



Registered Charity No. SC003089

Newsletter No. 93: February 2019

Coming Events

Wednesday 27 February 2019: “Aberdeen Performing Arts – An Update” – a talk by Jane Spiers, Chief Executive Officer, Aberdeen Performing Arts. At the Royal Northern & University Club, No. 9 Albyn Place, at 7:30 for 8 pm.

Friday 8 March 2019: Annual Dinner at the Royal Northern & University Club. This will include the presentations to recipients of our Annual Awards. At the Royal Northern & University Club, No. 9 Albyn Place, at 7pm for 7:30pm.

Wednesday 24 April 2019: Annual General Meeting followed by a talk from Bruce Keith; entitled “Bridgescapes”. At the Royal Northern & University Club, No 9 Albyn Place for a 7.30pm prompt start.

Annual Awards 2018

At the end of last year, we announced the winners of awards for 2018. This received some comment in the Press & Journal and below is the press statement.

The Sandman Signature Aberdeen Hotel on St Andrew Street is one of the winners. It recently opened for business in an existing granite building located in the heart of Aberdeen. The conversion retains much of the existing building, which is very large and was previously a part of Robert Gordon University. Of particular note is the way that the work has been done to convert the building into an hotel without very many changes, particularly when seen from the street.

Cognito on the Corner, the second winner, lies on the corner of Mid Stocket Road and Beechgrove Terrace. This is a clever conversion of a former bank building into a delightful café/bistro serving the community of Rosemount and beyond. The work done to the building makes it a lovely feature on a prominent corner site.

Dominic Fairlie, Chairman of Aberdeen Civic Society said, "It gives us great pleasure to be supporting two projects this year, both of which involve the re-use of some of Aberdeen's lovely granite heritage. We give awards for projects that improve or add to our built environment and increase street activity and there is no doubt that both make a significant contribution in this regard."

Murray Todd, General Manager at Sandman Signature Aberdeen Hotel, added: "We are very pleased and excited to be presented with this award from Aberdeen Civic Society.

"Since opening in August this year Sandman Signature Aberdeen Hotel has quickly become a popular venue for guests to overnight, relax, socialize and dine, with many enjoying the unique and striking original features that can be seen throughout the hotel and restaurant and from the street. It's great to be recognized for the hard work and efforts that have made in retaining these aspects that make the building so iconic and distinctive."

Nicky Turnbull, owner of Cognito on the Corner, said, "We tried to stay true to the heritage of the building, taking it right back to how it would have looked in the 1900's ...bespoke curved hardwood windows, with a modern twist including tri-fold windows, hand made by quality local trades men makes the building really spectacular."

Presentation of the awards is being made at our Annual Dinner on Friday 8 March 2018.

Contributed by Dominic Fairlie.

What is a Walkable Neighbourhood?

At the very heart of good urban planning is something called a walkable neighbourhood. This is an area in which it is possible to easily walk from one part of it to another, and it should contain almost everything you need for living daily.

A good indication of a walkable neighbourhood is whether or not you are inclined to take the car. For example, if you want to do some light shopping and as you go out of the front door of your house decide that it would be easier to take the car, then where you are going to is probably out with the walkable neighbourhood in which you are living.

There is always a bit of fiddling about when taking a car – for example you must find the keys, get into the car, often turn it round, drive to where you are going and then find somewhere to park it. All this takes time, and if it is marginal as to whether you would be quicker walking there, then you and where you are going are probably within the same walkable neighbourhood. The weather may well have something to do with your decision about how far you are prepared to walk. If it is raining, you will not want to walk as far, but even so, if it is a wet day and where you are going to is relatively close, you may still prefer to walk.

I would always define a walkable neighbourhood as a shape from which it takes 5 minutes to walk from the edge of the shape to the middle. In its simplest form, this means that it is a circle with a radius of 400m – it takes 5 minutes to walk 400m at normal walking pace.

Some people may argue that a walkable neighbourhood is a bit larger – occasionally twice this size – so that instead of taking 5 minutes to walk from the edge to the middle, it takes 10 minutes. The easiest way of testing what is or is not a walkable neighbourhood is, when you are going to do a bit of shopping, would you walk, or would you go in the car. Most people would not walk as far as 10 minutes there and 10 minutes back to do something like go to the butcher. However, they may walk if it was just 5 minutes away.

Often right in the middle of a walkable neighbourhood is where the commercial activity takes place. It is where the shops are, and if your walkable neighbourhood is very good, there may be some offices as well.

If you live on the edge of the walkable neighbourhood, it would indeed take you 10 minutes to walk from your house to your friend's house if your friend lives at the opposite side of the walkable neighbourhood. Ask yourselves the question again though, if you were going to see a friend for dinner would you be prepared to walk for 10 minutes there and 10 minutes back or would you take the car.

More about walkable neighbourhoods in future newsletters.

Evening Talks to date

At the end of last year there were two talks that we hosted for our members. On 24 October 2018 we heard from Mike Scott who is the lead officer for Historic Environment Scotland (formerly Historic Scotland) about his role in planning decisions. Mike only really gets involved in planning decisions on important (eg listed) buildings as Historic Environment Scotland is a statutory consultee. What they can do is quite restricted depending on the listing and they have to weigh up carefully the desire to protect the building and its environment and ensuring its long term sustainability.

On 28 November 2018 Councillor Philip Bell from Aberdeen City Council gave us a very detailed overview of what happens to our waste after it is collected by the bin lorry. Phil is obviously very engaged about waste and this came through loud and clear.

Unfortunately, Sally Moir from SMART Consultants had to cancel the talk she was due to give us on Wednesday 23 January due to unforeseen circumstances. We will try to re-arrange for another time. Evening Talk by Sally Moir "Creating a Vibrant City"

We welcome contributions from guest writers to our newsletter. Please send them to info@aberdeencivicsociety.org.