

Foundations for our Future (HES-HCCT)

Tue, 11/2 1:06PM • 11:00

SPEAKERS

Megan Pearce, Fatima Uygun, David Harkin, Audrey Carlin, Niall Murphy, Taylor Cross-Whiter, Andrew Cardwell

Taylor Cross-Whiter 00:05

Glasgow is one of the most important historic cities in the UK and the largest in Scotland. It has a rich tapestry of historic sites and places that document both its past and present. Shaped by the landscape around it. With the Clyde running east to west and a typography carved out by successive ice ages, the city has a distinct character with historic and natural heritage coming together.

David Harkin 00:25

Glasgow, like cities all around the world is today at a very real risk from climate change. And the city's heritage is no stranger to that either. There are physical climate risks that will impact the city's heritage. But at the very same time, the city's heritage is also part of the solution to the climate crisis. We're off on a walk round the city today to visit examples of historic buildings that are actively contributing to solving the climate crisis. We'll go to the Briggait, Govanhill Baths, Central Station, and Bell Street Stables, and there we'll speak to people on the ground to find out how these places are contributing to solving the climate crisis. But first off, we're going to catch up with an expert to see exactly what's going on with the climate right here.

Megan Pearce 01:06

So I'm Megan, and I'm a climate consultant at the Met Office.

David Harkin 01:10

Can you tell us what Glasgow's future climate might look like?

Megan Pearce 01:12

Yeah, absolutely. So I'm sure it's not really a surprise to you guys. But Glasgow is one of the wettest cities in the UK. And it's projected that temperatures in summer and winter will increase by one to three degrees Celsius by 2050. While summers might be drier overall, what we do see is that when there is a rainfall event, this rainfall event will be more intense. Unfortunately, not such great news for winter, where precipitation in Glasgow is projected to increase by 5 to 20% by 2050. We really want to all work together to achieve, just reduce our emissions as much as possible, because we know that we can limit those impacts that might occur in a high emission scenario.

Taylor Cross-Whiter 01:55

Thank you so much for your time, Megan. With that background, and Glasgow's current and possible future climate from Megan, we're now setting off to find out what role historic buildings can play in helping Glasgow adapt to and mitigate climate change. Our first stop is the Briggait in Glasgow City

Centre. Constructed in the late 1800s, the Briggait started life as a fish market and operated until the 1970s. Abandoned for decades, the Briggait once faced an uncertain future. Today the building has found a new lease of life as a hub for the creative industries in Glasgow with space for visual artists and cultural organisations. It's a vital part of the city's cultural scene and an excellent example of how historic buildings can be saved for a 21st century use. We're meeting Audrey Carlin, Chief Executive of Wasps, the organisation that was responsible for bringing this building back into use. Can you tell us a little bit about the backstory of the building and Wasps' involvement with the Briggait?

Audrey Carlin 02:47

The Briggait was obviously built in 1873 as an exemplary hygienic market hall for Glasgow and particularly focused on the fish industry at that time and located right beside the Clyde. However, the markets moved eventually up to the motorway network up at Blochairn in the late 70s. And this building became surplus to requirements and was earmarked for demolition. There was a campaign to save it and find new uses. And it took about 20 years for Wasps to come to the picture. But it wasn't until 2009 that we were able to get the building renovated, put artist studios in it and make it wind and watertight, service it and do all the things that a fish market doesn't have that made it suitable for creative people to work in. What an inspiring building, you know, everyday I'm so blessed to walk in the door and think that I work here.

David Harkin 03:39

With the Briggait giving us an insight into how historic buildings can be repurposed and given a new lease of life, we're now off to Central Station to see an example of a place still performing its original and intended function. The next stop on our trip is Glasgow Central Station, where we'll speak to Niall Murphy from Glasgow City Heritage Trust. We'll ask Neil about the history of the station, the role it plays in the everyday life of Glasgow city residents. And we'll find out how the station is playing its part in helping Scotland to meet ambitious climate change targets. Could you give us a wee bit about the history of the station and how it's developed over the 20th and 21st century?

Niall Murphy 04:14

So this was all to do with the competition of various railway companies to get into Glasgow and bridge across the river. And because the river was a harbour, that was not easy to do. So the initial station was built between 1876 and 1879. But it very rapidly proved to be too small. And so it was then massively expanded at the turn of the century.

David Harkin 04:36

Is the historic and architectural features of the station, is that is that important to the station and its use?

Niall Murphy 04:43

So it's a really impressive building from that point of view. And it's got all these kinds of fantastic sort of curving pods in it. And so what they ended up doing is they base the whole thing on how to kind of get people to their platform as quickly as possible and it's how water flows through a space and so everything is kind of curved and sinuous to try and get people to flow towards their platforms, which of course, when you have like the Glasgow Fair, and everybody's leaving town to go doon the water, that's exactly what you need.

David Harkin 05:08

What do you think the role of somewhere like Glasgow Central Station is in helping Scotland meet quite ambitious climate change targets?

Niall Murphy 05:16

Well, I think it's incredibly important because it's kind of like this, this huge kind of machine that basically, you know, brings in people from the surrounding area, and then passes them out through the city, because that whole network of train tram lights are kind of coming into the city are all electrified, and majority of them are and then more are being electrified as well. It means it's a really, really low carbon way to travel.

Taylor Cross-Whiter 05:39

From a major transport hub we're now going to see what historic buildings can teach us about materials and skills and solving issues beyond the climate crisis. The Bell Street Stables were built in the late 19th century to house the horses and equipment for Glasgow's cleansing department. Then in the 1950s the stables were converted to house the city's police horses. Today it has been converted again, this time into affordable rental flats. With ambitions to substantially increase the residential population here in Glasgow City Centre the conversion of the stables is another excellent example of reusing a historic building to meet 21st century needs. These are great examples for the construction industry of how they can reduce the sector's environmental impacts. We're here today to talk to Andrew Cardwell from Collective Architecture, the architecture practice that was in charge of designing the retrofit of the stables. Hi, thanks for meeting us here. Can you tell us a little bit about the backstory to this building and your involvement with it?

Andrew Cardwell 06:33

Yeah. So this is Bell Street Stables. It was purpose built by the cleansing department. When they originally built it it was for the horses that they used at the time and the carts and all the equipment. So they had stables on the west side there. You know, it was a noisy there was 80 horses, maybe in this space, and a lot of industrial activity, you know, so it was quite a busy noisy building.

Taylor Cross-Whiter 06:56

Can you also tell us a little bit more about where some of the materials were sourced from and also the sustainability around those materials?

Andrew Cardwell 07:03

Yeah, so we're pretty sure that we've used the same stone from the same quarry down in the borders that the building was built from.

Taylor Cross-Whiter 07:09

So that's a local, a locally sourced stone.

Andrew Cardwell 07:11

Yeah, locally sourced stone.

Taylor Cross-Whiter 07:12

What do you think the role that historic buildings like the stables have to play in terms of climate action?

Andrew Cardwell 07:18

No, I think they're a great opportunity, quite robust and quite adaptable. So you know, actually, they will take several iterations of use.

David Harkin 07:27

For our last stop, we're heading south of the river to see an incredible example of people coming together to save a historic building at the heart of their community. Built in the 1910s, Govanhill Baths gave the local community wash houses, baths and a public swimming pool. The Baths were closed in 2001 and since then, they've become a site for local grassroots community activism, with the local community, grouping together to really save the building that the Baths were situated in, but also to give it a new lease of life. We're going to meet Fatima Uygen to find out more about how Govanhill Baths has been brought back into use. So you've been here since the very beginning of

Fatima Uygun 08:03

Since the very beginning Yep

David Harkin 08:05

Community driven renovation or sort of bringing the place back into life. So that's great. And could you tell us a wee bit about the history of Govanhill Baths?

Fatima Uygun 08:13

It's an Edwardian swimming baths, built at the start essentially of the First World War. And it was closed in 2001, that spurred a huge uprising locally. And we occupied the building. It is the longest occupation of a building in British history, a civic building for 141 days with police and security and so on. And in 2012, we finally got the keys to the building and we moved back in and now it's under community ownership.

David Harkin 08:44

I feel like there's big plans for the place going forward.

Fatima Uygun 08:46

There is, this gives you a rough idea of what we're hoping for the buildings and it's going to be a well being centre. So it will have two of the three swimming pools back into operation. It will have a multipurpose centre, a gym, a cafe, a Turkish sauna, and we're also going to be locating the pantry, our People's Pantry into the back where it used to be the steamie, the old laundrette. I think what's important about our buildings and the Govanhill Baths is that they were fought for. So that activist based approach to owning property. You care for it, you believe in its future, you want to look after it.

Audrey Carlin 09:26

Being able to keep, retain buildings like this in a city centre location where people live, where it's easy to get to, is important, than building something new.

Fatima Uygun 09:37

These buildings were built 100 years ago and they're still standing. What does that tell you about sustainability? Let's build buildings that are going to last for generations and generations.

Taylor Cross-Whiter 09:50

Thank you so much for joining us on this journey through Glasgow and some of its historic buildings. Learning a little bit more about how Glasgow's historic buildings and communities are fighting to help protect the city from climate change. We know climate change is the defining issue of our generation. But we hope that some of the things you've seen in this video, help bring hope and offer new solutions for people when thinking about how we can adapt our historic buildings and cities to not only cope with climate change, but also help fight and mitigate the effects of what we're looking at in the future.

David Harkin 10:18

The other thing that we've seen today from from the places that we've been to visit I think, is the potential of the historic environment or historic structures to contribute to solving the climate crisis. I guess, in summary, from what we've seen today, is really that the historic buildings like the ones that we've been to today, they are very much part of the solution to the climate crisis. They are not part of the problem. We just need to get better at looking after them, at sort of valuing them and giving them a new lease of life in the 21st century.