

DUNDEE CIVIC TRUST

NEWSFLASH


 Dundee Civic Trust
 encouraging the best

Planning Update

Nick Day

The number of significant new planning applications remains low, but we take encouragement from recent public consultation events that have been held prior to submission of an application.

One such proposal is for **90 flats in the B Listed former GPO building on Meadowside**. The building had a previous approval for an Arts Centre associated with the High School of Dundee. The Trust welcomes this new proposal which should help support existing shops and services by increasing the population of the City Centre.



B Illsley

As reported in Newsflash 58, the Trust supports the principle of development of the site at **60 Brown Street, Blackness for 72 flats**, but has doubts about the desirability of commercial premises on the ground floor. Following further consultation, the Trust has indicated that ideally the pre-WW1 drill hall or elements of it should be retained within the development. The Trust also commented that given the number of recent

applications in the Blackness area, a master plan for the area is needed, and that a central green space is essential along with significant public realm improvements.

We have had early notice of an application to be proposed for a **2000 panel solar array on land at Ethiebeaton Farm, north of Balmossie Heights housing**. This would be the second such array proposal in the city, the other helping provide power to the James Hutton Institute. Although the amount of farmland within the city is limited because of the tightly drawn boundaries, we might expect to see more such proposals given the necessity of reducing carbon emissions. An interesting debate on the future use of greenfield land on the edge of Dundee seems likely as part of the process for the soon to begin **preparation of Dundee Local Development Plan 3**, with competition between agriculture, solar arrays, recreational uses and housing. The Trust will continue to resist housing on more greenfield sites both within the city boundaries and in those parts of neighbouring local authorities that are effectively part of the Dundee housing market. The focus must be on the development of brownfield sites within the city, supporting our local centres and 20 minute neighbourhoods.

Changes are proposed at the award winning **Water's Edge development at City Quay**, following a review of the market. The bar/restaurant proposal has been shelved in favour of a conference and training facility and use for public events. The Trust welcomes this change of plan.

There is an application to renew the approval granted in 2019 for a **7 storey development of 28 flats with 3 retail units on a prominent derelict site in Trades Lane fronting Dock Street**. The Trust objected to the previous application in terms of design and the anticipated problems letting retail units here. Normally, the Trust would respect the Council's previous approval decision, but we believe there is a case here for reconsideration given changed circumstances. The promise of the Dundee Eden means the site assumes even more prominence, and it has since been identified in the Council's City Centre Strategic Investment Plan 2050 as part of a potential major development opportunity extending to Seagate, and thus requiring a comprehensive rather than piecemeal development approach.

In sharp contrast in terms of design, on other side of Dock Street, it is great to see work is at last progressing with the conversion of the Grade A Listed **Custom House to flats with a welcome planning application for much needed stone cleaning**.

48 residential units for Home Group, Housing Association at Hebrides Drive, Mill O'Mains.

This is the last phase of this successful redevelopment and while welcoming the development, the Trust has noted the need for good quality sound insulation of homes and a well-landscaped buffer zone between the proposed housing and the busy noisy A90 dual carriageway.

The provision of much needed **purpose built student accommodation (PBSA)**, necessary for our universities and colleges to attract the best students, is a long running saga without much action. Against a projected need of around 3000 PBSA units, some 1500 have planning approval, but only 16 of these are under construction as far we know - on the corner of Nethergate and West Marketgait as an adjunct to the major BT office development. Encouraging though is the extension of time granted by the Council to commence redevelopment of the former multi-storey **college building on Constitution Road for PBSA**, and there are signs of pre development preparation of the former **Jumpin Jacks nightclub site on South Ward Road for PBSA**. The same applies too for the site at **56 Brown Street, Blackness which has permission for ground floor commercial use with student housing above**.

Less encouraging is the withdrawal of an application for PBSA of the former **nightclub at 19-21 South Ward Road** opposite the city centre Lidl store. But just as we go to print, there is news of a pre-application consultation on proposals for **student accommodation on the site of Willison House, the former home of Robertson's furniture store** destroyed by fire last year. The plans will be available for consultation in June, so more in the next Newsflash.



B Illsley



B Illsley

And in further contradiction of my opening sentence, two major applications have just been submitted for residential development - a 5 to 6 storey development of 134 flats and commercial development on the site of the Hilltown Market on Main Street, and 174 flats of up to 6 storeys on the site of the Wallace Craigie Works on Blackcroft. We reported in previous editions of Newsflash on the pre-application consultation for the Wallace Craigie site and will look to see how our comments are reflected in the proposals. In both these cases the Trust will comment on the detailed plans, but we will welcome the principle of residential development. The occupants will help support local services and both developments are well served by public transport and will support their 20 minute neighbourhood.



B Illsley

There have been some welcome planning decisions in the last two months notably:

- * **approval of development of a 7,500m2 warehouse off Jack Martin Way, Claverhouse East Industrial Estate** for Scottish Hydro Electric Transmission plc. Good news for Dundee with this set to be the major essential equipment store for SSEN.
- * a Scottish Government Reporter has **rejected an appeal by Henry’s for a drive-thru coffee bar off East Dock Street**. This is in line with the Trust’s concerns regarding queuing traffic on this busy trunk road, and the use conflicting with the Council’s and the Scottish Government Town Centres First Policy
- * **approval has been granted for 8 houses for Invertay Homes at Summerfield Gardens, Whitfield**. A seemingly uncontroversial proposal, but issues relating to drainage appear to have delayed the approval process for over a year.
- * **approval to 8 flats in Candle Lane** on an infill site in the Seagate area.
- * and welcome news is that approval has been granted for the **Museum of Transport at the former Maryfield tram depot**, enabling its long planned move from Market Street. Not only will this allow the Museum to house many more exhibits, but it also will secure the restoration of this historic building.



B Illsley

Love them or hate them

Dundee's jute mansions

Peter Gackowski

I am not alone in my fascination with the mansions of Dundee, and of Broughty Ferry and West Ferry in particular. They rose up in significant numbers on large plots, most with views across the Tay. These buildings evoke mixed emotions: for some people there is admiration at the glory of their scale and the richness of their architecture, with a corresponding sadness at how many have crumbled to the elements of fire, water, fungal and pestilent decay; for others they are viewed as symbols of the oppression of the working classes and should all be pulled down.

While there is no doubting that the owners were privileged and wealthy and that their mansions were built on the back of a workforce that was anything but, these structures are part of the story of Dundee and part of our history. Tales of millionaires' mile are well documented. Many of the jute barons and merchants were philanthropic and the legacy of that philanthropy lives on to be enjoyed by new generations of Dundonians, but, like all empires, the cliché 'what goes up must come down' is apt as it applies not only to their businesses but also to many of the monuments they built to show off their wealth and position.

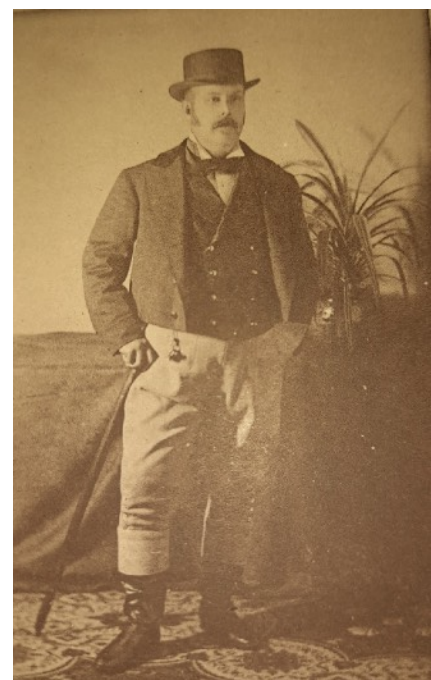


One such jute palace or mansion was built for John Sharp. Called Fernhall, it sat high upon the slopes of Dundee Road on a particularly large plot. Last year, when surfing an online platform, by chance I spotted an old photograph of Broughty Ferry and recognised Fernhall's listed lodge that still stands today at 69 Dundee Road, albeit now devoid of many of the architectural Heiten gems that once adorned it, including chimneys, ornate pillars and ironmongery. What really delighted me, however, was to see John Sharp's mansion, Fernhall, in the background of the photo. Built in 1866 it was a very large and imposing property.

What do we know of the man that funded the construction? John Sharp was a leading figure among his peers. His company, John Sharp and Sons, ran three mills employing 1200 when the jute industry enjoyed its halcyon days. He was philanthropic and funded many good causes; his nickname 'honest John' tells its own story. He appeared on the guest list for Amy Grimond's 21st birthday party at Carbet Castle in 1891 and there is a picture of John Sharp in the souvenir booklet from that event. The booklet is in an archive of material from the Cunningham and Ogilvie families who also attended at the party. He died in 1895.

The full story of John Sharp is an article in itself but I thought that members might like to glimpse the former jute palace, its location and what remains. The photo below was taken not long after its construction.

What of Fernhall? The mansion fell into ruin in the 1930s. We know that in 1932, Miss Sharp still lived there but around that time other family members resided in the beautiful Hill of Tarvit mansion, and Balmuir House. By 1938, however, Fernhall was no longer occupied, and it was



later demolished.

Fernhall lodge is all that survives, albeit as a shadow of its former glory. The house, together with the garden walls and gate piers, were listed Category B in 1991. Today, the lodge appears unoccupied and is perhaps due some TLC like so many other buildings in Dundee that the Trust works so hard to preserve.



P Gackowski

Historic sign rescued

Members will be aware that the former Lauries of Dundee garden centre in the west end of the city is to be redeveloped as a 60 bed care home by Simply UK. Lauries, founded in 1860 by James Laurie, was a highly regarded nursery and landscaping firm which closed in 2001. Once the site was cleared, the Trust’s Secretary spotted the garden centre’s iconic metal sign and arranged with the owners for it to be donated to The McManus as part of the art gallery and museum’s official collection.



Simply UK

DIA Young Designers Competition 2023

Fionn Stevenson

"The greenest building is the one that is already built," Carl Elefante (2007)

When considering national architectural awards, probably the first ones that come to mind are the well-publicised Stirling Prize and The Civic Trust Awards. However, have you ever heard of any that are solely dedicated to renovating and revitalizing existing and underused buildings? I certainly hadn't, until the President of the Dundee Institute of Architects invited me, as a representative from the Dundee Civic Trust, to join a panel of four judges for their exciting new Young Designers Competition with the promising theme of 'Adaptive Re-use Ideas'.

Promoting the innovative and adaptive re-use of buildings is probably now more important than designing new buildings, given that most of our building stock already exists and much of it is in need of renovation. Equally, the re-use of existing buildings, rather than their wholesale demolition and replacement, also saves a significant amount of embodied carbon emissions. This is a vital factor in our quest to mitigate the climate crisis we are in.

The judges met in the Dundee V&A Design Shop at 34 Union Street on 27th February 2023 to discuss and assess the various entries. The brief for designers was to select a building anywhere within Dundee, Angus, North Fife and Perthshire and our judging criteria were:

- Appropriateness of building selected for adaptive reuse
- An original and apt idea for adaptive reuse
- The suitability of the particular building for the specific reuse
- Potential for continuous use in the future and/or addressing a current need within a community
- Creative and imaginative illustration and depiction of the idea

We were delighted by the quality of proposals submitted by both architecture students and young architects alike. The winning entry (£750) by Reece McCallum was an original repurposing of the iconic former Dudhope Works building in Blackness into a community library for sharing useful items, rather than us having to buy yet more stuff. The urban place-making was exemplary, showing a sensitive understanding of context and the drawings really brought the whole project to life in a very imaginative and atmospheric way. The Runner Up prize (£250) entry came from Dylan Baliski - an Undergraduate student and showed a sophisticated level of detail and understanding in this highly innovative proposal for improving the use of the Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art and Design's Crawford building. The proposed new solar façade dynamically showed off the artistic nature of the building behind it in a delicate manner, with lace-like shading that opened and closed as needed.



We also made a Commendation for the careful restoration and re-use of the well-loved fire-damaged at-risk Lochee Old Parish Church by Lewis Chalmers and Stelian Stefanov as a centre for drug addiction support and transition based on sound research in terms of need.

There will be an exhibition of the competition entries at the V&A Dundee Shop running from 11th -16th May.

Blending the Old and the New

Les McLaggan images of Auld Dundee

Adam Swan Dundee Historic Environment Trust

This exhibition of images by Les McLaggan is now on display at Dundee Historic Environment Trust's office, 29 Exchange Street, Dundee. The office is usually open Tuesday to Friday 10.00am to 5.00pm, but often outwith those times too. There is also a PowerPoint version displaying the images in the window area.

The blended images show historic views of Dundee merged with views of their current locations. These originated during lockdown when Les McLaggan was showing his daughter some old photographs of Dundee on social media. He realised that she had no idea of their location. He headed out and took photographs from the same viewpoints using his smartphone. Using freely available software applications, he then 'blended' the old and the new images, adding colour where he thought appropriate. Les went on to share these images on social media sites with members of Dundee local history groups. He has also generously passed many of these on to Dundee Historic Environment Trust to share with local people and visitors to the city. Captions provide additional historic building information. DHET thanks Les for the images and John Gray for putting together the exhibition.



L McLaggan

Dundee's Low Emission Zone

Mike Boyle Communications Division DCC

Drivers in Dundee have been advised to prepare for the city's first Low Emission Zone (LEZ) which officially launched last May. A two-year grace period, meaning enforcement won't begin for all vehicles until May 2024 is giving drivers, businesses and local people time to get ready. Signage on the major entry points to the zone is being erected as well as automatic number plate recognition cameras and the software needed to run the system.

Dundee's LEZ will develop an environment that helps to promote more active and sustainable travel choices, contributes to the city's ongoing transformational change and helps to promote Dundee as an inclusive and desirable place to live, invest, visit and learn.

An area inside the A991 inner-ring road will form the Low Emission Zone within which only vehicles that meet the emission standards set out in the Low Emission Zone (Emission Standards, Exemptions and Enforcement) (Scotland) Regulations 2021 can be driven. In summary this means that petrol cars and vans registered from 2006, diesel cars and vans registered from September 2015 and buses, coaches and HGVs registered from



B Illsley

January 2013 will be eligible to access the LEZ. Owners can check whether their vehicle is compliant at <https://www.lowemissionzones.scot/get-ready/vehicle-registration-checker>

The LEZ will operate 24 hours a day, seven days a week and be enforced through a network of automatic number plate recognition (ANPR) cameras. When enforcement starts in May 2024, there will be an initial penalty charge for all non-compliant vehicles entering the zone of £60, reduced by 50% if it is paid within 14 days. The default penalty charges for LEZs have been set by the Scottish Government and are therefore consistent across the country. Scottish Government ministers have approved the details of each of the four Scottish LEZs, including Dundee.

The scheme is the culmination of a number of years of planning and consultation, complemented by the adoption of other policies that have been introduced by Dundee City Council in recent times to help improve quality of life. As a city, this has meant that commercial transport companies for example have been engaged with the process and investment has been made in new buses and lots of newer taxis that are already compliant with the requirements of the LEZ. The Low Emission Zone will contribute to Dundee's broader objectives and the vision to create a healthy, vibrant and attractive city by protecting public health through improving air quality and achieving air quality compliance for NO₂, PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5}.

50th anniversary events

Donald Gordon

I can report on two matters that have happened during the first part of 2023, which is the year of your Trust's 50th anniversary.

Civic reception

At the end of February, we were fortunate enough to be honoured with a Civic Reception in the spacious and elegant surroundings of the City Chambers, at the invitation of and hosted by the Lord Provost Bill Campbell. A few dozen members and guests attended, and were entertained to a speech by our host, who commented favourably on the work done by the present Trust members, and their predecessors, and wished the Trust well in the future.

In reply, your chairman thanked the Lord Provost for his kind words. He also expressed the gratitude of the present Board to the far-seeing work done by the founders of the Trust, who recognised that there was a need for an independent, interested voice, speaking as the general public and on their behalf. This is a public who were at that time, and remain now, affected by the decisions and actions of Councils, architects, planners, owners and developers. These people and bodies affect us all by designing, approving and building new structures which alter the landscape and the historic place of our city. We are aware that much more needs to be done.

Early Day Motion

The Trust received a letter from one of our local MPs, Chris Law, who had tabled an Early Day Motion in the House of Commons, congratulating Dundee Civic Trust on achieving its anniversary. We were delighted and honoured by this, for us, most unusual and generous act, and I am pleased to reproduce Chris's letter here.

Chris Law MP
Dundee West



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31st January 2023

To all at Dundee Civic Trust,

I am writing to congratulate you all ahead of your fiftieth anniversary next month.

I know that the work you do is appreciated not only by myself but by so many across our city. The Trust have done so much over the last fifty years to not only protect but improve our city's built environment, and you should all be incredibly proud of that work.

I have tabled the following Early Day Motion in Parliament to congratulate and thank you all for this invaluable work:

Dundee Civic Trust 50th Anniversary

"That this House congratulates Dundee Civic Trust on the occasion of its fiftieth anniversary; notes that the Trust was founded in February 1973 by local people to help support the protection and conservation of Dundee's numerous historic buildings; further notes that the Trust continues to this day to promote and organise talks and events which help educate local people on our city and its built environment, and in particular matters of civic design, architecture and conservation; thanks all Trustees, both past and present, who have helped to run and develop the Trust over its fifty years; and wishes them all the best for the future."

Best of luck for your upcoming events and if I can ever be of any help or assistance in the future, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

All the best,

Chris Law MP (Dundee West)

2023 Dundee Civic Trust Awards Bill Lynch



B Illsley

The Trust's coveted awards scheme will take place in 2023, our 50th anniversary year.

The Awards Panel look forward to judging a variety of quality projects completed between June 2019 and March 2023. The elongated time-span since the last awards held in 2019 is due primarily to Covid and the shadow it cast over many aspects of our lives including construction and development projects. Previous winning projects have included the Maggie's Centre, and the High Mill at Verdant Works.

We are seeking nominations for buildings and other projects which contribute positively to the city's built environment and urban scene, and/or

its social life, economy, recreational, educational or cultural life. This presents a rather wide spectrum of activities that affects life throughout the city so please have your say on what has brightened your life.

We will be looking for a high quality of design, incorporating excellent use of materials, energy conservation and sustainability. As well as new developments, we will consider projects which restore the city's built heritage and historic buildings, including buildings at risk, and those which remove public eyesores and deal with problem sites. Projects both large and small are



D Gordon

welcome.

In this anniversary year, there is to be a new joint award between Dundee Civic Trust and Dundee Historic Environment Trust, the DCT and DHET Conservation Award, given for those projects deemed worthy of conserving, restoring or preserving the city's built heritage and historic buildings.

Following site visits and discussion, the Awards will be announced in the Autumn.



B Illsley

Scaffolding

Stephen Brand

Scaffolding is usually a sign that buildings are being repaired, restored or springing up from the ground. There is a fair bit of scaffolding around the city centre at the moment so let's have a look at some prominent examples.

Springing up opposite Debenhams is the new BT office, intended to be home to the city's call centre staff, and it will be an imposing building once it is finished.

We also have new flats emerging at City Quay making a contrast to the former harbour workshops on Chandler's Lane.



S Brand



S Brand



S Brand



S Brand

Also down at the docks, scaffolding is, at last, shrouding the magnificent Custom House as it is converted into flats. The building was gradually deteriorating and turning green so it is such a relief to see something happening.

Opposite the Customs House in Gellatly Street, Hillcrest/ Cater Homes are developing the old "brow" building into flats.

Just up from there, beside the bus station, is another flatted development for Hillcrest Housing. This must be the longest erected scaffolding by several years. When exactly did it go up? Rumours are that it will shortly be coming down to reveal the building. Don't hold your breath though.

Meantime, blossom is evident in the High Street and Chalmers Hall is covered in scaffolding. I have a feeling this might be the case for some time, but we shall see.



S Brand



S Brand

What next for parking in our high streets? Below are two different views from two of our members.

Traffic-free days? Bill Lynch

I recently argued, in an earlier City Scene article, that if we are to achieve 20 minute neighbourhoods by promoting active travel, reducing air pollution and tackling climate change through reducing emissions then we somehow had to find ways to accommodate the motor car. To get people out of cars and walking, cycling and wheeling especially for short journeys then the alternative to driving had to be pleasant and inviting. That trip to the local shops should be enjoyable, stress-free, sociable and in a welcoming space with a bit of greenery, public art, benches to rest and chat. The infrastructure has to be in-situ to assist the potential for a pleasant walk, cycle and wheel.

Our problem is that as a society we have invested heavily in car travel. The internal combustion engine (soon to be replaced by battery powered versions so car numbers may never be reduced significantly) has dominated how we move around our cities but a car has become much more, it's a symbol of personal freedom and assumed to be a quick and safe means of travel. In economic parlance a car can be seen as a piece of conspicuous consumption not just purchased to get us from A to B but to show off status and success. Many people are wedded to their car with perhaps the majority failing to appreciate that a number of their journeys take them through and into other people's neighbourhoods. That neighbourhood walk, cycle or wheel is blighted by the constant oppressive nature of streets being filled with moving and parked cars – avoidance behaviour is a constant for those engaging in active-travel on our streets.

The latest survey undertaken in 2021 by Sustrans of walking and cycling throughout Dundee provides a number of statistics and quotes that assist my arguments, such as:

- 25 million car journeys of under 3 miles are driven in Dundee each year.*
- Only 24% of residents think that their streets are not dominated by moving or parked motor vehicles.*

On street parking - need it be doomed? Brian Cram

It seems to me that cars and their owners are in danger of being driven out of town centres and out of busy streets that have vibrant services, shops, cafes, hairdressers, barbers, etc. The justification comes as part of a move to improve our health, improve air quality and help our country reach a zero-carbon economy, all laudable aims. As I see it, the danger is, that we throw the economic baby out with the bathwater as the effect will be to diminish economic activity in these areas.

The recent Sustrans Survey asks many questions about walking, wheeling and cycling with suggested actions to increase the likelihood of persuading citizens to get out of their cars and use these other options. I thought the methodology was slanted to such an extent that it seemed to be leading the participant towards answers that favoured Active Travel.

I suppose my cynicism comes from a lifetime spent in a sector of the retail industry that quickly decided that out of town warehouses and free



B Illsley

large car parks was the only profitable way to run their businesses. It is still happening today and the move from the Murraygate by Marks & Spencers to Gallagher Retail Park is a perfect example. The free two-hour slot for car parking will be irresistible for their customers and the fact that the site is outside the LEZ planned for

c) 67% agree that increasing spaces for people socialising, walking and cycling on their local high street would improve their local area.

What we can determine from the above is that of those surveyed the majority feel the need for change that the pendulum should swing now in favour of people and neighbourhoods and away from cars.

As for those currently engaging in active travel the following comments suggest that much is still lacking in the current facilities provided:

d) 'It is too scary to get into town and across the city on the trike (e-trike) because there aren't enough safe routes. I think more effort should be made to join the network up so people can get around more easily'

e) 'I would love to see better cycling infrastructure and connectivity in other neighbourhoods of Dundee to promote active travel within every community'.

Walking and Cycling Index 2021, Sustrans

I would therefore like to argue that we don't need more parking spaces but rather we need to begin to create spaces for people rather than cars. Making it much more pleasant to shop will lead to increased footfall of those engaged in active travel and is key to the survival of local businesses. I have to agree with one respondent to the Sustrans survey who suggested that the Perth Road should be pedestrianised. I would extend this argument to that of Brook Street, Broughty Ferry as well. Both streets lend themselves to becoming meccas of 'healthy streets' but this can't be done overnight. Neighbourhood Improvement Schemes like these take time and everything that is done to promote



Dundee will be an added bonus. Incidentally both the Overgate and the Gellatly Street Car Parks are within the LEZ and so non-compliant vehicles will be fined if they use them. I suspect that the city centre will decline, and pressure will build to allow a wider range of retailers to move to the existing retail parks.



The ideas for Active Travel seem to revolve around making life difficult for car users with the expectation that somehow walking and wheeling and cycling will increase as a result. I think the aims are laudable but they don't take account of human nature. Time and comfort seem to be much more important factors in making decisions about what method to use for travelling and I don't think the 20 minute neighbourhood is a viable concept for the majority of us. The concept is based on walking for 10 minutes at 3 miles an hour and then back again. That gives you a range of 800m, 880yard or half a mile in old money. Just look where the majority of Dundonians stay and look at the facilities that they will have access to within half a mile of their home. There might be a small parade of convenience shops and a choice of takeaway but little else.

Finally, I would like to defend the on street car parking on the Perth Road. The shops are varied and I am convinced that the high turnover of the car park spaces is attributable to the free 45 minutes no return within 75 minutes policy. In addition, there are several bus routes that use Perth Road, bringing more customers to the area.

such schemes has to be measured – communication is paramount along with trials and changes undertaken where necessary. Local residents have to feel ownership of such schemes and feel that they are being undertaken to improve their quality of life. Monitoring and agreed evidence parameters should be evaluated and reported regularly – this of course could include footfall and sales for local businesses who fear being adversely affected.

Small changes can be undertaken for example traffic-free days – weekdays are as normal but people have priority at weekends can be trialled so that events, markets etc can be held regularly. Where these have been introduced both internationally and across the UK, positive outcomes for many local businesses have been recorded. Home deliveries can be introduced using e-cargo bikes for those who have purchased too much to carry just like the old message bikes of yore. Let’s embrace a healthy change on our local high streets.

Active Travel seems to me to undervalue the importance of public transport. They talk of investing in pavements, creating cycle lanes, restricting speed limits, restricting car access but there is no talk of investing in public transport.



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