



We have a deal!

Barbara Illsley

On December 17, after years of discussion and argument, the Tay Cities Deal was signed. This is a vitally important moment for the Tay Cities Region as the agreement is designed to unlock £700 million for investment in projects across Dundee, Perth and Kinross, Angus and north Fife. This is Scotland's seventh regional growth deal and involves the UK and Scottish government's committing £150 million each, with the remainder coming from the private sector. It is a partnership involving local authorities, universities and colleges, business, the third sector, and Enterprise and Skills Development Scotland. According to the Tay Cities Deal website, the deal means that partners "will work closely together to create growth more quickly and sustainably using the significant public investment to bring greater prosperity and equality."

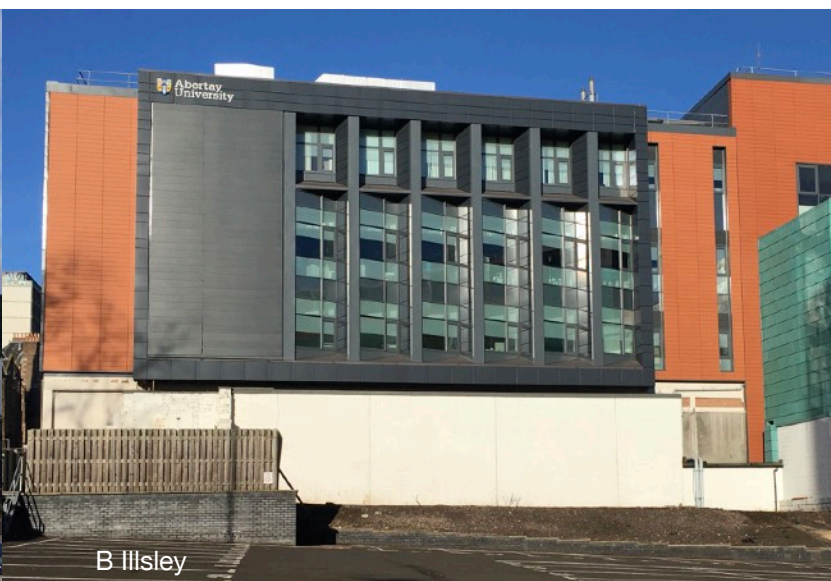
What does the Deal mean for Dundee? Responding to challenges facing the region, which has productivity, employment growth and wage levels below the Scottish average, many of the projects emphasise business and skills development, both to assist those already living in the region and also attract new people to come to live and work here. The projects build on the area's strengths in, for example, digital technologies, life sciences and higher education.

Some of the main projects linked to the city are:

- Growing the Tay Cities Biomedical Cluster, University of Dundee (£25m). This involves a) an Innovation Hub which will provide new lab and office space to grow and exploit the city's life sciences capability, increasing inward investment and jobs; and b) an enhanced Medical Technologies environment using refurbished premises with specialist equipment.
- cyberQuarter, Abertay University (£11.7M). This is an academic-industrial partnership which is designed to establish the area as a centre of best practice in applied research and development, and knowledge exchange in cybersecurity.



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- Just Tech, University of Dundee (£15m). The proposal is to establish and build the world's first Institute for Innovation in Forensic Science including creative spaces, digital laboratories, data analytics and prototyping capabilities.
- Aviation Academy (£8.1m) with purpose-build facilities in Dundee and Perth. The Dundee operation will focus on pilot and air traffic control training.
- Studio Dundee (£3m) a new business incubation and co-working space, to be located within the central Waterfront.
- Regional Skills and Employability Programme (£20M) This focuses on closing the opportunity and employment gaps for our most disadvantaged sections of society.
- International Barley Hub, James Hutton Institute (£35m). The hub will be a centre for a research, development, skills and knowledge programme into barley, the country's most valuable crop.
- Advanced Plant Growth Centre, James Hutton Institute (£27m). This is an industry-led research programme into the science and application of indoor agriculture or vertical farming. Vertical farming has the potential to use derelict sites or repurposed old industrial buildings.
- Regional Cultural and Tourism Investment Programme (£37M). £10m of this fund is committed to Pitlochry Festival Theatre but the remaining funds will be available to develop the culture and tourism sector across the region.

This is a hugely important moment for Dundee and the wider region. We have come a long way from the initial "wish list of rather ill-defined schemes" described in Newsflash 30, back in April 2017. The task now is to ensure that the projects are delivered as soon as possible.

Dundee's Eden Latest

Stephen Brand

We understand that the Eden Project is preparing an exciting full Press release in early March, to detail proposals after undertaking a feasibility project which was completed at the end of the year. David Harland of the Project gave some clues, however, at a recent online presentation during an 'Invest in Dundee' webinar that got front page coverage in the Courier. It appears that they are thinking of a theme of the "Nine New Guilds of Dundee" which echoes the Nine Incorporated Trades of Dundee, albeit with very different trades or guilds. Some of these guilds seem a bit forced as if they are trying to shoehorn the themes into nine, but there is not enough detail yet to see what they are trying to do. The guilds would have an "embassy", some temporary, in different parts of Dundee which suggests multi-site venues with trails between them. They do, however, seem to recognise the need for what he calls a "big bang" to drive people to visit the city. It seems to suggest that they are trying to incorporate the different, varied aspects and strengths of the city into a cohesive attraction that could be promoted to attract visitors to the city.

They have in mind a timeframe of 2024, which might be possible if funding can be obtained and if they focus on a number of small sites around the city rather than one major one. It is early days and these comments are clearly only a taster of what is to come. Roll on March when we can hopefully see the fruits of their work. We are all keen to see what they are proposing.



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Planning Update

Nick Day

Recent planning approvals include the conversion of the former **Baxter's flax warehouse on Constable Street** to 24 flats; erection of **industrial and office units at Tom Johnston Road, West Pitkerro**; new cycle and footways on **The Esplanade, Broughty Ferry** with the closure of Mill Street enabling linking of Castle Green to Windmill Gardens and a new public space overlooking the beach at the Windmill car park; and 38 flats and 16 houses for special needs and for social rent for **Blackwood Homes in Charleston**.

The Council however refused the development of 12 flats as part of the Charleston development because of lack of parking and road safety concerns.

As anticipated, an appeal has been lodged against the refusal of the Tim Horton drive through restaurant at the **New Craigie Retail Park**, and a fresh application has been submitted; and a review is being conducted relating to the refusal of drive through fast food and coffee units off **Riverside Drive** on the approach road to the Amazon warehouse.

Good news is that work is about to start on the construction of 31 upper floor flats with a ground floor shop unit at **11-15 Murraygate**.



New proposals include a pre application notice for demolition of the **West Ward Works** on Guthrie Street for new student housing. Also conversion to student housing of the derelict **former Dundee College buildings on Constitution Road** is proposed in another pre application notice. This would seem to be a welcome solution for this prominent eyesore. These are the fourth and fifth recent proposals for student housing in the vicinity of Blackness, West Marketgait and The Conchie. And there is a pre application notice for the development of more housing at the **Western Gateway** on a site allocated in the Local Development Plan for housing. We will comment further on these following online exhibitions.

Following online discussions with the developer, the Trust has commented on the pre application proposals for **5 storey offices** fronting **Marketgait and Greenmarket** with **flats** on the corner of Marketgait and Nethergate. We are told an occupier for the 75,000 sq.ft. offices has been lined up with up to 800 jobs based there. A formal application for this important vacant city centre site is expected shortly.

Former Fernbrae Hospital site. Whilst welcoming the principle of converting the main building and construction of some new housing on the site, the Trust has objected to the application as we consider the proposed 32 flats represent overdevelopment of the site, and improvements could be made to the design of the new buildings.

Dundee & Angus College are proposing to demolish the library facility at the **Kingsway Campus** to construct a two storey building for the Hair and Beauty Department. This will be a better designed building on this prominent corner of Kingsway and Old Glamis Road.

There are two new applications by Kirkwood Homes at **Linlathen Grove**, just to the south of the new 250 homes development at Balgillo Heights. Both raise concerns that more housing is proposed in an area remote from all services that will increase the size of this car dependent community. Both are zoned as open countryside in the Local Development Plan which means there is a presumption against development. The site next to the existing Linlathen Grove flats, however, benefits from planning approval for another 42 flats. The intention now is to develop 15 houses here instead and the previous approval sets an unfortunate precedent.



To the east of this, 16 further houses are proposed on the site of a former walled garden and, as no such approval exists, the Trust will be suggesting this be restored as amenity space for the new developments nearby or returned to agricultural or market garden use. We are asking the Council not to agree to any further greenfield housing development not already allocated in the Local Development Plan pending the next review of the Plan. This is consistent with the Trust's recently published Vision 2040.

Other recent proposals include 8 flats for Hillcrest Housing on the remaining infill site on **Candle Lane**, off Seagate; 40 houses for Caledonia Housing on the site of the **former Rosebank Primary School** in the Hilltown, a welcome use of this vacant inner city site; new changing facilities for the Foxlake wakeboarding centre at **Victoria Dock**; and 10 single storey units for new business enterprises at **Michelin Science Innovation Parc**. Good to see progress here.



Debenhams closure - can Dundee city centre reinvent itself?

Brian Cram

The recent news about Debenhams has highlighted the issue of what happens next for city centre properties that are used for retailing. The Debenhams customer base and website was bought for £55m by online retailer Boohoo, so one would hope that the suppliers of the products sold through the Debenhams website might be secure, however the staff involved are not being taken on and all the properties will be left vacant. This presents an opportunity to think about how these properties will be used in the future.

A broad history of Debenhams is that the business was formed in 1778 by William Clark, who began trading at 44 Wigmore Street in London as a draper's store. In 1813, William Debenham became a partner and the corporate name changed

to *Clark & Debenham*. Their business model for growth was to buy into suitable businesses where the existing proprietors were wanting to retire or were willing to amalgamate to be part of a bigger organisation. This has been a very long-standing approach and we have seen the effects in our own city centre with local stores gradually being taken over. Draffens, DM Browns and Smith Brothers are three names but there are many others.

What is different with this round of reinvention is that the property and its location is now not regarded as the base for the business. This is a major change in the business plan for bricks and mortar retailing and it will have repercussions beyond the straightforward loss of jobs.

Part of the growth of department stores was facilitated by retailers being willing to rent the property rather than own it. This created competition for the best sites and businesses, like pension funds, who had cash could buy commercial property to rent out for a return that was higher than they could ever earn if they just relied on dividends or interest on their investments.

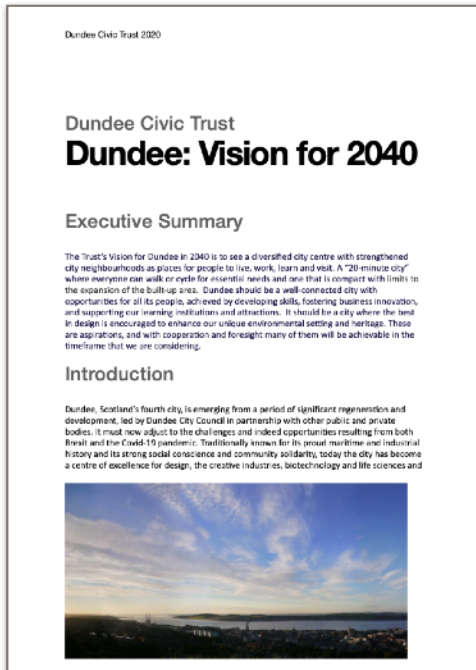
This relationship would appear to be breaking down and the challenge for the companies who own these vacant properties is to find a way to recycle them. The example of DM Browns, Draffens and Smith Brothers was to make smaller shop units so that specialist retailers could benefit from a city centre location. The principle of specialist shopping seems to be the way forward and there might be merit in trying to bring people back to live in the city centre on the first floor and upwards with specialist retail and recreation spaces being created on the ground floor. To do this the companies that own properties will need understanding from our planners.



Change is coming to our city centre and we should expect that the current planning laws and rules will need to be reviewed. It seems to me that Dundee, uniquely, has an enlightened approach to change and how to adapt to the future. The examples of the work being done by our universities, the James Hutton Institutes, the Michelin Scotland Innovation Parc, the Dundee & Angus College Forth Ports, DC Thomson Media and the computer games industry show the importance of looking forward rather than hankering for a bygone age.

Compare and contrast - the Trust's Vision and the City Council's Strategy

Donald Gordon



The Trust has decided to extend the reach of our publications, including this Newsflash and CityScene, as well as the recently published *Vision for Dundee 2040* document. The Vision was sent, of course, to members of Dundee City Council, and I was very pleased to receive an invitation to meet virtually with John Alexander, the Leader of the Council, and Greg Colgan, the new Chief Executive. Past chairman Nick Day and I met them on 13 January, for a thoroughly positive and useful session. We discussed the Trust's Vision as well as the Council's own *Our Future City Centre: Strategic Investment Plan 2020 – 2050*, two papers which contained a large element of “shared ambition”, in John Alexander's phrase. This ambition includes the four themes of Dundee as a place for **working, learning, living and visiting**; and which proposes that every policy and objective mentioned should be capable of demonstrating how each of these themes can be improved by the implementing of the policy or objective.

There are some differences between our Vision and the Council's Strategy. Theirs, which they regard as encompassing “living and

breathing...guiding principles”, is based on a narrower definition of the city centre than ours, and contains less reference to the wider city centre, the wider city, or indeed the Scotland-wide context. Their Strategy is “step one of 100 steps”. Other aspects in the two papers complemented each other, even if not necessarily explicit in the documents, for example cultural strategies. Greg's view was that our paper was “refreshing and energising”.

Some policies highlighted in the Trust's Vision were discussed, including:

1. Dundee as a **20-minute city**;
2. a presumption in favour of development on **brownfield sites** rather than encroaching on greenfield sites, especially those on the city boundary;
3. a presumption against new **retail developments** outwith existing established centres;
4. a positive review of pedestrianisation and transport requirements, including the **Waterfront area**;
5. the extending of the **Council boundaries**.

It is fair to say that every one of these policies met with a measure of approval, and we were told that there will be “important developments coming in relation to the city centre”, involving other partners.

The Council is in favour of developing the “20-minute city”, (Item 1) with walking and cycle lanes, and possibly better transport links, to make the centre “more permeable”. The Trust may wish to further develop our thoughts on this policy. Item 2 was not further discussed.

It was accepted that more discussion is required with the Council regarding retail development (Item 3). Appropriate policy development will form part of the review of the Local Development Plan.

The Council representatives are passionate advocates for sustainable transport (Item 4). The Council's five-year capital plan highlights future anticipated spend in the later years of the plan (beyond 2025) of £100m for wider green investment.

Members of the Council support the Trust's views about "Greater Dundee" (Item 5) and the boundaries review, which may begin after 2022.

Next Steps: it was agreed that this is the most important aspect of the whole process. Officers are reviewing the timetable for reporting the outcome of the consultation and anticipate that reporting in March would be on emerging theme. The Strategy document will be refined before it goes to the committee, after which there may be some (probably limited) opportunity for further feedback/consultation, and the document would then be adopted as policy by the City Council. Specific policies should then be promulgated.

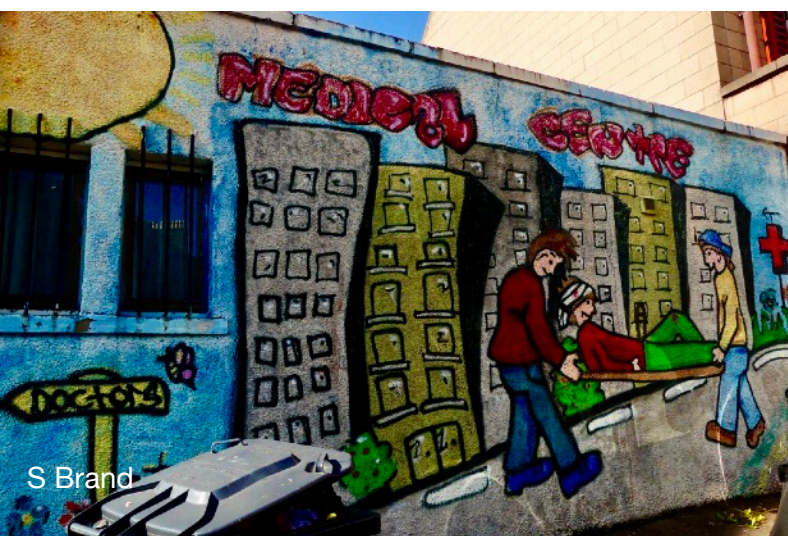
Other matters:

- A "Tourism Tool" is ready to be issued, promoting city breaks, though it is on hold at present.
- We must consider how Dundee relates to the wider Scottish context, including improved transport links and the north-east bypass, as well as tourism, education and jobs. John said that there is much more to do, for example with Eden International, who are very keen to come to the city, and the specified projects in the Tay Cities Deal will help to address several of these issues.
- Waterfront, and specifically the barrier of the road network. The Council is always prepared to review policies such as this, but funding is a major impediment, and the landfall of the road bridge is simply in the wrong place. Matters to be considered would include housing, extending the Union Street pedestrian area and making more community use of the car park behind the Caird Hall.

Finally, John suggested holding another meeting before the summer, possibly to include a meeting with our whole membership.



Murals



Stephen Brand

Following our article on murals in Newsflash 46, Openclose Dundee has just announced on their Facebook page that they have been working with the Love Lochee community group and have got funding for a series of new murals between Lochee High street and Camperdown St and the pend at Aimer Square. Any budding artists can download the brief on their Facebook page.

Dudhope Castle - Going, Going Gone? Steve Connelly



Members will have seen reports of the council's decision to sell off Dudhope Castle in the hope that an alternative use as a hotel or residential accommodation can be found from the private sector. A hastily-organised online petition calling for the building to be turned into a tourist attraction received the backing of more than 500 people.

The castle has been unoccupied since the council stopped using it as offices in 2018. The site has been an important strategic one since the 13th century when it was the home of the Scrymgeour family, hereditary constables of Dundee. This original building was replaced in 1460, which in turn was superseded by the current structure in 1580. In 1683 the castle and the office of hereditary constable were acquired by John Graham of Claverhouse, aka Bonnie Dundee, the Jacobite commander who was mortally wounded after leading his troops to victory at the Battle of Killiecrankie in 1689.

For most of the 19th century the castle was used by the military, giving Dudhope Park its earlier name of Barrack Park. In 1893 the council went to great lengths to acquire the building and grounds from the War Office, so that, as the 1920 *Dundee Corporation*

Official Handbook proudly proclaimed, it was secured "for the use of the people of Dundee for ever". By the 1930s the *Official Guide to Dundee* reported that "The Castle, Military Hospital and Officers' Quarters have been adapted to Museum and other purposes." The ancillary buildings, seen opposite, are long gone, but the castle was restored in the 1980s when it acquired its present harled exterior and the formal garden was laid out. More recently It has been used as the business school of Abertay University and by the council's social work staff.



The castle is category A listed and the council has resolved that any redevelopment of the subjects will ensure the condition and integrity of the building does not deteriorate over time and secures the long-term future of this important heritage building. The council is also committed to exploring the options of community asset transfer and long-term lease as well as sale. Regardless of the outcome, Dudhope Castle must remain as a prominent feature in the Dundee cityscape in perpetuity. The Trust will closely monitor developments.

Carbon neutrality and boundaries: the saga of Strathmartine Hospital continues

Gordon Fleming

The saga of the Strathmartine Hospital site continues, seven years after it first received Planning Consent for housing by a 12-9 majority of Angus Council. But thus far nothing has been achieved, at a guess because the costs don't stack up, and in the intervening period there have been frequent problems with vandalism and arson in the derelict hospital buildings. Leap forward to November 2020 and we find Angus Council granting a renewed Planning Permission in Principle for a maximum of 224 houses. I suspect that the Angus planners have found themselves in a "no win" situation.

This development, just a few minutes' walk outside the Dundee boundary, will increase the proportion of city housing on remote unsupported perimeter locations that are only valid for families with two cars. Thus it runs directly contrary to Scotland's carbon neutral objectives. It would be easy to criticise Angus Council for taking this decision on the doorstep of Dundee, but note that housing proposals agreed by Dundee City Council on greenfield sites east of the city are just as remote from support services, and just as dedicated to two car families and high mileages.

Angus has agreed a reduction of the affordable housing component on the Strathmartine Hospital site from 25% to 12.5%, presumably because it's an illogical place to put families who have lesser access to car transport, which underlines the high carbon nature of the development and its focus on a single wealth group. That is not a good trend for the city's social integrity. Among the issues underlying this development are that backing for 224 new houses seems to have been largely based on a desire to protect a B listed building. So many houses to protect the future of a building that isn't exactly Edinburgh Castle, looks disproportionate.



The original hospital site owners, presumably the Scottish Government, could have avoided all this by clearing the site after the hospital closed, but evidently they had a narrow focus on making money and avoiding costs by selling off the site in a derelict state, regardless of the strategic consequences, which will now be borne by the City of Dundee, - not least in terms of traffic congestion from the 400 or more peak hour car movements this development will generate.

The public transport and educational implications of the Strathmartine Hospital development are predictably poor. Bridgefoot currently has about

half a dozen buses per day running past the hospital site, and Angus now considers that subsidy of a better bus service is unnecessary. Contrast this with the latest extension to the Craigowl View Estate nearby inside Dundee, which will have a high quality bus service at a peak frequency of 8 minutes from early morning to late at night, and a secondary school within walking distance. In comparison secondary pupils from Strathmartine Hospital will be bussed to Forfar Academy, a journey of about 30 minutes. But about 4 minutes after they leave home, their bus will pass the front door of the new Baldrigon Academy in Dundee, shown opposite.



If Dundee had more sensible boundaries none of this would have happened because Dundee objected to the original grant of consent, and even if consent had been granted on appeal, it would have been able to provide nearby schooling and good bus services fairly easily.

Vacant and Derelict Land Fund: an opportunity to transform Dundee's 'stuck' sites? Bill Lynch

The £50 million programme of funding for vacant and derelict land development over the next five years, published at the end of 2020, is intended to make a difference in promoting the health, wellbeing and resilience of communities throughout Scotland. 'Sites that will benefit from the funding will offer opportunities for reuse that help tackle climate change such as: low carbon, quality, affordable housing, woodland and other greenspaces, low carbon commercial and industrial developments, flood prevention measures, district heating and other community renewables projects'. [Scottish Government, Transforming Vacant and Derelict Land Fund, 2020]

<https://www.gov.scot/news/transforming-vacant-and-derelict-land>

A central thrust of this latest tranche of funding is that a 'place-based approach' to decision-making with community engagement at its heart becomes mainstream policy. A new approach to dealing with the legacy of derelict land may finally be on the cards. The VDL Taskforce also recommends that responsible land ownership should be embedded in corporate social responsibility and that future public funding should also be predicated on landowners producing plans for diligent land-use including future disposal. The Taskforce also suggests that Scottish Government should bring forward proposals for the introduction of Compulsory Sales Orders in the next parliament. These, along with many further proposals, should hopefully reduce future pieces of land becoming vacant or derelict.

Will Dundee be bidding for funds from this new programme? What sites may have been prioritised and for what purpose?

An annual survey of vacant and derelict land is prepared by each local authority and held on a Register. Vacant land is defined as land which is no longer used for its original purpose and is viewed as an appropriate site for development. Derelict land is land which has been so damaged by development, that it is incapable of development for beneficial use without rehabilitation. (Scottish Vacant and Derelict Land Survey, 2019).

In 2019, there were 8,866 hectares (ha) of derelict land and 2,060 ha of urban vacant land recorded in Scotland. In Dundee, the total was 191 ha, consisting of 177 ha of vacant land and 14 ha of derelict land spread over 185 sites. The city's largest single area is at Claverhouse Business Park (21.86 ha). Dundee's recorded figure has been fairly consistent in recent years, with 37.65 ha removed from the Register and 31.34 ha added between 2016 and 2019.



Why does this matter? The unaccounted-for costs of dereliction appear to blight communities by affecting the well-being of the people living there, with neglected sites being particularly pernicious. Almost a third of Dundee's population live within 500 metres of classified derelict land. In economic terms, these sites are also a wasted resource. Post Covid-19, we may need to think more laterally about how to use these sites.

In the early part of this century, we witnessed the phenomenon of 'guerrilla gardeners' and their use of seed bombs to transform sites with flowering and edible plants. Could we maybe see a role for 'considered gardeners' – community members who operate with the Council's blessing and with grants from the newly available fund to design these forgotten spaces for growing food or merely creating pleasant greenspaces?

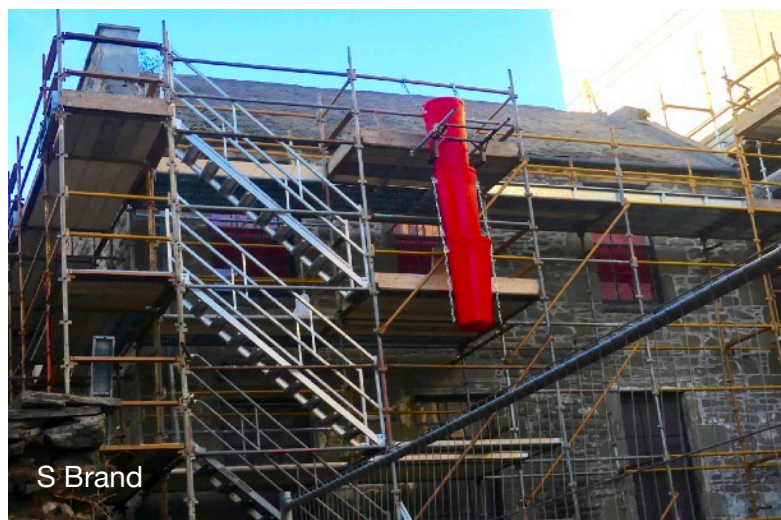
A number of local authorities, though still small, are now including interactive maps and site plans as well as 'before' and 'after' photos once development has taken place on vacant and derelict sites. This is a simple but effective way of recording change and noting progress. This is something that Dundee should consider as it can both help provide evidence of performance of the use of funds and, just as importantly, assist with achieving the central tenet of the new funding, namely community engagement.



St David's Halls

Stephen Brand

We reported last year, in Newsflash 43, that there was some uncertainty about St David's Hall. We have now learnt that the building has new owners who are believed to be a pension investment company. We are not sure of their identity or their plans, if any, for the building but we will continue to make enquiries. The good news is that there is work being undertaken currently to the roof including re-slating to stop water ingress. The pictures illustrate work being undertaken on the weekend of the 21st January.



FUTURE EVENTS

Wednesday 24 February 2021

Art for All

2.30 pm via Zoom

Matthew Jarron

Matthew Jarron is Curator, Museum Services, University of Dundee. This is our Joint Meeting with Dundee Heritage Trust and will be held on 'Zoom'. Login details will be circulated shortly.



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