

# Dundee Civic Trust

## THE UNSATISFACTORY NATURE OF THE LOCAL AUTHORITY BOUNDARY OF THE CITY OF DUNDEE

### Introduction

The boundaries of the city of Dundee, in 2026, hinder the effective and efficient management of the city, and do not allow all those who are invested in the city to participate democratically or to contribute fairly to its finances, and thus to help its economic growth. There are key deficiencies with the present boundary arrangements. Our submission focuses on the main issues which justify their revision. The policy of Dundee Civic Trust is that the boundaries should be extended to include Monifieth, Invergowrie and the surrounding areas.

### Background

Before 1975, Dundee's local authority covered only its immediate built area. Until 1913 even Broughty Ferry was not part of the city. The creation, in 1975, of Tayside Regional and Dundee District Councils expanded Dundee's jurisdiction to cover more of its growing functional urban area. Then, in 1996, regional councils were abolished, and Dundee's boundary was reduced again, and excluded most of the areas gained in 1975 except some sparsely populated farmland. Consequently, many residents who identified as Dundonians reverted in 1996 to being administratively part of Angus or Perth and Kinross. This shift saw new commuter areas included for over twenty years and then removed. That is an inconsistent implementation of boundary policies when compared to the treatment of other cities, the most obvious example being Aberdeen, whose boundaries have been much extended. We believe these boundary decisions do not produce effective governance.

### Specific Anomalies Caused by the Current City Boundary

#### Transportation

Dundee is the central transport hub within its region, and attracts most of the commuter traffic, bus routes and rail activity. However, within just a few miles of the city centre, four separate transport authorities manage many Dundee-related issues. This arrangement makes more complex most decisions over government subsidies and traffic management.

#### Local and Regional Planning

The city boundary impacts housing development, service provision, and commuting patterns. Most high-value jobs are in the west of Dundee, but developers have expanded housing largely eastward into Angus, which exacerbates cross-city congestion: Angus and Perth gains population and revenue, while Dundee loses both. Adjusting the city boundary to include areas like Monifieth and Invergowrie would align planning decisions with actual urban needs, and will reduce conflicting interests between councils.



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## Education

Angus Council and Perth & Kinross Council oversee education along Dundee's border. This results in illogical school assignments: for example, students from Piperdam must travel through Dundee to reach a distant Angus secondary, passing several closer Dundee schools. Similarly, children living in Dundee and near Monifieth High School, in Angus, may not attend it, while places are reserved for those much farther away. West-end villages like Invergowrie rely on an already full Dundee school only through special arrangements. Perth & Kinross Council have paid for an extension to the school. These boundary issues result in unnecessarily long journeys for many pupils living near the city boundary. Education planning and the development of policy is severely fragmented.

## Council Services

Some departments cooperate with other councils to some extent already, such as legal and risk management, finance and education. It is efficient. Why not more departments? Why not them all: social work, justice, business support, elections, housing, environment, birth registration, tourism, libraries, refuse collection and disposal? Does anyone deny that the sight of differently coloured bins, patiently awaiting collection on different days, on opposite sides of North Balmossie Street, is a nonsensical inefficiency?

## Wealth, Education, and Image Imbalance

Around any major urban area, there is a well-established trend – over the past 40 years or more - that more prosperous citizens, with cars and an ability to buy houses, move out of the inner urban area to live in semi-rural suburbs, from which they commute into the city. This situation increases pollution, congestion, and time wasted in reaching work or pleasure activities or vital facilities such as schools and hospitals. It destroys greenfield sites and contributes substantially to the impoverishment of the city centre through business profits and lost local tax revenue.

In Dundee's case the tightly drawn boundary around the city has sharply demarcated the housing stock between better, pricier, owner-occupied units (often outside the city boundaries) and cheaper, often rented accommodation nearer the city centre. Thus, the current boundary has distorted the social, educational, and economic balance of the city. This in turn distorts the city's statistics: typically lower in earnings, health, skills, and educational qualifications and higher in unemployment and in demand for social services. These same statistics would be significantly less negative if the city's boundaries expanded to reflect its whole, "real" population.

This matters because it damages the image of the city to the world, and the willingness of investors to bring projects to Dundee. Also, it damages the city in the eyes of its own people. This leads to an unfair comparison of Dundee against other authorities which have more balanced socio-economic compositions. Obviously, the statistics for Angus, Fife and Perthshire all benefit from having so many prosperous "Dundonians" resident within their boundaries.



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## So Where Should the Boundary Be Located?

While the exact line can be debated, we recommend that the boundary includes Monifieth and Invergowrie and surrounding areas to the east, north and west should be within the city. There is no green space or other boundary (such as the Tay estuary) between these areas and the built-up city. This avoids unnecessary extensions into greenfield Strathmore as has been seen in previous council boundaries. Some will argue that a limited area on the south shore of the Tay, specifically Tayport, Newport, and Wormit, should be included, as they are really close suburbs, but this may be a step too far, and is not recommended by us.

## The Democratic Deficit

Many people who live just outside the city boundary are fundamentally dependent on it for most of their activities but have no vote or representation. House owners and commuters who live just outside the city boundary create substantial costs for the city but contribute nothing to the costs of running the city. People may move just outside the city boundary because Dundee's council tax is higher than that of the surrounding county areas. Why higher? For the very obvious reason that the city is the focus of the main issues of deprivation with their consequent need for increased social services and housing costs. The boundary as it stands facilitates this anomaly; but it would be more or less eliminated if the boundary was more widely drawn.

## The Reverse Argument

Finally, in reviewing the merits of the present city boundary, imagine the opposite case: suppose the Dundee city area had not been reduced in 1996, but still comprised the much larger area of the old Dundee District Council boundary that applied from 1975 to 1996. If residents of Invergowrie or Monifieth now wanted to move to Angus or to Perth & Kinross, what could be the logical basis of their argument? The examples that we have given above make it clear that there could be no such case.

For these reasons, we urge the Scottish Government and the all the local authorities concerned to reconsider Dundee's city boundary and to authorise the expansion of the city area to an appropriate boundary that properly reflects its economic area for improved development.

