



16<sup>th</sup> May 2013

Dear Sir/Madame,

I am writing to you to express my extreme disappointment and objection to the continued ill thought, misguided and inappropriate development of the Aberdeen seafront and surrounding area.

It is common knowledge that out of town retail parks and numerous shopping malls are damaging city centres and high streets across the UK and this is also true of Aberdeen. In addition, I believe that here in Aberdeen we have a double-edged issue that is being ignored. By developing an out of town style retail park at the seafront, not only is this helping to degrade Union Street further, but it is also having a negative effect on the social and leisure aspects of the beach area.

In 1996/97 the Queens Links Leisure Park was developed to boost the seafront's popularity. This included big chain restaurants, multi-screen cinema, and a giant nightclub and bingo hall. In 2006 the nightclub closed and soon after the bingo hall too. The cinema is still there, albeit a different owner, but since the opening of another cinema in the monstrous Union Square it is no longer the "go to" venue it used to be. A few restaurants have remained, although there are at least 2 problem units that are often empty or frequently changing names. The most noticeable thing at the beach now is the remnants of the nightclub and bingo hall. These two massive buildings are such an eyesore and of such ridiculous proportions that the current owner, X-Leisure, has been unable to do anything with them for over 7 years.

The latest proposal is for The Range to open a store in these two buildings, which is what prompted me to write this letter. I honestly believe that this proposal (although better than Europe's largest Chinese buffet) will not enhance the area. What it will do is make traffic flow even more of a problem than the Beach Retail Park has already caused. It will reduce the parking available for those wishing to spend leisure time at the beach, which after all is what the seafront should be for. It will also continue to be an eyesore on what should be a beautiful coastline.

Aberdeen Beach and Promenade is one of the city's greatest assets and was once a summer destination not only for locals, but also for people across the Shire, Scotland and the rest of the UK. As stated on the council website, Aberdeen is the second most competitive city for business in the UK, but will we maintain this ranking if the city continues to ruin it's public areas? To attract business we must attract people. We need to offer things that will make Aberdeen a great place to live not just work.

Now it is very easy to object to things, and we all know that Aberdonians are the best at negative criticism. As stated above I have strong objections to the way the Seafront is being developed. This is because I truly believe that natural and green spaces are what make a city great – and a beautiful seafront can make a city amazing. After all, not many cities in the UK can boast a beach.

So instead of simply criticising other people's efforts I would like to offer up an idea that I am working on. I feel that if I am not quick the opportunity to do something really great will be missed, which is why I have written to you. My biggest problem is finding the

backing and support for my idea, so I am hoping that by sharing my idea with you something may evolve from it to help me progress.

Aberdeen has a strong connection to the sea. It is both a historic fishing port, the harbour is one of the UK's oldest, and a service hub for the North Sea oil and gas industry. The fastest sailing ship was built here, so too was the first stern trawler, and as previously mentioned it is well known for its mile-long golden beach. In recent years it seems that there has been so much focus on oil and gas that good architecture, pleasing visual aesthetics, social and leisure requirements have been neglected.

Therefore in an effort to bring back the balance I would like to propose my ideas for rejuvenating Aberdeen Seafront to make it a great social and leisure destination again, for both city, shire and beyond.

- 1. Pedestrianise the promenade.**  
Why is there a road and parking between the cafés and the view? It's supposed to be a promenade yet there is more space allocated to cars than people.
- 2. Utilise more of the seafront.**  
Why is everything crammed in to such a small area? Why aren't there small kiosk cafés etc. dotted along the length of the beach? For an example look at Copacabana beach in Rio.
- 3. Improve the architecture and utilise the natural asset – The Beach.**  
Stop allowing unsightly extensions on the old historic buildings. Do not approve unimaginative, boring or ugly buildings like the Boardwalk and the rest of the Queens Links to be built. Why do most of the buildings take you away from the seafront and face inland? Stop allowing giant metal sheds to be built everywhere.
- 4. Relocate the carpark entrance for the Beach Retail Park.**  
Why do the retail carpark and beach carpark entrances overlap? This is causing major traffic congestion. Why not have accesses to the retail park from Cotton Street or Garvock Wynd?
- 5. Build something in keeping with the seafront ethos – An Oceanarium.**  
This is the heart of my idea and the one I personally wish to achieve. I would like to see ownership of the beach area taken away from X-Leisure. The nightclub and bingo buildings should be demolished and the carpark relocated (preferably as either an underground or multi-storey). In its place a new architecturally significant and aesthetically pleasing structure to house an aquarium of such quality that it would rival the National Aquarium in Plymouth and become Scotland's National Aquarium.  
It would house predominately local species, including invertebrates, fish, sharks and seals. There would also be additional exhibits for foreign animals for example a tall Kelp Tank with Sea Otters and Coral Reef tanks etc. Other facilities to include an animal rescue and rehab centre for sick or injured marine birds and mammals, a 10-30m deep SCUBA pool for local dive schools to use for improved diver training, and some laboratory space for Aberdeen University student projects.

- 6. Build a retractable pedestrian bridge to the Torry Battery.**  
Allow better access to local assets and improve their use by the public. The trouble with a lot of places in the UK is that they are portrayed as a great day out, but only really take up an hour or two. By linking areas better a “day out” may be achievable.
- 7. Incorporate and connect to the Harbour.**  
Create harbour space for extension of the Maritime Museum and have a small selection of vessels for visitors to explore. For example a tall ship, a replica of the Thermopylae, or perhaps a Royal Navy warship or submarine.
- 8. Magnetic Levitation Mass Transit System.**  
Connect the beach to the train station and centre of town by building a magnetic levitation transit system. For an example see Darling Harbour in Sydney.  
OK, this may be an extreme idea, but I think it’ll be a great way to make Aberdeen truly a city of the future. It would help reduce traffic by providing a quick, clean, quiet and exciting form of mass transit between the city centre and seafront priced at a level that the public can actually afford to use.  
It could be developed further to provide loops along Deeside toward Duthie Park and Robert Gordon’s University, and northward to Aberdeen University and the AECC.  
Again, this would help create better connections allowing people to easily move between facilities and public spaces. It would also reduce the need for some of the city centre buses, freeing them up for more community-based routes. It would ultimately also negate the need for the “bendy” buses that are far too large and cumbersome for our roads.

These are my ideas. I would love to hear what you think.

Yours sincerely,

Philip van Kuyk.