



Helping Protect, Conserve and Develop a Better Built and Natural Environment

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14 March 2013

Ms Bernadette Malone  
Chief Executive  
Perth & Kinross Council  
2 High Street  
PERTH  
PHQ 5PH

Dear Ms Malone

### **Redundant Buildings in Kinross**

The Kinross-shire Civic Trust wishes to express its deep concern at the number of buildings lying empty in Kinross. Some of these are former civic buildings of architectural merit and cultural importance and are the responsibility of Perth & Kinross Council. The empty buildings create an air of neglect which does nothing to attract visitors or business to the town.

The Trust is dismayed that the Council does not appear to have had any sort of strategy in place with regard to a planned withdrawal from these buildings and finding an appropriate use for them.

**The Kinross Town Hall** and associated buildings have been lying empty for **eleven years**. The Hall and former Post Office are B Listed, the Carnegie Library is C Listed and the clock tower is a scheduled ancient monument. The buildings have been poorly maintained since closure; the roof and gutters leak and the building has become an eyesore, with green slime on the walls, windows boarded up and vegetation growing in the gutters. The Council has

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been free to dispose of these buildings since February 2008, following the conclusion of a court case over Common Good.

**The former Kinross High School** has been empty for over **three years** (since the community campus opened in October 2009). It has been very prone to vandalism and looting and looks terrible with its windows and doors boarded up. The need to dispose of the High School could have been anticipated long before the school building was vacated; planning for the new campus began in 2003.

**The County Buildings** have been empty since June 2011. This Georgian B Listed building was the former seat of administration for the county. The Council could have anticipated this redundancy, as the decision to move all services to the community campus had been made formally about a year earlier (Strategic Policy & Resources Committee, 15 Sept 2010) and in principle two years earlier ('Enhancing Customer Service', PKC paper, 2009). We are extremely concerned that this fine building, still in good condition, will face a fate similar to the Town Hall.

The former Social Work Department building in **Mill Street** has also been empty since June 2011. Though not of any architectural importance, another empty building adds to the air of neglect in the town. Again, the vacancy of this building could have been anticipated by around a year at least, as the decision to move services to the campus was taken as for the County Buildings above.

A former **public toilet** building – in a prominent position on the main thoroughfare, opposite the Green Hotel – has been boarded up for approximately **eight years**, since the Comfort Scheme came into force. This building is in a prominent position on the main thoroughfare of Kinross, by an inter-city bus stop. This is in what is otherwise the most attractive part of town, by the Market Park and an avenue of trees. Are there any plans for this toilet block?

There are several other buildings in Kinross that are empty, prone to vandalism and run-down, such as the **former Health Centre** at Lathro (empty for 3½ years) and **Miller's Bar** (a C Listed building) in the heart of the High Street. Although these two properties are not owned by PKC, the Trust hopes that the Council would be willing to give the owners support in achieving appropriate disposal or refurbishment of these buildings.

All the buildings mentioned, except the former Health Centre, are located in the Kinross Conservation Area and so have a huge impact on the appearance of this historic town, the lives of its residents and the perception of visitors.

The Trust is aware, of course, of the proposed High Street environmental improvements. These are long overdue, the proposals being very similar to those contained in the Kinross Strategy 1995, of which very little was implemented. However, it will make a mockery of the High Street environmental improvements if the town is still littered with neglected, abandoned buildings.

The current situation is a disgrace.

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It is Perth & Kinross Council's responsibility to ensure that appropriate reuse for these buildings is found, or appropriate action taken to remove their negative impact.

The Trust would like to see commuted sums from developers being used for development that is of use to the town.

The Trust looks forward to receiving a response to this letter.

Yours sincerely

Alistair Smith, Chairman

For and on behalf of Kinross-shire Civic Trust

cc

P&K Councillor M Barnacle  
P&K Councillor D Cuthbert  
P&K Councillor J Giacobazzi  
P&K Councillor W Robertson  
Gordon Banks MP  
Roseanna Cunningham MSP  
Claire Baker MSP  
Jayne Baxter MSP  
Annabelle Ewing MSP  
Murdo Fraser MSP  
Willie Rennie MSP  
Richard Simpson MSP  
Elizabeth Smith MSP

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