

Newsflash 49

April 2021



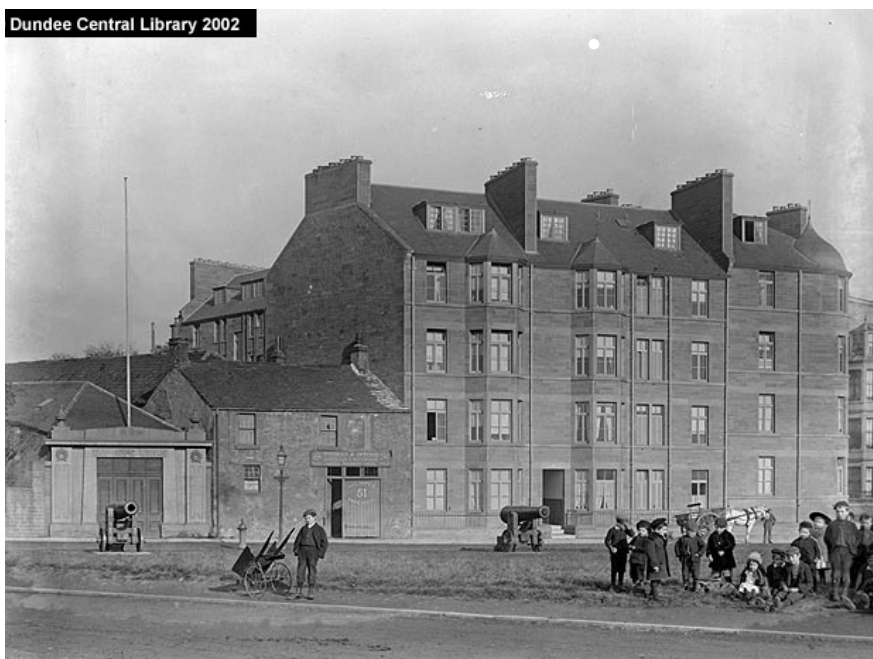
**Dundee
Civic Trust**
'Encouraging the Best'

Tay Rope Works

Steve Connelly

A request for information about this property led me to do a little digging into the history of this west end landmark. Many of you will be aware of the listed frontage at 51 Magdalen Yard Road, the demolition and reconstruction of which has been the subject of a number of failed planning applications over the past few years, but perhaps less aware that the redevelopment of the works stretches back almost 35 years.

Ropemaking was one of Dundee's oldest industries, perhaps not surprising for a port with numerous sailing vessels, followed later by steamships and whalers. The development of the jute industry must also have given local ropemakers further impetus, providing them with excellent raw material. The area between the south side of Perth Road and Magdalen Green was a popular



Dundee Central Library 2002

spot for locating rope walks. The Hilltown was another part of town popular with ropemakers. Perhaps working down a slope was an advantage in the ropemaking process.

The local directories list Alexander Ogilvy as a rope and sail maker at the Fishmarket and Perth Road as early as 1824. For almost forty years Alexander Ogilvy & Sons, canvas manufacturers and rope and sail makers, occupied Tay Rope Works, at 222 Perth Road, with an office at Shore Terrace and a house at 220 Perth Road. Other ropemakers were their neighbours. From 1853, for example, Halket & Adam, rope and sail makers and sacking manufacturers, whose office was at 23 East Dock Street, had works and a house at 224 Perth Road. Early Ordnance Survey plans show what looks like two separate rope works immediately adjacent to one another.

The suggestion that the Tay Rope Works could be converted for housing long predates recent developments. The property, consisting of rope work, factories, warehouses and commodious dwelling houses, occupied one acre, two roods and thirty poles, and was, according to the advert in the *Dundee Advertiser* of 27 February 1863, admirably adapted for building purposes to form a street from Perth Road to Magdalen Green with an uninterrupted frontage of two hundred yards. The redevelopment did not occur then, however, and Tay Rope Works was taken over by William Lawson, probably the name most familiar to an older generation of Dundonians. By 1930, William Lawson & Sons, rope, twine and sail makers, tarpaulin and waterproof cover manufacturers, became the largest producers of jute ropes in Scotland. William's sons, John, Robert and William junior, were all taken into the company.



The business survived disastrous fires in 1900, 1932 and 1937, but by the 1980s the redevelopment had begun with Cleghorn Housing Association building 24 houses at the broad upper part of the site on Perth Road and Thomson Street and demolishing half of the narrow corridor which stretched down to Magdalen Green with a view to further development. F & H Property Development's 2019 application to build five houses and four flats failed over the issue of demolishing and reconstructing the Magdalen Yard Road listed frontage. An appeal was upheld in December 2019 and the developer now only has to incorporate the old signage for the project to proceed.



Broughty Ferry walkway takes shape

The first section of the new walkway/cyclepath along the front at Douglas Terrace in Broughty Ferry is now open. There is still a long way to go to complete this Flood Protection project but first impressions are very positive. There have been comments about the uneven surface, very noticeable by passing cyclists. The City Council and the contractors are aware of this.

Planning Update

Nick Day

Planning permission has been granted for the following proposals previously highlighted in the Newsflash: the exciting upgrading of **Discovery Point** making much better use of the spectacular riverside location; an **Arts and Culture Centre at 1a West Bell Street**, formerly the Music Centre; flats for Hillcrest Housing in the former homeless hostel on **Soapwork Lane** by the Ladywell Roundabout on the inner ring road; and a new building for the **Hair and Beauty Department of Dundee College Kingsway Campus**, replacing the old library building on the Kingsway frontage.

Planning permission has been refused for a **new care home at Liff** on the grounds of incongruous design, increased traffic generation and pressure on water and sewage capacity.

New applications include revised proposals for a new building for a 54 bed **care home on the site of the former Cambustay Hotel, Dalhousie Road, Barnhill**. The hotel building is not Listed and is not in a Conservation Area and the new two storey building is of an acceptable design. The amended plans allow for the retention of many of the trees on the site, including 9 of the 11 trees covered by a Tree Preservation Order. The Trust has suggested a further fine beech tree might be saved by adjustments to the plans, but we accept that some tree loss is inevitable if a viable development is to be achieved.



N Day

More “drive-thru” news. Two new ones are proposed at **Myrekirk Road, off Kingsway West** for Burger King and Clarks Bakery. Clarks are a well respected Dundee company but we are concerned that, as these developments will be directly visible from the Kingsway, they are designed to attract new car trade and will detract from existing established local centres. The Council, belatedly, seem to agree with this principle having recently rejected a “drive-thru” on the **New Craigie Retail Park, Kingsway East for the Canadian fast food chain Tim Horton** as being contrary to Policy 54 (Safe and Sustainable Transport) of the adopted Local Plan as it would lead to an unacceptable increase in traffic. This refusal is now subject to an appeal to the Scottish Government. If all these 3 applications were eventually approved, the Kingsway would be blessed with 12 such establishments.

In stark contrast after the Council refused a “drive-thru” off **Riverside Drive near to the Amazon warehouse**, the not often used procedure of a Local Review Body of 3 Councillors overturned the original decision (made under delegated powers rather than by the full Committee) and approved this proposal. Another blemish for visitors to admire on this “Ambassador Route” into the city centre.

The Royal Tay Yacht Club are planning to vacate their existing HQ on Dundee Road, West Ferry and relocate to **Glenogil House, Ogilvie Road** closer to their sailing facilities at Grassy Beach. Extensive parking already exists there, albeit down a steep narrow road, and the club hope to ameliorate the impact on nearby residents by undertaking not to have a liquor licence nor allow functions for outside organisations. Glenogil House is a striking modern building based on a nautical theme and won the

Dundee Civic Trust Design Award in 2007. The proposals make minimal change to its appearance. RTYC’s existing base at Fort William House could be suitable for conversion to flats.

An online consultation has taken place on proposals to develop the former BOC factory site at **Ballindean Road in Douglas for flats and houses** for Caledonia Housing Association. This 9 acre site has lain empty for at least 40 years and the proposal has the potential to inject new life into the area and strengthen the Douglas community by supporting local facilities as part of a 20 minute neighbourhood. Board members also had a very positive Q/A session with the developer and other professionals involved in the proposal, covering a number of technical issues including the need for the developer to engage with the local community to ensure the development is integrated within Douglas.



With reference to the article on student accommodation later in this Newsflash, we have had a constructive discussion with the prospective developer of the former Dundee College building in Constitution Road which also involved local residents.

20 Minute Neighbourhoods

Bill Lynch

Members may recall that the Trust’s Vision, Dundee 2020-2050, included reference to 20-minute neighbourhoods. The concept is growing in popularity and is currently taxing elected members and local government officers across the length and breadth of Scotland. This follows the Scottish Government’s publication of ‘Protecting Scotland, Renewing Scotland’, in the introduction to which Nicola Sturgeon suggests, *‘This crisis also gives us an opportunity to radically rethink the places we live in, our homes and our communities. We want to ensure our communities can become vibrant hubs for the people who live there – to work, shop, learn, keep active and socialise’* [Scottish Government, 2020 p5].



The 20-minute neighbourhood concept, associated with the City of Melbourne, was developed long before the current crisis. The goal is to enable people to engage in all the activities mentioned above within a 20 minute return journey from their home by walking, cycling, wheeling (there is a need for inclusivity here) or public transport. *Plan Melbourne 2017-50* sets out a series of 5 yearly plans seeking to achieve this goal, not only in current settlements but also for greenfield developments where the onus is on reducing car-use and creating healthier citizens in healthier environments. Melbourne’s vibrant hubs are called Activity-Centres, where

schools, community centres, retail, healthcare, workplaces, sports facilities, cafes, restaurants, public transport, and crucially libraries, are all easily accessible to everyone within a mixed housing neighbourhood creating a practical population density to make this feasible. Box Hill, shown above, is one of seven metropolitan activity centres in the city which combines train and bus stations with retailing and other activities.

This notion of localism, decentralisation of services, the availability of workplaces and access to all essential needs on your neighbourhood doorstep is certainly appealing but what is the reality for many and what may be required to achieve this within Dundee? As a Trust, we have started to try and find out more about the concept and explore possible ways ahead.

Both the city centre and the suburbs are facing challenges that make 20 minute neighbourhoods problematic. The city centre has seen a reduction in resident population, whilst competition from out-of-town retail, and more recently from on-line shopping, has led to high profile shop closures with a loss of jobs. With more people working from home, demand for office space will be affected, increasing the number of empty buildings and reducing the number of commuters using the centre's facilities, cafes, sandwich shops, pubs etc.

Likewise for each suburb, when making a list of elements there are likely to be gaps in that list and these missing elements would then need to be targeted by Councils. Over time, shopping areas have become rundown and in places neglected, bus services have been reduced in number and frequency. How many services can be accommodated, for example, within each suburb? Do population densities warrant secondary schools in each suburb? Can we see an equivalent of an extended Crescent in Whitfield, which currently combines health, community, social and leisure services under one roof, becoming the norm for other suburbs? Who will ensure dental facilities, opticians etc are available in every suburb? How can work be introduced to the suburbs? The provision of pedestrianisation and cycleways and the accommodation of the car will require engineering and finance. How funding will be made available to provide these in every suburb and to link all suburbs will present another challenge.



The messages during the pandemic to stay home, stay local, exercise and shop locally has meant more people have become aware of their local surroundings, but we have also become aware of other concerning aspects, such as digital poverty; the importance of caring responsibilities and the effects on families; lack of green space for many; derelict and vacant land blighting areas; social isolation and increasing mental health issues. All of these will need to be tackled post-Covid and consideration given to the best way of integrating responses with the delivery of the vibrant hubs mentioned by the First Minister, as a way of cushioning neighbourhoods during future pandemics. These are by no means insurmountable problems but certainly challenging. Initially, the Board is exploring the potential for design-led interventions in the city centre and one neighbourhood, and a possible Secondary School competition. We will keep you updated.

Accommodate the Students?

Donald Gordon

Dundee is a major centre for students, both under- and post-graduate, with two universities and D&A College being the main suppliers of further and higher education. Leaving aside (please, let's leave aside) the last, most untypical, twelve months, there has been steady growth in student numbers over five years to 2019. In 2018/19 there were 20,200 students (of which 16,000 full time), which had increased by 12% in the last five years. Historically, many students have lived at home with parents, for good social and economic reasons, but there is much to be gained from living with other young people in a mutual setting. Most of us who attended universities in our youth made our best and longest lasting friends – and spouse, often enough – during that time.

Most students, of course, are from other parts of the UK, and abroad (about 2,530 of those, mainly Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics (STEM)), and the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) judge that in Dundee there are about 11,000 students who do *not* live at home, a significant proportion of the total population of the city. Many live in Purpose Built Student Accommodation (PBSA, sorry, another acronym), and others in privately rented Houses in Multiple Occupancy (HMO).

I shall mention below the applications (made and pending) for PBSA, but first, let's look at what is provided at present. HESA judge that in 2018 there was a demand for accommodation from over 10,000 students, and only 3,834 beds available. If that weren't bad enough, HESA report that Dundee has about the worst quality of accommodation of any major city providing higher education, 63% judged to be of "poor quality". Some of the adapted accommodation is sub-standard, and the privately provided HMO flats are of course of variable quality, some excellent, a few no doubt fairly ghastly. If HMO flats are occupied by students, it reduces their availability for permanent living for local residents and workers coming to live and work here.

So, it seems to be vital for promoting the economy and social and cultural life of the city that a sufficient amount of high quality and high quantity PBSA should be provided. Despite this, the Local Development Plan (LDP, sorry) suggests that there should not be an "excessive" concentration of such accommodation in any area, and that developers will need to demonstrate demand before planning permission is granted. There had been no applications for PBSA for a



number of years, but five have been lodged or are being worked up since the start of 2020. Four are very close to Abertay University, and three have a frontage to West Marketgait, in

- West Marketgait (the Shell Garage),
- Locarno Works at the corner of Brown Street/Douglas Street and Lochee Road,
- 63 Brown Street,
- West Ward Works in Guthrie Street, and
- the former Dundee College in Constitution Road.

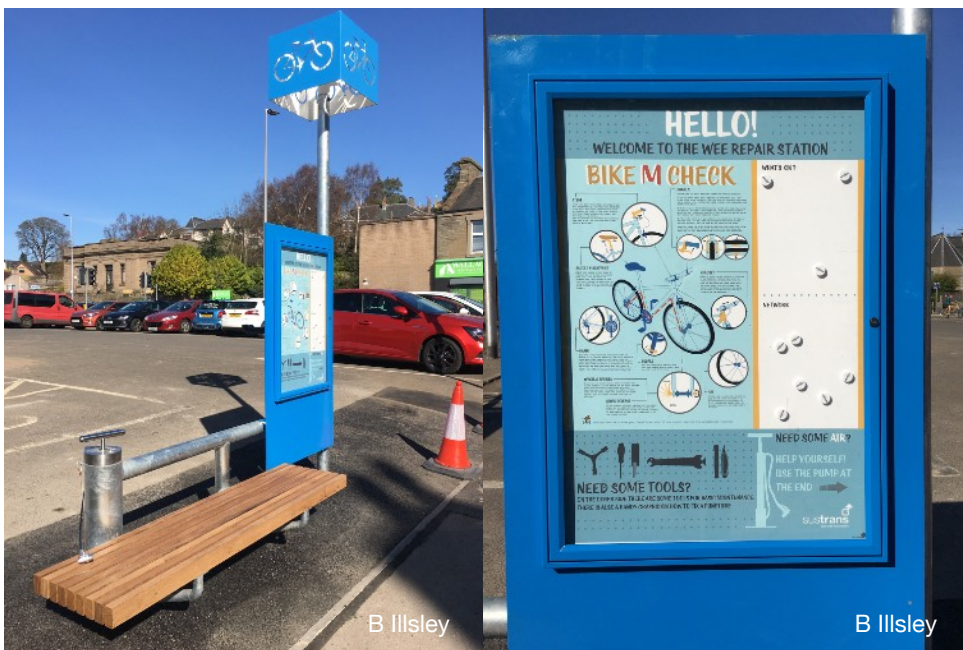
One seems not to be moving ahead at present. There may be nearly 1500 beds to be provided, which will go some way to reduce the shortage. Most involve the demolition of existing old buildings, but, interestingly, the very visible Dundee College is largely to be taken back to its metal skeleton and rebuilt from there.

In some cases, Dundee Civic Trust has been consulted about proposals in a pre-application procedure. Generally, we have been supportive, and we have taken the opportunity to comment on certain aspects that we think should be included, improved or emphasised. These include, for example:

- Roofscape improvements to the appearance of the roof areas, by hiding electrical plant and the like, especially on a sloping site.
- A percentage contribution for public art.
- Future-proofing for suitability of accommodation (such as more self-contained flats in these hygiene conscious times).
- Sustainability and energy efficiency, such as district heating, solar power, electric vehicle charging points, fewer car spaces, suitable public and communal areas, where appropriate to include community use.
- High quality design and materials.
- Good external appearance, and use of high quality, low maintenance wall surfaces. Consider vertical green walls.
- Adherence to the Building Research Establishment approved method for the efficient and resilient construction, use and ultimate disposal of a building during its whole life cycle.

These applications are complex and costly, so there won't be diggers on the ground any time soon. We will continue to monitor and express the views of the Trust on all of these, and more.

So, Watch This Space (WTS).



The Wee Repair Station

Look out for the latest addition to the car park across from the library in Broughty Ferry - the 'wee repair station' - which provides a seat, tools and a pump to enable cyclists to maintain their bikes.

Planning Appeals - A mockery of local democracy?

Barbara Illsley

A headline in a recent edition of *Scottish Housing News* caught my eye: 'Questions raised over the number of planning decisions overturned by Scottish Government' (8 December 2020). According to the article, planning decisions on major housing developments taken by Dundee City Council have been overturned in 12 of the last 18 appeals, that is in 66% of cases. Such a situation, it is suggested, makes a mockery of local democracy. This is a significant claim so let's look in more detail at the way the planning appeals process operates and some of the recent planning decisions in Dundee that have been through that process.

The Planning Act requires planning authorities to reach decisions 'in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise'. This means that most weight is given to the development plan, currently TAYplan 2 and Dundee Local Development Plan, 2019 for Dundee, but it also allows other factors to be taken into account, such as design issues, access and the provision of infrastructure, community plans and legitimate public objections or support. Planning appeals for major applications are considered by the Directorate of Planning and Environmental Appeals, acting on behalf of Scottish Government but made up of independent reporters. Reporters have to arrive at their conclusion on the same basis as planning authorities, taking development policies and other relevant factors into account.



It is perhaps important to say at this point that over 90% of planning applications in Scotland are approved, with conditions attached, and only a small proportion of those that are then appealed. For the year 2019-2020, the original decision was upheld in 61% of appeal cases. An example of this is the recent appeal against refusal of an application for change of use from a three-bedroom flat to a four-bedroom house in multiple occupation at 12 Dock Street where the reporter dismissed the appeal, agreeing with the Council that the proposal was contrary to two policies in the Local Development Plan, Houses in Multiple Occupation and High Quality Design and Placemaking.

The more controversial applications are those where the original council decision for refusal is overturned. Two recent appeals in Dundee fall into this category. The first was an application by Persimmon Homes for housing at the former Kingspark School site in Kirkton and this was one of the cases referred to in the *Scottish Housing News* article. Planning officers recommended approval on the basis that the proposal complied with the development plan, but following significant public objections, councillors refused the application. The applicants appealed and the decision was eventually reversed, after the small matter of a legal appeal to the Court of Session. The reporter took a different view from councillors on the balance between the development plan and other factors, agreeing with the original view of planning officers.

A second example relates to the development of 150 houses at Linlathen for Kirkwood Homes in 2018. This was a complex case where councillors refused the application, on the grounds that the proposals were premature, would mean the overdevelopment of the site, and that there was a lack of infrastructure

and service provision. The reporter upheld the appeal, disagreeing that the development was premature and hence contrary to the development plan. The other issues, it was felt, could be addressed either through a legal agreement requiring payments to be made towards education provision or via planning conditions. A more recent application for an additional 100 houses on an adjacent site was also given permission following an appeal. The Trust objected unsuccessfully not only to this site being in the LDP, because it would create a car dependent community, distant from schools, shops and other services thus generating increased traffic on the Arbroath Road, but also to the application. The development is now well underway, as shown on the photo below.



Should decisions be taken solely by local authority councillors? Would this enhance local democracy? There is an argument that democratically elected representatives should accept this responsibility but there is a counter argument about natural justice and the importance of allowing decisions to be reviewed to counter potential bias. Planning is a complex process and decisions are never black and white; judgements on the balance between competing interests have to be made. Policies in 'the development plan' provide the key basis for taking these decisions which is why it is so vital that all of us get involved when these plans are being prepared. Unfortunately, not enough of us do so.

The Electric Revolution

Stephen Brand

A comment made by one of our members on how electric vehicle charging is going to have a detrimental impact on the built environment, coupled with our Chairman having taken delivery of a nice racing green electric Mini, had me thinking about this issue. The motor car has dominated our built environment, influencing the planners and the development of cities all over the world.

The green revolution, the next generation and the pandemic have made us think about using alternative means of transport, living in closer communities, working and shopping from home and generally re-evaluating how we do things in our day to day lives. The target is to have no new petrol or diesel cars for sale by 2030, which is not long.

Those considering buying an electric vehicle (EV) have several issues to consider. They are expensive to buy, they have limited range on a charge, and they take time to charge. There have been big improvements on the cost and range over the last few years. The biggest concern remains the availability of accessible charging stations. Home charging is the most common option and charge points are being installed in new homes, but this is not possible for all existing house types.



How is all this going to affect the built environment in Dundee? Dundee City Council has taken a very progressive and forward-thinking approach to EV's. The council has built EV charging hubs in Lochee, Princes Street and Broughty Ferry, with a fourth one planned in the north of the city. The Princes Street one was previously a petrol station. It was the UK's first EV charging infrastructure to incorporate solar canopies and battery/energy storage. These hubs have been designed so they can cope with more chargers as demand increases. They are also planning to connect the electric bike chargers to the hub in Broughty Ferry.

These hubs are not easily accessible to everyone, so it is exciting to find out that the council is participating in an experimental project to install "pop-up" charging stations which were developed here in Dundee. These will be commissioned for use shortly. There are 8 sites across the city including at the new beach at the V&A. They are installed flush with the ground and will pop up when required, via an

app, and then retract into the ground when not in use. It will help stop vandalism and will also remove charging stations where the visual impact would not be welcome. Let's hope the experiment is successful.

You can find out more about electric vehicle charging via this YouTube video:

[The Electric Vehicle Charging Problem - YouTube](#)

The council is also leading by example with over 160 DCC EV's, about 22% of the entire fleet. The first two electric bin lorries were delivered recently, named in a competition, "Bin Diesel" and "Leonardo di Charge-io", with four more ordered. They are the first city in Scotland to do so and the only city in the UK with more than one. There are also mini-buses and an electric street sweeper.

Local taxis have been encouraged to convert to EV and there are now over 170 such vehicles. The bus fleet, initially changed to hybrids, is now going to EV. Hydrogen fuel cells, set to be manufactured in the new Michelin Innovation Parc, will be used to power Dundee buses giving a range of 200-250 miles. An HGV charging point has been installed beside the Grassmarket car park and it is being utilised by Ember who have been operating the UK's first intercity EV bus service between Edinburgh and Dundee since October last year.



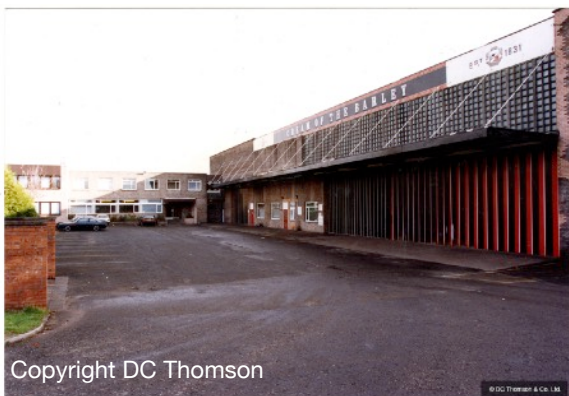
It seems, therefore, that Dundee has made a good start in getting infrastructure in place for EV's. For more on the future, have a look at this video about Shenzhen, a Chinese city of 12 million, which has a few more buses than we have, 16,000 of them and they converted the entire fleet overnight! Dundee, gets a mention 19 minutes into the video. Fascinating stuff.

[The City with 16,000 Electric Buses & 22,000 Electric Taxis | 100% Independent, 100% Electric - YouTube](#)

Growing jobs at Invergowrie

Brian Cram

The Tay Cities Deal and the substantial investment in creating a World Barley Research Hub at the James Hutton Institute is wonderful news. Having been influenced by the horror stories of GM crops and the emotive language that was used around the debate in the 1990's, I was reassured to learn that the scientific techniques for the future will rely on genetic editing. The process can, for example, involve trying to improve yields or boost the vitamin content by making small changes to the genetic composition of the plant. These changes can happen naturally, and in a previous life, plant improvement was done by painstaking cross breeding.



For the World Barley Hub, the positive message for me is that the businesses and sectoral interest groups such as the Scotch Whisky Research Institute, Maltsters Association of GB, and the National Farmers Union Scotland have formed part of this project consortium's demand side. Science and business working together is a great way to proceed. It is also good to see the region's long association with the whisky trade, and names such as Robertson's Yellow Label and Stewart's Cream of the Barley, continue.

My own knowledge of barley comes from a slight interest in Scottish malt whisky. I have done my research and been assured that the only changes that genetic editing will bring will be even better malt whisky!

The Tay Cities Deal will also support the Advanced Plant Growth Centre (APGC) which will help to develop improved crops and sustainable new ways of growing and storing existing crops. It will contribute to reducing the risk arising from the impact of climate change and will enhance the UK's capabilities. The APGC has four main strands.

Firstly, an Advanced Controlled Environment which will have next-generation controlled-environment facilities. Secondly, a High-throughput Phenotyping Facility will provide an imaging platform to show, at a very early stage, how plants respond to different stresses. Thirdly, a Post-Harvest Storage Facility, unique in its scale, will allow crops to be developed that have improved storage and supply chain characteristics as well as being resilient in the field. Fourthly, Vertical Growth Towers will be built to make use of new developments in vertical and indoor farming to allow plants and crops to be produced at very high densities in totally controlled environments. Vertical farms can be located anywhere, potentially shortening supply chains and reducing food miles. There are certainly opportunities to test the technology using derelict sites in Dundee.

The work of these research centres appears to be vital to the future well-being of the world. I see articles where 're-wilding' is going to help improve the health of our country, but it seems to me that we need to produce as much food, both from existing agricultural land and underused land in our cities. If we use new technologies so that fewer acres were needed for agriculture, then perhaps the dreams of replanting forests and regrowing the rainforest will be realised.

Mindless vandalism

Stone balustrades at the southern end of the historic Linlathen Iron Bridge were vandalised and destroyed on Sunday 29 March. The bridge dates back two hundred years, making it the oldest such structure in Scotland, and it was restored in 2012 at a cost of almost £400,000. It makes you wonder - why do such a thing?



B Illsley



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