

7 May 2020

## Kevin Murray Associates recognised at RTPI Awards



Kevin Murray Associates has received a commendation in the category for Small Planning Consultancy of the Year at the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) Awards for Planning Excellence 2020. The ceremony took place virtually this year – we got together as a team on Zoom to watch the livestream, and cheer together!

The RTPI Awards for Planning Excellence are the most established and respected awards in the UK planning industry. Running for over 40 years, they celebrate exceptional examples of planning and the contribution planners make to society.

We put ourselves forwards based on our strong range of consultancy work across the UK on research, strategy and visioning in planning and regeneration, specialising in stakeholder and community engagement, including design charrettes.

Our inclusive place momentum approach assists Councils and communities with regeneration; government bodies with research; garden village promoters with engagement; and planning students with applied contemporary learning.



The judges said: “Kevin Murray Associates are a niche firm who are interesting, innovative and client and engagement based. The judges were particularly impressed by the variety of work carried out by the practice, with exceptional performance in consultation and engagement, and the calibre of their clients.”

Reacting to this, our Directors Kevin Murray and Jas Atwal had this to say:

Kevin said: "It is very nice for our KMA team and specialist collaborators to have our work and techniques validated by peer assessors. So much depends upon the calibre of client and the communities and stakeholders we engage with, and we are hugely grateful to them all for enabling and supporting the rich mix of planning that we practise."

Jas said: "The KMA team are pleased to be recognised in this way, a tribute to the hard work of many colleagues, clients and communities. We have been fortunate to work with people from a wide range of backgrounds and ages, from 4 to 94, who have all added richness, authenticity and fun to the plans we have co-created. Thank you to everyone we have had the privilege to work with and we look forward to working with many more in the future."

We're thrilled with our commendation!

30 March 2020

## RTPI Measuring Planning Outcomes Research – Survey Live



KMA are delighted to be leading a consortium of researchers and practitioners from across the UK and Ireland to deliver this really interesting and important research commissioned by the RTPI alongside project and funding partners in Scotland, England, Wales, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. We are working with yellowbook, McCabe Durney Barnes, University of Dundee and Cardiff University.

This survey is a key part of our research process, we want to hear from planners and users of the system about how it currently monitors and measures its impact and what you think can be done in the future to get a really clear understanding of planning's impact on places and lives.

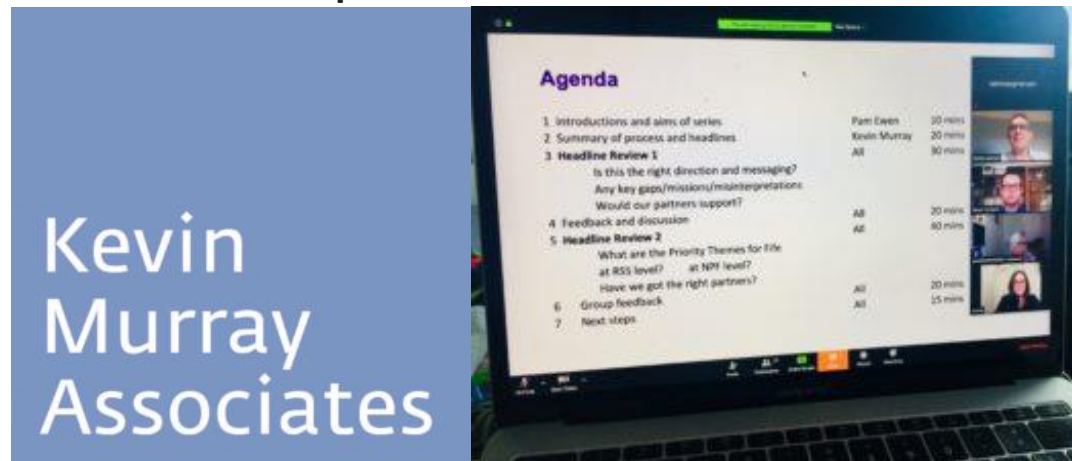
<https://dundee.onlinesurveys.ac.uk/rtpi-mpo-research>

This survey will take approximately 20 minutes to complete. The deadline is 11.59pm on Friday 17 April. We really appreciate the time and thought given to responses. We will treat these in confidence. If you have any questions please contact Iain MacPherson on [MPOResearch@kevinmurrayassociates.com](mailto:MPOResearch@kevinmurrayassociates.com).

Read more about the research team's approach here: <https://www.rtpi.org.uk/blog/2020/january/why-measuring-planning-outcomes-is-vital/>

19 March 2020

## KMA Covid-19 Response



During the ongoing Covid-19 health crisis, KMA remain fully operational. Team members are working flexibly from home to help our clients progress their projects. We want all our communities to be safe and are therefore taking social distancing and, if necessary, isolation very seriously.

We have always been an agile team, our work demands it. Now we are working with clients to support the effective delivery of their work using video-conferencing, participatory workshops and other forms of digital engagement. Please keep an eye on Twitter to see how we have been delivering workshops over ZOOM.

If you'd like to get in touch and don't have a team members details, please email [info@kevinmurrayassociates.com](mailto:info@kevinmurrayassociates.com), and we'll get your message directed to them.

This is a time for collective action, to bring out the best in our communities and we'll be here to help think through what this means for different places during the pandemic crisis. Look out for each other, and we hope to see you in person before too long.

18 February 2020

## RTPI Awards 2020 – Finalists!



KMA are **double finalists!**

We are thrilled to be shortlisted as finalists in two categories of the RTPI Awards for Planning Excellence 2020.

KMA have reached the finals stage in both Small Planning Consultancy of the Year and Excellence in Plan Making, for Your Kirky Town Centre in Kirkintilloch, East Dumbartonshire.

Recognition in the Small Planning Consultancy category has come from and the hard work of a dedicated team. We have a team that is committed to constant development and applying our specialist skills to equip communities, stakeholders and client teams to deliver better places. This shortlisting comes during a period of sustained growth for the practice, as we continue to work on sector-leading projects throughout the country. Of course none of this can happen without great collaborations with clients, communities and co-consultants all across the UK, thanks to all who have been part of this.

The plan-making achievement of Your Kirky has been driven by an amazing core of enthusiastic local people around Kirkintilloch Community Council who believe in place-making and influencing their town centre for the better. Supported by ourselves, Willie Miller Urban Design, and East Dumbartonshire Council officers, they've recognised that by enabling local people to plan they can help shape the town centre they want and not leave it to chance. It's been incredible for KMA and Willie Miller colleagues to work with this group and enable them to guide their town in its transformation.

Good luck to all the other finalists, and we look forward to the finals in late April.



27 November 2019

## Glasgow Canal: Cultural Heritage and Arts Strategy



KMA won the contract for the Glasgow Canal Cultural Heritage and Arts Strategy in early 2019. This commission is for the stretch of the Glasgow branch of the canal from Port Dundas top Firhill, an area of the canal we are very familiar with having done charrette work at each end of the area. This project was funded by a successful bid to the Heritage Fund by the Glasgow Canal Regeneration Partnership. This is a larger project that is being undertaken in the area with the Glasgow Canal Coop, Scottish Canals and Glasgow City Council working collaboratively.

The Glasgow Canal Coop, a cooperative of creative organisations, businesses and institutions in this canal area, has been instrumental in raising the profile of the area and working on continued regeneration of the area as a creative quarter in the north of the city. Working closely with the Canal Coop and its membership was key to the process. We're really grateful for their participation and guidance along the way.

Our process included a series of 'walkshops' along the canal and surrounding neighbourhoods where we joined local people and organisations to hear about their experience of the area and how they would like it to change in the future. These walks gave us insight into current perception of the place and how this might be shifted. In addition to our own place assessment these walks also helped unpack and understand the different character areas, from a post-industrial natural ecology regenerating along the canal and in the Claypits Local Nature Reserve, to heritage character areas with interesting buildings filled with creative activity from Applecross to Spiers Wharf and the action sports-led activity around the Port Dundas basin.

A key date for the projects outreach was at the Canal Festival in July. We spoke to over 400 people who came to take part in mini-boat folding and pin their ideas to our 'flat model'. We spoke to people who had never visited the area before and people who lived close by. Both groups had their imaginations sparked of what the place could be like by seeing the great range of activity on at the festival.

Engaging in dialogue with the Coop membership through interviews and workshops we developed 7 action themes and a draft vision for the area. This vision is that the area becomes:

A city destination – with regional, national and international visitors

A unique location recognised for the creative response to its place

Rooted in heritage and ecological assets of the area – giving authenticity and quality

Cooperative/collaborative working to deliver projects across all mediums and projects

Accessible to all – particularly to immediate communities but with widening access.

The strategy document will be owned by the Canal Coop and other partners and be used to inform action plans, policies and project development. The document will also be useful for making external funding applications.

27 October 2019

## Warrington Central 6 Masterplan



UPDATED: The Warrington Central 6 Masterplan is a finalist in the 2021 RTPI Awards in the Excellence in Plan-making category. Congrats to all involved.

A KMA-led team was commissioned in summer 2018 to undertake the Warrington Central 6 Masterplan by the Warrington Central Area Renewal Board. The Board is made up of community, partner organisations and council representatives – as such they were looking for an approach to masterplanning that was community driven and had a high degree of engagement. We offered an approach that put the community at the heart of the process, with three major feedback loops built in to the method.

Our team has deep insight into how to build up a masterplan collaboratively with a community, and the deliver through partnership working, community empowerment and is not dependent on an old style top-down delivery model. A key aim of this Regeneration Masterplan is to help local people to take part in planning Warrington's planning, regeneration and future growth processes. By creating an inclusive co-production approach, the engagement process has been as important as the masterplan document.

The engagement process was broadly split into three stages, with each stage building on the previous and informing the next one. This progressive conversation allowed stakeholders and consultees to see how their input built the plan. Overall, the engagement process involved the input of over 2600 people who gave the ideas contained in the masterplan. The role of the design team was to take these ideas, curate them, understand how they can be shaped into a deliverable project or place proposition and present that back to the public to affirm the aspiration and implications.

The outcomes of this collaborative work was a plan where communities can take action and responsibility for shaping and changing their places, in addition to developers and the Council function. This strategy document sits to serve these communities and empower them to 'grasp the nettle', as well as providing a framework for agencies, planners and placemakers to work from. The plan sets out a strategy, vision and principles that



explain in an accessible way the benefits and how to read the plan. Then, an action and project themes, providing descriptions for each action area and the projects that deliver on that theme's aim. Finally, how to deliver the masterplan, setting out some options for governance and for taking the plan forwards. The projects in the plan were a suite of improvements; they work together, often in small ways, to transform the place, e.g. from place maintenance and upkeep through to how traffic flows might work and infrastructure change.

A large part of the delivery process is about empowerment and equipping communities to take ownership. This can be through experimentation or 'tactical urbanism' projects where a temporary solution should be trialled in a first phase before rolling out a project on a more permanent basis and to other locations. The masterplan also suggested some phase 1 locations. Again this was in the spirit of experimentation and trialling projects prior to committing more money across wider areas. Further, to deliver the process, the masterplan sets out several appropriate mechanisms that links the players and partners to deliver committed measures with clear capability to continue over a prescribed timeframe.

The masterplan is set to be officially published in early 2020.

## Former Cockenzie Power Station Masterplan Update and Information Sessions



Following on from our work on the Cockenzie Masterplan, KMA along with PBA were commissioned to support East Lothian Council with a series of update sessions on the Cockenzie Masterplan. In the period of time between the masterplan being completed and now East Lothian Council have acquired the site.

The purpose of these sessions was to provide up to date information on site ownership, planning applications related to the offshore wind connections and on the masterplan itself.

We planned a series of 5 sessions in and around the communities near the site, plus further afield. The reason for this is that the scale of the site has regional implications, plus local people visit the places we undertook these sessions at Tesco in Musselburgh and the Haddington Market.

The update sessions reached a wide audience through a process that included community venues and public locations. There was opportunity to get information into people's hands quickly, but also to have more detailed conversations about the future of the site.

7 March 2019

## Important developments at Kevin Murray Associates

Due to expanding activities across the whole of the UK, Kevin Murray Associates (KMA) is making the following changes:

- Jas Atwal has been appointed a Director
- Iain MacPherson becomes an Associate Director
- Lynne Gibbons becomes Company Secretary

Founding Director, Kevin Murray, explained that *'these are important changes in our structure, recognising the key role these individuals play in the continued expansion of our practice.*

*We are also growing our network of specialist Associates across the country, as well as building new and deeper relationships with a variety of clients and partner practices.'*

KMA is an award-winning niche consultancy operating across the spectrum of spatial planning, regeneration, urban design and community consultation. Established in 2002, the practice draws from over 30 years' direct experience in leading edge projects in town planning, regeneration, urban design and economic development.

KMA are currently working on a number of diverse and transformational projects, including a 6 neighbourhoods regeneration masterplan in Warrington, Garden Village proposals in Oxfordshire and South East Manchester and a regeneration masterplan in Springburn, Scotland.

For more information please contact Iain MacPherson on [iain@kevinmurrayassociates.com](mailto:iain@kevinmurrayassociates.com)



Jas Atwal, KMA Director



Iain MacPherson, KMA Associate Director



Lynne Gibbons, KMA Company Secretary

7 May 2019

10 June 2018

## Redevelopment of the former Birmingham City University Campus, Perry Barr



KMA was commissioned by Birmingham City Council to undertake the community information and consultation exhibition relating to a major housing-led regeneration proposal at Perry Bar, Birmingham prior to the submission of the planning application.

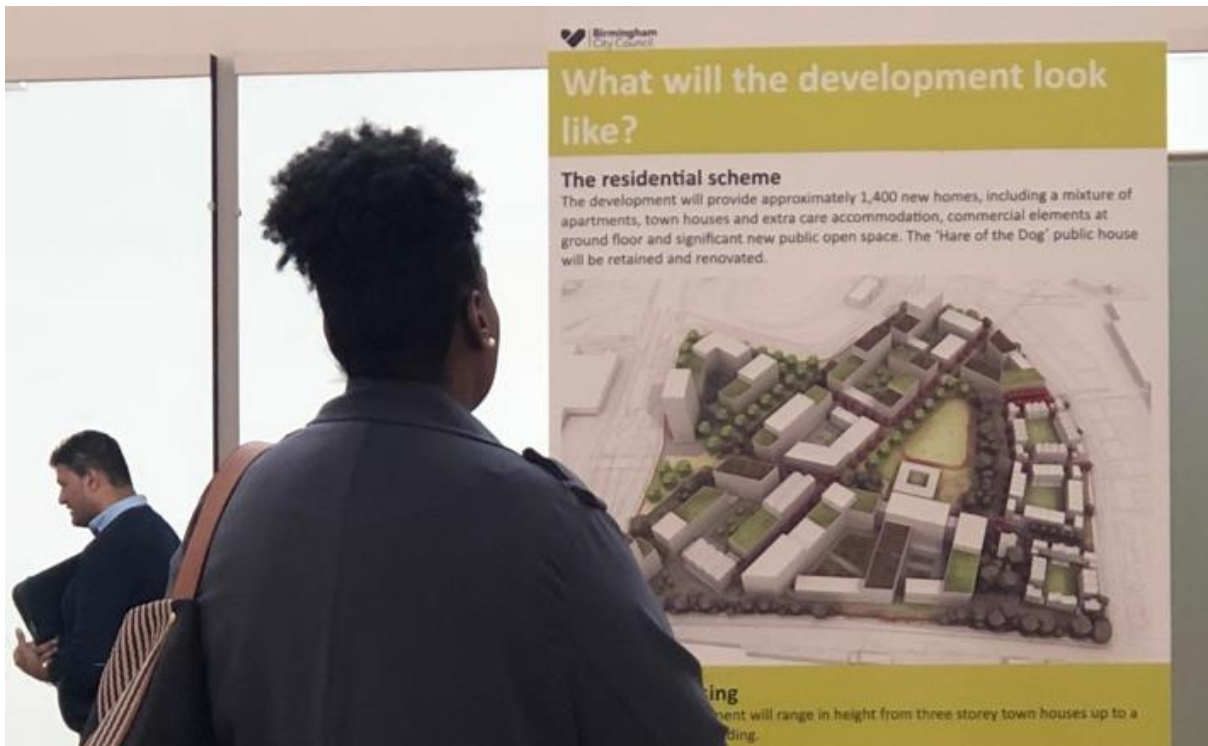
The communication and consultation event was held at the Doug Ellis Sports Centre, Perry Barr, on Monday 4th June 2018. The exhibition comprised a pre-application drop-consultation, explaining the proposed housing development of circa 1,400 homes, which will also serve as the residential accommodation for the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games Athletes Village. Once the Games are over it will form the heart of a high-quality residential neighbourhood.





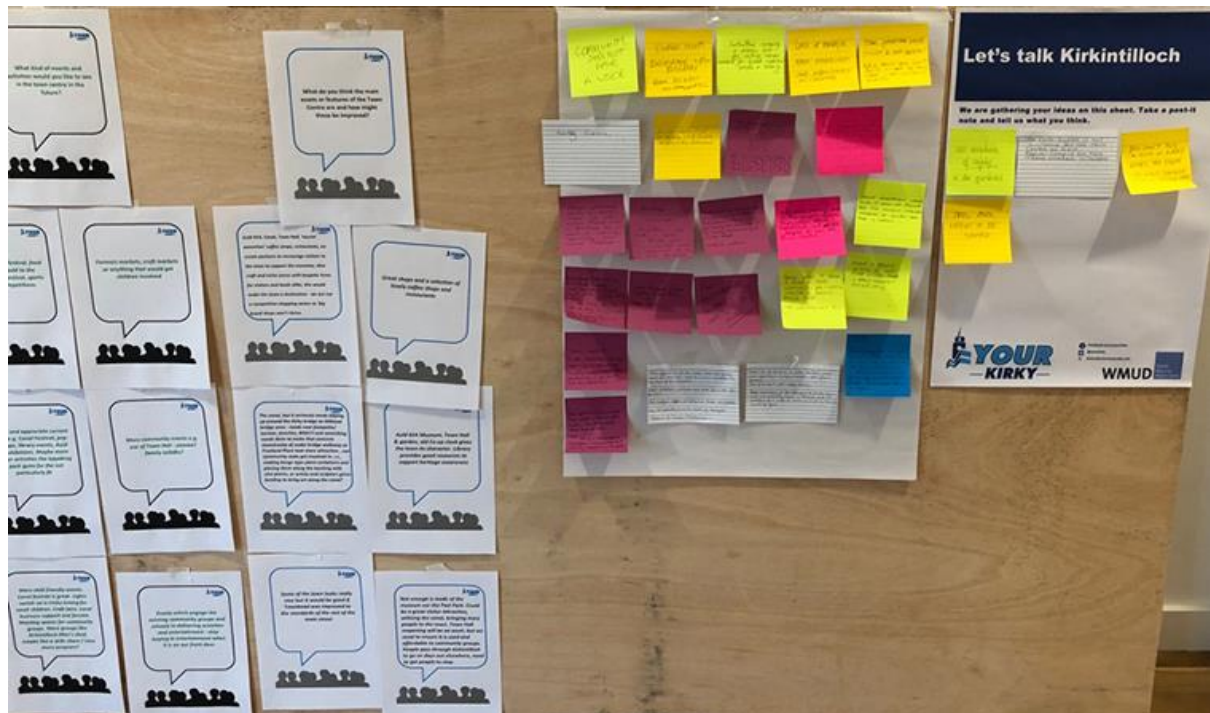
The consultation was arranged to explain and assist in the exploration of the key information concerning the proposed planning application. It included details about the context, the development scheme, access and movement strategy, landscape strategy and wider related opportunities for the Perry Bar area.

The event was well attended by some 162 residents from diverse age, gender, social and sectoral backgrounds. The range of people included economically active, business owners, students and young people, retired people, community organisations, councillors, including diverse cultural backgrounds and a healthy gender balance.



27 March 2018

## Kirkintilloch Town Centre Consultation



The KMA-lead team were commissioned by Kirkintilloch Community Council, with funding and support from East Dunbartonshire Council, to provide planning, delivery and analysis support for a KCC-led programme of public engagement. The purpose of this engagement was to develop a thorough understanding of how the community in Kirkintilloch view the town centre and its function now, and how they would like to see it develop in the future.

The period of engagement ran from late November 2017 through to February 2018. The engagement process used a variety of methods to reach people and give them an opportunity to contribute their views.

- Christmas Card Quick Questions and Mapping at the Christmas Light Switch On
- Survey, primarily online, but with hard copy available at The Regent Centre and through local groups
- Pop-up Consultation Events
- Public Drop-in Sessions
- Public Workshops
- Visits to multiple groups in and around Kirkintilloch Town Centre
- Youth and Schools engagement.

This process was very much led by Kirkintilloch Community Council, who used their local knowledge and network to great effect to ensure a wide reach for this process both online and in person. Overall around 1554 people participated and contributed their views on current challenges, opportunities and ideas for the future.

KMA team processed the material and categorised these into themes, each with a vision for the future of Kirkintilloch, alongside projects that were proposed to move the town centre towards the vision ambition.

28 November 2017

## The Former Cockenzie Power Station Masterplan



Kevin Murray Associates led the stakeholder and community engagement for the Former Cockenzie Power Station Masterplan as part of the masterplan team led by Peter Brett Associates, with [Duncan Whatmore Urban Design & Architecture](#), Energised Environments and Gardiner Theobald. East Lothian Council had identified that community and stakeholder buy-in would be key to the masterplan, so KMA designed a process that would be central to the masterplan, built around two stages of public consultation, the first one during November 2016 and the second during February 2017.

The engagement process consisted of workshops with National Agencies and Local Stakeholders, drop-in community sessions in Prestonpans, Cockenzie and Port Seton and unstaffed drop-in sessions in local libraries in Longniddry, Prestonpans and Port Seton. We also ran school workshops at Preston Lodge High School during both stages and at Longniddry Primary School during the second stage. Across this programme of engagement there were multiple methods by which participants could feed in their thoughts and ideas. 506 people participated in the process from residents, young families, civic and heritage groups, community representatives, to developers and East Lothian Council officers.

During discussion and feedback from the first stage, ideas and aspirations for the site emerged focussed around future leisure uses, retail use, specialist housing, employment and industry, energy, community uses, tourism and heritage, transport, infrastructure and connectivity, landscape, biodiversity and education. Those involved collectively sought to raise the aspiration of the area through the creation of a destination. The vision for this destination was clean, with connecting green areas; respectful of the heritage and natural assets of the site and to create an environment where people want to work, stay and live.

The material from this first stage was used to develop a set of principles that aided the design team in producing several scenarios for the site. These scenarios were illustrative of how different approaches to the site, driven by the principles, produced different outcomes.

We presented these to stakeholders and community in a second round of workshops, drop-in sessions and community presentations. The first scenario "Characterful Cockenzie" was community oriented, the second



“Commercial Cockenzie” was commercially driven, the third “Connected Cockenzie” was infrastructure driven and a fourth hybrid scenario was shown to demonstrate another way of looking at the site. During this stage, we asked people to evaluate these scenarios against the principles, and then to suggest their own hybrid.

## 1 CHARACTERFUL COCKENZIE



## 2 COMMERCIAL COCKENZIE



## 3 CONNECTED COCKENZIE



## 4 COMPLETE COCKENZIE



We analysed the different hybrids people suggested and this started to show a direction for what type of development should be on the four zones across the site. The zoning uses suggested were:

- Zone 1 (by the coast) mostly for leisure and recreation use.
- Zone 2 and 3 (the transformer station and coal store sites) for employment, energy and education uses.
- Zone 4 (agricultural land and the battlefield site) preserved as open space and heritage uses.

Across the site, people wanted a strong green network to be used to connect the site and make it highly accessible, to add more green space and not to over develop the site. Some of the tension that has been present from the first stage around the viability and the positive or negative impact of a cruise terminal was still present, although it was by this stage apparent that the technical and economic feasibility of such a port was low. For the youth, the need for leisure and recreational activities was expressed. Several attendees talked about the importance of arts in the area and how this can become a driver of local regeneration.

The consultation analysis and report will be used as a basis for producing the masterplan alongside the technical baseline material. [The masterplan report can be viewed here.](#)



24 September 2017

## North Berwick Town Centre Charrette



Kevin Murray Associates led a team alongside [Willie Miller Urban Design](#) and [Urban Movement](#) on the North Berwick Town Centre Charrette. The North Berwick Coastal Area Partnership, supported by East Lothian Council and the Scottish Government Charrette Mainstreaming Programme, commissioned the charrette with a particular focus on accessibility in the town centre.

In advance of the charrette, extensive community engagement took place with schools in North Berwick and surrounding towns, with North Berwick Day Centre, North Berwick Youth Project and local golf clubs; there was also on-street engagement and a pre-charrette survey that was distributed to over 7,500 addresses. There were also site familiarisation visits arranged through the On the Move sub-group of the Area Partnership, and with Council Officers from Planning and Roads.

The charrette was launched on Tuesday 30 May 2017 at the North Berwick Community Centre, followed by intensive design workshops held over three days from Thursday 1 June to Saturday 3 June 2017 across various venues around North Berwick's Town Centre.

Beginning with a site visit using the [Place Standard](#) evaluation tool, the charrette progressed through a series of workshops exploring issues, potential solutions, testing and prioritising before a final community presentation on the Saturday afternoon. This final afternoon session at the St Andrew Blackadder Church Hall comprised an exhibition and closing presentation to a full house.

The charrette was enthusiastically attended with a very good spread of groups represented across all the sessions. Participants ranged from various community group representatives, to individual residents, school pupils, young families, retired and semi-retired, shop-keepers and small business owners, as well as East Lothian officers and councillors. Cumulatively there were over 300 involved, not counting all those who contributed to the pre-charrette work.



From the site walks, groups discussion and workshops, some 44 projects were identified. A good number of these focussed on the central part of the town where there are serious equality of access issues, with incredibly narrow pavements. The full suite of projects has been brought together under the following four Action Plan Themes; (1) Street and public realm improvements, (2) Traffic and parking, (3) Character, quality & amenities, (4) Sustainable travel & accessibility.

The leading three priorities identified through the charrette process were:

1. Improving walking and access as the east end of High Street – making major people-focused improvements to walking and access conditions along this narrow section of the street.
2. Providing a better parking strategy – to increase effectiveness and turnover, enabling other projects and contributing to a people-focused town centre.
3. Improvements for people movement – a programme of individual projects that combine to create a much-improved, high quality place giving more space for people and activities.

A community hand-over presentation was organised as part of the Area Partnership's AGM on the 19 September, to update the community on the outcomes of the charrette. The community, most of whom had participated, generally supported the outcomes of the charrette and now looked forward to taking the various projects forward.

We would like to thank all who participated in the pre-charrette activities, the charrette events and the follow-up, including online through Twitter and Facebook. Participation is essential to the collaborative planning and design of successful places, and also of course to securing funding and policy support for the various constituent projects.

[The final report is available for download from the East Lothian Council website.](#)



25 June 2017

## Inverness Victorian Market Action Plan



The Inverness Victorian Market is a key asset in the heart of the city centre. The Highland Council commissioned Kevin Murray Associates to facilitate a series of workshops with traders and stakeholders and to devise an action plan for the regeneration of the Market.

Kevin Murray undertook a series of interviews with traders ahead of a series of workshops held between November 2016 and February 2017. The workshops were built around the views gathered and from research into other comparator markets. They consisted of a mix of open discussion, a presentation on lessons from other markets to help stimulate thinking, and a prioritisation workshop exploring transformational action.

A key dimension was the collaborative working with traders and stakeholders, aiming to develop a coherent, yet aspirational approach that helps will guide the future of the Market, and enable its fulfilment as a unique and characterful destination in the Highland city.

To help realise this aspiration, KMA produced an Action Plan based on the collaborative discussions

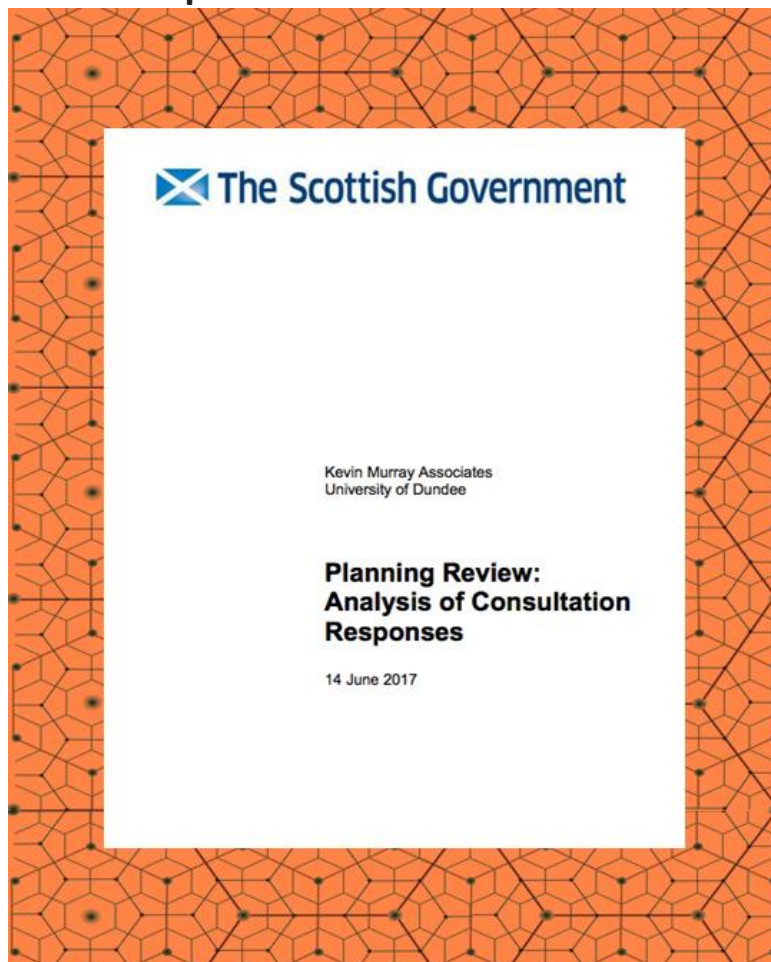
Kevin then presented the outcomes and Action Plan to the new City of Inverness Area Committee in June 2017, where it was accepted as an excellent approach to the continued regeneration of the Market. He has continued to advise on the follow-through stages.

We would like to thank all the participants in the workshops, the market traders, the BID and David Haas at The Highland Council.

Keep an eye out for more change at the Victorian Market in coming weeks and months.

18 June 2017

## Our analysis of latest consultation responses to The Planning Review is published



We are pleased to announce that the report from our commission to analyse the latest evidence submitted to the Scottish Government's Planning Review has now been published on the [Scottish Government Website](#). Undertaken with the University of Dundee and Eclipse Research Consultants, the project involved the analysis of the 474 written submissions, using a cross-coding system, that was undertaken during the months of April and May following receipt of all the submissions.

We structured the analysis around the four main themes of the Review, seeking to draw out the major areas of agreement and concern from across the full body of submissions. We have presented the findings to the Planning Review Team and had an engaging dialogue around the themes and ideas. We are due to present the findings to RTPI Young Planners and West of Scotland Chapter on 6 September.

We had a very challenging time working through such diverse qualitative data in an extremely tight timeframe, so we would like to acknowledge the efforts of our whole team of Rim Chouaib, Dr Ian Cooper, Iain MacPherson, Kevin Murray, Michael O'Sullivan, Dr Husam Al Waer and Frances Wright.

Good luck to the Scottish Government Planning Review team taking the ideas and aspirations forward to the next stage.



17 February 2017

## SCR Vision Launch



Today, 17 February, the SCR Vision has been launched. The prospectus, “A Better Future Together – Developing a Vision” is the product of our close work and collaboration with Professor Heather Campbell of the University of Sheffield, the other anchor institutions in the region, Sheffield Hallam University and the Sheffield Teaching Hospital Trust, and some 400 businesses, organisations and individuals.

The prospectus can be downloaded at [scrvision.com](http://scrvision.com).

Our thanks to our Associates Robert Upton and Vincent Goodstadt for their work on this, as well as to Professor Heather Campbell, the University of Sheffield, Sheffield Hallam University and the Sheffield Teaching Hospital Trust.

1 June 2016

## Fun and Games at Talk Prestwick Charrette



Talk Prestwick was an intensive community-facing charrette, led by [Willie Miller Urban Design](#) and sponsored by South Ayrshire Council, that took place over four days in the south west Scotland coastal community of Prestwick, close to the international airport. The event, while focusing around the town centre, drew in community initiatives from the beach and hinterland, as well as from the neighbourhoods. Much of the effort was around building up community awareness and collaboration, as well as key themes such as dementia friendly environments and shared activity, such as gardening and local food production.

Dozens of live and potential projects were identified, with the effort now being to concentrate on the priority ones, particularly those that can have a lasting community benefit. Some projects have already begun the process of business planning and the search for resources.

Keep an eye on the lively town or Prestwick as things could be changing there.

[The report from the charrette can be downloaded here.](#)

15 May 2016

## Crinan Corridor Charrette



An intricate and complex charrette was held over 4 days, in 6 venues along the Canal, between Lochgilphead, Ardrishaig and Crinan. There was good cross community attendance, with over 200 contributions from residents, businesses and community groups and agencies, in both sunshine and snow! The charrette team was led by [Oliver Chapman Architects](#), with KMA facilitating, [Harrison Stevens Landscape and Urban Design](#), Ekosgen and McIlhagger Associates on transport and DM Hall.

The charrette was sponsored by Argyll and Bute Council, Scottish Canals and the Scottish Government.

Discussions in the workshop got off to quick start, with many people already having fed in ideas through [WAVEparticle's](#) pre-charrette work. The sequence of KMA facilitated workshops built on these early discussions by drilling down into the reality of the issues and opportunities along the canal corridor while the design team developed plans, sketches and 3-D concepts.

Ideas ranged from developing the arts and cultural network to better routes and signing, to a pedestrian friendly streetscape and square in Lochgilphead that shifted it from a place to pass through to a place to stop. Larger scale opportunities came under consideration at Ardrishaig harbour, with discussions about the role of the Gleaner former oil storage site.

There is a huge appetite for getting on with a range of projects to build up momentum across the community.

The charrette process was documented and [summary videos of the event can be viewed here](#).

24 March 2016

## Our analysis on The Planning Review evidence is published.



Contact name

**Kevin Murray Associates  
University of Dundee**

### **The Planning Review: Analysis of Written Evidence**

4 March 2016

We are delighted to announce that the output from our commission, undertaken with the University of Dundee, to analyse the evidence submitted to the Scottish Government's Planning Review, [has now been published on the Scottish Government website](#). The project, which involved rapid analysis of the 391 written submissions, using a cross-coding system, was undertaken in the early weeks of the year, following receipt of all the material at the end of last year.

Following completion of the report, which sought to represent the key issues and proposals from a very wide range of contributors, we presented the findings to the Planning Review Team and had an engaging dialogue around the themes and ideas.

We had a challenging time managing such diverse qualitative data in an extremely tight timeframe, so we would like to acknowledge the efforts of the whole team of Iain MacPherson, Kevin Murray, Dr Husam Al Waer, Dr Adriana Saoto, Frances Wright and Dr Ian Cooper.

Good luck to the Scottish Government Planning Review team in taking the ideas and aspirations forward.



1 March 2016

## Cowdenbeath Youth Charrette



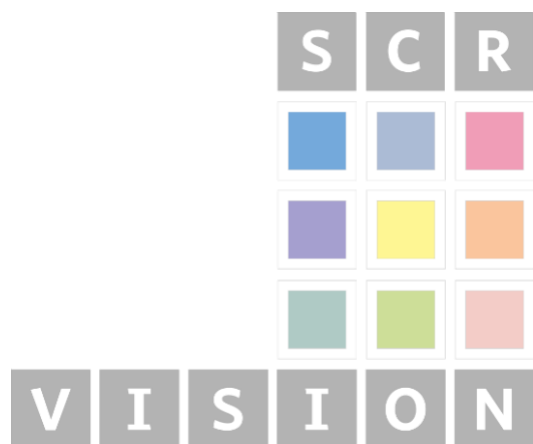
KMA were appointed by Fife Council to undertake a youth 'training' charrette with young people in Cowdenbeath. Working with young people is a key dimension of our *place momentum* collaborative placemaking approach. Our team, comprising Kevin, Husam and Iain, worked with a mix of local young people to explore, understand, then plan the future of their town centre, using the new Scottish Government Place Standard tool as a gauge. This work builds on, and contributes to, other strategy and project work the Council has been undertaking for the town centre.

The participants, aged between 13 and 16 willingly (or so we are told) gave up a day of their time to consider the town centre and what is needed to improve it. The site visit helped to draw out their perceptions, while the Place Standard tool helped them articulate their views about a range of factors. The afternoon session involved prioritising a range of potential improvements before considering design aspirations for a particular space, including activities for animation in different seasons.

The outputs from the exercise were compiled into a report for the Council team. This record of the event and its outputs has enabled them to demonstrate the value of consultation with a distinctive group, allowing the voice of the group to stand out, and they hope to carry out similar exercises with other groups in the future.

20 January 2016

## Launch of the Sheffield City Region Visioning process



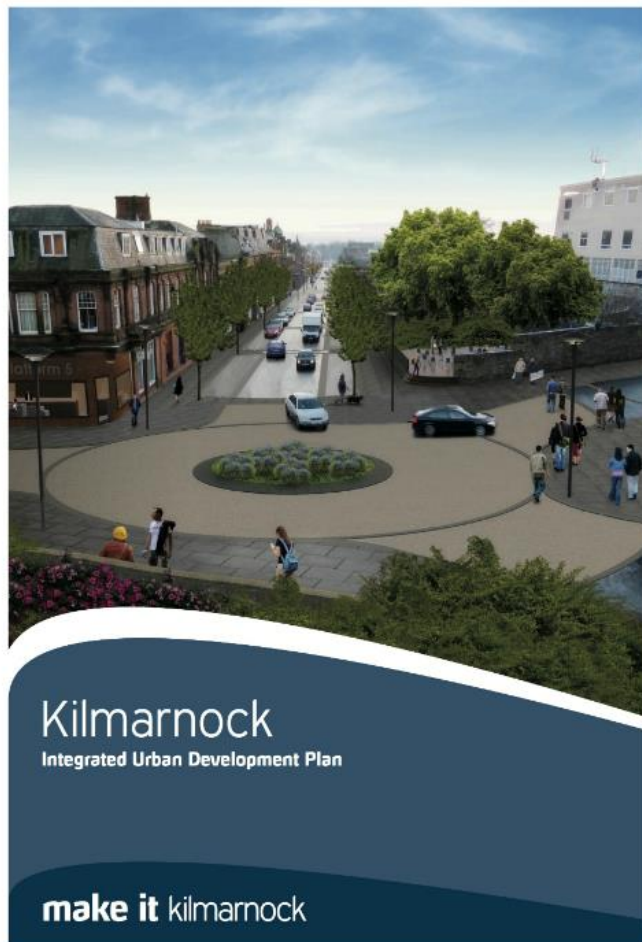
We are delighted to announce our involvement in facilitating the Sheffield City Region visioning process. We have been working for many months with various institutions across the city region to help devise an approach to build an inclusive, aspirational vision that builds strategic relationships goals and a shared direction, building from the existing base of plans, strategies and evidence. This has now been given formal approval and has begun with a call for evidence.

This early stage involves drawing data, policy, ideas and aspirations from a wide range of sectors, communities and politicians, and will be accompanied by a range of discussion sessions and individual meetings over the coming

months. Look out for future posts on emerging evidence, and other details on the project website [scrvision.com](http://scrvision.com).

11 December 2015

## Sharing in Kilmarnock celebrations



It is with great pleasure that we report on the success of Kilmarnock as the Most Improved Town in Scotland at the 2015 SURF Awards. It was only a few short years ago that Kilmarnock was a town in despair when the world renowned Johnnie Walker whisky distillery plant announced its closure, following on the footsteps of other key industries.

A team led by KMA was appointed by the Make it Kilmarnock Board to devise an Integrated Urban Development Plan for the Central area. This plan was developed with a range of partners and the local community.

You can read Kevin's reflection on the outset of the project [here](#).

10 November 2015

## Involvement in Hatfield Vision 2030+



KMA has performed a key role, as part of the Nexus-Broadway Malyan team, in soliciting and analysing the community and stakeholder contributions to Hatfield Vision 2030+. Sponsored by Welwyn Hatfield Council, Hertfordshire LEP and Hertfordshire University, the brief was to develop a vision and range of transformational projects for this former New Town, built up from the views of local people, institutions and the business sector.

Our staged engagement process had to involve a wide range of stakeholders, and these were carefully planned to involve thoughtful inputs of residents and visitors, students and school pupils, traders and lecturers, developers and politicians. Our futures process drew inputs from over 800 people helped by our presence at the Galleria shopping mall, university, schools and youth clubs, car boot sales, Jimmy Mac Centre and the wonderful outdoor Halloween festival in the town centre.

The diverse range of ideas and suggestions are now being crafted by the planning and design team into a vision and strategy, with key improvement projects, which will be presented to the community in the New Year.



27 October 2015

## Young Planners' Placemaking Workshop



Kevin Murray and Dr Husam AlWaer teamed up with RTPi Scotland to devise a special Collaborative Placemaking event for the Scottish Young Planners Network. As a compressed form of the 1,2 and 3 day workshops they run, this half day session was an immersive 'learning by doing' experience that involved briefing presentations, a site visit to a live project, and team workshops to develop a framework for the site.

Held at A&DS on 8 October, the event was very well attended by young professionals and students from all over Scotland. The briefing part included an introduction to different levels of masterplanning, the roles of different players in a charrette type process, and the importance of evaluating different potential outcomes.

Each team developed their ideas from different perspectives, drawing upon realistic role play contributions, and then presented their framework ideas. Will Garrett of Edinburgh City Council evaluated the comparative merits of the output propositions.

The feedback from the participants has been very positive, with most looking for this module to be run over a full day, so we will look at that option with the RTPi and different local authorities. Sam Jackson appreciated 'considering the different roles and voices involved in the masterplanning process', while Philip Graham enjoyed 'the group working, and learning how to analyse how different uses worked together'. Angus Dodds noted that it was all 'run at a brisk pace, which kept the impetus up'.

Architect Feras Ghaloul, who is also involved in KMA training in the Middle East, said that many of these approaches, techniques and skills are transferrable, and looked forward to running similar training events internationally.

Tweets on #sypndesign giving an impression of the evening can be found [here](#).

24 September 2015

## Sauchiehall Garnethill District Strategy



Working closely with a high-level engagement team for Glasgow City Council, with [Nick Wright](#) [Planning](#), [icecream architecture](#) and [co-occurence](#), KMA colleagues Jas, Iain and Kevin contributed to the engagement activity of the initial Glasgow City Centre Districts Regeneration Strategy. The engagement team collaborated with Gehl Architects across a range of community engagement events. These sought to facilitate the co-production of a people-focused regeneration strategy for the Sauchiehall Garnethill District. As this was the pilot strategy it created an opportunity to develop and test leading edge engagement approaches. The methodology combined sectoral focus groups, larger public workshops, community action evenings, on-street engagement and street animation. It was underpinned by the Sauchiehall.net website using interactive mapping from Future City Glasgow and social media.

The final set of community action evenings were hosted during the early part of the summer in the District. These were particularly well attended by residents from Garnethill and were a great opportunity run through issues that had been raised during the earlier part of the project. Business people, the Sauchiehall BID (with an emphasis on the street's evening economy) and local residents all worked collaboratively towards mutually beneficial solutions.

[You can find the Engagement Report here.](#)

27 August 2015

## Tranent Town Centre Charrette



*Image is courtesy of Willie Miller Urban*

### *Design.*

East Lothian Council and the Fa'side Area Partnership commissioned Kevin Murray Associates to lead a town centre charrette in Tranent, working alongside [Willie Miller Urban Design](#), [Peter Brett Associates](#) and [icecream architecture](#).

The charrette was held over three days from 26 – 28 March in The Fraser Centre and in Ross High in Tranent. The Fraser Centre was an excellent venue to launch the charrette, being an old cinema building going through the process of securing funding for redevelopment as a community facing facility. Participants ranged from the Recharge youth group to community representatives and East Lothian officers. Through a sitewalk, groups discussion and scenarios, they worked to identify the following eight goals for Tranent town centre: (1) Build on the town's special qualities, (2) Celebrate the heritage by telling the story, (3) Strengthen links to surrounding areas, (4) Improve the areas and paths behind the High Street, (5) Create community gathering spaces, (6) Slower and safer streets, (7) Diversify the businesses, clubs, culture and events on offer and (8) take advantage of the vacant opportunity sites.

The design team worked up options based on these workshop sessions to facilitate positive change and promote new ways of using the town centre. A key area of focus was Civic Square, which is currently an under-utilised central space in the town, with vacant outmoded buildings to one side. Redevelopment of these buildings could serve to re-animate the space, particularly with an active ground floor use. The key debate was around whether or not to use part of the square as a route for a link-road, to create a one-way circulatory system in the town or not.

To the north and south of High Street it was recognised that there were good community-facing assets that could all benefit from better connections to core of the town centre, catalysing the overall use of the centre.

The charrette event was supplemented with a follow-up exhibition and presentation on 30 April. The team had used the interim period to further develop the ideas from the charrette, and consider the implications of different options for Civic Square and approaches to the High Street. There was also further development of the ideas linking the areas to the north and south of High Street, in particular re-forming the lanes, known locally as The Backsides, as safe and attractive routes connecting facilities and public parking with High Street.

We would like to thank all who participated in the pre-charrette activities, the charrette events and also the follow-up and online through Twitter and Facebook. Participation is essential to collaboratively planning and designing good places, and to securing funding and policy support for the different projects.

The final report will be available for the Scottish Government and Council sites in due course.



31 July 2015

## RTPI Awards for Planning Excellence 2015



Kevin had the privilege of hosting the RTPI Awards for Planning Excellence for a second time in July 2015. After the success of 2014, the awards had more entries, more finalists, and even more demand for tickets – it was sold out after only 4 weeks!

The judges clearly had a very hard time, as the calibre of entries across all categories was extremely high, with many finalists who might have been winners in previous years. President Janet Askew welcomed Head judge, and former Government Minister, Nick Raynsford, who was most impressed by the standard, and the rigour of the process.

The event was great fun, with lots of excitement, but we had to keep moving to get through all fourteen categories in time for the celebrations – [see the pictures here](#).

Some of the highlights for me included Merthyr Tydfil winning in the public realm category and Viral Desai winning Young Planner of the Year. I was also pleased to see the Scottish Government's National Planning Framework 3 (NPF3) pick up an award and commendation, as we had been directly involved in [running stakeholder workshops for them when they started their process](#).

The Jubilee Cup Winner for 2015 was Thames Tideway Tunnel, an amazingly complex and intricate infrastructure project that set new standards in engagement within the new Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPS) process. [The full list of winners is in the Awards brochure](#).

Thanks again to the great RTPI events team, all the sponsors, judges and, of course, all the category finalists for their contribution to a great evening.



7 July 2015

## Aberdeen City Centre Masterplan



In June 2014 KMA was engaged by Aberdeen City Council to facilitate the community engagement element of the Aberdeen city centre masterplan, to be prepared by a BDP-led consortium of international specialists. The work was one of the most intensive and closely scrutinised that we had been involved in.

The city centre was seen to have suffered from a lack of public and private investment in the recent past, especially Union Street. Retailers and consumers perceived a reduction in the quality of the retail offer, recognising a transition from once-prestigious department stores to more basic budget-focused brands. Union Street itself is heavily trafficked and the public realm would clearly benefit from some upgrading. Given the recent controversies surrounding the proposed development of Union Terrace Gardens and Marischal Square, community interest was heightened and creative engagement needed to be a key component of the project.

Our response to the brief was to develop an open, constructive dialogue with the public, businesses and community groups, in order to generate positive synergies between different interests, such as residents, visitors and businesses. The engagement process also contributed an ongoing sequence of briefing stages for the design team.

The consultation was planned and staged in a progressive way over 6 months with key stages in September 2014, November 2014 and March – April 2015, providing participants with the opportunity to influence the emerging masterplan as it developed. This enabled contributors to be a central part of the process, contributing to an evolving vision and approach, as well as themes and objectives, rather than simply commenting on a finalised masterplan.

In addition to addressing the particular requirements of the city centre, the engagement methodology included a series of City Talks, which sought to share learning from other cities to help inform the debate about Aberdeen's future. Eminent guest speakers were invited to share their experiences of city centre transformation in Gothenburg, Manchester and Calgary in order to stimulate ideas and provide a wider perspective and reference point. The feedback was that these talks extremely helpful and well received; more can be read on these talks [here](#).

Over the course of the project, almost 3,200 participants helped frame the vision and goals, for instance for more than just development and retail, towards a much more people-friendly, distinctive place. At the second stage, the participants supported the key themes and objectives to a range between 46 – 68%, depending on the topic. When it eventually came to the detailed masterplan and specific projects, the support levels – from over 1500 responses – were in the range of 71 – 93%, which is extremely high given earlier controversies.

This was only possible by having a method of phased positive engagement, a responsive design team, and positive Council officer and member support, all helping to stimulate and translate ideas from the diverse Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire public.

The masterplan was unanimously backed by Aberdeen City Council in June 2015. The masterplan and all the background documentation has been made available [on the City's website](#).

7 May 2015

## Kevin Murray Associates have moved



30 April 2015

## Amman 'People-Places' Charrette Workshop



Kevin Murray helped to lead a major charrette-type collaborative training exercise at Isra University in Amman, Jordan, working alongside Husam Al Waer (Dundee University) and Samer Bagaen (Brighton University). Led by Dr Nawar Alatassi, the exercise sought to simulate actual charrette process evolution over several days, with students working collaboratively in groups to address two different types of urbanism challenge within Amman's rapidly changing city.

The students investigated the areas from the perspective of different owners, users and policymakers, developing design proposals for improvement, integration and healthier, more convivial environments.

The exercise proved a great success, with the participants developing their analytical, design and integration skills, with the quality of their team-working particularly notable within very tight timeframes. The culmination was a final presentation and certification event. It is intended that this intensive 'learning by doing' model can be used as a basis for further collaborative placemaking training in the future.



20 April 2015

## Port Dundas Continuity Workshop

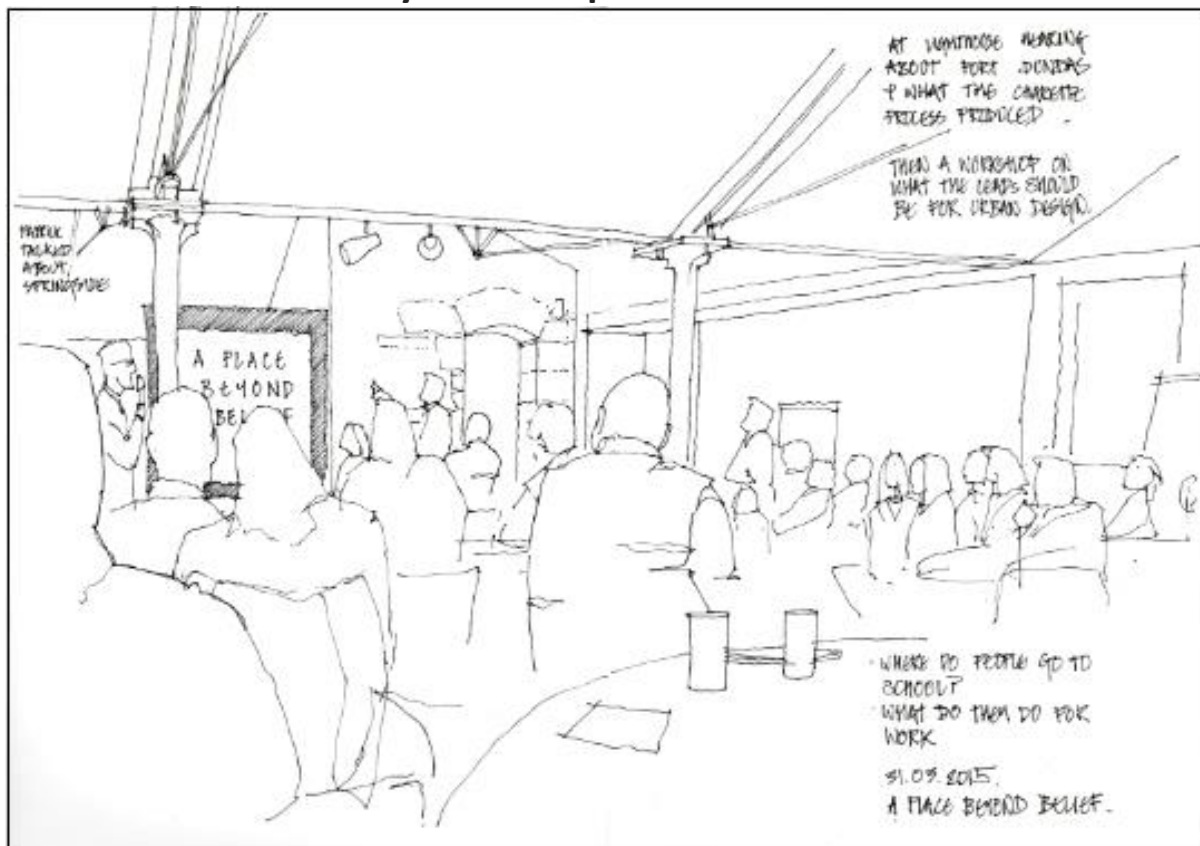


Image Credit: Sandy Morrison

At the end of March 2015, Kevin Murray Associates facilitated a 'continuity workshop' for the Glasgow Canal Regeneration Partnership (Glasgow City Council, BIGG and Scottish Canals) to update all stakeholders on the position of Port Dundas and to workshop the next steps together.

Presentations were made by Kevin Murray and members of the Partnership by way of update following the successful Port Dundas Charrette in 2014 along the canal corridor, Sighthill, 100 Acre Hill and the forthcoming Supplementary Planning Guidance for the area.

Workshop groups discussed the priorities and key delivery partners required to take things forward under the following themes: transport and movement; infrastructure, energy and SUDS; public realm and streetscape; urban form and open space; economy and business; and community and housing. Discussion highlighted the importance of connecting the area into the city, with emphasis on how the edges of the area function in this important re-connecting role.

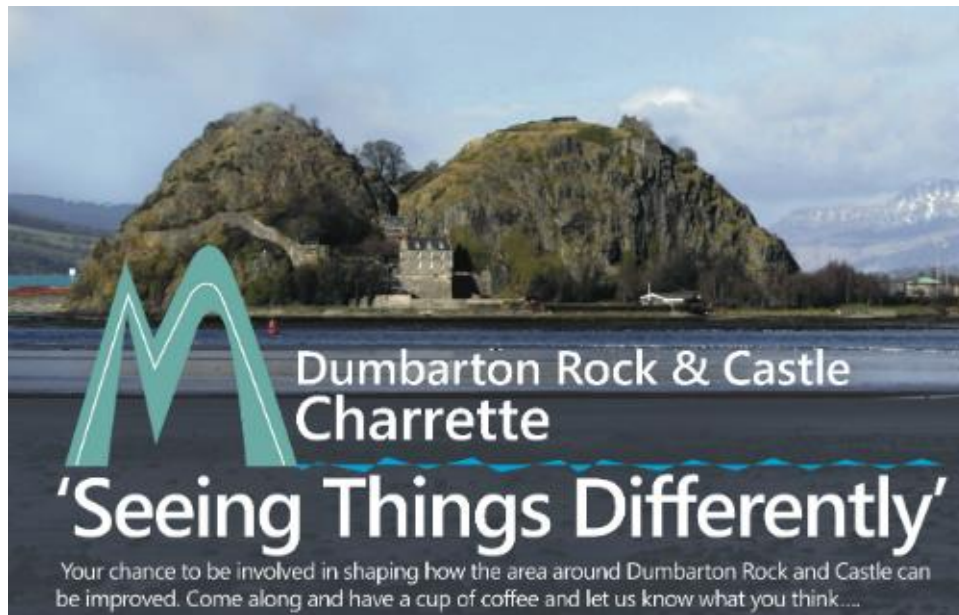
The mixed-use aspiration was also important, as the area has slowly been a successful business location and can continue in this vein, even as it transitions into a mixed neighbourhood with housing and community facilities. Importantly however, it was affirmed that this area is a major opportunity for innovation, both in terms of the businesses that might occupy the place and in the procurement of housing through innovative models.

The sketch above is by Sandy Morrison of [HTA](#), who are undertaking urban design and masterplanning work on 100 Acre Hill. More of his sketches can be found [here](#).

The report from our 2014 Port Dundas Charrette can be found through the Scottish Government Charrette Mainstreaming page [here](#).

15 April 2015

## Dumbarton Rock & Castle Charrette



In February 2015, Kevin Murray Associates was commissioned to facilitate and report on the [Anderson Bell Christie](#)-led charrette examining the area around Dumbarton Rock and Castle, including the River Leven waterfront. The charrette client was West Dunbartonshire Council, with support from Historic Scotland and the Scottish Government, but of course the ultimate client would be the residents, businesses and visitors to Dumbarton.

Part of the Scottish Government Charrette Series, the main event was held over 4 consecutive days from 25 – 28 February, primarily based at Dumbarton Football Club at the base of the Castle Rock. Located in the heart of the area the charrette was examining, it was readily apparent to all that the area around the football club has several vacant sites waiting for development to take place, but which currently increase the sense of distance between the Castle Rock and Dumbarton's town centre. This disconnect, and how to overcome it, was a recurring theme throughout the charrette, particularly given the role that the Castle and Rock could play in attracting people to Dumbarton (for heritage reasons and also extreme sport, as Dumbarton Rock is a popular rock-climbing destination of international renown) and thus stimulating the local economy.

Other themes included the redevelopment of the Mill and Still site (including debate about whether the tower should stay or go) and how this could make a positive contribution to the town centre and the waterside. The River Leven was recognised as a huge asset to Dumbarton, and access to and along the River was seen as playing a key role in the regeneration of the development sites, and also the town centre itself.

Another facet of the area that proved to be significant was the boatyard on the west bank of the River Leven. Analysis showed the site sits in all of the key sightlines between the town centre and the Rock making it strategically significant in townscape terms. Any future development would need to be sensitive to its location and contribute to activating the water edge in this area.

The final part of the charrette event was held in Dumbarton Burgh Hall, displaying the outputs that the design team had worked up in the initial 3 days, providing the opportunity for the public to view the proposals, discuss them with the design team and provide their responses. This feedback was used to refine the proposals which were subsequently presented at a follow-up exhibition on 26 March in the Burgh Hall.

Our thanks to all who participated in the charrette, West Dunbartonshire Council, Historic Scotland and the Scottish Government.

The final report will be uploaded onto the Scottish Government website in due course.

25 March 2015

## Aberdeen City Talks



*Photo credit: Norman Adams, Aberdeen City Council*

As part of the Aberdeen City Centre Masterplan consultation process, Kevin Murray Associates and BDP organised a series of City Talk Series with Aberdeen City Council. The series of talks invited experts from other cities to share their experiences of changing their city with a public audience, followed by a Q&A session. The purpose of these talks was to expand the conversation about Aberdeen's changing city centre to include learning from other places.

The first talk was from Bjorn Siesjö, City Architect in Gothenburg. Bjorn's talk focused on the River City Vision for Gothenburg, highlighting the importance of vision, strategy and engaging both the public and politicians; creating a more diverse economy; creating public realm that supports year-round activity; and making much more of the water-front areas in the city.

The second talk, in January, was from Eddie Smith, Manchester. Eddie is the Strategic Director for Strategic Development at Manchester City Council and has overseen many major initiatives in the city. His presentation focused on regeneration over the last 30 years, including the adaptive use of heritage buildings and historic spaces, increasing the city's residential population and managing changing transport needs in a growing city through innovative approaches.

The third talk was by Rollin Stanley, the General Manager of Planning, Development and Assessment in the City of Calgary. Calgary is undergoing rapid change, with a growing population related to the role of oil production in Alberta. Rollin brings to bear his experience and reputation as a visionary, drawing on what works to change things that don't. He has worked on revitalising the City of St. Louis through tax credits and historic preservation, urbanizing the suburbs of Washington D.C. and redeveloped out-dated industrial districts in Toronto. His approach was colourful and challenging.

The City Talks were well attended and well received by Aberdeen citizens, with many people attending all three events. The talks provided a common reference point for those who attended, and aided a deeper level of discussion in the public consultation sessions that each talk corresponded with. All three of the talks can be accessed through Aberdeen City Council's [Shaping Aberdeen site](#).

If you would like to discuss how a similar series could enrich your planning and consultation process, please get in touch with us.

18 March 2015

## Glasgow University REPR MSc 2015: Port Dundas Spatial Planning



The 2014-2015 REPR Masters students at Glasgow University studied the Port Dundas-Sighthill area as part of their Spatial Planning group project. Led by Amin Kamete and Kevin Murray, this work entailed analysing and devising a plan for this area to the north of the city centre, currently subject to several initiatives of regenerative change.

The students, who are from all around the world, worked in groups to develop spatial strategies and action plans, which they then presented to a combined audience. Their work is also assessed as part of an annual RTPi West of Scotland chapter award that will be announced in the summer.



6 March 2015

## Firhill-Hamiltonhill Charrette



Kevin Murray Associates were commissioned by Scottish Canals and their partners to facilitate the Applecross-Firhill-Hamiltonhill-Woodside Charrette, or as it came to be known, “What Floats Your Boat?” Charrette. We worked alongside the charrette design team of LUC, LDN architects, AECOM and Envirocentre to programme a charrette event that took in a wide area around the canal corridor with multiple, distinct communities in the area.

The charrette ran from 4 – 7 February and was primarily located in Partick Thistle Football Club’s Aitken Suite, with a satellite event held in ng Homes new base in Possilpark. The charrette explored the area on foot at the outset, highlighting some of the opportunities in the area, and the unique feature of the expansive greenspace in close proximity to the city centre. Participants worked on future scenarios and special site studies. Strengthening the communities in the area by providing better connections to and across the canal was a strong theme that was looked at on the second day of the charrette during the technical session, alongside other issues such as flooding, housing and movement.

The themes that emerged from the first two days acted as the brief for the design team to draw up material on the third day, while community engagement work was ongoing. The themes were:

Activity – to improve health through exercise and active lifestyles; sport, play and leisure; and art and culture production and consumption.

Movement and access – a bridge crossing to reconnect Hamiltonhill; formalize desire lines; and adopt a people-first approach to the road and movement network.

Greenspace – protect and enhance the Claypits as an important community green area; and green networks that not only join up greenspaces, but influence the character of urban areas too.

Development – housing with a truly mixed tenure and typology on Hamiltonhill; mixed use sites on Trossach Street and Baird Brae; a redeveloped Firhill Stadium giving a street front to Firhill Road; and creating a focus for the area with arts-led development at Applecross Basin.

Other big themes that ran through the charrette were health and community participation. One of the aims of the charrette was to start to shift how local people view the canal corridor and encourage them to see it as an asset in the area that could help people adopt healthier lifestyles. To this end, Matt Baker was commissioned

to run an art programme that engaged people in the area and helped them to begin to imagine what the canal could be like in the future. This programme ran street events, schools events and culminated in an arts event after the close of the charrette exhibition on the Saturday beside Firhill Basin. This was a really successful close to the event, bringing life and vibrancy to the canalside on a frozen February morning, giving a powerful demonstration of the animated canal that many participants envisaged during the charrette.

Images and video from the charrette are up on the Scottish Canals

website: <http://www.scottishcanals.co.uk/property-regeneration/projects-/glasgow/applecross-firhill-and-hamiltonhill-charette>

31 January 2015

## Royston Vision and Strategy



The Rosemount Development Trust, on behalf of the wider Royston Strategy Group of local partners, appointed a team led by Kevin Murray Associates with [Willie Miller Urban Design](#) and [Benton-Scott Simmons](#) to prepare a comprehensive vision and strategy for Royston as a place, integrating the social, economic and environmental elements. This strategy is to be used as an advocacy tool for discussions with stakeholders, policymakers and funders, helping to sustain positive change and investment in Royston. Royston, historically a canalside

industrial community known as Garngad, is located in the north-east of Glasgow, dislocated from the nearby city centre by the M8, and earlier the Monklands Canal that preceded it for nearly 200 years. It sits on the edge of the North Glasgow Priority Area, exhibiting indicators of multiple deprivation, notably poor health, lower than average levels of educational attainment and high unemployment. A great deal of valuable work by local housing associations and the community over the last twenty five years has resulted in a much improved housing stock, but there are still pockets of land that are disused or misused. The quality of place could be further improved, while the retail offer is very limited, particularly in terms of fresh food, and there are few major employers in the area. There are generally poor transport links to the rest of the city.

Crucially, the Royston Vision and Strategy has been a true community-led initiative, commissioned by and developed with, the people who live and work there. The Royston Strategy Group is an important umbrella partnership including the Rosemount Development Trust, Royston Youth Action, Blochairn Housing Association, Copperworks Housing Co-operative, Royston Corridor Homes (GHA), Spire View Housing Association, the Council and local politicians. They have helped to enable a true grass roots vision, with local voices highlighting the issues and ideas, making it a more authoritative tool for building on the positive change that has taken place, by expressing the future shared direction for the area.

The vision aims to continue making Royston into a strong, stable, socially resilient and healthy Glasgow neighbourhood. The strategy and action plan identifies projects that have been considered under the outcomes of improving the health, economy, connectivity, social resilience and community facilities of Royston.

Following discussions with the community and local organisations, the action plan also identifies some early projects that could act as demonstrators, building confidence in the process and gaining more involvement from the community. These projects offer a way of making physical differences in quick, easy ways, delivering on the momentum that the engagement process has developed.

The Vision and Strategy is being used as a basis for promoting the area internally and externally, linking it to the wider regeneration of North Glasgow, connecting it to other initiatives like Sighthill TRA, rail strategy investment, stalled spaces and public art, ensuring that a whole range of diverse initiatives join together to impact positively on everyday life.

31 July 2014

## RTPI Awards for Planning Excellence 2014



As the culmination of the RTPI's 2014 Awards for Planning Excellence, the main ceremony was held at the Shaw Theatre in Euston, London. Kevin was compering, following a long line of media personalities and newsreaders who had performed the role previously. Given the centenary year, there were a number of links to early planning and planners, including George Bernard Shaw himself, and Stanley Adshead, one of the pioneer planning educators. But the key was celebrating the achievements of all the great finalists, assessed in a process led by Sir Terry Farrell, the head judge.

The full drama of the evening, including all the winners, is captured on the [RTPI's photostream](#). What was impressive was the commitment and achievement within so many different types of planning in different places – we had representation from Ireland, Northern Ireland, China, Scotland and Wales, as well as across England.

There was delight from all the winners, none more so than local authority team of the year, Sandwell MBC. It was also a delight to see Glasgow pick up the Silver Jubilee Cup for the Govan Action Plan, as it is a project KMA know very well from using it as a project laboratory at [Glasgow University](#).

Thanks are extended to all the excellent RTPI team who put the event together, represented in the photo here by Ellie Green, who also assisted the formal presentations on stage.

[The brochure with all the winners and shortlisted entries can be found here.](#)



26 July 2014

## Haddenham Airfield Consultation



Lands Improvement

Holdings (LIH) commissioned KMA to run a set of community-facing design workshops for land on the edge of Haddenham, Buckinghamshire. This was part of the process for nominating the site as a potential allocation for housing in the Haddenham Parish Council Neighbourhood Plan. The site that LIH holds in Haddenham has an interesting constraint; a gliding club uses one third of the land as its aerodrome, which was historically used as a training ground for gliders used in the D-Day landings.

Working with LIH's planning and design team of Savills, Broadway Malyan, Fabrik landscape architects and Peter Brett Associates, we designed and facilitated a series of workshops and site visits that sought community input over two stages: The first around general principles and future scenarios of uses and layout; the second, run with Political Developments Limited (PDL), explored more detailed masterplan proposals for the site.

The workshops were well attended and a highly enjoyable experience, thanks to the participants who came ready to question and probe emerging proposals in an open and thoughtful manner.

The outcome of these workshops can be summarised in 6 main themes:

1. Importance of village identity – the built environment has an organic growth pattern with winding streets, alleys and several village greens known as 'Ends'
2. Community relationships and balance – any new development should ensure that it is possible for new residents to integrate into village life, for instance by locating village sports provision within part of the site.
3. Population needs – the two ends of the homeowner spectrum particularly need to be considered – young homeowners with children who will need playspace and access to education, while older homeowners may be looking to 'downsize' and have a degree of supported living.
4. The Gliding Club – retention of the club is really important to Haddenham, both as part of its heritage and current identity. Clear safety zones need to be established to allow new housing and the club to coexist.
5. Drainage infrastructure – surface water drainage on the edge of Haddenham has been an issue in the recent past and new development needs to improve on the current situation, and certainly not exacerbate it.
6. Access, movement and linkages – future growth of Haddenham needs to be accompanied by an expansion and enhancement of the movement networks to ensure there are different options for moving around (by foot, bicycle, public transport, car) and that these alternatives are desirable and useful, for integration.

The site under consultation went on to gain an allocation in the [draft Neighbourhood Plan](#) in December 2014. UPDATE: [The Neighbourhood Plan was approved in a local referendum on 16th July 2015.](#)

30 May 2014

## Inverness Cultural Centre: An Exploratory Conversation



In May 2014

Kevin Murray Associates were commissioned by Highlife Highland and the Highland Council to facilitate a community discussion on the prospect of a cultural centre in Inverness. The brief was to lead the session based on the first principles that the evening would explore a culture-led town centre regeneration project that was multi-use (library, museum, art gallery etc.) and of national scale ambition and partnering.

KMA researched and prepared a presentation of multi-use centres from around Scotland, the UK and Europe, to demonstrate the types of uses that could co-exist and learn from how other places had approached culture-led regeneration. In amongst this were examples of cultural centres that had failed, either from failed management or too sterile a use.

Following the presentation we gamed the possible make-up of a multi-use cultural centre for Inverness. Each group came up with a different emphasis for the cultural centre concept, but a series of principles emerged:

1. A destination factor is crucial – provided that the people-drawing effect was to the enhancement of the city and not the detriment by ‘emptying out’ of some areas.
2. Co-location of production and consumption was considered a key move, particularly if it represented a ‘filling’ of the gaps in the Inverness cultural scene.
3. The regenerative effect is key for Inverness, therefore this needs extremely careful consideration in terms of location and network.
4. Progress the idea based on good knowledge of the cultural landscape in Inverness and use this to address the risk of merely diluting the existing.
5. All groups built up a vision of a place that has multiple uses, with the justification that some uses would be present to financially sustain the centre by generating an income, such as a café, childcare or other commercial element.

Thanks to all the participants, Highland Highlife and Highland Council.

20 May 2014

## Port Dundas Charrette



Port Dundas was another of the charrettes in the Scottish Government's Mainstreaming Programme with KMA acting as the joint team lead with [Peter Brett Associates](#) alongside the team of [Willie Miller Urban Design](#), [Benton Scott-Simmons](#) and [Turner Townsend](#).

The aim of the charrette was to formulate a planning and development framework that would subsequently form the basis of supplementary guidance for the area through the city development plan. The Port Dundas site is widely acknowledged to have massive potential, given its location across the M8 from the city centre. However there are several challenges to moving the area forwards, including previous uses, the scale and image of the site and the level of investment required for transformation.

The charrette identified key principles

- Strengthening the links not only north-south, but also east-west
- Continuing to evolve the surrounding post-industrial uses with an even more diverse mix, including residential
- Exploiting the opportunity to experiment and innovate, from small businesses incubation to funky leisure
- Generating visitor interest, to help put Port Dundas on the mental map as a gateway to the north of the city
- Exploring new procurement models such as Custom-build development

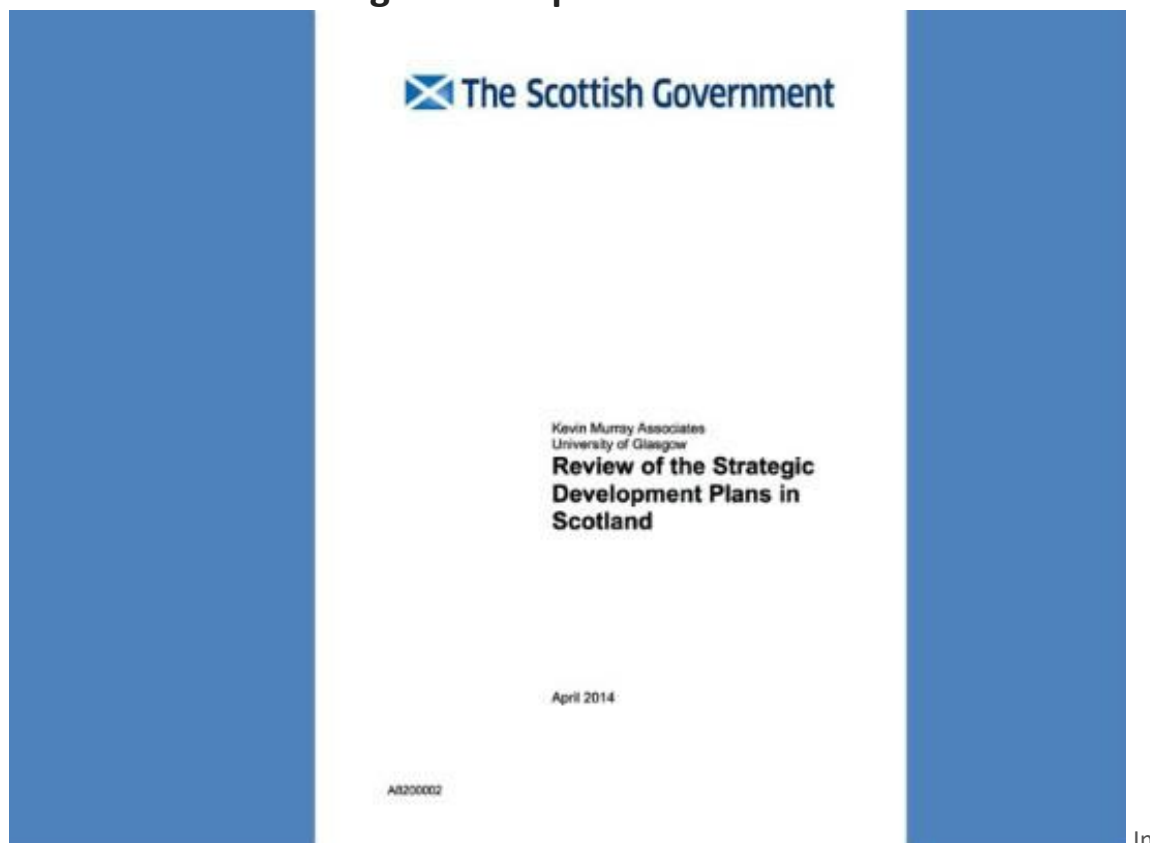
The first moves along North Canal Bank Street aim to build upon the idea that positive incremental change creates its own momentum and interest that stimulates visitors and further investment.

This was Glasgow City's first charrette and it received an enthusiastic reception from participants whom we thank for their contributions. Glasgow City Council had a small film crew on hand to document the process and this can be viewed [here](#). Social media also played an important role in engaging people in the charrette and a summary of this was put together by Willie Miller and can be viewed [here](#).

**UPDATE:** The charrette report is up on the Scottish Government website: <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0047/00476616.pdf>

25 April 2014

## Review of the Strategic Development Plans in Scotland



October 2013, a team from KMA and the University of Glasgow were commissioned by the Scottish Government to undertake a review of the Strategic Development Plans and their 'fitness for purpose'. Vincent Goodstadt advised our team, drawing on his extensive experience of strategic planning and his role in helping establishing the current Scottish model. The research methodology involved gathering a wide range of initial data from a questionnaire to identify the key issues on content and process, before exploring these at a deeper level of detail through workshops and interviews in each of the strategic plan areas.

With nearly 500 contributions from participants, the output from the review was a report that culminated in 6 overview themes, with findings and proposals under each theme for the Scottish Government, its agencies and the SDPAs to consider. The themes reflect the key topics that emerged from the research as areas that could be strengthened to improve the Strategic Development Planning system in Scotland. Overall it was considered that the system was certainly 'not broken', but that it was been a good time to take stock in order to ensure that the system matures and evolves well.

The key improvement themes are around:

1. Collaborative leadership and governance
2. Effective engagement and scrutiny
3. Housing and community building
4. Transport and infrastructure role
5. The influence on delivery
6. Resourcing and skills

The full report is available to view online through the Scottish Government website [here](#).

UPDATE: Response from the Scottish Government to the Review can be found [here](#).



20 March 2014

## Bowling Basin Charrette



The Scottish Government Charrette Mainstreaming programme for 2013-14 included charrettes by Scottish Canals in 3 different locations, and KMA were involved in all three. At Bowling Basin, KMA were the charrette facilitators and reporters as part of a team comprising Michael Laird Architects, Rankin Fraser Landscape Architects, Arup and RSP.

The charrette was held in two stages, the first in mid-February. The local community were central to the process and, as the first stage unfolded, there were reservations from some at the prospect of major change or development on the site, while others regarded it as necessary investment in order to move the place forward from a long period of negligible investment. The design team worked really creatively with the community, illustrating what different levels of development might look like and the level of impact there might be. The live design element of the charrette served its function as a form of open, visual mediation.

The stage 2 event held in mid-March presented the work that the design team had completed in the interim period. Members of the community, including boat and canal users had the opportunity to view the different options and provide feedback. While there were still mixed feelings about any new development, the drawing work that had been done in the interim period showed that change and development could be more contextual, and less dominating, than some had feared. This was achieved through careful consideration of scale, design and the limits to the extent of development established during the first stage of the charrette.

The report and design work from the event is available on a dedicated Bowling Basin website, set up by Scottish Canals [here](#).

15 March 2014

## Glasgow University REPR MSc 2014: Glasgow City West



This year's spatial planning class investigated the issues around the western edge of Glasgow city centre, mimicking a real life project undertaken by Scottish Enterprise and Glasgow City Council. The area included the International Financial Services District (IFSD), the land under and west of the motorway and Kingston Bridge, as well as the sites around the 1960s Cadogan Square scheme at Anderston, where the team pic was taken.

Working with Aminn Kamete and Kevin the student groups devised strategies for mending the fractured linkages, upgrading the subway station, and bringing a diverse mix of uses into the area, from technology and finance, to culture and learning. Proposals for some housing (including for students!) and hotels, came forward alongside some ideas for new public spaces and radical traffic calming, with much better cycling links. Some of the bigger ambitions included additional crossings over the Clyde, while there were also radical ideas to make the spaces under the bridge more useable.

This was a more fragmented challenge than many of the previous study areas and, given that market circumstances were seen to be sticky at best, many of the proposals were functional, pragmatic and even a little cautious. This was perfectly realistic given local and global conditions, but most teams devised approaches for ramping things up over time, and having partnership and funding approaches to ensure delivery.

The project parameters were typical of so many current cities across the world, outside the booming economies, and a good model from which to explore strategies and appreciate potential risks and outcomes.

17 February 2014

## Glasgow City Centre West Development Framework



*Under the M8, outside Anderston Station.*

Kevin Murray Associates were part of a team, led by Hypostyle Architects, commissioned by Scottish Enterprise and Glasgow City Council to produce a development framework for Glasgow's City Centre West. The study area is a large part of the western city centre, running from Central Station to the M8, and from the Broomielaw north as far as Sauchiehall Street. KMA provided planning policy analysis, advice on strategic policy direction, placemaking as well as facilitating two key stakeholder workshops.

The study examined exemplars of successful business districts in other European cities to cross-examine the policy direction for the area and consider how it could be adapted to enable a vibrant and competitive business district. The area falls within the city's principle office area in terms of planning policy. While this has been successfully resulted in several major commercial developments these have under-active ground floors, leaving the place desolate, especially outside business hours. The study recognised that the most competitive business districts have a fine grain of uses integrated into the commercial office environment – therefore a primary recommendation coming out of the study was to stimulate more human activity and a better sense of safety by ensuring that existing and future developments have ground floor uses that contribute activity to the streets and a much finer grain of uses, including some residential and retail, to create a more dynamic place that people want to visit.

Another key element was considering how the development framework could facilitate the greater activation of the Clyde waterfront. This is a highly under-used area, despite the considerable investment in public realm. Ideas that were proposed included floating barges, housing restaurants, offices, leisure uses and even a barrage to raise the water level enabling a greater degree of interaction between people on the river bank and the water.

The study identified that critical early investments are required around much improved walking and cycling networks, including a major upgrade around Anderston Station, to connect the area both back into the city centre, and also west towards the regenerating Finnieston area. Being able to move more continuously across the M8 corridor would further enhance the area.



20 June 2013

## Signature Project Brodick – The National Trust for Scotland



In December 2012 a consortium led by Kevin Murray Associates – including [Willie Miller Urban Design](#), The Burrell Company, Janet Benton Landscape (now Benton Scott-Simmons), James Fraser Tourism, ruralDimensions, WSP and Turner and Townsend – were commissioned by the National Trust for Scotland to undertake a spatial masterplan to unlock, co-ordinate and reveal the many assets that the NTS has at Brodick Castle, Country Park and Goatfell Estate. The aim of this Signature Project was to enhancing the place for the visitor and community on the island through strategic investment in both the property and operations. The NTS property on Arran is an iconic landscape, highly visible on the approach to the island by ferry – so delivering sensitive, yet economic solutions was placed high on the agenda.

We worked with the NTS Signature Project Brodick working group, along with local community, businesses and agencies in a series of workshops. These tested different scenarios in exercises that showed the limits of both high and low levels of development in delivering the aims of the Signature Project. Too much development and change would compromise the special character of the place and its appeal to visitors, too little development and change would risk the property by not increasing visitor numbers and spend to the level required.

The team analysed the spatial elements of the property from the shoreline to the top of Goatfell, the highest point on the island, and everything in between. This transect acted as a background principle for the whole project. The masterplan provided the client with a prospectus of projects that could be grouped into varying configurations to address economic, environmental and social needs of the estate and island.

Conversion of the various castle flats and cottages into tourist accommodation, an extensively upgraded adventure play area for children, and a new multi-functional facility attached to the castle providing space for unified office, service and catering functions, were suggested, along with an enhanced museum and interpretation space. The aim was to build positive synergies and additional capacity that met the aspirations of the Trust for the property.

The prospectus was presented to the NTS board in June 2013 where it was well received.



15 March 2013

## Glasgow University REPR MSc 2013: Govan



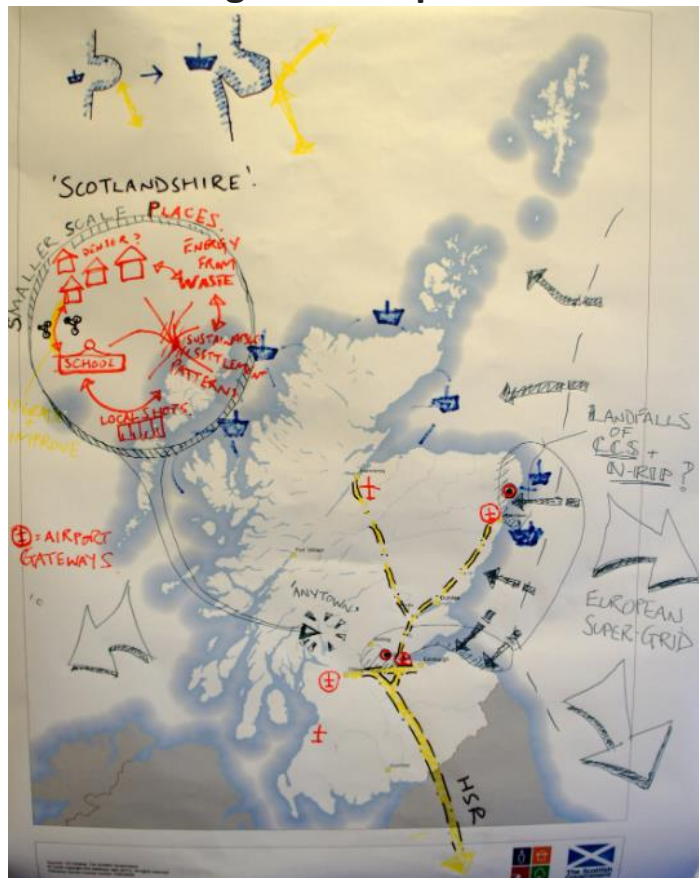
This year's Spatial Planning Strategy project, which Kevin led with Amine Kamete, involved devising a strategy for the historic Govan neighbourhood of Glasgow. With ancient roots dating from before Viking times, Govan underwent rapid growth in the 19th century, but equally rapid decline with the collapse of shipbuilding and other industry in the later 20th century. With a much reduced population the place has many contemporary challenges including connectivity, housing, but particularly employment and health, as student research showed from the many datasets.

Eamon Campbell of Glasgow City Council provided much needed baseline background and insight, as the student groups sought to devise their own particular strategies for renewing prosperity to the area. Some concentrated on the historic identity and distinctive separateness from the city centre identity, while others sought to integrate with new bridges. Several sought to provide new reasons to visit for leisure and tourism activity, while new modes of employment from engineering to culture, to health sector R&D were advocated. Nearly all sought to add a measure of new housing, particularly close to the river, where they also proposed that a stronger interface with the Clyde was necessary.

Coming from such a diverse nature of backgrounds, both internationally and Scottish, these group strategies showed a growing maturity in analysis and thought, while their increased capability and confidence with digital graphics meant that their presentations were cogent, overtly spatial and often colourful too.

20 February 2013

## NPF3: Stirling Workshop



In January 2013, the Scottish Government hosted a workshop to update and engage a wide range of stakeholders in the progress of the National Planning Framework (NPF3). Facilitated by Kevin Murray of KMA, the event was opened by Derek McKay MSP, Minister for Local Government and Planning, who encouraged participants to think ambitiously about the plan and the role it can play in supporting Scotland's economic development.

During the course of the day, the groups rotated between three main workshop themes: (1) Low Carbon Economy (2) People and Environment (3) Connections and Infrastructure, each hosted by a specialists convenor.

The groups explored a range of potential future scenarios, analysed issues, and generated propositions for consideration in the Planning Framework. Discussion was around any gaps in knowledge or propositions, and the potential alignment between some of the themes, notably environment and economy.

There was some detailed discussion around what might conceivably constitute a 'national project' and what might fall below that threshold.

The output from the workshops help to inform other consultation events, all leading towards the [Main Issues Report for NPF3](#) which is due to be out to consultation spring/summer 2013.

19 May 2012

## Supporting the Glasgow Jazz Festival



In the autumn of 2012, Kevin Murray Associates will be 10 years old, having launched at the Birmingham Urban Summit in 2002.

As part of our celebration of this landmark, we are sponsoring the Glasgow Jazz Festival 2012 in June and July. We already sponsor a range of charities and causes on an individual basis, but believe the Jazz Festival fits well with the philosophy and approach to our professional work.

Good urbanism is as much about social and cultural animation and experience, as about planning and place design, and we believe supporting the creative sector in this way also helps celebrate great places, like the award winning Merchant City, at the heart of Glasgow.

At a time when large scale capital investment in the physical fabric is considerably reduced (in both the UK and much of Europe), it has become even more important that we make the best use of the facilities in our towns, cities and villages. One obvious way is through the curation of events, activities and experiences that help us to appreciate what we have, in terms of culture and venues, and share it with others.

We are grateful to Glasgow Jazz Festival and Arts and Business Scotland for enabling this association. If you would like more details about the festival programme, please refer to [www.jazzfest.co.uk](http://www.jazzfest.co.uk).



6 May 2012

## AoU Derry~Londonderry Congress VII



The Academy of Urbanism took its 7<sup>th</sup> Congress to Derry~Londonderry, the city on the Foyle way up on the border in the north of Ireland. Having planned it for nearly a year, we aimed to strike a balance between gaining a deeper historical understanding of Derry~Londonderry, appreciating its current stages of regeneration, whilst also undertaking an exploration of the wider meaning of resilience from an urbanism perspective.

Our 'place partnering' approach to the Congress enabled delegates to get closer to the issues of the host venue, notably in workshops, whilst also sharing ideas and advice. The speakers from the locality, whether from official bodies or the community, were open and reflective, offering up their ideas, strategies and ways forward, and even some mistakes to be overcome. The international speakers provided an excellent contribution on the roles of progressive thinking about design and placemaking, from Helsinki to Lisbon, and also about living with cross border mindsets in the Netherlands.





In addition to the plenary day at a packed Playhouse Theatre, the delegates said that it was often the other experiences that made the Congress one of the Academy's more memorable events: The launch at the award-winning Culturlann, walking along and around the famous walls, listening to the University of Ulster Choir in St Augustine's Church, visiting the Foyle Hospice and later the Apprentice Boys Hall. Even the Congress dinner, held in a marquee at famous Beech Hill House during a rainstorm, was made memorable by power failures that only added to a sense of occasion in candlelight.

Once again, it was during the concluding morning's workshop that some of the greatest creative contributions and incisive learning came, during an open and discursive debate about the place and lessons to be learned from the event.

It had been considered a risk to go to Derry, by some, certainly a big step. I can only say once again, a big thank you to all the organising partners, hosts, sponsors and speakers, for making it such a truly memorable event that will take some beating in future years.

There are a selection of pictures on the Academy website at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/academyofurbanism/sets/>

8 April 2012

## Hong Kong Urban Design



Just back from speaking at the Hong Kong Institute of Urban Design (HKIUD) international conference. An excellent event, picked up in their local media, not least because good urban design will play an ever-increasing part in Hong Kong's attractiveness to businesses and tourists, and also its liveability to workers and managers. It is not just the prestige that matters, but the everyday liveability, which it seems generally agreed, needs to be improved.

I was speaking on engagement across the public and private sectors, which seemed well received, not least because there are many local challenges of engagement to address. It would be good to go out there again and work with them, and the HKIUD are to be congratulated for the progress they are making in taking this dimension forward over the last two years. Hopefully they will be able to progress from a 'professional' body to become a wider influence on place and culture.











30 March 2012

## NPPF : Friend or foe? AoU debate

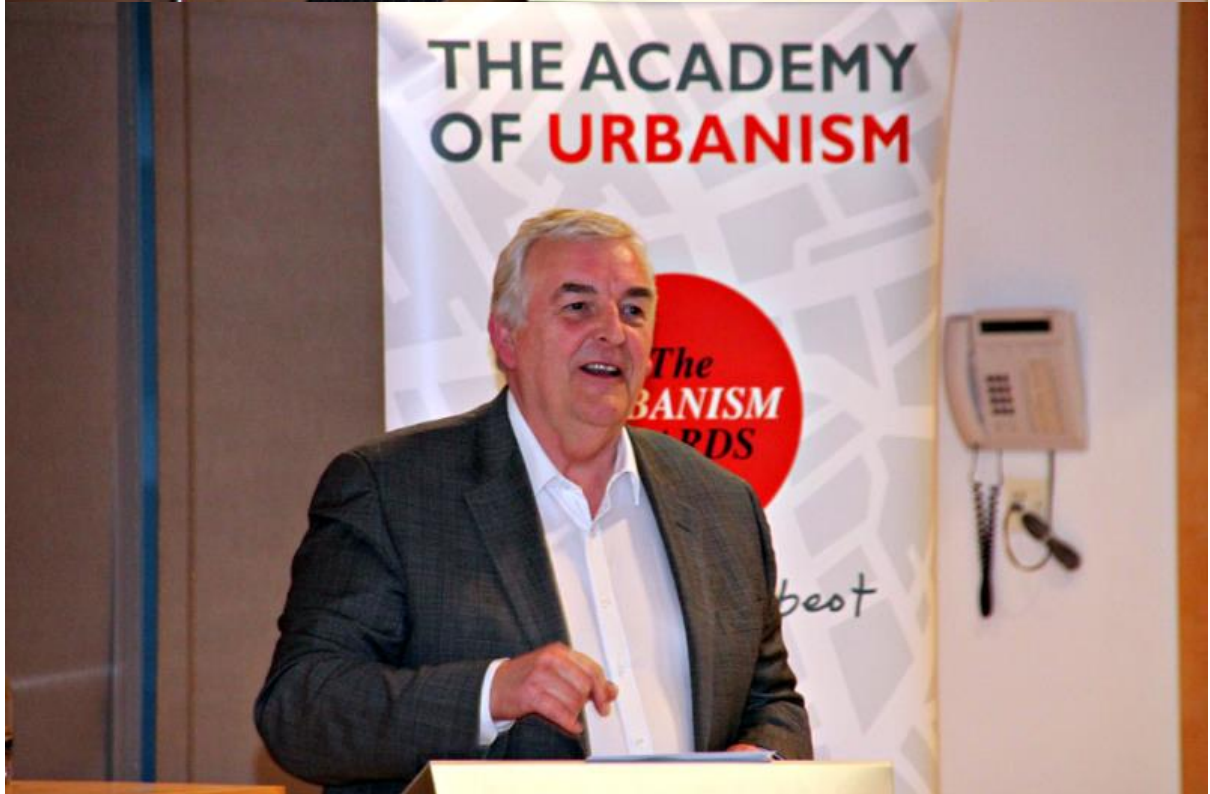


I chaired a timely debate on the merits of the new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in England. Kindly hosted at the London offices of Grosvenor as part of their support for the Academy of Urbanism, it included thoughtful presentations from David Lock, Charmaine Young and Paul Murrain on the day after the NPPF was launched.

David was broadly supportive of the Government's amended NPPF, in the sense that it was an improvement that would encourage the good projects, but he was more nervous about the capability of local government to support this. Charmaine was very supportive of the amended draft, intimating it had come a long way from the more criticised version, and stressing the importance of moving on now to deliver much needed homes. Paul was much more critical of an avoidance of place-based thinking, with a prevailing culture of plans merely as an allocation of fields to 'capture' houses. He doubted that the latest NPPF would make much difference to positive, sustainable urbanism.

My interpretation of the debate was that the permissive nature of the NPPF may enable the 10-15% 'better' urbanism to proceed apace, but it will do little to help address the 85% of placeless development that will be unleashed. Stuff will happen, yes, but most will not be very good. There are clearly capacity and skills issues in local authorities that will make this more problematic, and there also seems to be far too much uncertainty created around interpretations of the materiality of previous plans and proposals from the previous cycles.

Lots of fees for lawyers, no doubt, who seem to be the main beneficiaries of the NPPF chaos... but more uncertainty around the urbanism legacy.







23 March 2012

## AoU Olympic Site Visit



We had an excellent guided bus trip around the Olympic Site, viewing the permanent and temporary features. Then we had a presentation from a variety of perspectives on the nature of the legacy and the likelihood of integration with surrounding areas. There is still much to do, not least in the nature of the downstream delivery after the hiatus of the Olympics itself. One can also get an interesting take in the legacy and sustainability dimensions from the humorous Twenty Twelve television programme.









23 March 2012

## Towns in Transition, Ecobuild



In our regular Academy at Ecobuild slot, I chaired the Towns in Transition seminar, this year including Bury St Edmunds, Derry and Totnes, the three previous finalists in our Great Towns category. The presentations respectively by Ian Poole (St Edmundsbury Council), Carol and Anthony Whitty (Transition Town Totnes and Totnes Town Council), John Kelpie and Tony Monaghan (Derry City Council), showed up the diversity and progressiveness of each place, but they also showed up some common strands too.

Historic layers of place are important, not just the now or the future, and how the inheritance is dealt with can contribute success. Having some kind of aspirational vision and principles are also important as a shared vehicle for taking people forward, albeit in a continuous debate or dialogue. Also I felt, the role of institutions and accountable mechanisms was important, as all three identified from completely different recent perspectives. The search for community enlightenment seemed to go hand in hand with community empowerment.

I hope many of those present will continue the debate at the Academy's Derry Congress on 10 May 2012.







21 March 2012

## Steve Tiesdell Legacy Seminar



On 27 February over 120 people gathered at The Lighthouse, Glasgow's Architecture Centre, to participate in a Legacy Seminar to celebrate the achievements and passions of the late Dr Steve Tiesdell of Glasgow University. People came from across the academic, governmental and practitioner communities of Scotland, England, Wales, and even Finland. They included friends from all stages of Steve's career, including former architectural and academic colleagues, research clients, former students, as well as his family. The seminar was followed by drinks in Babbity Bowster, a favourite haunt of Steve's in the Merchant City, then a curry evening at the Dhakin restaurant. [Details](#) and [pictures](#) from this very successful event are kindly hosted on the A&DS website link.



I first knew Steve when we were both young professionals working under Francis Tibbalds in London during the late 1980s, before Steve returned to academia at Nottingham. We linked up again when I was involved

with his teaching at Aberdeen, then Glasgow, Universities. He was a passionate urban designer with a uniquely colourful lecturing style, but he was also an extremely thoughtful urbanist who sought to look behind the obvious superficial patterns – examining spaces, financial processes, laws and personalities, and the positive and negative impacts they had upon place. He loved living in Glasgow’s Merchant City, whilst retaining an enthusiasm for travelling worldwide – and for sports, especially West Ham United.

Just like Francis Tibbalds 20 years’ earlier, Steve’s death represents a sad premature loss to colleagues, friends and family. We are fortunate that much of his important work, like the seminal [Delivering Better Places](#) research, is published and widely available.



28 February 2012

## Glasgow University REPR MSc 2012: Port Dundas



As part of their Spatial Planning Strategies project, Kevin took the international group of MSc students around the Port Dundas and Sighthill areas in February, to gain an appreciation of the complexities of the challenge. Although the weather was bleak, the students learnt about the scale, connectivity and environmental challenges, including advice from regeneration specialists Brian McGraw and Gary Watt. Here they are up at the Sighthill Standing Stones, overlooking the motorway.

Working in mixed groups of three or four people, and drawing upon a series of specialist lectures, they went on to develop their own distinctive approaches to redeveloping and transforming the area.

The strategies, which the teams devised and submitted formally, were then presented to an expert audience at the University at the conclusion of the project. Ideas ranged from new bridge and station infrastructure, to new residential neighbourhoods on the hills, new employment, temporary uses, and outdoor leisure along the 'go ape' model. One of the groups successfully went on to receive the RTPI prize at a special ceremony, awarded by representatives of the RTPI West of Scotland chapter.

21 November 2011

## Filwood Park Enquiry by Design



KMA planned and facilitated an Enquiry by Design process for the HCA at Filwood Park, Knowle West in South Bristol, working with an excellent team combining GVA, New Masterplanning and Alan Baxter Associates. The challenge was to approach an underutilised park and former industrial brownfield site, and try to configure something that provided new community greenspace, as well as new housing and mixed use development.

It was extremely sensitive for a range of reasons, and there was a need to involve local people and agencies in a creative manner. We did this in stages over several days, starting on a Saturday with a site visit, then holding agency and young people's sessions as it progressed. Issues included usable green space, the role of wildlife, neighbour security, as well as the core challenge of creating development value with a critical mass and appropriate design. Many interests had to be accommodated and our team worked hard, thinking through a range of scenarios and responses. A preferred approach was arrived, to be taken forward as a planning application in the New Year. Well done to the Knowle West community for their constructive engagement, but also the whole team who worked particularly hard in a very concentrated time span.

22 September 2011

## AoU City Assessment Oslo



We arrived by train during one of the strongest storms of the year, but the weather soon improved. Oslo, like Gothenburg, is clearly a leading edge city, but is able to rethink itself from a position of greater economic strength. It has many progressive elements such as the longstanding toll road system, a green and blue network below the protected forest line. It has a progressively redeveloped waterfront including a new opera house and an approach to progressive densified redevelopment at key nodes over time. There is a growing multi-ethnic population as a result of economic success, and a range of measures and policies to try to deal with this expansion, sometimes integrating the work of several national and city departmental services. It is certainly one of the most stunning of European cities in its setting, and retains a very Nordic feel whilst becoming ever more international.









12 September 2011

## AoU City Assessment Gothenburg



I could not make the Lisbon assessment visit, which was a shame as it was allegedly fantastic. However, several days in Gothenburg demonstrated what an exceptional city it is in terms of building on its historic identity and post-industrial transformation.

There is a clear strategic vision, many component elements and programmes. Themes like culture, safety, even beauty, are as important as economy, jobs and tourism. Indeed they are interconnected through progressive institutions and partnerships.

As with all post industrial cities there is still much to do, but Gothenburg seems to be more willing to connect the physical place to the social and economic dimensions that many British cities, and to challenge overly reductive, simplistic sectoral solutions.









12 September 2011

## London 'beach' at Southwark



London is not normally associated with having a beach, although there are several historic photographs of kids playing by the banks of the Thames.

When walking along the South Bank when the tide was out, I observed how distinctive it was, as an attractive sunspot, but with few venturing onto the sand. The cast of South Pacific were publicly rehearsing just above.

If this was another city, or another country, would more people be down on the sand?





24 August 2011

## Aou Great Towns Assessment visit to Derry



Although Derry is a city, we assessed it in the towns category because of its size. I found the journey it had travelled in the last 10-15 years to be quite impressive. The physical place had changed but, more importantly, the social and cultural dimensions had been key building blocks, with Culturlann and The Playhouse both excellent examples. The Peace Bridge and Ebrington Barracks site at the end of it look like offering further major transformational components. There is still much work to do, but Derry looks to be heading in the right direction, aided by a truly distinctive historic town wall and grid plan layout. And everyone seems so enthusiastic.



18 August 2011

## GIA Design Competition Kilcreggan



I was invited to be a judge on the Kilcreggan Design competition, set for the village of Kilcreggan on the Rosneath Peninsula by the Glasgow Institute of Architects (GIA). I visited the day a great many architects, old and young, local and from further afield, came to talk with the locals. They explored lots of ideas together, which were developed into the eventual submissions. These ranged from object fetishism to avant garde landscape to sensitive urban design and village mending. We were impressed by the thought and creativity of a wide range of entries, not least the six finalists. The winner was the entry by Konishi Gaffney architects. There is more information at <http://gia.org.uk/our-work/competitions/kilcreggan>.



24 July 2011

## Vindolanda: What (kind of urbanism) did the Roman's make for us?



As part of a weekend exploring sites along Hadrian's Wall in Northumberland, we go to Vindolanda, an amazing walled town that has been carefully excavated. It is fascinating to view the juxtaposition of the formal walled town with the informal, more organic settlement outside. Both are important and needed in their own way, as most urban evolution can testify. The rigidly planned can be too constraining and inflexible, while overly organic can be too chaotic and difficult to manage. But well worth a visit whatever your preference.



25 June 2011

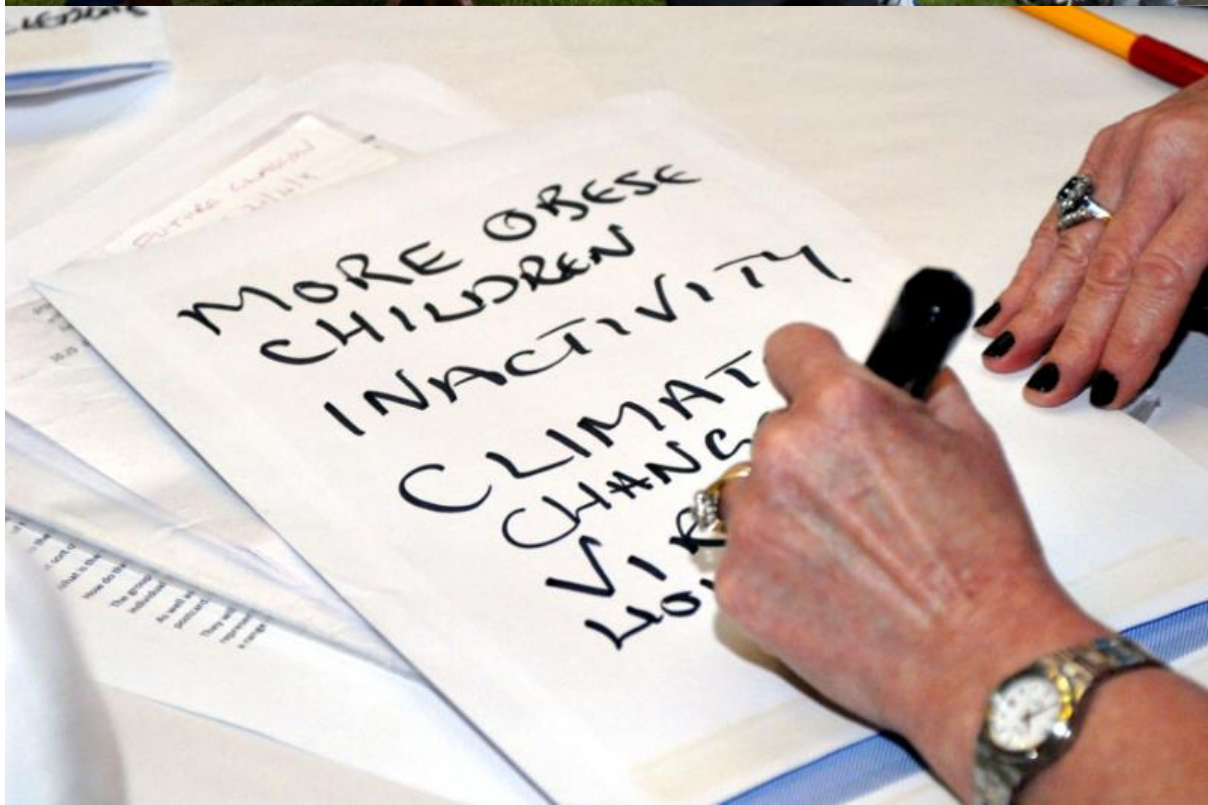
## Future Glasgow: City Vision consultation



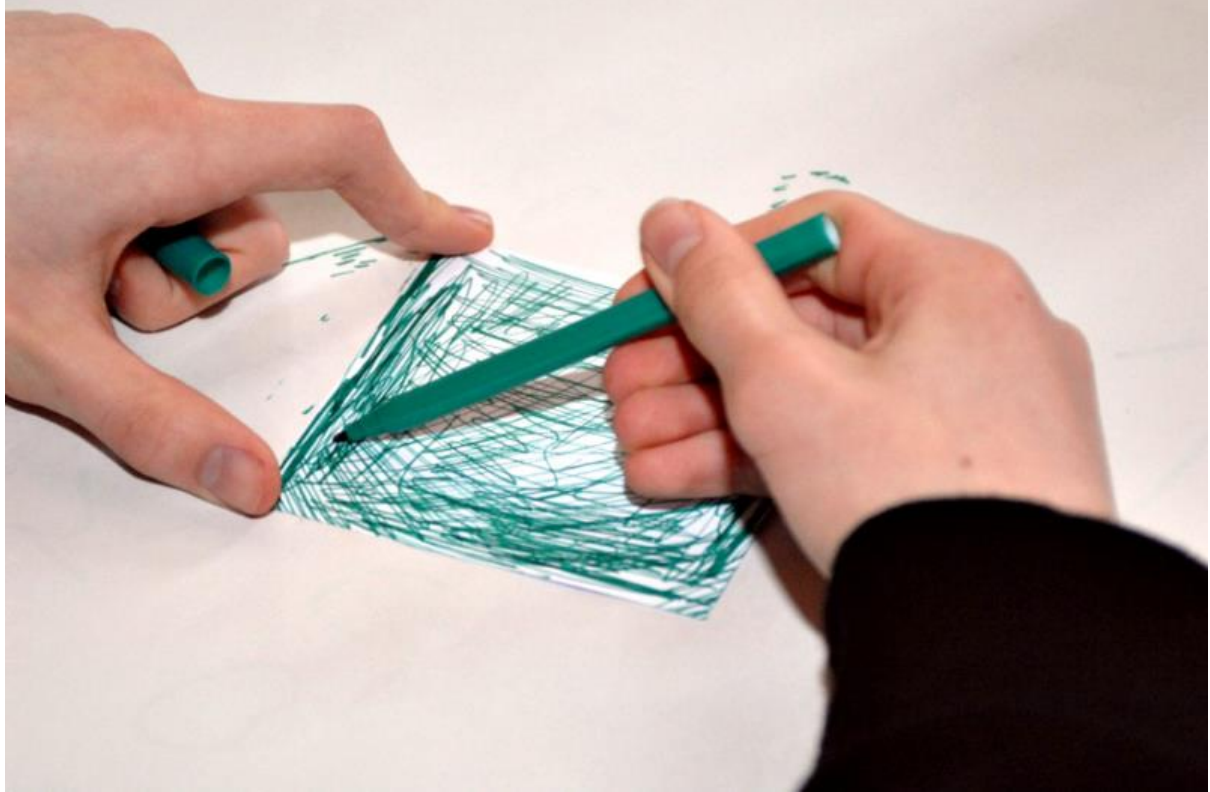
We undertook a series of consultation events across the city as part of our engagement commission on the Future Glasgow project – a 50 year visioning process, promoted by the Leader, and reaching nearly 3,000 people. We consulted business, civic groups, community councillors, schoolchildren, politicians and many others. Here we are working with Ice Cream Architecture (who have the nice van) at a series of community festivals across the city.

For those who want to read about the process and the full vision it is documented on the City's [Future Glasgow website](#). There is also a [Facebook Page](#). The results of the consultation were amazing in their depth, richness and diversity. They are [published here](#).





















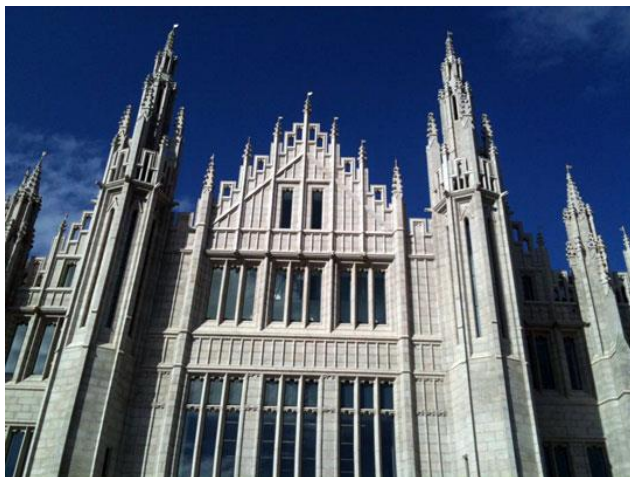


23 May 2011

## Scottish Heads of Planning event, Aberdeen



I revisit my home town to assist in creative workshops with the Scottish Heads of Planning groups. It was nice to meet some old faces, as well as some new ones. The picture shows us all visiting the Union Terrace gardens, where proposals for a new City Gardens are being promoted by Ian Wood and the business community via an international design competition. The details of the process were explained at the event. There were some mixed views as to whether either a design competition or a redevelopment were appropriate, made poignant no doubt by the fact the gardens were being enjoyed by many people on a particularly lovely sunny day.



The Council are soon to move into Marischal College, formerly a key part of the University (and where I studied Geology). It looked particularly resplendent in the sunshine.



29 December 2010

## Richard McCarthy on localism



CLG Director Richard McCarthy spoke to the Academy of Urbanism end of year review, setting out some of the Coalition government's thinking behind the Localism Bill that was announced at the beginning of the same week. Clearly not all the processes and criteria are fully thought through yet, with some elements to follow as national policy documents, but a great deal of work has been done in a short time.

As a lifelong supporter of community engagement, it is hard to fault the aspirations of some of the key elements, challenging top-down strategy and default policy culture (not least by civil servants). I even proposed something like the new Neighbourhood Development Orders myself, some years ago, but was considered bonkers.

However, we also need to be honest about the risk scenarios that lie ahead, including the appropriation of such a devolved system by influential anti-change NIMBYs, who often struggle psychologically to appreciate the implications of doing nothing, especially on those less able, or with fewer life choices than themselves. If however, localism means local people and institutions genuinely taking on wider responsibilities for the whole of their community, including in-migrants, the elderly and the young, then things could perhaps improve. Open processes are not enough. Outcomes matter too.

My current worry is that some local groups and institutions have only a limited grasp of the true scale of the housing needs crisis (and the homelessness that is continually building up), and therefore have only minimal drive to forge ahead with the housing that it is acknowledged is required. It will be interesting to observe whether any of the so-called incentives make a difference.

On balance, it is surely not enough to engage communities in the planning, design and development processes; rather it is essential to help educate all on the implications of different decisions, so that we avoid taking decisions from too narrow a perspective.

4 December 2010

## Letter to the Editor of the Guardian



The feature on the Prince of Wales' 'big society' role (Guardian 27 November) identified a set of opportunities, as well as risks, in the way a participatory democracy might take planning and design issues forward. There is clearly a need for more local participation and arguably less top-down direction from Whitehall, especially on matters of detail.

In our recent Academy of Urbanism Awards celebrating the best places in the UK, Ireland and continental Europe, many of the key winners, such as Hebden Bridge and Tobermory Harbour, highlighted collaborative efforts of individuals and organisations working to create a positive place over a long period. Public, private and voluntary players focused on the overall sense of place and vitality, and not narrowly on design or development aspects.

Our findings are that creating and nurturing great places and neighbourhoods is about much more than just design, embracing as it does events, activities, leisure and community facilities, and of course transport.

Having led Enquiry by Design engagement events myself, I know that we also need to employ a range of equally valid, but less intensive, approaches that can fit different community circumstances using a variety of facilitators, enablers and mediators. The Academy of Urbanism's role includes sharing its members' expertise on urban design, planning and architecture so we can all learn from successes and mistakes, both past and present.

We would do our communities a huge disservice to reduce things to a style spat between so called traditionalists and Will Alsop, or to promote a single methodology. Most communities do not want to be confronted by some stark ideological choice. They want grown up discussion about the future of their place, and trusted people to help them shape it.

23 November 2010

## Academy Awards for Urbanism 2010



The Academy Awards passed for another year, with all the finalists celebrating their achievements in making better places at a lunch in Westminster's Church House. Finalists at all levels had demonstrated considerable achievement, often implemented over several decades, with the three in the City category explaining their back story at a seminar on the preceding evening. Helsinki is progressively planned, indeed a planner's utopia, while Budapest is steadfastly recapturing its former glory, and eventual winner Glasgow exhibited imagination and leadership in moving from an industrial economy to a post industrial one, whilst also enhancing its sense of place.

Keynote speaker Wulf Daseking, who was also being installed as an Honorary Academician, underlined many of the key principles that have guided the progress of Freiburg (and will soon be seen in the English version of the Freiburg Charter).







29 October 2010

## Kilmarnock Integrated Urban Plan: early consultation stages



KMA has been appointed to lead the *place momentum* consortium in preparing an Integrated Urban Development Plan for the Ayrshire town of Kilmarnock. For decades now Kilmarnock has been losing once important industrial activity, with the next major closure due to be Diageo (and the world renowned brand of Johnnie Walker) in 2012.

The challenge for Kilmarnock lies not only in its post industrial economic readjustment, but also in the effect of recent motorway improvements that make it, for some, a lower cost commuter suburb of Glasgow; this external pull is exacerbated by the large out of town malls of Silverburn and Braehead, which affect Kilmarnock's town centre.

There is enormous pride in local people and untapped potential from local business, and part of our early challenge has been to get to grips with the local assets, such as a Castle few outsiders appreciate exists, and hidden potential, like the river that runs through the town centre.

As the plan evolves, there will surely be a role for the Kilmarnock College, a key drawer of young people into the town, and some rethinking of public space and the traffic system. The ideas from local people so far, many of them youngsters, have been imaginative, but also pretty honest and realistic. That has been a positive start so far.







21 May 2010

## **The Grandhome Charette**

The Grandhome Charrette was part of a series of three charrettes around Scotland, exploring innovative placemaking masterplans undertaken in an intensive manner with the involvement of local bodies and community members.

The charrettes were led by American New Urbanist Andres Duany and his international team of practitioners, employing their well known diagnostic transect and associated coding principles.

This interview was taken at the Midway presentation stage of the Grandhome event, held at Kings College in Aberdeen University. More material can be found on the Scottish Government website and the associated Scottish Government report.



1 May 2007

## Hong Kong plays host to talks about creative industries in cities



A symposium in Hong Kong engaged international expertise to look at the way in which planners can liaise with the creative sector to provide the infrastructure that can help support cultural industries, reports Kevin Murray. The RTPi was a leading partner in a major symposium held in Hong Kong last month. Hosted by the Hong Kong Institute of Planning (HKIP) and the Urban Planning Society of China (UPSC), "When Creative Industries Cross Over with Cities" drew more than 300 delegates, including some from Europe, North America and Australia, and saw considerable media coverage. Creativity and cultural industries are of great interest in this area of the world, which has been seeing structural shifts in traditional manufacturing and the service sector. As well as arts, tourism and urban planning perspectives, a chief concern in China is economic development. Presenting a [paper](#) with University of Glasgow cultural researcher Katherine Champion I found that while many issues are globally relevant, policy approaches must be carefully tailored to reflect specific locations and contexts. In China, many cultural operations have grown up in the low-cost space of former industrial buildings, sometimes prospering in neighbourhoods that are then dubbed cultural quarters.

The view of some planners is that artists in such areas are only temporary colonists. Ultimately, they believe, these buildings will become ripe for commercial, residential or office schemes. They miss the point that urban creativity is vital for economic prosperity and contributes to the identity of contemporary cities. These neighbourhoods are not just about rental levels. They involve human networks, progressive leadership and organisational capacity, all part of what author Charles Landry has termed a "creative milieu" deemed essential to foster progressive, adaptable cities.

To meet such challenges, planners may need to consider stronger urban policy responses, perhaps looking to affordable housing percentages as a way to guarantee a proportion of studio space within reach of cultural industries. Alternatively, they could provide cross-subsidising elements to support lower-rent activity. The need for housing and commerce in Hong Kong and other fast-growing Chinese cities can put older, cheaper buildings at risk. It was refreshing to hear symposium presentations on the conservation and heritage potential

of Shanghai, Hong Kong and elsewhere. Laurence Loh's approach to feng shui and the spirit of place was particularly interesting to a western rationalist.

Consultation and engagement issues were also raised and there is clearly more scope for working with artists and the creative sector itself rather than simply providing for them in a top-down manner. Local creative intelligence is something that cities must tap into if they are to prosper in the 21st century. We also heard about pioneering methods of funding, design, delivery and management from Canada, Australia and the USA, with the differences in institutional and fiscal environments being the most obvious contextual factors.

Three issues stood out for me in the discussions:

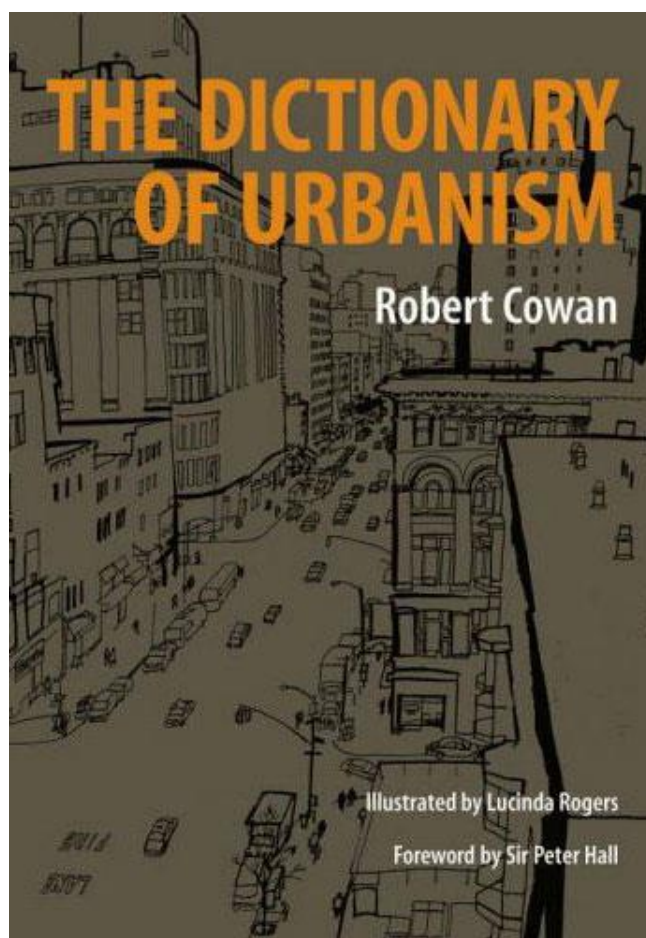
- Thinking and policy development in spatial planning are relatively underdeveloped. Planners must engage more proactively to nurture cities' creative potential.
- There is a danger in simplistically transplanting project models from one context to another. What may have worked in Dublin may not be right for Saigon.
- The economic and top-down policy agendas can eliminate any authenticity in artistic and creative endeavour. Such reductionism means that we all lose out, not just the artists.

The RTPI's role in supporting the symposium builds on earlier cooperation with Hong Kong and China on policy and educational issues. As well as the important role played by RTPI secretary-general Robert Upton, I learned that the efforts of his predecessor David Fryer, past president Robin Thompson and former education director Margaret Catran are well regarded. Not only was the venture a successful collaboration, but it will serve as a platform on which to build future cross-institutional initiatives.

Special mention should go to Johanna Cheng and her HKIP organising team who put in so much work to make the event a success and to UPSC secretary Shi Nan for his strong support. Good luck with the next joint venture.

22 August 2005

## The Dictionary of Urbanism – book review



Whilst academics may reflect on the nature and validity of concepts by analysing their evolution in discourse, planning practitioners possibly reflect less deeply on the terms and concepts we use as daily professional currency. Yet those of us who work across different administrative jurisdictions are often bemused by the subtly different meanings of such basic terms as *planning*, *regeneration*, *renewal*, *development* and *urbanism*; not to mention the divergent interpretations of finely crafted concepts such as *spatial planning*, *sustainable development*, or *new urbanism*.

Frustrated at being manipulated by the definitional drift of ministers or civil servants (for instance, from renewal to regeneration as 1980s PR spin) or the interpretive hair-splitting of lawyers, practitioners are equally apt to distort concepts and principles to suit their own ends – whether working for authorities or particular development interests. For instance, *sustainable development* has become a justification for overdevelopment at a station – even a bus stop – and alternatively an argument for contextless techno-gimmick architecture.

We have been in need of an honest compendium of terms – crystallising the currency of our trade at this point in time. Well, now we have it – and so much more – with Rob Cowan's excellent *Dictionary of Urbanism*. It combines a historical and geographical inventory with a bluffer's guide to all forms of jargon. Indeed it is Cowan's attempt to challenge George Steiner's proposition that 'the proliferation of mutually incomprehensible tongues stems from an absolutely fundamental impulse in language itself'.

Urbane, witty and distinctively illustrated by Lucinda Rogers, it captures and distils terms, ideas, concepts and people from the past and present. It is not merely a listing however, but a networked collective which positively expands one's boundaries. We may know what a *Potemkin village* is, but what of *fatto urbano*, *zenobia* or the *city of Ys*?

For me this work is a tour de force, and almost certainly a labour of love. Among its many strengths are:



- That it crosses the different disciplines involved in urbanism, providing insights into many important personalities who may have influenced the course of thought and practice. Although planning-rooted along the dual axis of Howard-Osborne and Geddes-Mumford, it reaches out to explain architectural, transport and construction terms, and even a few curios like *taylorism*, *birtway* and *regenbabble*.
- Although not academically biased it helpfully spans, and frequently connects, theory and practice being usefully clear and concise in the explanations of, for instance, *space syntax*, *smart growth* and *digital city*.
- Overwhelmingly Anglo American in its content, the dictionary also draws from well beyond that easy London-New York-Chicago axis, taking in concepts, terms and personalities from mainland Europe, notably Germany and Italy, as well as Russia and India, for instance. For an 'English' book, Scottish terms and experiences are unusually well represented, although Africa, Australasia, South East Asia and the Hispanic world are perhaps under-represented.
- The Dictionary frequently embraces cinema, literature and television, where we get so much of our imagery – good and bad – concerning urbanism. In a range that spans John Buchan, Frank Capra, Arthur C Clarke, William Morris and Emile Zola, Cowan manages to go beyond the traditional stereotypes of *No Mean City* and *The Fountainhead*. If *West Side Story* and *Assault on Precinct 13* represent the grittier North American urbanism of the 1960s and 70s, and *Metropolis* and *Blade Runner* are the nightmarish futures, then *The Benefactors* and *The Good Life* offer up important English middle class angst. If only the Australian film *The Castle* were also included
- Cowan ably reflects the important role that key individuals have played in city planning and design and makes connections between them, reminding us that the flow of ideas is through people over time, sometimes in support, at other times in repudiation. Unwin to Tudor-Walters, Geddes to Mumford, Jacobs to Le Corbusier, and Abercrombie to Johnson-Marshall are all intriguing links for which the Dictionary can be a springboard to further inquiry
- The dictionary has humour, even an occasional smugness, especially in subtle criticism through faint praise. The *wow factor* and *non-place urban realm* get this treatment, while the humorous *dress sense* entry would make an illuminating feature all on its own.

The fascinating range of entries Rob has included in this Dictionary makes one wonder what he left out and why. In theory and philosophy Habermas, Healey and Faludi are included, yet there is no place for Castells, Harvey or Sandercock. From Newcastle we have T Dan Smith but no Richard Grainger, and from Merseyside we have Kirby and Brookside, but no Runcorn or Knotty Ash. From history, we have references to *bastide* and *baroque* towns, but no entry for Hellenistic or Roman urbanism.

Perhaps the key lesson from this work is that technical language is important yet ever-changing, and can only ever be represented as a crystallisation of the outlook and usage norms from a particular age and culture. Ideally, within this dynamic the terms we use should enable clear interpretation and, to help with this in the constant flow of language and professional activity, we need specialist works just like this. It is an ideal desktop companion for our times, and even a good bedtime read. Hopefully it will be updated and expanded in the years to come.

**Compiled by Robert Cowan and originally published by Streetwise Press, 2005**

22 March 2005

## Planning is mental. Absolutely.

It is all in the mind, as they say. The sooner we acknowledge planning as a dynamic, neural activity the quicker we can devise approaches, skills and behaviours to make us more effective.

Planning cannot – and will not – survive as an effective spatial management activity if it is confined to rigid statutory processes and the uncritical adoption of so-called ‘best practice’. These prisons of our imagination tend to produce clone city, ‘anywhere’ outcomes, but rarely enduring places. Planning is not just about regulation, it is about the exploration and synthesis of ideas, values and ultimately behaviours.

Planning is as much about our emotional intelligence as our rational and deductive thought processes. It is often our instinctive responses and prejudices which affect how places develop – and we are not always terribly constructive in this regard. The human mind – encumbered by more ‘backward looking’ baggage as we age in adulthood – tends to fear and inhibit change.

Take, for instance, the imaginatively designed and negotiated scheme turned down at committee, not because it is poor or contrary to policy, but because key councillors consider it appears ‘different’ from their view of ‘traditional’; or the town expansion opposed by residents because they do not understand the evolutionary nature of settlements. They assert the town is completely full at 70,000 people and must not grow any further. Ever!

There is the mental block many planners and community environmentalists have about the ‘green belt’, as if it is some self-evident, immutable truth – part of the meaning of life – rather than an important temporary designation to structure the relationship of developed and undeveloped space.

The fears of residents in a regeneration area about the need to accommodate ‘different people’, possibly poorer, sometimes much wealthier, thereby changing their neighbourhood composition, often provokes extreme visceral responses of anger and bitterness. Their cognitive neighbourhood is changing – and they don’t like it.

This fear of change or ‘otherness’ can affect planners themselves, like those who reject the ideas of a partner agency or ‘external’ consultants – not because they are inappropriate or wrong – but because the planners themselves were not at the heart of the project’s conceptual thinking. They have no ownership. Nor are our co-professionals in other disciplines exempt from the ‘not invented here syndrome’ and associated control-junkiness. ‘Letting go’ of an idea is not the strongest trait of many architect friends.

All of these personal emotional responses can affect, sometimes very negatively, the making of a nice, liveable place over a generation. Planning must rise to the challenge of such real emotions, fears and prejudices in these situations. We must recognise we are not dealing with some abstract rational world, but rather an opportunity for mutual learning.

Planners therefore need refreshed skills & approaches, augmenting our core role in the processes of physical and social change with an intelligent listening and learning dimension, sensitised to the people involved.

We need to facilitate the envisioning of future solutions in a creative, collaborative manner. Not to set the lowest or ‘least hassle’ benchmark, but to educate, mediate and stimulate higher aspirations.

We need a heightened ‘social intelligence’ that helps us read situations and guide different people through the practical aspects of sustainability – not as some naïve mantra, but as a core part of our professional competence.

Planners should not be unyielding technocrats shielding behind narrow pseudo-technical jargon or processes. We need to draw from the wells of other specialisms, such as education, communications and psychology. Perhaps we have to become *spatial therapists*, working through the dysfunctionalities of our many communities – whether in towns, cities, or villages.

So, does that mean planning is really a mental rather than technical activity? Not really – just that the technical and legalistic aspects are not the full picture in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. To be effective in the post-Egan interdisciplinary world, we have to continually add new layers of intelligence – becoming *techno-mental*, if you like.

None of this has anything to do my recent work in Barking...



22 June 2004

## Sustainable places ...and how not to design them

Creating enduring places is one of the key challenges for those of us charged with delivering communities that will be successful throughout the 21<sup>st</sup> century and beyond. In this highly mobile and globalised information age, when individuals and companies can choose to locate anywhere, creating a 'somewhere' rather than a 'nowhere' has become a new holy grail.

If we get this wrong we will be wastefully retro-fitting or redeveloping our flawed places for generations to come. The 'demolish and rebuild' philosophy might work for those parts of our towns and cities that experience continuous cycles of investment. In market terms these can support the necessary change. However, for many – if not most – parts of our towns, affordable change barely happens more than once a century, frequently less. These towns must have a template that will be functional over a very long cycle, way beyond normal, human life spans.

So, rather than advocate some 'motherhood and apple pie' concept of worthy, sustainable urban design, I thought it might be helpful to consider what to avoid if we genuinely want these adaptable, lasting places. Here are my ten easy steps of what not to do. What are yours?

1. Completely avoid the idea of 'place' as a concept that influences people's idea of where to live, invest, raise a family or just visit. Traditional notions of 'places', 'streets' and 'squares' are outmoded and, well, square. Think like an aristocrat or waiter: *place* is simply your station in society, or perhaps your setting at dinner. Anyway, in the mobile, digital age of the camera phone, aren't we all placeless now?
2. Similarly, ignore the role of urban design as a structuring framework for creating and regenerating towns. There is no such thing as context – only demographic profiles, market responses and creative imagination. 'We know our market and the crap we sold in the past will almost certainly sell again'. Radburn meets Ratner.
3. Decide you need a 'masterplan' to deliver your new or regenerated sustainable community. An all-singing vision of modernity and progress with whistles and bells. Don't prepare a complex and long-winded multi-disciplinary brief or appraisal – talented people rarely read them. Instead go for a design-led competition, unfettered by the constraining realism of a funding developer or investor.
4. Consider whether to go for an open competition which encourages very young space designers – too young to be master planners – or select a la carte from tried and tested designer 'names', as if buying a suit, trainers or perfume. Don't go for any planning or urban regeneration specialists who will dilute the clear thinking and clean lines of a pure designer.
5. Encourage innovation above all else. We have nothing very much to learn from the past – other than that we have usually got it wrong, somehow. The poverty of historicism and all that... We need completely new places for this completely new age.
6. Let the public view an exhibition of design ideas. But don't let them vote or select – for what do they actually know? And don't let the 'creatives' be infected or diluted by collaborating with them; this rarely works because designers don't like being told what to design, and communities don't like being told what they are going to get. Rather, inform the public of the result once you have made your choice.
7. Select the preferred masterplan based on the most colourful and imaginative proposals, ideally by a recognised signature 'hand' which breaks the few guiding rules of your minimalist brief. Don't worry that it is not buildable, that no-one will want to live there after five years, or that it makes your town look like a run-down, nowhere place that has completely lost its confidence and sense of identity. Your choice must be exciting and look good on video fly-throughs, especially going under all those buildings that don't quite touch the ground. It is not really your concern what happens down at that level.
8. Don't take up any references to see whether your winner has designed successful sustainable neighbourhoods elsewhere. You might not get the response you want. Rather, make sure their professional indemnity insurance is above £10 million. That will cover your backside, just in case...
9. Make sure you can get the selected scheme displayed and photographed as an internally-lit glass model. Image is everything, so is publicity. Get it written up in a glossy design journal or even featured by Jonathan Glancey in the Guardian.

10. If you are getting a little nervous about all this, make sure you enlist validating support from the likes of CABI, English Partnerships or Scottish Enterprise, possibly with senior representation from the key professional institutes to legitimise the decision you have surely made in advance.

And if you have already implemented all these steps, it is probably time to move on ...rather quickly ...to screw up yet another urban environment somewhere else, just like you did in the 1960s and 1980s. You don't want your past catching up with you just when it is due for demolition...

22 May 2003

# My 'first fifteen': the values of planning – contributing towards a true professionalism

Those values which have drawn practitioners into the nurturing fields of town or regional planning have varied across time and space, so identifying a set of universal values or principles is well-nigh impossible. Nevertheless here is a crude attempt at my 'first fifteen' which fall roughly into two categories – those 'forwards' primarily concerning the substance of planning – and the 'backs' related to the operation and procedures of planning.

## The Eight Substantive 'Forwards'

1. A deep concern with the intrinsic **nature and quality of space and place** is at the heart of what planning is about. A primary focus is on how we utilise land in our built habitats – from villages to megalopoli – but this is an equally important concern in our approach to sparsely populated or sensitive environments, such as coastlines or wilderness areas. Environments can be valued for their own sake – even without human presence.
2. A belief in the **improvement of conditions through 'rational intervention'** in, or alongside, market mechanisms. Creating better places has been a central value of planning from the Enlightenment and Victorian industrial era to the present. Making places work better than if 'left alone' is felt to be a desirable thing, particularly where that is not an exclusive, elitist practice – but one which brings wider social and economic gains to a community or nation. It is the reason planners find it difficult to allow areas to decline 'naturally' – our instinctive desire is to improve things.
3. Facilitating **patterns of settlement growth which foster global sustainability** – through, for instance, minimising unnecessary energy consumption, addressing urban density and waste impacts, and safeguarding critical nitrogen-fixing forestry – recognises that spatial planning has a critical, yet often underplayed, global role. This is a more recent value, dating from the later 20<sup>th</sup> century, rather than one emanating from the early pioneer's of planning.
4. The belief in a sense of **fairness or 'spatial equity'** – in the social and economic outcomes across a town, region or nation. This spatial expression of a communitarian ethic means planning is often focused on redressing geographical imbalances of, say, economic opportunity or residential amenity.
5. An awareness of the **functional connectedness of things** – actions and impacts from the planetary to local level. Planning is neither a closed system, nor does it view other systems or processes as disconnected 'silos'. Rather it is about appreciating the interactions between many different complex systems – economic, hydrological and transport – with a view to making the best judgements for action with the minimum negative impacts.
6. The importance of **understanding time and the inter-generational dimension**. Effective planning accrues quality of life benefits to generations who follow us – as in urban parks, clean air, or transport infrastructure. Equally, exploitative, short terms actions can build up long term problems and disadvantages for towns or neighbourhoods. Good planning bears fruit over time.
7. The **idea of serving a public interest** – for wider benefits – as well as being advocates for certain specific projects which may bring benefit to key client groups, such as occupiers or investors. Seeing the bigger picture, beyond an applicant or developer, should be instinctive to all planners.
8. Some appreciation of and **aspirations towards better environmental design and visual amenity** – even beauty. The notion that one of the purposes of planning is to make places more visually attractive can be traced to Classical and Renaissance civilisations. It means that there has to be a strong architectural and urban design capability within the profession.

## The Seven Procedural 'Backs'

9. The **need for research, analysis & reflection** to inform policy and action. Survey and analysis are important to assist understanding and the rationalisation of what we are planning – and why we are doing so. Basing things purely on political dogma or tradition, may well lead a place in the wrong direction, environmentally or economically.
10. **Synthesis and integration** of disciplines, skills and requisite actions – legal, technical, infrastructural, political. Planners do not have all the answers. We need to draw upon the skills and expertise of other



disciplines – some spatial, some not. However, this integrative capability is one of the most distinctive traits of the planner.

11. Ideally, planning should be **legally represented in formal layers of government**. The administration of a planning regime should be transparent and accessible to its ‘consumers’ – with strong links to accountable, democratic bodies locally or nationally.
12. Planning may be seen as a **positive vehicle for cultural expression**. In this respect we should expect some divergence of content – as currently experienced in the UK – to take account of different demographics, economic roles and relationships with the land. A crude ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach to planning can be damaging to places and their communities.
13. A culture of **equal opportunities in aspects of race, gender, age, disability**, etc is a central part of the ethic of planning practice – both for those inside the profession, and the communities we serve.
14. The **roles of heritage in place-making and sustaining identity** are key elements of the planning armoury. This involves the notion of carrying built heritage as layers of meaning – sometimes uncomfortably so – from the past into the future, as well as incorporating means of retaining folk memory and the perceived spirit of a place.
15. Planning is, at its core, a **creative, innovative, shaping and nurturing** activity which, to secure effective ‘spatial action’, also has to be controlling, guiding and directing at times. It is a profound mistake to perceive it as narrowly regulatory without any appreciation of a greater positive purpose.  
**And finally, the referee...**
16. Planning also requires an **‘umpire’ to mediate and/or arbitrate** in occasions of dispute and difference. This should be filled by an accomplished, independent professional who will have authority behind his or her proposed resolutions.

**Originally written for the Planning portal**

22 November 2002

## The Urban Summit – from an RTPI perspective



The significance of the Urban Summit lies in its recognition that those working in the fields of planning, regeneration and urban design are doing something very important. Something valued by society and by government. Part of our contribution to the wider global agenda promoted in Jo'burg, Rio, Kyoto and Istanbul.

After more than a couple of decades of fighting for our cause, and even our very existence sometimes, the imperative of joined-up governance means that place – both urban and regional – has been forced back to centre stage. Messieurs Prescott, Lunts and other organisers should be congratulated for the sense of occasion and value which has been bestowed on the practitioners in these important areas. The event gave validation and a sense of belonging to a diverse community committed to delivering better places. Even the Chancellor referred to urban design – I would have celebrated if I had not been in shock!

The RTPI stand was alive with friendly visitors, all providing positive feedback on the New Vision, website and organisational change. Our representatives were instrumental in promoting the new RTPI associations which many of our non-planner friends said was just what they required. As someone used to taking the flak for our profession and institute, I felt a sense of pride and justification.

We met planners working in diverse areas of regeneration, design, LSPs, URCs, RDAs, EP and CABE. There were also many de facto planners who may not be professionally chartered. We still have to find an appropriate home for them – to help develop their skills, culture and confidence too. None of this diminishes the crucial role played by those working within the statutory framework.

The Lunts-Prescott roadshow has emphatically driven the agenda of sustainable communities further forward. Sessions like the one led by Alison Nimmo on 'Making it Happen' explored what has been achieved and how we can become more effective. Her speakers identified that there are still many obstacles, and that there needs to be a continuing raising of standards from current ordinary practice to secure better outcomes.

Innovative thinking was at the heart of the session led by Lee Shostack on the 'Future of Towns and Cities'. Our longer term challenges include energy consumption and waste, viable urban economies, access to knowledge, all set within the challenging dynamic of demographic shift and technological evolution.

It is in this sphere of long range, radical thinking that I felt the Summit fell a little short. It very effectively corralled a large cohort of people into the territory of the Rogers Report and Urban White Paper, but it kept us within that contemporary paradigm. There could have been more discussion of alternative models of local/regional taxation or of exploring mechanisms for helping communities to embrace change; not to mention different approaches to public-private governance and the delivery of transformational regional infrastructure. Still these are challenges for the future which, as responsible practitioners, we must continue to research and debate within our wide family of practitioners and legislators.



20 April 2000

## Making People Friendly Towns: Afterword



This book is undoubtedly a seminal piece whose message is being constantly validated over time. Although partly inspired by Francis' reaction against the qualities of alienating corporate urbanism which he witnessed emerging during the 1980s, it is the important observations and exhortations about synthesis – or 'closing the gaps', as he sometimes called it – which distinguish it from other, narrower works on design, planning, or urbanism. In many ways, by seeking to place urban design at the centre of a vision for a better quality of urban living, he was both of his time and ahead of his time.

Although Francis was passionate about towns and cities he did not simply wax lyrically about those places he liked. He wanted to turn his experience and insights – extensive in both time and space – into something which has practical value for professionals, politicians, communities, developers and investors. His analysis and recommendations are relevant today and will surely remain so for some time to come. This is why the book needs to be read and re-read by a wide range of new audiences over time.

Francis believed that urban design was a critical philosophy and discipline because places matter more than the individual components which make them up – buildings, spaces and structures. Fundamentally, the austere design simplicity of the modernist era of planning failed to create the enduring places people want and need. A new – or arguably, traditional – integrative approach to placemaking was required.

Although there is still a prevalent object fetishism in architecture and public art, the holistic urban design approach has continued to gain ground, not least on mainland Europe where it never really disappeared. It has been at the forefront of the much admired renaissance of post Franco Barcelona, not only in modest neighbourhood spaces but in the philosophy behind the Olympic Village. Other approaches have been pursued across the Netherlands and in the dramatic reconstruction of Berlin since re-unification.

Francis would be moderately impressed to find that urban design has slowly crept into the mainstream of UK planning and regeneration during the 1990s, featuring both in government guidance – which he pressed for strongly – and in the personal initiatives of John Gummer, when a minister.

Regeneration projects such as Newcastle Quayside, Birmingham's Brindley Place, and more recently the post-bomb reconstruction of central Manchester, all exhibit the stronger sense of integrated urban design which has sought to emulate their international counterparts. On housing led development too, a distinctive neighbourhood approach has been pioneered by projects as diverse as Hulme in Manchester, Crown Street in Glasgow and the Duchy of Cornwall development at Poundbury, Dorchester. Some of these draw from the

American approach of 'new urbanism' with its strong principles and building codes framed to challenge the placelessness of strips, malls and suburban sprawl. Francis' former practice sought to apply these in their plan for the urban village of West Silvertown in London's Royal Docks.

Perhaps one of the biggest steps in the UK has been the strong recommendation in Lord Rogers' Urban Task Force Report that urban design – particularly three-dimensional spatial master planning – should play a key part in the regeneration of towns, cities and their neighbourhoods. Francis undoubtedly supported this objective – which he enjoyed undertaking himself – but would probably have settled for a less overtly 'architectural' approach than the Task Force report promotes.

The need for appropriate multi-disciplinary skills, training and practice was identified as crucial by Francis more than a decade before the Task Force, but with negligible follow through. A committed architect-planner, he was concerned that his was a dying breed, with architects acting primarily in the interests of individual developer clients, while planners focused on sectoral policies and processes.

The 'joined up thinking' which latterly became the watchword of political protagonists such as John Prescott, was trailed in Francis' RTPI Presidential theme during 1988. He would have been delighted at the formation of the multi-professional Urban Design Alliance, following on his own founding of the Urban Design Group some 20 years earlier. However, the Alliance has a long way to go to make a telling impact on the training of its constituent professionals and on the environments they create. Nevertheless UDAL has made a positive impact in a number of areas, including widening the scope of the successor to the Royal Fine Arts Commission to become the Commission for Architecture **and** the Built Environment. As a supporter of many of the developments which Stuart Lipton undertook – he would be urging us to watch the progress of CABE with interest.

Francis considered that narrow professionalism was at the root of many townscape problems and he was not afraid to become unpopular by charging fellow architects and planners, not to mention surveyors and engineers, with this crime. Nowhere was he more concerned about the gaps than in the design, implementation and management of the public realm. He would surely be impressed at the progress made in European cities such as Copenhagen, Prague and Munich in developing an attractive network of people-friendly streets and spaces. These have been matched in their own way by progressive improvements in central UK cities such as Birmingham, Manchester, Glasgow and Cambridge.

Despite this progress many American cities retain a strong preference for vehicular access and dominance of town centres. There seems to be a general unwillingness to adopt the progressive removal of vehicles pioneered by Copenhagen over a thirty-year period. Nevertheless impressive steps have been made in Portland, Oregon, where a highway has been removed to create a new riverfront park; and San Francisco, where innovative public realm improvements are emerging along the corridors of elevated highways irreparably damaged by earthquake. Even New York's sidewalks and public spaces have been improved dramatically over a decade which has seen Manhattan become cleaner, safer and more convivial for residents and visitors alike.

As Francis' drawings in this book testify, he was a lover of variety, vitality and the richness of the urban scene. Drawing on the influential work of Jane Jacobs he was a passionate believer in the need for mixed use. This philosophy has clearly moved forward since the book was first published, gradually shifting towards the mainstream of a number of planning regimes across the globe. In the UK this has been stimulated by the advocacy of the Urban Villages Group, research by a range of bodies, and advocacy in government guidance. Some successes have been achieved in locations such as Birmingham's Jewellery Quarter, Newcastle's Grainger Town and Edinburgh's historic port area of Leith. Specific area strategies have been adopted in Sheffield, Belfast and Dublin, focusing on both the production and consumption of cultural industries.

The mixed use challenge is to secure enough interest to stimulate regeneration through human biodiversity, although there is always the danger of adverse impacts working against the intrinsic qualities which laid the foundations of success. One-time favourites of Francis, such as London's Covent Garden and Dublin's Temple Bar, now exhibit some of those problematic qualities. Perhaps they need some constraints on the level of commercial occupancy, as are applied in New York's SoHo to protect the role of its artistic and creative communities.

Francis identified our love affair with the motor car as a long-term problem for the health of our cities and, more importantly, for global sustainability. While the problems have worsened in many areas over recent years there have been improvements too. I believe he would have welcomed Croydon's new Tramlink in South London, which would have taken him from his Beckenham home to the Croydon Library, one of his most satisfying development projects. New public transit systems in Manchester, Grenoble, Portland and Sydney have all given new dimensions to those cities. Hopefully the Heathrow Express and New Jubilee Line would have mitigated Francis' frequent criticisms of the shortcomings of the London transport system.

It is clear therefore that in many of the areas of urban design which were of great concern to Francis Tibbalds, some positive progress has been made. Francis would undoubtedly accept those, but he would not rest on any laurels. We have not gone nearly far enough. He would look to move the debate forward, spreading the word to new audiences, using different arguments. He might contend that:

1. Good urban design is crucial to the local economy, both in terms of attracting and holding residents and workers. In the globalised, footloose economy of the information age, the comparative attractiveness of places is also important in retaining expenditure and taxation locally.
2. Tourism is positively shaped by good urban design. Those with choice will tend to visit attractive places, whether historic or modern. Ironically, the once mocked Disney Corporation are now becoming leading exponents of urban design in creating successful new settlements.
3. Our objectives of sustainable development can be assisted by good urban design which stimulates reinvestment in the existing urban fabric, rather than wasteful exploitation of virgin land.
4. Most of all, I believe, Francis would argue that good urban design, the very nurturing of our towns and cities – is the responsibility of all of us, whether professionals, politicians, developers or members of the public.

If those of us who have the opportunity can take forward Francis Tibbalds' urban design vision with even half of his passion, then together we can make a difference by creating successful places for real people.



16 July 1998

## BBC Radio 4: You and Yours with George Monbiot



I participated in a Radio 4 listeners call-in radio show, *You and Yours* with George Monbiot, discussing community experiences of planning. I did it down the line from the soon to be vacated BBC Scotland studios in Queen Margaret Drive Glasgow, before the move to Pacific Quay.

It showed that people care about planning and their local environment, but that they have widely varying experiences, and expectations, of it. Because I was there on behalf of the RTPI, I suspect it made me more defensive of systems and processes that I don't always fully support. Most of the creativity and progress comes from outside the formal processes, and is then co-opted.

It would have been more fun to do this in a studio together, and have a bit more banter and debate directly with individuals, but that is a problem I have had on most radio inputs which I do from afar.

12 February 1998

## Cities in 2010 – Beyond the Millennium



I was involved in what seemed like a very pivotal interview with Sheena McDonald on the future of cities, at a time when 'New Labour' had just arrived with an allegedly much more urban agenda, and indeed a regional one too. What was changing in architecture and place design had already begun to impact upon London, and was likely to ripple out to other UK cities, so there was an interest in what might happen over the next 13-15 years.

There were interesting discussions on technology, design, culture, tax and economic competitiveness in a world of increasingly footloose, mobile talent. We even talked about 'league tables' of cities and, as cities became more powerful, the idea of a new Hanseatic League of European Cities, which I loosely modelled on the UEFA Championship.

As with so many of these types of discussions, much of the really quirky parts get cut out, which is a shame, but it was an interesting discussion which provoked some interesting responses. I have always thought it would be good to gauge what actually happened against the predictions for 2010.