DUNDEE CIVIC TRUST

NEWSFLASH

Dundee Civic Trust
encouraging the best

Perceptions matter - Urban ReLeaf app

Barbara Illsley

Urban greenspace is important to those of us living in cities. Activities, such as visiting a local park, taking children to a play area, walking beside a river or participating in community gardening can have a positive impact on our physical and mental wellbeing. Greenspaces also help make cities more 'liveable', creating places where it is cooler, with less air pollution and where biodiversity can flourish. Dundee is fortunate to have a wealth of greenspaces, large and small, as well access to appropriately named 'bluespaces' such as the river Tay, the Dighty burn and Stobswell ponds. But what do you think of these spaces? Are they, in your view, safe and well maintained? How could they be improved?

The Urban ReLeaf Cities mobile phone app, launched in mid-July, offers residents the chance to answer these questions and to share their perceptions of Dundee's greenspace. At lots of different greenspace and bluespace locations across the city, you can access, on your phone, short surveys containing questions on a range of topics such as ease of access, safety, play facilities, wildlife and flooding. You can give your personal views of the park, garden or burn and upload photos. The data collected will be used to inform Dundee City Council's greenspace strategies with the aim of improving health, wellbeing and biodiversity.

B Illsley

The Urban ReLeaf Cities app is part of Dundee's contribution to a four-year EU Horizon-funded project involving academics, local authorities and others. The other cities are Athens, Cascais, Mannheim, Riga and Utrecht. The Dundee project is a collaboration between Dundee City Council and a team from Dundee University led by Professor Mel Woods.

An update on use of the app in the project's most recent newsletter reveals that there have been over 350 responses shared since the July launch. The project is hoping for many more contributions so go to the Google Play Store or Apple App Store and get involved. The newsletter also highlights some upcoming activities related to the project.

- 28th September, Urban ReLeaf is participating in the Scottish Climate Week headline event, RE:City – Smart Energy for Everyone.
- 5th to 9th October, Urban ReLeaf is hosting three events as part of the University of Dundee's Festival for the Future.

Details of these events and the project as a whole can be found on the Urban ReLeaf website at.https://www.sustainabledundee.co.uk/projects/urban-releaf

Is it a Lobster Pot? Fishy Delays at Gallagher Retail Park

Roderick Stewart

The welcome opening of our impressive new M&S superstore in Gallagher Retail park has regrettably (and predictably) exacerbated an existing problem for drivers: how to escape during rush hours. The shopping bait lures us in but the traffic management system, acting like a lobster-pot, makes it very difficult for us to escape.

There is only a single exit, obstructed by traffic lights, while the obsessive use of 'give-way' markings contributes greatly to the lobster pot effect by backing up the side-lanes to create a gridlock.

Many other retail park car parks suffer to some degree from this type of superfluous traffic micromanagement which is particularly unhelpful when the side-lanes are many and short. Try making any sense of the maze of one-ways, give-ways and blocking kerbs in the Cox's Stack car park, which is also restricted by one main entrance/exit. The wasted fuel alone should force a re-think.

Some thoughts

A quick and easy mitigation could be to alter the priority markings to give side lanes priority in the manner of the French priorité a droite, or even better to remove the give way markings altogether. Many car parks manage with no give way markings at all and drivers are remarkably willing to allow others space if they feel it is a voluntary politeness. The result would be the equivalent of the well-proven motorway zipper-merge.

A random rush hour: All the side lanes are completely backed up but the blue car is being allowed to zipper-merge while the black car in the next lane remains obediently stuck.

It has been reported that the Gallagher Park traffic light phasing has been altered to help traffic escape. Perhaps this re-phasing needs to be even more focused on allowing rush hour escapes from the lobster pot, although there will, of course, be a knock-on effect in Dock Street.

In the longer term, extra entrance/exits should be opened to the east and west, with East Whale Lane being returned to two-way flow. Traffic engineers like to 'eliminate' blockages by either completely closing off any offending junction or by making it difficult (eg the unhelpful blocking of cars at the east end of Perth Road) but that fallacious reasoning merely shifts the problem while common sense and logic tell us that the more options which are open, the better.

Of course, shoppers can always 'vote with their feet'. I have already shifted much of my M&S shopping to Broughty Ferry which is much further but also much easier.

Dundee Civic Trust Student Awards 2024

Fionn Stevenson

For five years, Dundee Civic Trust has given an award to one or more fourth year Dundee University students who are studying architecture at Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art and Design. The aim is to engage with students, and to recognise and promote excellence in their substantial year-long projects. This year's winner of the Student Award was Gavin Wu, who studied in Dundee, coming from his native China for one year. His submission was entitled: 'Revive The Courtyard Vennels: Community Centre and Care Home Design'.

Gavin's project demonstrates a sensitive and contextual use of 'Vennel Walls' and 'Courtyards' as traditional architypes reflecting the urban environment of central Stirling, in order to carefully insert a vibrant new complex of buildings stitching together the back courts in this area.

Courtesy of G Wu

The complex and detailed brief is a bold attempt to ensure cross-generational interaction between older people who will inhabit Gavin's proposed new care home and younger people who will use the new community centre and hall. More of this vibrant mixed use planning is needed in our cities. The sophisticated planning in this project is generally very clear and well resolved with some lovely internal spaces. Perhaps the number of entrances might be reduced to make the management of the buildings easier, but this is a relatively minor quibble.

There are a lot of interesting and original construction details, and the use of gabion walls is a worthy and well considered move to use natural resources more sustainably. The dramatic adjustable wooden shutter for the full height glazing in the main hall creates an intelligent façade that can moderate solar gain and retain heat at night. Plenty of structural and finishing timber is used internally, which provides a very warm and comfortable feeling to the buildings, and which is also a much more sustainable material than traditional concrete and steel. The construction details in section and 3-D diagrams are believable and it's good to see that solar panels are specified.

It is also heartening to see thorough use made of inspirational precedents which are well analysed. These included the John Modern Centre in London by MAE architects, which won the RIBA Stirling Prize in 2023, and the Foundation Beyeler exhibition centre in Switzerland by Renzo Piano architects. The drawings are generally excellent with lovely warm interior perspectives, and it is a joy to see well-made physical models of the project too.

This is the final year of the award and we look forward to engaging with Dundee School of Architecture students in new ways in the future.

B Illsley

Two dates for your diaries

23/29 September 2024: Dundee Design Festival
https://cityofdesigndundee.com

28/29 September 2024: Doors Open Days
https://www.doorsopendays.org.uk

Camperdown Stadium – Latest News

Donald Gordon

Readers will be aware from Newsflash and other publications that the in-principle planning application by Dundee Football Club is proceeding, but at a pace, so far, that if continued would surely lead to a goal-less draw.

The application is delayed, for a good reason: most of Kingsway is part of the A90, a main and very busy trunk road that is the responsibility of Transport Scotland (TS) rather than the local roads department. TS have a duty to investigate the traffic flows and safety issues, and to consider and lodge a response with the Council planners. The access to the stadium area for 300 cars will be by means of a new slip road off Kingsway. This new slip road is at one of Kingsway's busiest and fastest sections, and on a left hand curve in the road. On days when there are football matches or concerts (with capacity for up to 20,000 concertgoers), and on other days too, the presence of hundreds of extra vehicles has the potential to cause severe safety issues on the main road, as well as at the Myrekirk roundabout and on the existing slip road into the city, and at the already congested mini-roundabout towards the Park, Muirhead and Faraday Street. The hotel, commercial units, crematorium and housing will contribute much extra traffic, not forgetting the large existing car park at the cinema, so vehicular traffic will spill onto Kingsway.

B Illsley

TS have asked for an extension of time to lodge responses, and indeed the planning application cannot be considered until TS have given their opinion. The earliest date for the planning application to be considered by the planning committee is in November, and some think that even that date is optimistic. Watch this space.

Another update to share with Newsflash readers relates to the training pitches, which were to be placed in a little used area *inside* Camperdown Park itself. Dundee Corporation bought the land at Camperdown in 1946 with funds provided from the Corporation's Land Acquisition Fund. The subsequent **City of Dundee District Council Order Confirmation Act 1990** states that the land "*shall be held and maintained by the Council as a public park and a place for public resort*".

This legal issue could possibly be overcome, but could easily take upwards of eighteen months to be resolved. The training pitches will no longer be in Camperdown Park, as the developers have subsequently come to an agreement with the City Council. This will allow the club to acquire much of the area which has been available for footballers to train at the publicly owned and much used pitches at Riverside, and to develop and build on the site. The deal will surely restrict the daily use of the pitches by amateur football teams. There is an irony here which is surely not lost on those who follow the fortunes of amateur football in the city, whose matches may be curtailed. They, more than most, will be aware that it is those football fans who are the most ardent supporters of the professional teams in Dundee.

B Illsley

Changes to rates relief for listed buildings

Brian Cram

In April 2024, Dundee City Council introduced a new policy for non-domestic rates relief on empty and unoccupied properties. From this date, empty properties are eligible for 100% relief for six months after which the full charge is payable. Unlike in the past, there is no separate relief for listed buildings despite the higher costs of maintaining listed buildings and the greater restrictions on what can be done with the buildings. I am concerned about the implications of this for listed buildings in the city centre.

Take the example of Robertsons, the house furnishers in Barrack Street. When it was last operating, 12 years ago, it had a rateable value of about £60,000, the rate £age was about 55% so we paid about £33,000 in business rates. Subsequently, as an unoccupied listed building it was eligible for rates relief but it was difficult to redevelop because of the restrictions relating to the listed façade. After the building was burnt to the ground and the site cleared, the rateable value for the site fell to £5,000 because it is regarded as vacant ground and there will be no requirement to rebuild the listed façade.

B Illsley

This leads me to wonder what will happen to all the vacant listed buildings in the city centre that cannot find suitable tenants for their existing uses or where redevelopment for a new use is difficult because of the restrictions imposed through the listed buildings process. They cannot be knocked down so that the process of rejuvenating the city centre can gather pace, and the owners must now pay rates and insure them.

If you look at Reform Street, Commercial Street, Whitehall Crescent and Whitehall Street, the buildings are largely set up with retail on the ground floor and offices or housing on the floors above, much of which is vacant. This arrangement worked well in the past but given the changes being felt in the retail and office sector it is a format that is becoming increasingly redundant. New ideas are needed.

It seems to me that our city fathers of old would be surprised by the number of buildings available for development, and disappointed by the limited vision that we seem to be employing to revive these listed buildings.

Another Crematorium?

Donald Gordon

I have to declare an interest, not merely because I am regarded as ‘elderly’, but also as I am an Angus taxpayer, living about a mile away from the site of the proposed crematorium at Duntrune, near Kellas, north of Broughty Ferry

In August, a small group of five Angus councillors considered, again, the application for a crematorium building on agricultural ground – of fairly poor quality. We need not delve into the history of the long-running saga here, except to say that the processes were so badly handled that a group representing some of the many hundreds of objectors sought a Judicial Review in the Court of Session. This procedure is available where someone can complain to a judge that a public body such as a planning authority has not acted within the rules that are set out for them to follow. It could be said that it is to Angus Council’s credit that they accepted that their procedures

D Gordon

D Gordon

had been inadequate, though not before it cost Angus Council taxpayers thousands in legal fees.

The same councillors had looked at the application and the hundreds of pages of documents at a meeting in June, and asked for a site visit and a fresh roads survey. This later survey showed that the traffic volumes had increased significantly since the initial survey; and the site visit showed that many of the narrow country roads leading to the site were barely adequate, and some junctions unsafe and unsuitable. The fact that passing places will have to be installed suggests to some that 'barely adequate' is in fact rather over-optimistic when it comes to congestion on these narrow roads.

Despite the results of the survey, the five councillors unanimously granted the application, subject to agreement of the detailed conditions that will apply. One is tempted to wonder to what extent the allowing of this new crematorium will impact on existing facilities – and indeed any that are in the planning pipeline in Dundee.

Planning Update

Fionn Stevenson

Although the Planning Group did not meet between June and September, there has been a lot going on these last three months since my last update.

We made a useful Deputation to the Planning Committee meeting held on 17th June about the **Eden Project**, where we asked for greater ambition and proper solutions to the poor access routes proposed. We also made a Deputation on 9th September to voice our concerns about 18/01056/FULM Residential housing - a proposal for another 250 homes in the **Western Gateway**. This failed to live up to the standards set by NPF4 and our own Design Recommendations, but was passed by the Council.

Topic Papers for the Local Development Plan continue to arrive in our inbox - we briefly responded to three more: Sustainable transport; Design, quality and place; Climate change, climate mitigation and adaptation, environmental response.

Submitted responses to applications in the last three months include:

Change of use from offices to form 10 flats and associated external alterations
3 Rattray Street (24/00500/FULL). This is a truly awful design proposition for a category B listed building which we strongly objected to.

B Illsley

Substantial demolition of **16 and 18 Airlie Place** (24/00369/CON.) The University is proposing to demolish two fine, if neglected, Victorian tenements - we objected to this, as did Historic Environment Scotland, in strong terms.

Internal and external alterations to two Grade 'A' listed building **High Mill, High Mill Court** (24/00365/LBC). We supported this, but recommended the fit-out be fully reversible.

Change of use of office building to 3 flats and erection of 4 houses within associated garden grounds. **Ingleside, 310 Broughty Ferry Road** (24/00363/FULL) - we raised our concern about the cramming of housing adjacent to this listed villa.

B Illsley

Erection of 31 social housing dwellings and associated roads and drainage on land to west of 318 and south of **Clepington Road** (24/00458/FULL) - we supported this, but with numerous recommendations to improve it, based on our Housing Design Guide Recommendations.

Erection of sports training and office building, spectator stand, 3G pitch, floodlights etc., **Riverside Park, Riverside Drive** (24/00487/FULL). We supported this, with the caveat that the design of the building be improved and that the public retain access to the training pitches.

Erection of 11 dwellings and associated landscaping including formation of new access road on land to the north and west of **105 Charleston Drive** (24/00532/PPPL) - we supported this, as it is a difficult urban infill site.

B Illsley

Erection of MacDonald's drive-thru restaurant and associated access, parking, landscaping and infrastructure on land south of **Riverside Avenue** (24/00509/FULL). The site already has planning permission for such use, and we felt it was good to see the site being used, at least.

Conversion of office building to form 9 residential flats and associated external alterations and works. Sangobeg House, **4 Francis Street** (24/00530/FULL). We supported this as sensible re-use of an existing building.

Erection of 18 dwellings at **Dykes of Gray Road** (24/00420/FULL) - we pointed out that this did not comply with NPF4 policies.

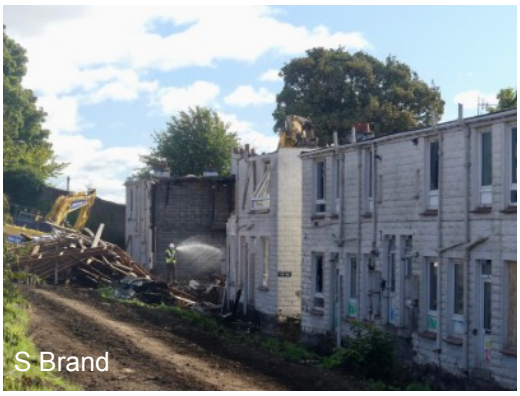
Purpose built student accommodation **Willison House, 56 Barrack Street** (24/00415/FULM) - we supported this, but stated that it should meet the standards set by the BT office conversion to student accommodation project.

Out and about Stephen Brand

It is always good to be out and see what developments are going on in our city so I thought you might like to see what has changed recently.

S Brand

Much to my surprise, the scaffolding has come down at the Chalmers Hall building so it looks a bit better but I have no idea if there are any plans for developing this long neglected building which is in such a prominent site on the High Street.


S Brand

The remaining houses at Ellengowan are being demolished and I hope the replacement residential properties will be built to the same standard as the excellent housing to the north that got a Commendation Award from us last year.

S Brand

The new East End Community Campus on Drumgeith Road is progressing. This will merge Craigie High and Braeview Schools. It is on the site of the old St Saviours School that was demolished about 10 years ago.

CBRE website

Signs have gone up for the sale of the old Oil Refinery facility on East Dock Street which has been unused for 10 years. It is a substantial site of nearly 9 acres very close to the planned Eden Project. I wonder what interest there will be in this.

S Brand

The framework is going up in Gellatly Street on the old Jobcentre building for the Social Housing development for Hillcrest/Cater Homes.

B Illsley

Finally, I spotted two new pedestrian crossings on Monifieth Road both with colourful flower beds. It would be nice to see this arrangement repeated elsewhere.

Dundee Civic Trust Winter Talk Programme 2024-25

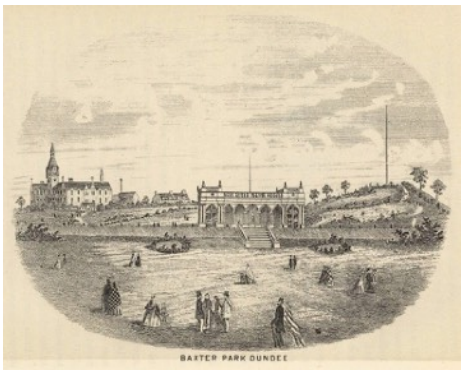
Thursday 19 September 2024 at 7.00 pm
Dundee Art Society Gallery Roseangle

Courtesy of W Watt

Willie Watt: 'Nicoll Russell - Beyond Dundee'
(joint event with Dundee Institute of Architects)
Dundee Civic Trust winter evening talks restart on Thursday 19 September when Willie Watt, BSc(Hons) DIP ARCH, PPRIAS, RIBA, will expand upon Nicoll Russell Studios' work outside Dundee.

Nicoll Russell Studios will be well known to many members of Dundee Civic Trust for their broad range of work in Dundee including the 'A Listed' Dundee Rep, the city centre's bus stops, Seabraes Bridge, Waters Edge, Dundee Station, The Space at Dundee and Angus College, Dundee Sheriff Court, Whitetops and Grianan alongside many less obvious buildings, houses, restaurants, cafes, bars and night clubs. Dundee is the home of the practice but to achieve growth the practice has always been outward looking, winning and completing a range of projects across the UK which will form the basis of this talk.

Willie Watt became a partner at Nicoll Russell Studios in 2006 having joined the practice as an associate in 1999, and is a past President of the Royal Incorporation of Architects in Scotland, an accredited conservation architect, an avid keeper of sketchbooks as well as a qualified mountain bike coach and leader.



Thursday 17 October 2024 at 7.00 pm
Dundee Art Society Gallery Roseangle

Dr Jan Merchant: 'The Big Back Garden; Baxter Park and its People'
The Big Back Garden project is led by the University of Dundee's Archive Services and explores the history of Baxter Park and its use. Central to the project were local communities who contributed their time, ideas and their memories of the Park.

The talk, by Dr Jan Merchant, Senior Archivist, University of Dundee Archive Services, will offer a brief history of the Park, describe the project and discuss the role of green spaces in our lives.

Thursday 21 November 2024 at 7.00 pm at Dundee Art Society Gallery Roseangle

Mark Watson, Historic Environment Scotland: 'Change of use: how Dundee buildings have been adapted, saving embodied carbon, and yet retain a sense of place and purpose.' (joint event with Dundee Historic Environment Trust)

M Watson

Reduce, re-use, recycle: a green city must use well the assets it has before building anew. How Dundee has adapted to changing economics and through good planning (yes, by Dundee City Council) much of its best historic architecture gives new vitality to the City of Design. Some buildings you'd scarcely notice, or wouldn't miss until they are gone, and others are startlingly transformed. How that happened will be revealed in this illustrated talk.

Thursday 16 January 2025 at 7.00 pm at Dundee Art Society Gallery Roseangle

Professor Fionn Stevenson: 'Earth, timber, hemp and straw: the better way to build today'
Buildings account for 40% of global carbon emissions today, and are drastically increasing climate change. How can we build more benignly? Biogenic construction offers an alternative set of robust materials to challenge the dominance of steel and concrete which are a major source of pollution. This talk will introduce you to international and local exemplar buildings and products that can be used for both new buildings and retrofit projects, with a nod to some traditional techniques too.

Thursday 20 February 2025 at 7.00 pm at Dundee Art Society Gallery Roseangle

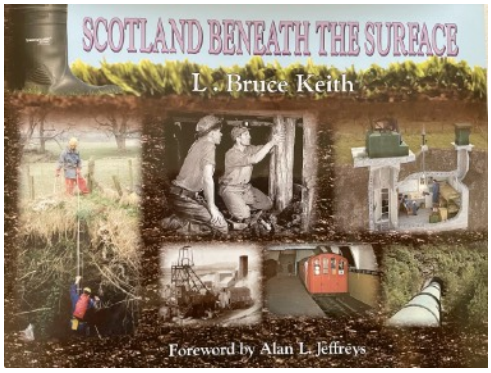
Dr Erin Farley: 'The Wellgate Project' (Details awaited)

Thursday 20 March 2025 at 7.00 pm at Dundee Art Society Gallery Roseangle

Joint meeting with Dundee Heritage Trust (DHT leading, details awaited)

Thursday 17 April 2025 at 7.30 pm following the AGM at 7.00pm at Dundee Art Society Gallery Roseangle

Bruce Keith: 'Scotland Beneath the Surface'
This talk, by our regular and fast-paced AGM speaker Bruce Keith, is based on his third book and takes a subterranean odyssey exploring the natural and man-made heritage under our feet.



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