

the SPACE

NEILSTON 
SPACE TO LIVE



A COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER PRODUCED BY NEILSTON: SPACE TO LIVE/NEILSTON DEVELOPMENT TRUST

JUNE 2006

Let's Buy the Bank!

Landmark decision puts Neilston on the map



On 25 May the Scottish Executive gave its approval to Neilston Development Trust to proceed to the next stage of Community Right to Buy. The Land Reform Act (Scotland) 2003 was drawn up to allow rural settlements (Neilston qualifies) to acquire and to assist the sustainable development of their communities. That is what we hope to do with the bank building. Pauline Gallacher has been working on this one; "Without going in to a lot of boring detail, it's important to stress just how much of an

achievement this has been for Neilston. It is difficult for communities to obtain a registration under the Land Reform Act. Most other registrations have concerned **land** rather than **buildings** on land; and the bank is within an 'urban' context in the central belt rather than the typical rural setting. It has taken us months of careful research and campaigning to get this far; now we have until end November to deliver".

Senior members of the Scottish Executive have already visited Neilston to

provide feedback and advice to the board of Neilston Development Trust.

Alan Walker, chair, adds: "If the sale goes through, this will be a truly independent asset, owned and managed for the common good of the village. It will provide a permanent and secure basis for activities that promote the economic and social wellbeing of all citizens."

Breaking News: at time of going to press, Clydesdale Bank has been in touch to open discussions. We'll keep you posted!

see page 4 for more...



NEILSTON
SPACE TO LIVE

For better or worse?

Places change. In the space of one generation, (the time it takes to move from carefree youth to careworn middle age!) a gradual process of alteration happens, punctuated by the occasional big event. 30 years ago, Neilston still boasted a wide range of shops; the Barrhead Co-op had a powerful presence. The village main street looked quite different – much more higgledy-piggledy, with big gaps appearing as buildings were demolished for road widening. The leisure centre and library were new buildings. The mills were still a big employer, the Bovis estate was coming out of the ground, and of course the bank was there as a key village service. Many residents, of course, have much older memories than these.

And then there were the battles – ‘to ‘Save the Neilston Line’, to extend Neilston Primary, and more recently to prevent closure of the Clydesdale Bank. We won the first two, and if the bank closure was a foregone conclusion we are turning that setback to positive ends.

This issue of *The Space* is all about change and opportunity. The opposite of change is no change. Do we want that? It's impossible anyway. Remember King Canute who told

the tide to turn back? If he'd really thought about it he could have been making himself rich from tidal energy! The secret; to turn potential threats into opportunities. Make change work for you.

So; Neilston in another 30 years - just another commuter town?

We don't think so. We hope **The Bank** will be still there, a place to call our own, a central hub for community life and enterprise, owned and managed by the people of Neilston for local benefit, generating projects and celebrating the efforts of wider network of other local groups.

Over the next few weeks you will be asked to *vote for the future* and back the community right to buy the bank. **We need a majority vote to prove local support.**

Read about it, come to meetings, speak to us about it, discuss it on the train, in the pub, at the coffee morning, at the bus stop.

Lots of words, one clear message:

Let's buy that bank!

A&DS: an offer we can't refuse



Top of the class, anyone who has heard of **Architecture and Design Scotland**. It's an independent body created by the Scottish Executive to promote quality architecture and urban design throughout the country. It's also a new and fairly small body, and it's looking to put its energies into carefully targeted schemes which can then be shown as models of exemplary practice. A+DS's ENABLING team has offered to engage with Space to Live and East Ren Council, through NVRG, to take forward the opportunities created by the whole Space to Live and regeneration process. The idea is to create a meaningful plan for the development of the village. Not the same as the Local Plan review that's going on, but it would obviously relate to it. Discussions are ongoing, but we are hopeful that this chance won't pass us by.

“When Space to Live got started, A+DS didn't even exist. Now we have a offer of free consultancy to help Neilston look to the future as one of the best places to live in Scotland (did I just say that? - I did, and why not?). This isn't about fancy finishes and designer homes. It's about shaping ordinary places that are worthy of our Scottish traditions and are both sustaining and sustainable.” *Pauline Gallacher*

Meet the Team



Martin Graham

Director, Neilston Development Trust

My name is Martin Graham and I was born and brought up in Neilston. I'm one of the newest and youngest (by quite a bit..) directors of the Neilston Development Trust. I have just returned from a year working in Slovenia and I'm currently studying Architecture at Strathclyde University.

Like most people in the village, I had heard of the Neilston Space to Live project and Neilston Live Festival. What really motivated me to get involved and help out was the proposal to buy the Clydesdale Bank building under the Community Right to Buy Legislation. I think this is a fantastic opportunity for the village and would provide a real central resource for all its people.

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Neilston: the only place to be this August

Festival set to be even bigger and better than last year's success!



Plans are well underway for the second **Neilston Live!** event which this year runs from 4–13 August, preceded by the Gaelic Feis from 31 July to 4 August. After last year's runaway success can we do it again? No question. Laura Carswell and her team have been slaving away for months to assemble a programme with lots for everyone, young, old and in between. They have been looking at filling any gaps in last year's pilot event, and this year are particularly keen to ensure that the young people of the village are catered for. The highly popular slots such as the tea dance, ceilidh and concerts are featured again, with the big outdoor bash being another pipe band extravaganza. We'll keep you guessing for the full story until the publication of the full programme; but see the draft programme below for a clue or two.....

Putting the festival on a sound financial footing has been a challenge. Responses to grant applications are eagerly awaited but there is already promise of support from Neilston Community Council (a big Thank You!), and two very generous sponsors have got out their cheque books. We will be acknowledging the contributions of **Phoenix Honda** and **Calibration & Measurement Services Ltd** more fully in the festival programme, but we wish to record our thanks here. The endorsement of the local business community in helping the festival and supporting the newsletter is very important to us. We hope the festival and the new Development Trust will begin to return that investment year on year, playing its part in stimulating the village economy.

Meanwhile; any other entrepreneurs wishing to identify themselves with our success, call **Laura Carswell on 881 1422**

Help!!

You enjoyed the fun last year – more fun to be had, helping put on the show! – get in touch with Laura if you're skilled in bunting or baking, have equipment to lend, play the didgeridoo, distribute publicity, dish out pies and peas... there's something here for everyone!

Laura's name rightly appears as main contact and maestro of the feast that is Neilston Live, but there are other great people who are also working their socks off to put this together. We'll be profiling these in our festival roundup newsletter. But meanwhile, a big cheer for Mary Burke, who last year put together the Barfest and is repeating the feat this year, as well as continuing her own singing career and completing an HND. Mary has been using her Neilston Live experience as a case study in her course – another welcome spin-off of our festival!

More info on **Barfest** from Mary Burke
07800 869469

More info on the **Feis** from Alasdair Law:
01475 715450

More info on **Festival** from Laura : 881 1422
laura.carswell1@tiscali.co.uk

Check the festival website:
www.neilstonlive.co.uk

Draft Programme for Neilston Live! 31 July-13 August 06

- 31/7-4/8 **Feis**; Gaelic culture for all ages
- 4/8-13/8 **Bar Fest**; great gigs in village pubs
- Exhibitions**
- 04/08/06 **Opening Concert** up to last year's standard? We think so!
- 05/08/06 **Michael Marra with our own Lou Hickey**
- 06/08/06 **Puppet Show featuring Mousetail Puppets.** All Welcome!
- Youth Gig** - even more local talent!
- 5/8-12/8 **Workshops/Events** for all ages and interests
- 09/08/06 **Cinema night** – remember Cool Runnings last year?
- 10/08/06 **Pipers' Parade** and 'Curry Ceilidh' How could we forget it?
- 11/08/06 **Concert with Das Contrás** – hits of last year
- 12/08/06 **Art Project** – opening
- Talent show** (afternoon) – Unmissable
- Jazz dinner dance.** Cool music, hot food
- 13/08/06 **Classical concert** showcasing local talent
- Closing Ceilidh** - pies, peas and pipes

Feeling Creative? Two ways to star...

Neilston – in your dreams!

Art competition; full details available from the library or from Laura laura.carswell1@tiscali.co.uk

Poetry competition

Again, full details from the library. Maria Cairnie will be leading a poetry workshop on 24 June (see village notice board for venue details) and workshops are also planned for the festival to complement the **Poems and Pints** evening

Buying the Bank

What Could The Building Be Used For?

This is the question on everyone's lips. The answer will be a combination of what is physically possible (skating rink *not on*), what we'd ideally like to do, and what will bring in some income to help the building 'wash its face'. **The basic aim is clear; to provide a flexible facility that helps the social and economic prosperity of the community in an open and accountable way.**

A *feasibility study* is in progress to look at the ways the space could be organised, and how it 'stacks up' financially. Public meetings will give everyone a chance to have their say (see village noticeboard for more details).

Some ideas (*but these are only initial hunches*)

Ground floor: for community services (the East Renfrewshire Credit Union has already expressed interest) and a **multipurpose area** for NDT and community use – space for casual meeting, training, information and advice; *a genuine social space*. There are so many ways in which this building could bring people together. For instance; young people currently have no space to meet in the evenings. We have been speaking to the Neilston Youth Initiative to look at ways they could use space possibly access the space. And what about the heritage of the village? Might there be space for a changing display of the superb archive of material?

The upstairs rooms: individual office/work spaces for small business. This will encourage people to come in to the village to work (there's an overall shortage of such accommodation in East Ren). It could also help others to stay local, creating jobs and investment, but also spending their cash in the village.

There is also room for extension to the rear – a second phase development if demand is there.

examples of great community-owned buildings from home and abroad



< >

Pics by
Andrew Lee

It's Good To Talk

There are too many questions to answer in print. We believe we have an exciting list of possible uses for the building, and already people are indicating interest in taking space there.

We want to give everyone a chance to get their questions answered and make their own suggestions, so we have programme of opportunities to make that happen.

By the time this summer is over, we promise everyone and their dog will have had the opportunity to participate in this big adventure for the village.

If you have any ideas about how YOU'D like to see the building developed, get in touch. Or if you have any concerns about the whole project, we would be glad to hear from you. The livelier the debate, the better the outcome!

**What's your opinion?
Let us know!**

BRING ON THE BALLOT!

The Community Right to Buy regulations are very strict, to ensure that community ownership means just that. The constitution of the NDT was very strictly vetted to make sure it promoted sustainable development of both the land and the community, and that the whole community could participate in the running of the company. We are glad to have received that degree of examination from the highest authority. Part of this vetting procedure is that we have to demonstrate community support for the proposal to buy the bank. An independently monitored ballot of the whole voting population is therefore a requirement of the community right to buy process. We are taking advice from the Council on the correct way to organise this, and will be making sure you have very clear information at every stage of along the way. You may have signed the petition we circulated earlier – and this was vital in getting to where we are now, but we still need you to vote – in even bigger numbers.

The precise date of the ballot is still to be confirmed, but it will be sometime in July. Proxy voting will be possible if you are due to be on holiday.

Balloting the whole community is a big challenge for a small organisation. A majority of the voting population has to vote, so every single vote is valuable. We'll be in touch!

Footnote: Even if negotiations with Clydesdale Bank prove fruitful (see Breaking News, p1), we need the ballot to demonstrate community support to our funders)



Community Right to Buy

Under the Land Reform Scotland Act 2003, Scottish Ministers have powers to allow community bodies in eligible areas (Neilston qualifies) to acquire land to assist the sustainable development of those communities. This is a very complex process, full of checks and balances to ensure that a very powerful piece of legislation is used fairly. What are these powers?

Intervening in the property market to allow a community body to exercise sole option to buy is a serious move. It is even more serious when the property is already on the market. This was the case with the bank. That makes it a 'late' application.

(It was only when the campaign against closure – in which we participated – had been rejected that we felt purchase to be the way forward. Negotiation on price was refused us, so Community Right to Buy was the only way to save the building for the community.)

During the process, the landowner is given the opportunity to comment on the community body's submission, and those views are taken into account in making the decision. The Executive has to be seen to act impartially in applying the provisions of the Act. If the decision goes in favour of the Community Body, the prohibition on sale continues for 6 months. (The landowner has a further period to appeal on the decision). An independent valuation is given by the District Valuer and appeal on this is also provided for. A full community ballot, final application to acquire and fundraising then takes place.

It is a very demanding process for community groups to pursue successfully. The Act is relatively new and will soon be undergoing review.

If you are interested, our full application and supporting documents submitted can be viewed on an Executive website <http://rcil.ros.gov.uk/RCIL> (Click on 'community body interests').

We have already had expressions of interest from locals and, as part of the business plan for NDT, will be considering the best policy for allocating space. If you run a small business in the area that could usefully operate from one or two rooms in this central village location, get in touch with Pauline Gallacher: 881 1337, or pauline.gallacher@btinternet.com

No Leisure for Leisure Centre Action Group

The village has been a hotbed of activity recently with campaigns against the cutbacks in the warden services and the leisure centre. An action group, composed of members of the Community Council, Space to Live and Stand up for Neilston, is working with the council to consider a viable future for the facility. A huge amount of work has been done by dedicated individuals taking responsibility for different parts of the campaign, e.g. the design, distribution and analysis of a survey that has been passed to the council, and much outreach and promotional work done by volunteers. John Watson, the new sports services manager has come into post and he and his team have shown great willingness to engage with residents' ideas. The recent open day at the pool attracted 250 participants, many of them children. It was great to see the place jumping with people, the staff were all really helpful and the director of Culture and Leisure even took time to pop in, hotfoot from running the women's 10K! A new programme has been produced and a copy is enclosed with this copy of The Space. There is no room for complacency about the future of the facility – usership is being monitored closely. Adults are still missing out on this great local facility, and there are plans for more open days – so get along there – USE IT OR LOSE IT!

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Neilston Youth Initiative

"Young people these days..." we've been saying it since the Greeks. Communication and understanding between the generations has always been difficult. Life today is very different from 50 years ago and today's young people need support and investment (not always of the monetary sort). That's why Space to Live (NDT) has been collaborating with the Neilston Youth Initiative (NYI) to try to ensure that what we do is as open as possible to the young people of the village. NYI is a joint project between the YMCA and ERC, working with other partners in a Support and Sustainability group. It operates from the Pavilion at Kingston Playing Fields. Watch the village notice board for info on all future activities for young people in the village.

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HAPPY BIRTHDAY NVRG



Neilston Village Regeneration Group was set up a year ago as a joint platform for community planning partners and the local community to work together to promote the physical and social regeneration of the village. Several community organisations have been active in NVRG's work over the past year. The most visible sign of the group's work has been the upgrading of the area in front of the shops. This has absorbed the majority of two years' worth of funds (£30,000 per year) allocated to Neilston from the Regeneration Fund. Clearly external funds will have to be attracted to the village if more integrated plans are to be pursued (see A+DS article page xx). The council has produced an end of year report focussing on the work of the group and its members and setting out its plans. It is obtainable from: Gillian McNamara email: gillian.mcnamara@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk. Or call 577 3044

A Bit of a Do...



THE HUB
the big do workshop
neilston 2005 11 26

'Thank you
...Both Ew
happy. It's
we're hap

Avid watchers of Space to Live and its exploits will remember the BIG DO workshop at the end of the year, when we had visiting designers from Denmark helping us to look at the

village with new eyes. We haven't produced a newsletter since then (bank and other diversions) so those who didn't attend have still to get a full report. This is in preparation and will be

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again for an inspirational weekend!
ra and myself left Glasgow exhausted but
potentially a ground-breaking project and
py to be part of it'.

David Sim, Gehl Architects, Copenhagen

launched soon. In fact the report is one
of a series of chapters of a bigger story.
That story starts with those first public
meetings in January 2004 (remember
the snow? Still grateful to those who

ideas developed at workshop
– don't hold us to them!

turned out that night!). It finishes
(or pauses) with the involvement of
Architecture and Design Scotland in
their enabling role (see page 2)

Calling all village organisations!

Publicise your events **free** on the
community noticeboard

Have you noticed the new bus stop, complete with notice board? It was installed as part of the NVRG improvements to the shopping square. Space to Live was awarded a community environment grant to erect a community notice board in the new space. When funds were not available to replace the bus stop, the council made the suggestion that the bus shelter and notice board should be combined. We had reservations about this, feeling that the regeneration funds should have been able to stretch to a new bus stop, but of course co-operated to find a solution. As you will see, there is a large amount of notice board space available and we have come to an agreement with the council about how it should be managed. All community organisations are invited to use the board. Space to Live (Neilston Development Trust) will undertake to keep the board up to date on a fortnightly cycle. Posters and notices may be handed in to Sinclair Hair Studio; we are grateful to Billy Sinclair for being willing to do this. Conditions of use have been intimated to members of NVRG, are posted on the notice board or can be obtained from pauline.gallacher@btinternet.com. Cleaning and physical maintenance is carried out by the council's contractors.

Space to Live/Neilston Development Trust



What's in a name?

How many names can one organisation have? Just as everyone was coming to know (and love) *Space to Live*, we go and register another company. What's going on?

Very simply, it's to do with the bank business. In order to qualify under Community Right to Buy, our constitution (called the Memorandum and Articles) had to be tweaked to conform to the legislation. So we now have two companies with very similar constitutions. **Neilston Development Trust** will continue with the aims and objectives of Space to Live, and soon (let's hope!) be able to operate from a new base in the old bank. Space to Live as a company will be wound up (members expect an EGM soon) but we'll probably retain the Space to Live title for the environmental and planning aspects of the Trust's work.

£1 buys you life membership of the Trust. Eligibility: everyone who lives within the G78 3 postcode area and is over 18. Under 18s please don't be put off by this – it's a legal requirement; we really want to work with you as well and are already in contact with a good number of young people in the village – so do get in touch.

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Calling all local businesses! Use this space to reach 2000+ households AND support our own community newsletter. **Space to Live** is aiming to make The SPACE a regular feature of village life. We can't rely on grants forever, so why not make it a win/win for your business and the community by taking advertising space with us? Contact 881 1337 or 561 8836 to discuss.

THANKS TO NEW ADVERTISERS FOR THEIR SUPPORT!

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I would like to apply for membership of **Neilston Development Trust**.

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Age (if under 18)

My Interests (e.g. sport, gardening, local history)

Organisations I'm involved with (e.g. Scouts, residents' associations)

I'd like to get involved in Space to Live, please contact me to discuss ☐

I enclose £1 membership (free if under 18) ☐

Signature Date

Return to Shona Donnelly, Secretary, 30 Glen Falloch Crescent, Neilston

Contact us

Shona Donnelly
Admin Secretary
30 Glen Falloch Crescent
Neilston
Tel: 561 8836
email: shdonn@hotmail.com

Pauline Gallacher
Co-ordination
Tel: 881 1337
Email: pauline.gallacher@btinternet.com

And not forgetting...

Thanks to:

Our funders to date

Awards For All,
Communities Scotland,
East Renfrewshire Council,
Levern Valley Partnership,
National Programme for Architecture
Innovation Fund

and

Neilston Business Forum and NVRG for
encouragement and active support.



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