

NEWSFLASH



Dundee Civic Trust
encouraging the best

International Festival of Stone

Doug Binnie

“This could be a unique and game changing event” was the advice given by a manager at the Heritage Lottery Fund when we approached them with our plans to stage the International Festival of Stone (IFS26) in Dundee between 24-30 August 2026. The festival is the brainchild of stone artist David F Wilson, to whom I was introduced in September 2024, but since then, together with a group of like-minded individuals and organisations, we have worked enthusiastically and passionately to set in place its foundations.



At a time when modern construction materials dominate, the International Festival of Stone will champion stone as the environmentally responsible choice, highlighting its durability, aesthetic appeal, and low carbon footprint and its role in a sustainable, circular economy, contributing towards the Government’s net zero commitments. Across the country, historic stone buildings are progressively deteriorating, while the number of skilled craftspeople capable of conserving them is in sharp decline. The Festival will also highlight the need to safeguard the country’s built heritage and the traditional skills required to maintain it.

Raising awareness of these issues and encouraging solutions are key objectives of the festival. In consultation with and support from local, national, and international stone communities, we aim to foster appreciation for stone’s role in modern architecture, restoration and landscaping our public spaces. The event seeks to inspire current and future generations to revive stone craftsmanship, ensuring traditional skills are passed on while also connecting heritage with the transition to a net zero future.



D Binnie

In addition, the Festival intends to explore various themes, including extending quarrying, the politics of procurement, the role of stone creatives, new architectural and engineering possibilities using stone, and will offer workshops, competitions, demonstrations and exhibitions. There will be something for everyone. The programme continues to be developed but has the makings of being unique.

Much of all of this was relatively new to me, which has resulted in much research, self-learning and listening to and discussions with many people in the stone world. One such person is Marcus Paine, the MD of Hutton Stone.

During August this year, I enjoyed a 350-mile round trip to Northumberland with David to meet up with Marcus and see at first hand his incredible operations, firstly in terms of production at Berwick on Tweed, then just north of Hexham

about 60 miles to the southwest, where the stone by the name of Darney is quarried (by Hutton).

Marcus is an inspirational and knowledgeable individual in the world of stone with a multi-talented workforce, and we are keen to have him, and his company, feature prominently at the festival. Hutton has invested hugely in the quarrying and production of stone with a vast array of expensive equipment and machinery aimed at advancing innovation, increasing and speeding up productivity, cutting costs and looking after the safety and welfare of his operatives.

One area of innovation is the development of stone bricks, the orders of which are progressively increasing. At the Clerkenwell Design Week I attended earlier this year, some of these bricks were on display being used in the construction of decorative arches.



Darney sandstone is renowned for its fine orangey grain, warm hues, and versatility, and has been used extensively from the start of the 20th century in many significant buildings gaining a high reputation. In Edinburgh for instance, it was used in many of the city's buildings in the New Town including the High Court of the Justiciary, Gleneagles Townhouse Hotel, St Andrews Square, the highly impressive Usher Hall and the imposing former Scottish Parliament at St. Andrews House.

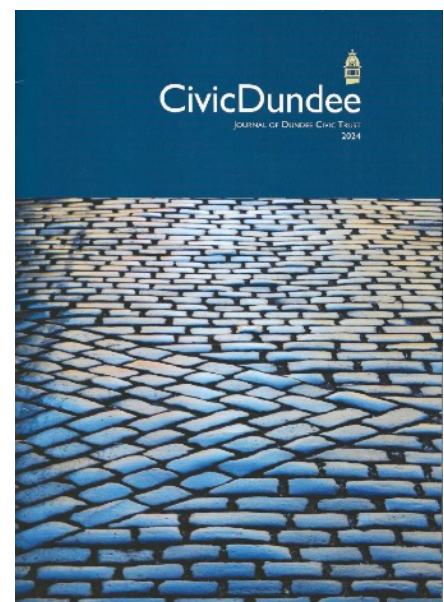
In 1995, as part of a multi-million-pound renovation of Dundee Sheriff Court (by Nicoll Russell Studios), Darney sandstone was used in the construction of the new west wing, but also extensively in the restoration and conservation of large parts of the Grade A listed building. It may have been 30 years ago, but I can remember clearly a journey to visit Darney on a very cold and snowy, winter's day. The purpose of that visit was to set the selection standards of quality and appearance for the stone to be supplied for the project.

It was fantastic to go back recently under the banner of the International Festival of Stone (IFS26) and appreciate all that is involved. There is so much to be aware of and learn about.

New Members

CivicDundee is distributed free to all our members. Why don't you encourage some of your friends and relatives to join Dundee Civic Trust to enable them to get their own copy. The annual cost is very modest and apart from CivicDundee, members get about five to six digital Newsflash bulletins throughout the year which keeps everyone updated of developments in the city. Members can of course come along to our various interesting talks at the Dundee Art Society, Roseangle, and enjoy the chat and wine at the end of each evening. A bargain if you ask me.

The website has details of how to join online. We can also give out a leaflet to fill-in if required.



Social Bite Recovery Village

Barbara Illsley

The idea of establishing of a ‘recovery village’ to support vulnerable people in Dundee who are recovering from addiction has been widely welcomed as the city has high levels of drug addiction and drug-related deaths. The problem is finding an appropriate location for what many see as an anti-social use.



This is the scenario currently facing the Social Bite Charity. Members may recall that the charity first announced the recovery village concept in November 2023 and comparisons at that time were made with their very successful village for homeless people located in Granton, north Edinburgh. (Newsflash 62). The search for a site in Dundee then began.

Roll forward to July 2025 and Social Bite released more detail of their £2.3m project which they hoped to locate on the former derelict bowling green at Mill o’ Mains with funding largely from WM Sword Charitable Trust and the Insights Foundation.

The proposal is for 10 single occupancy nest houses and a 10 bed share prefabricated unit together with a community building offering communal and support facilities.

A series of consultation events immediately began and, perhaps not surprisingly, significant opposition to the plan quickly emerged with concerns raised by locals about the proximity of the village to existing housing and the loss of public open space. A petition against the plan was launched. In response, Social Bite has redrafted the scheme slightly, moving the village eastwards onto land allocated for residential use, away from the former bowling green but closer to houses on Hebrides Drive. In addition, the charity has offered to upgrade and supplement the leisure facilities in the area.



Will this be enough to win over the objectors? What will be the response of the planning authority? We will only find out when a formal planning application for the ‘recovery village’ is submitted later this year. Watch this space.

Save the Date! DCT Awards Ceremony - 16th October 2025



The Judging Panel for the **Dundee Civic Trust Awards 2025** visited five shortlisted projects in August: Innovation Hub, Michelin Scotland Innovation Parc; Derby Street Housing by Hillcrest; Walker Luxury Jewellery Shop in Union Street; University of Dundee Life Sciences Innovation Hub; and Downfield House in Bank Avenue. A follow-up meeting was held to decide on the awards. Two categories were considered: firstly, the DCT Award 2025 for New- build/Retrofit and secondly, the DCT/Dundee Historic Environment Trust Conservation Award 2025 for those projects restoring and preserving the city’s built heritage and historic buildings. The Awards Ceremony will take place at **7pm on October 16th in the Roseangle Art Gallery, Dundee Art Society, Roseangle - all welcome.**

Planning news

Fionn Stevenson

The Trust's alternative **Central Waterfront Plan** was submitted to Council in June.

Representatives of the Trust met a Council official in August to discuss this. They are still aiming to bring in private sector developers for the seven remaining empty sites and are keen to have mixed housing tenure in city centre. They would need to see an "oven baked", fully funded proposal for any temporary site use with no risk to them. Actively managed art frames on the hoardings are being proposed, but there is no budget for this at the moment. A new bus station at Yeamans Shore is highly unlikely because the current bus station is in private ownership and there is no risk appetite in the Council to partner on new developments at the moment. It was therefore agreed that the Trust would write to the Council to pursue its proposals for a new primary school, new housing and increased density.



B Illsley

The Trust has received three new 'internal' response documents from the Case Officer at our request relating to the application for the **proposed new football stadium development** - two from within the Council and one from the Police – all very critical of the traffic and pedestrian issues, but these important responses are not currently shared on the Planning Portal.

Two new consultations are underway on new Active Travel Routes - Eden Project routes and Lochee Road/Arbroath Road routes. The Trust will ask the Council to focus on producing a more comprehensive integrated cycle network scheme and to prioritise public transport by bus.



B Illsley

The Trust participated in the recent Dundee National Planning Improvement Framework (NPIF) peer review. The finalised **NPIF Performance Assessment and Improvement Action Plan** contains Actions to improve Community Consultation and the Council's website. The Trust will write to the Chief Planning Officer, Gregor Hamilton, asking for progress on

the review of the Planning Portal with a view to it publishing comments on applications in the future.

We responded to the **Draft Housing Land Audit 2025** with much the same response as last year – a plea to include in the audit details of sites with empty buildings, a request for missing housing sites to be added, a request that more focus is put on converting empty buildings in the city centre into housing, and including the windfall sites where planning application has been refused.

The **Local Development Plan 'Ideas' consultation stage** runs from 1st January - 31st March. DCT has decided to focus only on the city centre for this exercise, incorporating DCT's Waterfront Plan, Housing Recommendations, and Empty buildings policy. This focus will help to provide an integrated response across most of the policies in the LDP.

Construction of 49.99MW **Battery Energy Storage System**, Happyhillock Road. The Trust had objected to this and were pleased to see it unanimously rejected by the Council. It was a

dangerous proposition to put lithium batteries, which ignite in contact with water, on a flood plain next to the highly volatile Dighty Burn.

McDonalds Drive Through on the Riverside. This application has been withdrawn after a local crowd funded a legal challenge on the basis that it did not conform with flooding and biodiversity policies, despite the Council approving it.

Change of use from church to pilates and fitness studio, 4 Taylors Lane. This was a helpful conversion of an interesting Edwardian church in the West End Conservation Area. The Trust supported this, as noted in the last Newsflash issue. It gained rapid approval and is already open!

Members of the DCT Planning Group were invited by Kirkwood Homes to visit to their **Fernbrae Hospital site** on 21 July and to discuss the planned conversion to housing. The Trust highlighted the need for:

- Symmetry improvements and massing adjustments
- Material articulation referencing the listed structure
- Parking layout concerns and accessibility compliance
- Heating strategy clarification and renewable integration
- Landscape retention and ecological offsetting.

We made comments on the following new planning applications:

Prior approval for erection of **33kV Switchroom**, Transco, Balgarthno Terrace. A rather odd 'shed on stilts' building for SSEN. The Trust sought reassurance that any felled trees would be replaced with the recommended replacement level.

Erection of wall and gates (retrospective) 288A Brook Street. This was a retrospective request for a new wall and gates in a Conservation area. The new wall should have been in stone but was proposed in cheap grey concrete block which appeared to ignore Conservation Area requirements. The Trust objected to this, but it was subsequently approved with a Condition to paint the new wall white.

Erection of boat house Royal Tay Yacht Club, Broughty Ferry. A thoughtful expansion of the yacht club's training facilities. It's good to see that it has resilience built into the design, to take account of future flooding from the Tay. The Trust supported this initiative and asked for embodied carbon to be taken into account.

Proposed residential development, Dykes of Gray Road. This further revision to the large housing development proposed formerly by Springfield and now by Barratts has poor housing variety and too low density to support the much-needed services to make this area a liveable 20-minute neighbourhood, despite the new house types proposed. The Trust objected.

Erection of two dwellinghouses Land at Panmurefield Den, Panmurefield Road. This site is a flood area next to the highly volatile Dighty Burn and the solution is to "build a flood barrier wall". Best practice is to avoid this, as it simply creates more problems downstream. The site is also part of the wildlife corridor along the Dighty Burn and therefore nothing further should be developed along this Green route. The Trust objected to this.



Erection of 48 dwellings and associated works, Dykes of Gray Road. This proposed alterations to house types was first given planning permission back in 2015. It's a rather soulless development and DCT objected to it in terms of placelessness, and too low density to make a liveable neighbourhood with services viable in this area.

Subdivision of two existing commercial units to form three commercial units and one flat, with associated external alterations 9 - 17 Commercial Street. This is empty Grade C listed building needs conversion. The adaptation of retail space to a housing unit seems like a good idea and the detailed Design and Access Statement is promising. The Trust voiced its support for this.



Alistair Barrie and Hugh Macrae resigned as DCT Planning Group members this summer – they are thanked for their extensive contributions over the years.

Alistair Barrie is a stick of rock

Alistair Barrie, a longstanding member of Dundee Civic Trust, has stepped down as a member of the Planning Group. This important group scrutinises planning applications and comments on the significant ones in the interests of great design, good architectural practice and sound environmental competence, as well as considering wider policy issues. As a member of that group, Alistair has displayed a quiet authority and influence that is a result of much experience in planning in the city.

Look inside Alistair and you will find “Dundee born and bred” right through him, like a stick of Edinburgh rock. He was born in Dundee a few more years ago than would be polite to mention, and educated here, including at Queen’s College, Dundee, studying engineering. A part-time course in Town Planning at Edinburgh College of Art ensured a swerve into his chosen profession. He remained a town planner until he retired in 1997, having been the Chief Planning Officer with Dundee District Council and, after local government reorganisation, Director of Planning and Transportation at Dundee City Council. Readers, and those who know Alistair, will realise that with such a quality of experience he was able to contribute more than effectively to the work of the Planning Group and the wider Trust. We wish him well as he takes life a little more easily.

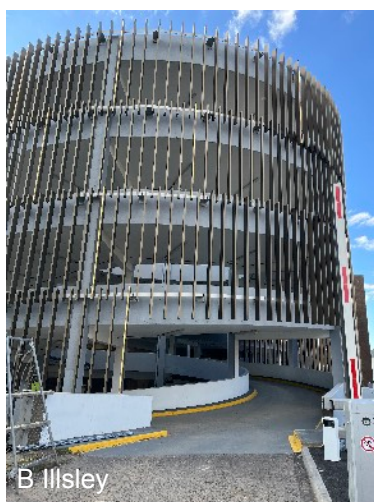
Donald Gordon
Chairman

Active Travel Routes – Who are they for?

Donald Gordon

Active Travel – a new and welcome buzzword – is in general terms to be encouraged and supported, and Dundee Civic Trust does exactly that: many people are not sufficiently active to improve their health and wellbeing, and walking and cycling along routes will help them.

Long routes from one end of the city to the other are not just for the fitter, (usually) younger types who can cycle the whole way. They can be used for short sections between friends' houses, to work, entertainment venues, medical or shopping areas, but are single threads over long distances exactly the right answer? There seems to be little planning for, or coordination between, these long, strategic routes and the so-called secondary and tertiary routes which will join these main routes to places where people actually live and where they want to go.



B Illsley

The next phase of the consultation process on Active Travel by Dundee City Council relates to routes along Lochee Road and Arbroath Road. These are both long stretches. The Lochee Road route seem to start at Linton Road, short of Kingsway – why Linton Road? – to the under-construction Bell Street hub. Will these routes provide adequate links to the schools, shopping areas and housing that are needed rather more than the miles of expensive threading tarmac?

This raises with me the fundamental issue that many people will struggle with: travellers, even active ones, will often want to walk or cycle from where they live to where they want to go, typically a fairly short journey. If they want to cycle or walk seven or eight miles, good luck to them, but in Dundee's damp, windy, chilly, and especially, hilly, environment, most will prefer to travel longer distances another way. I am an active cyclist, but even I will think carefully before cycling from north of Broughty Ferry to Ninewells. I will do so in better weather, in daylight. Most people should be encouraged to take the bus. A good number will have neither the health or the wealth to buy and maintain a bike, and as Active Travel routes 'prioritise' cycle use, this may not be the approach which many will prefer.

Sustrans and Transport Scotland, the agencies supporting and leading these proposals, should, in my view, be looking at forms of sustainable transport *in addition* to cycle routes. Electric buses are rather more 'sustainable' environmentally than private cars, and are used by many more than the fit younger cyclists (or even the fairly fit, old cyclists like me). Perhaps the balance has moved too far in favour of cyclists and away from public transport. The bus lanes in some parts of the proposed Active Travel routes seem to appear and disappear at will, and the layouts and priorities at some of the 'pinch points' are difficult to envisage from the information given.

For example, the narrow street area at the start of the western end of Arbroath Road is likely to leave insufficient room for all of the competing interests; for, yes, the different requirements for buses, businesses, vehicles, parking and pedestrians will compete for the limited space. In the recent past Dundee City Council proposed to limit the provision of bus stops while ignoring the need to provide useful bus lanes at difficult points where buses are held up by other traffic congestion. Fortunately, they abandoned these ideas. Should they now be giving a little more priority to the mode of transport favoured by many – the bus?



S Brand

Traffic still jamming up stadium application

Donald Gordon

In the original responses to the in-principle planning application for the new Dundee FC stadium, lodged in March 2024, Dundee Civic Trust (DCT) commented on "the unsafe, dangerous and congestion-inducing transportation proposals". Transport Scotland (TS) has used many of the same arguments that we did in order to reach their own conclusion that they were "unable to support" the application as it stands, even considering the revised traffic plan that was lodged recently. DCT's view about the revised traffic management plan is that it changed very little, improved nothing, ignored some of the most dangerous aspects such as the exit from A90 Kingsway, and disregarded many of the other serious problems, such as congestion on the Coupar Angus interchange spilling onto Kingsway.

We think that the applicants have a long way to go before they can satisfy the statutory consultee (TS) that the traffic management proposals are suitable. The present plans, even as amended, are neither suitable nor safe. An obvious example of the difficulties with the traffic plan as presently proposed is that stewards are to be placed at car parks and crossing points, but they have no legal authority to direct traffic anywhere. Significantly, Police Scotland point this out in their recent response, unpublished by the City Council, but seen by us. Also, the excessive congestion will not be limited to football match days, but will occur at times when the stadium will be used as a venue for up to 20,000 spectators.

Important though these traffic aspects are, there are other difficulties and challenges relating to the whole application, and we would not wish any eventual agreement here to forget these. A few of these other issues include:

- The residential and hotel development, on the outskirts rather than in the centre of the city, which is contrary to the Local Development Plan;
- The crematorium, for which no significant demand is established, and is unsuitably located
- The increase in commercial operations which will adversely affect other businesses;
- The additional congestion, inconvenience to residents and businesses, environmental pollution and carbon emissions that will arise from construction, use and increased traffic.



These are just some examples.

We wish to see Dundee Football Club thrive, but we consider that this extensive development should be placed elsewhere, preferably on the existing site. The proposed site is the wrong development in the wrong place.

I mentioned above that Police Scotland's responses have not been published on the Council's planning portal. We have seen them, and they should be published, as they are quite critical of some aspects of the revised Traffic Management Plan (TMP). Their conclusion is that "(t)he TMP at this stage poses as many questions as it answers and merely transfers the issues at the current stadium to a new location with potential for safety risks to increase."

That's not all: the Council's own Sustainable Transport and Roads Department have also responded. In a pithy, three-page comment, the Council officers come up with (at a quick count) no fewer than nineteen "requirements" for improvements, and fourteen questions looking for more

clarity or information. Several parts of the TMP are “unacceptable” or “flawed”. The killing blow: “it is considered that a full revision of the Transport Assessment is required.”

And I haven’t even started on the Roads Department’s eight pages, where they write that “DCC agree with the Transport Scotland Comments”. Note TS’s comment above. In the interests of transparency, this information should be made widely available.

CivicDundee 2025 - Advance details Stephen Brand

The new issue of CivicDundee is in the advanced stages of preparation. You can expect to find articles about two famous Dundonians, namely James Orchar and Thomas Justice. There is the first of two parts of a comprehensive article about the Cemeteries of Dundee. Also covered are the now demolished West Station and Dundee’s Castles. The exciting plans for Dundee and Angus College are explained by the Principal while the ‘Dykes’ and ‘Look Up Dundee’ articles are visually arresting. These are just some of the subjects in the new issue of CivicDundee. We plan to distribute the issue immediately after the October meeting when the Trust Awards will be announced.



TCL needs a lot more TLC

Brian Cram

Town Centre Living (TLC) is the best way to help our city centre to thrive. You bring people back into town by creating affordable housing.

Affordable housing is the key, and if you are old enough you will remember the Prefabs that were built in Dundee. Could the prefabricated construction process be redeployed, but this time the materials would be designed to last and respond to higher insulation and energy saving requirements? Could tenement style buildings be fitted into appropriate city centre sites? Town Centre Living for Dundonians might be delivered by converting commercial property into homes but why is it not happening?



It sounds so simple but meh heid is nippin’ wi’ aaaah the official documents and policies and expert commentary that I have read to try to write something that makes sense of it all.

One of the documents I looked at was the study by Architecture and Design Scotland and the Scottish Futures Trust (2025) ‘Unlocking Town Centre Living: insights from private sector engagement’. Private sector developers seeking to deliver city centre projects face a staggering list of barriers. Some of these barriers are structural and legal, e.g. VAT can be reclaimed for work on new build properties but not for work on existing ones, while other barriers

relate to funding e.g. most regeneration grants are limited to heritage properties and these projects are typically very expensive, or to people, e.g. the perception that demand for TLC is restricted to young people without families despite this not being the case in cities in Europe.

These are not my words, but “one of the overarching messages regarding TCL projects is a recognition that the range of positive impacts and benefits of TCL are not acknowledged or incorporated into project appraisal, particularly not into the quantitative cost-benefit analysis that project funders typically require. See why meh heid’s nippin? That means there are more benefits to creating Town Centre Living than the current measuring system allows. “While some projects are financially viable in their own right or can demonstrate sufficient economic benefit to enable public sector gap funding, TCL projects are typically more expensive, riskier and take longer to deliver than other housebuilding options.” Quotes are from Mhairi Donaghy of Scottish Futures Trust.



The new development on Blackness Road seems to me to be an example of this problem of higher risk and higher cost. Dundee City Council is set to build 24 new flats and more than £8.5m has been put aside to fund the project, which will provide six wheelchair accessible one-bedroom flats and 18 two-bedroom properties. 24 homes costing, £8.5m, that is £354k each. A Bellefield Avenue flat with 2 bedrooms is advertised today for £140k (we bought our top floor flat in Bellefield Avenue for £3500).

Town Centre Living is going to be vital for the success of our city, but there needs to be more focus on costs and affordability. Governments and local authorities need to find ways to make Town Centre Living affordable, reducing the barriers facing private sector investors.

Work begins....

Members may be interested to know that, at long last, work has begun on the site of the former Cambustay Hotel, Dalhousie Road, Barnhill. Planning permission was granted in September 2021 for demolition of the former hotel and the construction of a 54-bed care home with open space, infrastructure and car parking.



Thank you

Donald Gordon

“We are very grateful to our wine sponsor, Euan McNicoll, for donating wines for our events. For this season, Euan has selected a red and a white from Utiel Requena in the south east of Spain to see us happily into the cooler weather. If you would like to order these wines, or for any wine-related enquiry, you are welcome to contact euamcnicoll@btinternet.com or call on 07738 180909.”

Dundee Civic Trust Winter Programme 2005-2026

Thursday 16 October at 7.00 pm

Dundee Art Society Gallery Roseangle
Dundee Civic Trust Awards Ceremony 2025

20 November at 7.00 pm

Dundee Art Society Gallery Roseangle
Iain Flett, **Dundee's Victorian legacy - the Improvement Act of 1871** (joint event with Dundee Historic Environment Trust)

15 January 2026 at 7.00 pm

Dundee Art Society Gallery Roseangle
Professor Rob Duck, **Dundee's Lost Coastline: The Story of Will's Braes**

19 February 2026 at 7.00 pm

Dundee Art Society Gallery Roseangle
Can we Live Together Differently? (TBC) (joint event with Dundee Institute of Architects)

19 March 2026 at 7.00 pm

Discovery Point (TBC)
Kenneth Baxter, **How Dundee Changed & Developed 1870s-1970s** (Joint event with Dundee Heritage Trust)

16 April 2026 at 7.00 pm

Dundee Art Society Gallery Roseangle
Annual General Meeting and speaker (TBC)



The Flour Mill
DCT/DHET Conservation Award Winner
2023



CONTACT US

Happy to hear
from you at:

[DCT](#)

info@dundeecivictrust.co.uk

Editorial Team

Barbara Illsley
Donald Gordon
Brian Cram
Stephen Brand
Roderick Stewart
Graham Nicholson

Reframing what it means to be a leading Scottish law firm.

Blackadders

blackadders.co.uk