

# THE GRIST

KELTY

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INFO@THEGRIST.ORG.UK



*Lillian King: Bridges | Gary Hutchison: St Ninians | Craig Dalzell: Pension politics |  
Claire Hutchison: Kelty Street Art Collective | Peter A. Bell: Robust and resilient | More*

# Welcome to The Grist - issue 11!

**W**elcome to Issue 11 of The Grist. While sorry that we no longer have Roger Mullin as our MP, it is good to know he will still be doing excellent work and applying his vast experience to the benefit of people in Scotland and further afield. Roger has been appointed as a special envoy by Westminster's All Party Parliamentary Group on explosive threats. In this role, Roger hopes to continue the work he was doing in Iraqi Kurdistan in conjunction with the Westminster Foundation for Democracy, and to contribute to peace building in the Middle East. We wish him every success in his efforts to build bridges.

Speaking of bridges, some of the team had the pleasure of being part of the 50,000 people who walked over the Queensferry Crossing. Fantastic experience and brilliantly organised. Hope you enjoy reading the terrific *Bridges* by Lillian King and all the other articles in this issue.

Our thanks go to: Claire, Craig, Gary, Lillian and Peter for their articles and to Chris Cairns for his cartoon; to our advertisers, Printing Services (Scotland) and our trusty distributors for traipsing the streets of Kelty. •

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## In brief

### What's going on at the St Ninians site?

The St. Ninians site at Kelty was to be a Land Art project encouraging growth and tourism for Kelty and West Fife. After the collapse of Scottish Coal, Hargreaves took over the site and the task of restoring the site, although not to the Land Art specifications.

During numerous presentations to Kelty Community Council, Hargreaves representatives assured the KCC that the minimum restoration of the site would allow it to be accessible to the general public. During an on-site visit, the KCC were shown where paths, roads and car-parks would be. The idea was that this site could be used for recreational use while Hargreaves found investors to develop the site.

However, this has dragged on for a few years now so I submitted a Freedom of Information request to Fife Council to try and gain some understanding of where they stood. Fife Council replied saying that there was no agreement with them to provide roads, paths or car-parks. As far as they are concerned the site is complete barring a few trees to be planted. Whether or not it is opened to the public is up to Hargreaves as they own the site.

Within the FOI reply, Fife Council also stated that all monies that were in bond for the site have been spent and they also stated to Hargreaves that they have no intention of running the site as a public park.

It is disappointing to say the the least that after years of putting up with an eyesore of opencast mining and the resulting heavy traffic, there is going to be no benefit to local communities. Promises were made by Fife Council and Hargreaves which are being forgotten. Although the site is still earmarked for leisure, tourism and recreation on the FIFEplan Local Development Plan, at present we do not have a proposed timeline from Hargreaves for when this site will be open for recreation. This is a warning to other communities with opencast mining on their door step as promises have not been kept. •

– Gary Hutchison, Planning Convener, Kelty Community Council

### Mossmoran Action Group

Kelty residents have expressed concerns about the recent flare ups and black smoke coming from Mossmorran. The environment agency SEPA is examining these incidents but has confirmed no report will be issued to avoid compromising any future action against the plant operators.

However, The Mossmorran Action Group has responded saying that once any fines or enforcement actions have been completed there is no reason for SEPA not to release all the results of its investigations for public scrutiny and that should Sepa refuse to publish their findings, the Mossmorran Action Group will use the Environmental Information Regulations (2004) to force the agency to do so.

You can read more on the group's website and contribute to discussion on their Facebook page. •

### First steps towards privatising The Meedies?

*Loch of Shining Waters* reports that Fife Council have been holding secret talks with St Andrews University for their boating club's boathouse, which if approved, will effectively privatise land at Lochore Meadows.

Documents shared with Benarty Community Council show that a 40-year lease is under consideration and confirm that the public will not normally have access to the land for the duration of the lease. The lease will be signed by the University of St Andrews. According to Iain Rice (Director of Rowing at the University of St Andrews), local benefits to the area could be: 'This project could bring more sporting opportunities, events and people to the area, as well as raising the profile of Lochore. The University boat club would like to offer rowing tuition for juniors and to provide sessions for children from the local area.'

Benarty Community Councillors asked the University of St Andrews Boat Club a series of questions including what 'concrete proposals are the boat club offering to the community?' The response provided to Benarty Community Council showed that 'there are no "concrete" proposals' but added that there is a 'willingness to offer taster sessions'.

*Loch of Shining Waters* was formed and launched on 1st January 2010 as a way to deliver local community-based news to Lochgelly and Central Fife. •



## A local group have brought colour to Blackhall square: what's next?

**T**he shutter art project started with an idea I had to brighten up the empty shops whilst supporting the businesses at Blackhall Square. The Community Council were in full support and we set up a sub group of Gary Hutchison, Carol Gilmour, Fred Clarke, Jean Hogg and myself. We secured funding from Fife Council and the Community Council were kind enough to add a small donation.

We recruited local artists to form the Kelty Street Art Collective with local artist Celie Byrne as our lead for this project. Celie had the idea to create a outdoor gallery of fine art, replicating works by Hokusai, Van Gogh and Warhol.

The 77th Fife (Kelty Church) Scout Group were a fantastic help preparing the shutters and masonry. Celie had help from over 20 artists who volunteered their talents including Kelty artists Vanessa Gibson, Ben Gibson, Donna Forrester and Carol Gilmour.

The whole project became a community effort with the Youth Club helping to weed the area and local kids from both primary schools and high schools asking to get involved in painting the artwork.

By leaving their hand prints on the gates at Jim Halketts Butchers, 300 local children became the Gatekeepers of their own special piece of community artwork.

Photos of the different stages of the project were oneour social media pages which have been full of lots of lovely comments from residents

and even some from ex pats as far as Australia and Canada. We really appreciate the support the local community have given us.

Ben filmed the project and is now working on the edit, so look out for his documentary!

The collective didn't want this to be a one off as we have many plans and ideas. In order to be eligible for a wider range of funding we decided to become a constituted group called the Kelty Art and Regeneration Trust with the Kelty Street Art Collective as a sub group. We decided our next project would be to bring the shutter art project to Main St as we had requests from Main St shop keepers. Our artists have contacted the local businesses to see if they want to be involved and will consult with local residents. Hopefully, if we secure funding Main St will be awash with colourful artwork.

Going forward we hope to create more visual art such as gable end murals and statues. The group hope to be able to support existing local groups with projects where our goals overlap and more sub groups will be formed. We welcome artists to get involved or if you have any suggestions you would like to make please message us on our Facebook page or write to our secretary Carol Gilmour, 11 Main St, Kelty, KY4 0AA. •

– Claire Hutchison is the chair of the Kelty Street Art Collective.

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Lillian King

## Bridges

**S**eptember 2017 will see the opening of the latest major bridge across the Forth, the longest three-tower, cable-stayed bridge in the world. This will add another chapter to almost a thousand years of the river's history, one which has been well-documented and faithfully recorded in books, photographs and film. This bridge, with its two companions, provides one of the most iconic and dramatic images of this century, and a demonstration of what can be achieved by a small country of vision and self-confidence. The engineering skills, the design and technical wizardry which produced these structures, not only of functional excellence but of breath-taking beauty and elegance are renowned throughout the world.

Bridges are important. Without them, people would be unable to travel far, open new countries or found empires. From the first time that man laid a

*Bridges are important. Without them, people would be unable to travel far, open new countries or found empires. From the first time that man laid a stone over a ditch or a fallen tree over a stream, they have added to the sum total of human existence.*

stone over a ditch or a fallen tree over a stream, they have added to the sum total of human existence. It's been a long road from those simple structures to the highly technical engineering miracles of today.

But there are other bridges, those metaphorical ones we build between us and our friends, between races, cultures and politics, trying to find common ground in our own and other countries. It is sad that while we are building these bridges, others are trying to pull them down, or using them to place obstacles in our way, to separate us from our friends and allies. The desire for Scottish independence exemplified that -the might of the British state and media was mobilised against us; and political leaders around the world were encouraged to oppose our legitimate and democratic desire for self-government.

September 2014 could have provided an opportunity for rebuilding. The delivery of promises made during the last weeks of campaigning would have encouraged the acceptance, albeit pro tem, of the status quo. Instead we got English votes for English laws, a watered down version of the Smith Commission, (and recently the news of twenty nine civil servants proudly accepting awards for their part in the 'dirty tricks' referendum campaign.)

Perhaps the worst aspect of this obstacle building is a lack of understanding and empathy, one which also makes it acceptable to fine people for being homeless; to allow disabled people to have their cars confiscated, removing the road-link between them, work and any kind of normal social life; to split up families and deport people who have lived and paid taxes here for years; and to do silly things like sticking union flags on everything from whisky to strawberries (and bridges) in the belief that this will tighten the bonds of union; and claiming Scottish successes as British while downplaying or failing to acknowledge Scotland's achievements. The truly Scottish Commonwealth Games was hi-jacked by the British media. Will it be Saltires or Union flags that are handed out to the hundreds of children that will be at the bridge on opening day?

Bridge-building requires good foundations but Brexit is like trying to mend one that wasn't broken by knocking its foundations out. The increase in migration from EU countries, plus a massive influx of refugees, led to the campaign for withdrawal from the EU and a return to the mindset of the 1930s. Tolerance was replaced by mistrust and even hatred of foreigners, encouraged by a section of government that campaigned against European policies which

were initiated or reformed by themselves. Small wonder then, that the EU is bemused by their weathervane style of negotiation.

Despite overwhelming support for remaining in the EU, Scotland is being forced to end the relationship because 'the people have spoken.' But we are the people too. Efforts at reaching a compromise fall on deaf ears; promises made are broken. Attempts to strengthen existing links between us and continental Europe are derided. There is a saying : 'Don't burn your bridges, you never know when you might need them again,' but bridges are being burned daily in an atmosphere of arrogance and self-entitlement that cannot possibly end well. Yet in spite of all this Scotland continues to thrive.

On September 4th, fifty three years after the ceremonial opening of The Forth Road Bridge, The Queensferry Crossing will be officially opened by the Queen. For some, this will be seen as a symbol of continuity, of a second golden Elizabethan age, which by the way, like the first, was golden only for the elite few. For others, it will be symptomatic of an anachronistic, outdated system of monarchical rule and a slavish veneration of the principal actors of an outworn class system. I am reminded of Khalil Gibran's story of the bridge at Antioch which was built of large stones carried down from the hills, on the backs of mules. When it was finished, the inscription read: "This bridge was built by King Antiochus II." Then one day, it was replaced with another reminding people that each time they crossed the bridge they rode on the backs of the mules of Antioch. So among the pomp and circumstance, spare a thought for the armies of dedicated bridge workers and families and friends of the men who died.

When the new bridge proposal was introduced, it was greeted by a barrage of complaint about it being unnecessary, representing an unconscionable waste of money, yet the ceremony will be attended by many of those who railed most against this 'vanity project.'

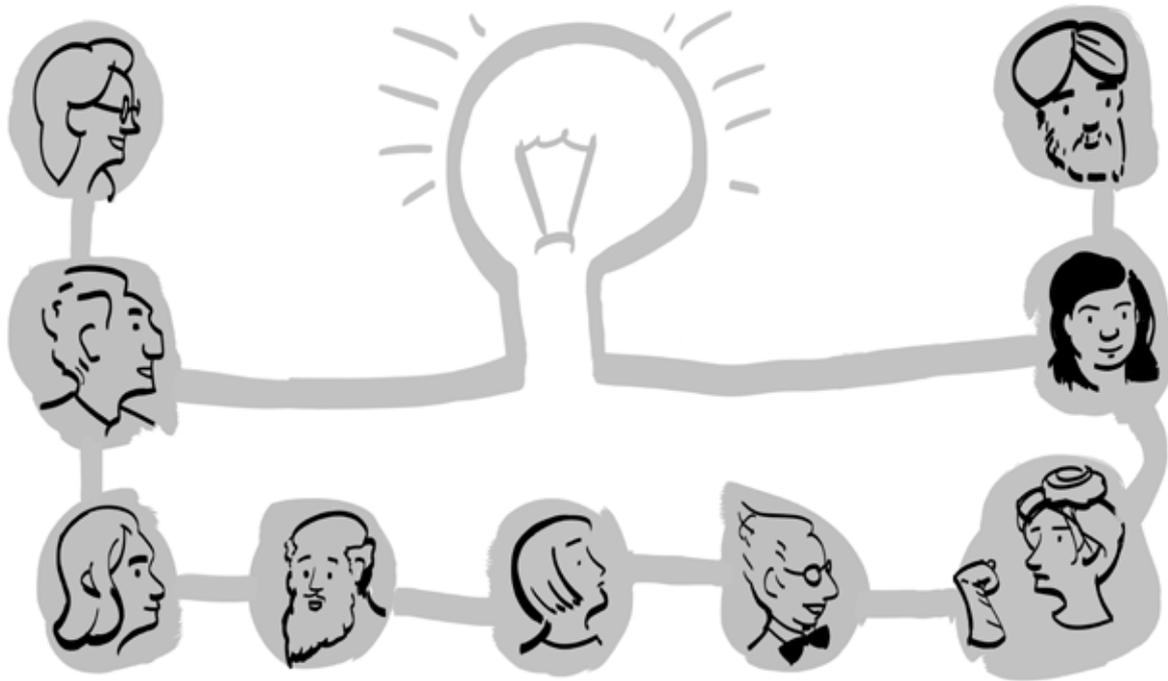
But they will be in the minority. The opening is a cause for rejoicing: the new bridge is a thing of beauty, a fantastic feat of engineering which will be admired throughout the world. And above all it is a Scottish achievement, of which everyone should be proud. And rightly so.

It's difficult to proceed when almost all metaphorical bridges have a 'Do Not Cross' sign on them. The others of friendship and goodwill will survive and may even become stronger. In the meantime, against all odds, we are building not just real new bridges, hospitals, schools, affordable homes, roads and railways, but an altogether better Scotland. •

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## Craig Dalzell: Pension politics

In July, the annual Marmot Life Indicators Report was published and showed that there had been a dramatic fall in the rate of increase in life expectancy in England. In fact, it had stalled completely. If the trend continues, then next year will be the first year in decades where life expectancy has fallen compared to the previous year, something almost unheard of outside of wartime.

This represents a reversal in a trend which has run for at least the last decade and a half wherein a baby born in one year could expect to live approximately 4 months longer than a similar baby born the previous year - a trend which peaked in 2010 and has declined since.

This date is no random effect as 2010 is also the year in which the Conservative party came to power (first in coalition with the Liberal Democrats, then by majority government and now in minority with DUP support). This marked the beginning of the Austerity program which has been ongoing since. This attack on the fabric of the UK's social security has, according to a 2017 report by the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, has been responsible for the premature deaths of 30,000 people in England & Wales in 2015 alone.

And the UK Government's response to this report? The day after it was released, they announced that the planned increases in the state pension age is to be accelerated. If you are currently aged 39-47 you will now be expected to work until you are 68.

Right now, and assuming that the trend noticed above does not occur, the average Scottish female can expect to live till 79.5 years of age and the average male to 74.5. According to Scottish Government figures, Cowdenbeath has similar outcomes as a child born in 2014 would expect to live for 75.7 if male and 79.6 if

female (though it is noted that this is substantially lower than the Fife average of 77.7 and 81.5 respectively).

Meanwhile, in the UK's richest borough Kensington, average life expectancy is around 84 so an average person would expect to see around 16 years of retirement even after the increase in the pension age.

Another important statistic brought out by the Marmot Report is the idea of healthy life expectancy. In poorer areas of the UK, whilst the life expectancy is in the mid-70's, healthy life expectancy can be as low as 57. Such folk will now be expected to continue working for more than a decade after their health begins to decline.

This is the reality of Tory Britain in the 21st century. Clearly there is something wrong with our politics if we are expected to not just work till we drop but to then pick ourselves up again and continue working. There's no wonder that the UK has now been repeatedly called out by the United Nations for its treatment of the sick and disabled.

Clearly this one-policy-fits-all approach across the UK takes little account of the specific needs of areas like Scotland but with the powers over pensions entirely reserved the Scottish Government is powerless to intervene and the experience of the WASPI campaign has shown how deaf the UK Government is to petition. Scotland needs to have a discussion with itself over what a social security system which puts all of us first would look like. And then it needs to have a discussion about what it needs to do to put that principle into practice. •

- Dr Craig Dalzell is the Head of Research for Common Weal. His blog can be read at [thecommongreen.scot](http://thecommongreen.scot)

# Peter A Bell: Robust and resilient

I don't take a huge interest in official reports. They are almost never as disinterested and objective as their authors claim. And those who are expressly neither disinterested nor objective always seem to be able to take from such reports whatever suits their agenda. The more polarised a political culture is, and the more significant the subject of the report, the greater the tendency for each side to find in the same document things which can be used as sticks with which to beat the other.

You'd have to look long and hard to find an example of political polarisation more acute than Scotland's divide on the constitutional question. And, arguably, no topic is more contentious than our National Health Service.

The nature of the confrontation between devotees of the British state and those who want Scotland to be a normal independent country is such that anything, but particularly anything representative of Scotland's increasingly distinctive political culture, is liable to be weaponised. Because it looms so large in our society, healthcare is an obvious battleground. And reports such as the Nuffield Trust's publication, Learning from Scotland's NHS, are seized upon by both sides as a source of cudgels.

Talking of two sides, we must be wary of the fallacy of false equivalence. We must take care to avoid the kind of banal simplification which, whether from lack of intellectual rigour or in a misguided effort to appear even-handed, maintains that each side is as bad as the other.

I make no pretence to being a dispassionate commentator when it comes to the constitutional question or my commitment to a genuine public health service. But I would challenge any neutral observer to deny the contrast between the two sides of Scotland's political divide in terms of their conduct in relation to NHS Scotland.

The Scottish Government, and its supporters, tend to stick to the facts. Obviously, they seek to emphasise the administration's successes and put the best possible gloss on its failures. That is no more than we would expect. They do not attempt to deny or minimise the problems. It would not be in their interests to do so because the whole point of their argument is that these problems are being effectively addressed.

On the other side, we have an incessant barrage of propaganda which seeks to portray healthcare in a permanent state of crisis, chaos and catastrophe. Reports such as that mentioned earlier are scoured by packs of mercenary hacks in the pay of the British state for any morsel of data which can be taken out of context and spun as proof that NHS Scotland is on the verge of collapse.

I don't take a great deal of interest in official reports. Neither do most people. What they see are the 'interpretations' presented by the two sides of the political divide. Unless we are too bigoted to be able to do so, we place these interpretations in the context our own direct experience and accounts offered by those we trust. We form our own opinion.

What we see is a health service which struggles, as any organisation must when it is faced with applying limited resources to ever increasing demand. But it copes. It manages. As it always has. The fundamental issues facing NHS Scotland haven't changed since its inception some 70 years ago. But it is still here. Because it is essentially strong.

Our NHS is robust. It can withstand all manner of assaults. And it is resilient. It can recover from pretty much any set-back. But it is constantly under threat. It is only as robust and resilient as our regard for it. It is only as strong as our determination to preserve it. •





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# Yes

Yes Kelty continues to work towards Scotland's independence  
Meetings at 7pm on last Tuesday of each month in  
Kelty Community Centre.  
Everyone welcome.