

Newsflash 56

October 2022



**Dundee
Civic Trust**
'Encouraging the Best'

Settling into a new home

Barbara Illsley

Members of the Newsflash team were delighted to have the chance to visit the new office of Dundee Historic Environment Trust (DHET) a few weeks ago and to use these premises for the group's recent meeting. After fifteen years based in Dock Street, DHET remains in the heart of Dundee's historic centre, having moved just a short distance round the corner to its new home at 29 Exchange Street. The unit, formerly used by Heart Space Whole Foods, has been given a fresh coat of paint inside and out to meet the needs of its new occupant.



DHET is one of Scotland's seven city heritage trusts, created in 2004 by the Scottish Government in response to the recommendations of the Scottish Government Cities Review (2003). Its main purpose is to manage a programme of grant assistance for the external repair of historic buildings in Dundee's conservation areas, with highest priority given to city centre projects, and to support complementary outreach activities that promote the appreciation and care of the city's historic environment.

Three significant grants were amongst those considered at DHET's Grants Committee in September 2022, and these illustrate the diversity of projects that can be helped. DHET is funded by Historic Environment Scotland.

1. A grant to the owners of 146 Nethergate towards roof repairs. This is part of a category A-listed tenement, build around 1790, which is known as Miln's Buildings after its architect builder James Miln. No 136, part of the same listing, was the birthplace of Frances 'Fanny' Wright in 1795, the famous writer, abolitionist and feminist.
2. A grant to the Unicorn Preservation Society towards site investigations into the condition of the East Graving Dock. These investigations are required to inform the nature of the works needed to repair the dock as a precursor to the construction of a new visitor centre for HMS Unicorn.
3. A grant to Dundee Museum of Transport for emergency roof repairs to a 1901 section of the former Mayfield Tram depot, which it hopes to become its new home. The depot is a vacant category B-listed building in the Maryfield Conservation Area.

You can find out lots more about DHET at their website <https://dhet.org> or pop in and speak to Adam Swan, DHET's Director.

More Cycle Routes for all?

Dundee, like so many towns and cities, radiates outwards from the centre. It is a little tricky, sometimes, to navigate from one peripheral area to another – certainly for this 45-year newcomer; although Kingsway clearly helps.

Dundee City Council is keen to promote “active travel”, connecting many parts of the city. In May 2021, the Council published a 24-page paper on the benefits of walking and cycling in Dundee, detailing the benefits of reduced car use, from economic benefits, to health, retail, reduced congestion, air pollution and others. The Embark cycle hire scheme is just one of the initiatives, though this still has some way to go. This is intended to link with the 20-minute neighbourhood concept, long championed by Dundee Civic Trust.

It is to be welcomed, therefore, that the Council is to investigate the feasibility of five new segregated cycling and walking paths, linking the city centre with other areas in the city, including:

- Ninewells along Perth Road,
- Stobswell and Fintry via Pitkerro Road,
- Strathmartine via Hilltown (not so great for cyclists?),
- Broughty Ferry via Arbroath Road,
- and what appears to be a cross-city route between Lochee and Stobswell along Dens Road.

The study alone will cost £325,000, partly funded by the Council with a major contribution from Transport Scotland and others. It is to be hoped that this eye-wateringly large sum will allow a really significant and positive design to be produced for these routes, and will then encourage a commitment to turn the aspiration into reality. The consultants should bear in mind that there is much merit in partially separating cyclists and pedestrians from each other. There are significant challenges, particularly at pinch points such as the city end of Arbroath Road, and an apparent reluctance to promote high quality, permanent and useful cycle paths, for example in Perth Road. On the other hand, the elegant path incorporating flood defences has now been completed from Douglas Terrace, past the Lifeboat shed to Broughty Castle, and work is progressing well with a path along Arbroath Road from Kingsway roundabout, and along the esplanade from the castle towards the soon to be started bridge over the Dighty.

Watch this space for more developments.

Donald Gordon



Potential for zero-energy bills

Bill Lynch

Given the current energy crisis, buildings that require little or no energy input make increasing sense. Imagine life without having to deal with, or worry about, the cost of heating and power for your property whether you are a homeowner or a tenant.

For many years, it has been blindingly obvious that the UK's housing stock, generally the most energy-inefficient in Europe, needs radical transformation. Insulation of UK housing is woefully inadequate and successive governments have failed to insist on requisite levels of insulation, whether in new-build homes or retrofitted to existing properties. Our building regulations are only now catching up but may still not go far enough.

Insulation schemes have come and gone, although the current Home Energy Efficiency Programme has resulted in £16m being allocated to Dundee since 2013. These funds have been used for area-based schemes so a number of properties have benefitted,

but the Programme has merely scratched the surface of what is actually required. A properly integrated system and decent levels of grant support are needed.



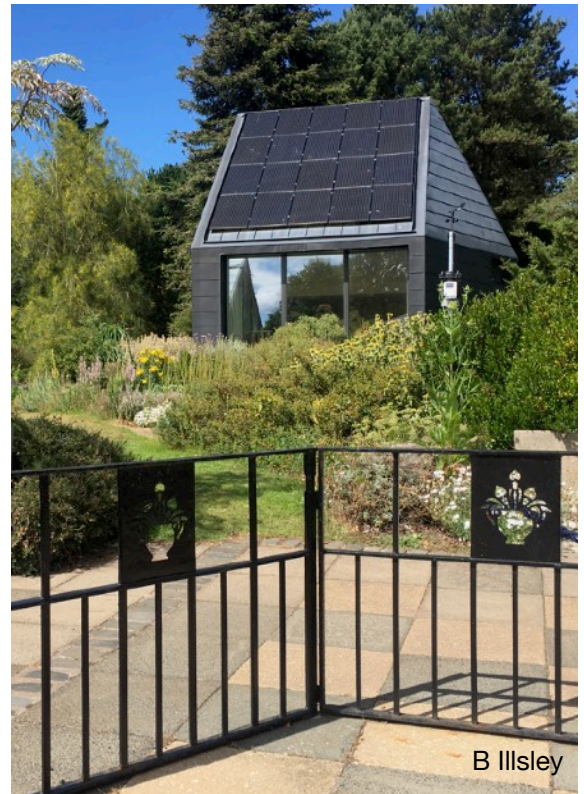
The use of the German PassivHaus (PH) building system provides a potential solution. The PH system is centred around the 'air-tightness' of the building, using high levels of insulation, and windows and doors which are designed to the highest specification. There are modified systems for local authorities (PH Local), for housing associations (PH Social), as well as for retrofitting the system to existing and older properties (EnerPHit). There is international evidence, collected over a period of 30 years, showing that the PH system is successful. Working with PH standards has led to reduced costs. A recent cost study suggested that the current cost of PH over that for standard build is around +4% but that value for money, over the life-cycle of the build, favours PH build. The benefits to owners and tenants in terms of reduced bills and increased comfort levels must also be taken into consideration.

Prior to the recent spikes in fuel costs, a typical 3-bedroom house built to PH standard had annual fuel costs of £120 for both hot water and heating and a 1-bed apartment costs £52 per annum. The current fuel crisis dictates that more of this standard of housing needs to be adopted. Not only would it alleviate cost pressures on households but also enable more money to circulate within local areas as residents have increased spending power. A recent article in the Times suggested that zero-bills housing is possible through a combination of energy-efficient building aligned with favourable tariffs, with properties returning energy back to the grid when not required. Given the large sums invested in renewable energies in the UK and the need for energy companies to make returns from energy supply, this approach is probably the most politically acceptable one at present. Yet a future for housing without the need to use much or any external energy, offers a brighter future for householders, tenants and others and should be embraced.

Local Authorities and Housing Associations throughout the UK are putting the standard at the heart of new build and indeed retrofitting current stock to achieve PH. In Scotland, there are examples of PH housing developments in Glasgow, Edinburgh, the Borders and Argyll and Bute, with the standard being perfect for off-grid housing in rural areas. Glasgow City Council suggest that adopting the standard will allow them to address fuel poverty, quality building and climate change. Perth and Kinross have used the PH standard for the new Perth High School, given planning permission this year and due to be completed in 2024. Currie Community School in Edinburgh is also using the standard and incorporating a swimming pool, community library and outdoor hubs including community allotments.

Here in Dundee, Dundee University's Macro Micro Studio at the Botanic Garden was an early adopter of PH standards. Developed and built by students in Architecture, Civic Engineering, Physics and Applied Computing during 2013, the building was the UK's first net-zero live/work studio. Today, the standard is being applied to the new replacement school for Craigie and Braeview. A private certified Passive House was also recently built at Ninewells. There is expertise on our doorstep. We should make more use of this.

The drive for energy-efficiency will test all of us as it is a feature of the Scottish Government's zero-carbon agenda. As well as phasing out new fossil fuel boilers by 2030, the intention is to use the Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) to drive an increase in energy-efficiency, initially focusing on a band C rating for all properties including owner occupied by 2033. By 2024, building warrants for new builds will only be granted where zero emissions heating is included along with very high levels of energy efficiency. As Building Regulations are updated, it would seem sensible, however, to inculcate the Passiv Haus standards into our buildings because, as the current energy crisis shows, an EPC rating of C may be inadequate - everyone deserves to be freed from the worry, and for some the penury, likely to be attributed to fossil-fuel price hikes and a non-functioning energy market.

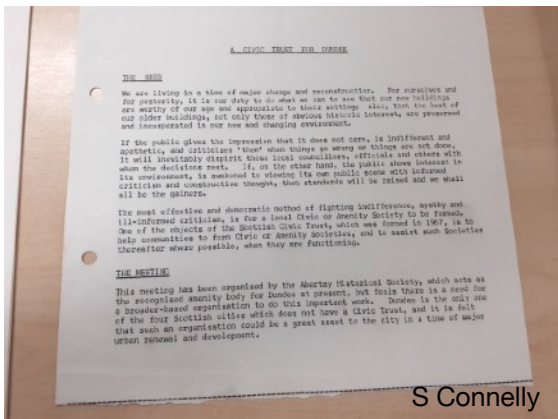


There are a burgeoning number of case studies on the Passive House Trust UK website [Passivhaus for Local Authorities & Housing Associations \(passivhaustrust.org.uk\)](https://passivhaus.org.uk).

Foundation of Dundee Civic Trust Part 2

Steve Connelly

In the last Newsflash I referred to some of the events surrounding the establishment of the Dundee Civic Trust nearly fifty years ago and the part played by the Abertay Historical Society. I am grateful for information received from long-standing trust member, Tony Cooke, who played a crucial part in proceedings and has filled in some of the details for me.



Tony, who will be well-known to some of you from his time working in extra mural education at Dundee University, took over as Abertay Historical Society secretary on history lecturer Bruce Lenman's departure to St Andrews University. The ongoing negotiations around the formation of the Civic Trust now fell to Tony. His extensive contacts in the area included distinguished archaeologist and regular extra mural lecturer, Dr Margaret Stewart, an active member of Perth Civic Trust. She was able to advise on the setting up of the trust and suggested that Perth-born Sandy Wilkinson, who was taking up the chair of Scots Law at Dundee, should be approached to join. Professor Wilkinson took on the task of preparing the Dundee Civic Trust

constitution. The first chair of the trust was Principal Chessor Matthew of Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art, who Tony describes as "delightful and very urbane". Principal Matthew wanted Tony to take on being the secretary of the trust as well, but with a new baby in the house and an already full plate of responsibilities he declined the invitation. Michael Shafe, Dundee University deputy chief librarian, stepped into the breach to become the first secretary. The launch event took place at Dundee University's Tower Extension Lecture Theatre (now called the D'Arcy Thompson Lecture Theatre) on 6 February 1973.

The minutes of the launch set out the various levels of subscription and the first annual report in 1974 listed the totals for the following membership categories: 8 corporate (subscription not stated), 5 foundation (£100), 25 life (£25), 120 ordinary (£2), 37 joint (£3), 3 student (50p) and 3 children (25p). A good showing for such a fledgling organisation.

In need of a new home?



Planning Update

Nick Day

Encouragingly there has been a steady flow of planning applications over the summer period keeping the Trust Planning Group busy assessing these.

The Trust, whilst regretting the demolition of the Listed **Wallace Craigie Works** on Broughty Ferry Road, welcomes the principle of redevelopment for flats here. The height of the buildings shown in the pre application consultation appear to be appropriate for this site, but the Trust has suggested reducing the overall numbers to create more amenity space for residents. The formal submission of plans is awaited with interest.



Objections have been submitted by the Trust to the plans for a further **50,000sqft of speculative offices with ground floor commercial use on site 6** opposite the V&A. Whilst an improvement on the Agnes Husband House offices next door, the design is not worthy of this prominent site in our UNESCO City of Design. And given that it has taken over 3 years to let just one of the two ground floor units at the railway station, there is concern that there will be a dead frontage to the street for a prolonged period.

The Trust has supported **two applications on South Ward Road for Purpose Built Student Accommodation**. There have been ten PBSA applications in the last 3 years, and it is hoped some of these will soon be built in order to fulfil the need for quality accommodation to help attract students to our Universities.

Extra classrooms at Harris Academy are proposed to accommodate the future increased intake of pupils, including those from the Carse outwith the city. The new accommodation is to be located on the south side of the school complementing the overall design.



Stage 1 proposals for the **Museum of Transport at Maryfield** are a significant step forward in the relocation from Market Street.

A new **car showroom on the site of the former Levi Jeans factory on Dunsinane Avenue** will make good use of a site that has been vacant for many years.

A proposal for an **Activity Centre in the empty Toys R Us unit at Kingsway West Retail Park** reflects the downturn in retail activity and raises questions as to why more out of existing centre retail units have been permitted on the former NCR Gourdie factory site and elsewhere.



Demolition of the Listed former Drill Hall and Regal Cinema in Queen Street, Broughty Ferry is proposed by the West End Garage Honda Ltd on the grounds that the building is in a dangerous condition and beyond saving. This will create “hardstanding for potential future development”. This would be a disappointing outcome, especially the loss of the distinctive elevation to Church Street.

Residential proposals submitted over the summer include proposals to redevelop the ruinous **Listed Building at 28 Roseangle as 10 flats**. Whilst very welcome in principle the Trust is suggesting this is scaled back to achieve a more acceptable design solution.

Other largely non contentious residential proposals include **4 houses at the Stannergate on Broughty Ferry Road** removing a derelict commercial building; **8 semi-detached houses on Riverside Drive west of the new flats and between the elevated rail-track and the busy main road**; **17 houses off Lothian Crescent**, Whitfield for Discovery Homes; **5 houses at Mains of Balgay, Elliot Road** involving demolition of a warehouse; **4 semi detached flat roof houses in Brown Street, Broughty Ferry**; and an infill development of **4 flats in Trades Lane**.

A single storey house in the grounds of 65 Camphill Road is a rare but welcome example of innovative design coupled with well considered energy efficient measures. Such attributes are sadly not often seen in applications for planning approval (reference Bill Lynch’s article in this Newsflash). Achieving nil or low energy and more innovative design are imperatives as we look to the future. And this applies to the major housebuilders too. Surely they can also do better than produce serried ranks of homes of similar design that we see on nearly every new housing estate.

More encouragingly applications for **housing on greenfield sites close to Dundee in both Monifieth and Carnoustie** not allocated for development in the Angus Local Development Plan, have been refused by Angus Council and upheld on appeal by a Scottish Government Reporter. Such development would not only have increased pressure on the Arbroath Road in Dundee, but also would have reduced the incentive to develop brownfield sites in 20 minute neighbourhoods within the city.

Applications decided:-

Refused, demolition of rear of C Listed cottage and erection of 3 houses at 383 Brook Street at the corner of St Vincent Street, Broughty Ferry. The Trust objected to this as overdevelopment of the site.

Approved, 14 small industrial units at West Pitkerro. Welcomed.

Approved, demolition of Listed eyesore remains of NCR factory at Ice Arena/Cineworld car park. Necessary for the proposed new Dundee FC stadium, but the Trust has made it clear that support for this demolition is without prejudice to views re the stadium et al proposals. There will be more news on the latter after the public consultations in September and October.

Approved, a modern design house at 9 Ellieslea Road, West Ferry. The Trust’s concerns re the design and loss of mature trees were not accepted by the Council.

Approved, Michelin Innovation Hub at the MSIP, Baldovie Road. Good news.

Approved, single storey extension to nursing home, 9 Dudhope Terrace. No objection from the Trust

Approved, Conversion of the semi derelict 1792 B Listed mill at 9 Guthrie Street to flats, commercial/retail units, workshop/office units and cafe with exhibition space. This should make a significant contribution to the Blackness area as well as saving an important historic building.



Graffiti Art in Riverside Nature Park Steve Connelly

On a recent visit, I was pleased to see that one of the structures in the car park had been adorned with this beautiful illustration of a thrush.

Further into the park proper, I came across the amusing *trompe l'oeil* decoration of the toilet complete with lace curtains! Great additions to Dundee's public art.



Berryhill Solar Farm

Barbara Illsley

The major Berryhill Solar Farm application, involving 152,000 solar panels on 118.5 hectares of arable and grazing land south of Piperdam, discussed in Newsflash 51, has just been approved on appeal by a Scottish Government reporter.

The application, submitted to Angus Council, a little over a year ago, proved controversial. Opposition was led by local campaign group 'Spare' (Save and Protect Rural Angus Environment) with the vast majority of the 150 representations submitted being against the project. The level of antagonism to the solar farm from local people was a key factor in the Council's decision to refuse the application in February this year, against the recommendation of planning officials.

The main issues considered by the reporter were the proposed development's contribution to renewable energy, its socio-economic benefits, and its effects on landscape, residential amenity, loss of agricultural land, local roads, flood risk and wildlife. He highlighted the development's potential contribution to the delivery of renewable energy generation and the achievement of the Scottish Government's net zero target and concluded that the development "will not have any unacceptable effect on landscape character, setting, sensitive viewpoints or public access routes, designated natural-heritage sites of the amenity of any community" and that it complies with development plan policies.

The application has been granted subject to 15 conditions. These conditions require the developer to submit further detailed reports, including on the final layout, the solar arrays and infrastructure, decommissioning and an associated financial bond, access management, biodiversity mitigation and enhancement, noise, landscape works and an assessment of glint and glare.



Who needs Hollywood?

Steve Connelly



Some of you will have seen the Beanotown sign put up on the southern slope of the Law for the Dundee Summer (Bash) Streets Festival held in July. It was certainly a bit of fun and attracted a fair bit of attention.

If you want to see more about the festival, you can check it out at:

[Dundee Summer \(Bash\) Streets Festival 2022 - Test - dundee.com](https://www.dundee.com)

Beachfront Arch

Donald Gordon



The elegant path from the Lifeboat shed to Broughty Castle has been mentioned elsewhere in this issue. Part of the path is framed by what at first sight looks like two whalebones, perhaps pinched from the Tay Whale. However, they represent davits, part of the cranes used to lower lifeboats from ships; and, very appropriately, commemorate the lifesaving work carried out, since 1830 at Buddon Ness and 1859 at Broughty Ferry, by lifeboat crews.

The curved metal arches, complete with flanges and cogs, seem to have been taken from real davits, and they certainly look like the real deal, but for the fact that, inscribed on both sides of the arches are the names of the dozen boats which have been stationed nearby. The sculpture has been designed by local artist Steve Page, who writes:

“The sculpture is constructed from laser cut corten [sort of self-rusting] steel and contains the names of all of the various all-weather lifeboats that have been stationed here over the years. The archway it creates is aligned to the setting sun upriver and frames the existing lifeboat mooring. It takes the form of a pair of empty davit cranes - the crane system that can be found in various forms holding passenger/crew lifeboats on larger vessels.”

“I’m pleased to say that the response to the sculpture has been overwhelmingly positive. I’m currently working on another public art piece to be located in the Stobswell area, though on a much smaller more subtle scale, but it might be that you’ll see it installed before the end of the year!”

“I didn’t really intend for it to be considered as just a “memorial” but rather a “celebration” of the many years of service that the community of Broughty Ferry have given to people at risk upon the sea. But it does of course include the Mona for which I’m sure you’ll know the history of so it’s fitting that this acts as a focal point for remembrance of that event.”



The response is certainly positive here too.

Future events

Thursday 20 October 2022 7.00 pm Dundee Art Society Gallery, Roseangle

Kevin Frediani, Curator of Dundee Botanic Garden, will give a talk “**Over the Garden Wall: celebrating 50 years of the University of Dundee Botanic Garden**”. The talk will explore how a space in the west end of Dundee became a special place for people and a home for some of the world’s rarest plants. Kevin Frediani is now the fourth curator and he will describe the cumulative work to cultivate a living collection.



Thursday 17 November 2022 7.00 pm Dundee Art Society Gallery, Roseangle

David Powell, DC Thomson archivist will give a talk entitled “**A Menace in the Archives: The Collections of DC Thomson**”. This light-hearted tour through the collections will show their breadth, influence and use and will perhaps spark a few memories.

Thursday 15 December 2022 7.00 pm Dundee Art Society Gallery, Roseangle

John Gray, Planning Officer, DCC “**Forty Years of Public Art in Dundee**”. John will describe the development of Dundee’s wide-ranging public art, from the Blackness Public Art Programme which started in Dundee in 1982. Since then, the city has become well known for its public art, so how has the city fared with public art?



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