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2065 : life today in  
Dumfries River Town

# WE LIVE WITH WATER 2065

Way back in May 2016 the people of Dumfries and Galloway elected a visionary regional council who set in place a programme of change for the region that has brought about the prosperity, equality and wellbeing that we now experience as normality in SouthWest Scotland in 2065.

In 2016 Dumfries had lost its way, it was clearly no longer the 'big town' for people of the SouthWest. The Council engaged deeply with citizens of the town and wider region and a plan emerged to re-imagine Dumfries as the regional capital by concentrating on making it a place that people wanted to come to meet and spend time...a place that had the key regional administrative functions and healthcare...a place with cultural attractions...a place with the main transport links for visitors...and so the place where much new business would be transacted.

In looking for the character of the new Dumfries, thinking focused on making a positive from a factor that had been regarded as a 'problem' for years...the River Nith and its regular flooding of low lying areas of the town. The idea of **'Living with Water'** was born; in this the River and the flooding were embraced as positive features of life in the town. Radical changes were introduced to the town that brought the river as fully natural feature into every aspect of life in the town – chief among these was the re-wilding of the areas immediately adjacent to the Nith. This became known as the Merse Zone and quickly became a hybrid town/country space with animal grazing, food production, education and cultural activities taking place. The annual boat race Nithraid grew to become an international event with the whole Merse covered in high quality stalls and attractions and the Salty Coo is now an icon of the town known throughout the world. The annual Rood Fair adapted to the *end of oil* and continues to thrive with rides and stalls powered by wind and hydro power from the river.

Bordering the Merse Zone is the 'Boardwalk' a strip of buildings specially constructed to withstand regular floods – the Boardwalk is a floating walkway has become an attraction in its own right and connects a series of outdoor markets, food producers and social spaces (cafes, bars and the popular boatyard for the small craft that use the river). The Vennel, Bank Street and Shakespeare Street are some of the most famous of Dumfries' 'Greenstreets' - the vegetation rich ways that join the Merse to the town centre and are watered by the famous 'Dumfries Roans' artist designed street drains that carry climate-change rainwater away from the roofs and streets of the town. The Greenstreets pass through some of the most popular residential districts of the town. It is hard to believe now that in 2015 less than 1000 people lived in the town centre or the 'Ghost town' as it was then cried. Now, more 10,000 people live in the heart of Dumfries and they bring prosperity to the independent markets, shops, cafes, bars, share centres, virtual making libraries etc that cram into every available space.

Other important changes that date back to the beginning of 'Living with Water' include:

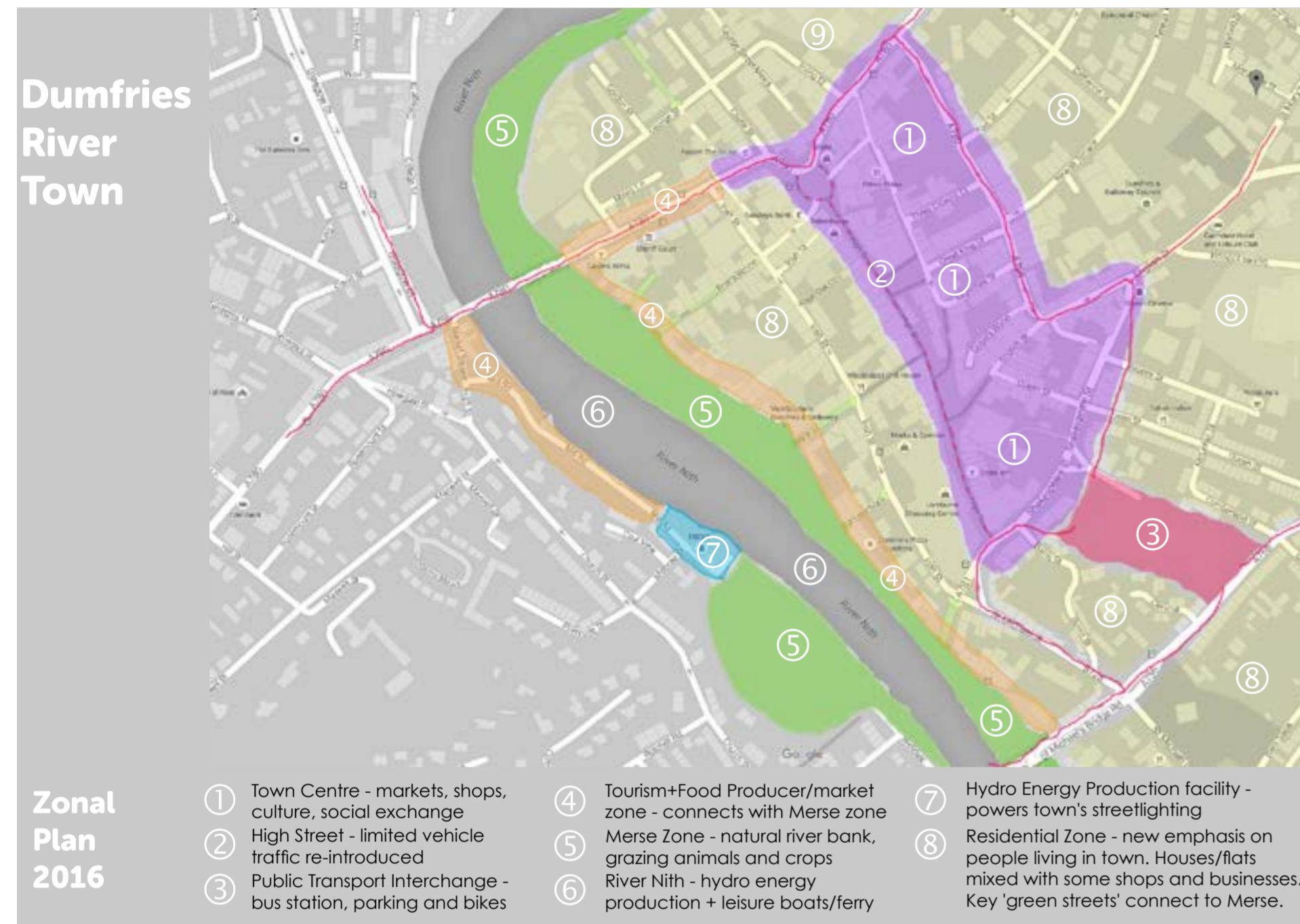
- The construction of the public transport interchange at Brooms Road – home to the electric buses that are used by more than 80% of Doonhamers
- The limited re-introduction of vehicles to the High Street...though these are now largely the electric bikes that most Doonhamers own, in 2016 petrol powered cars and lorries brought renewed activity to the High Street 24 hours a day.
- The Burnsmill HydroElectric power station was built in the former cinema and Burns Centre – with the advent of the 'Zygadlo Inverter' this now powers all of the town's streetlighting and much of the power for our electric buses and bicycles.
- The Stove Network first moved into 100 High Street in 2015 – the membership of The Stove have now repurposed more than 30 buildings in the town using the skills of local people and creating numerous jobs...making them the third largest employer in the town after the Market Cooperative and DTC (Dumfries Transport Company). Among the buildings developed by The Stove are Rosefield Auditorium (Culture and Leisure complex in the old tweed mills at Troqueer), DG1 (an abandoned swimming pool – now the headquarters of DTC) and the Dumfries Harbour buildings at Kingholm from which Dumfries Carbon Free Freight operates.



**Josie McRobert**  
Provost of Dumfries 2062-



# DUMFRIES RIVER TOWN 2065



How 'Living with Water' began in 2016, when the Council adopted the saying:

*'Don't get stuck criticising the darkness. Light a candle'*



# DEAR DUMFRIES



Gemma Aharish  
(Citizen of New Germany)

Thank you for such a fantastic visit, it was inspiring to be immersed in such innovative use of space and land. Water flowing, community gardens growing food, things working together in ways I hadn't considered, makes you want to be involved, come up with your own ideas and you feel like they would be listened to. What I found most prominent during my visit is a quiet confidence in collaboration, a beauty and a balance that was overwhelming.

The Culture and Leisure Centre was full of interesting stories about your town, its historical and cultural links across Scotland as well as places further a field like Norway. I was surprised to find out Dumfries had had such troubles in the past or that its rich cultural history was nearly forgotten and left uncelebrated. The way you have used your story to positively shape your town for inhabitants and visitors alike shouts out. I particularly enjoyed following your map leading me past places of historical significance, points of new design and inspiration, relics of the old embraced by the new.

Dumfries is truly a place bustling with creativity and new ways of looking at things; one of my favourites was the hydro inspired water sculpture further down the riverside. Unfortunately flood was not an occurrence during my visit so I was not able to see it in its full glory but I have been advised to come back in November when there has been a bustle of excitement over forecasts of high water levels. So until then I will have to imagine my next visit when I hope to walk along your boardwalk as it floats above the place I recently sat to eat my lunch to see the whirling wheels of this sculpture.

Thank you again!



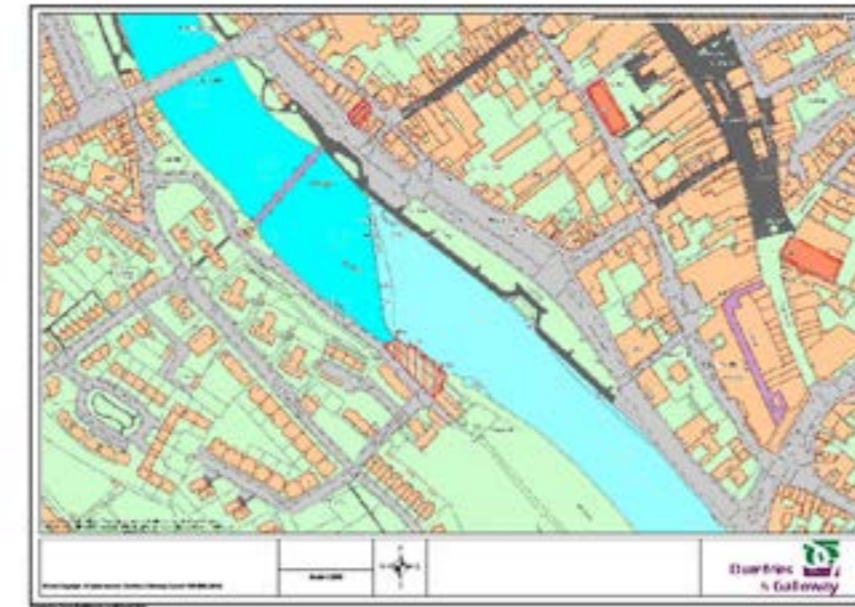
# DUMFRIES RIVER TOWN 2065



Existing green spaces were retained and linked to re-wilded areas like the Whitesands, creating a green corridor right through the town centre out to the University and Innovation Quarter at the Crichton and, to the North, the Energy Enterprise Zone of Greensands and Sandside.



# OUR ENERGY



This is one of the original drawings for what became the Burnsmill Power Station. It shows the location of the first turbines (red hatched area). The initial capacity of the plant was only 1,000,000 kw/PA, but, with technological advances including the locally developed 'Zygadlo Inverter' Burnsmill was soon contributing a significant proportion of the town's energy.

The world famous Kinetic Platform was installed in 2020 and the first of the Biennial sculpture commissions was unveiled a year later as part of the region's Environmental Art Festival Scotland (founded 2013).

## BURNSMILL

**In the winter of 2059 one of the pioneers of Burnsmill, Dr Ludmilla Van Der Graaf gave a rare interview to Willie Johnstone III of the Scottish Broadcasting Collective - below is an edited extract:**

'Since beginning,' she says, 'I am only one worked with batteries. There was laddie before, when it was old generators. Poor wee mannie. Grid was connected, of course, and grid what killed him; massive shock. Is easier now just batteries here. Big submergennies, in the riverbed, all automatic and, since grid was cut, they feed town network along with roofgennies, windgennies...'

'So, the batteries aren't charged from the submergennies?'

'No, just from screwgennie.'

'The Archimedes?'

'Yeah. Old screwyougennie.' She spits again. It plops beside my foot and I appreciate the full significance of the footwear safety regulation.

'It's very old, isn't it? How long has it been running?'

'Fifty, almost fifty, years. Excellent machinery. They had vision, boys and girls who is put it. They not really needed, there was new programme of nucleargennies coming but they do it anyway. And, after Middle East Wars, Gas Wars and Water War, you remember that? Hard times, and they not over. Another Water War coming, you taking my word.' Again, she does the blink and time congeals in the basement. I rehearse what she has said and decide that it doesn't make much sense, but what does? So, I let it drift while the fermata blink freezes everything.

'What?' she says.

'What?' I say.

'You just standing there, ask me something for interview. You think I got all day?'

'Yes, I do.' I say, 'but I don't.' 'So, ask.' 'Where are you from?'

'What kind of question? I am scientist, international scientist. I training in Damascus, Munchen, Stockholm... What you mean?...You are young, shitter, and you know nothing but I tell you something now to make you teeth curl. You want to know where this batteries are going, eh? I tell you. Every one of this supergelcells is making your fucking CCTV. Yeah, for sure. See how many there are? One for every one of those eyes. This beautiful machine made by ancient Greeks four thousands years history, this superlight graphine cell I work in team to invent in Dusseldorf, 2046, this superconducting fibre made in Oxford,' she kicks a limb-sized section of cable half submerged in the sludge, 'it all come to this shit; super-eye surveillance. And I too, to this shit.' She spits at my boot.

'Shot.' I say.

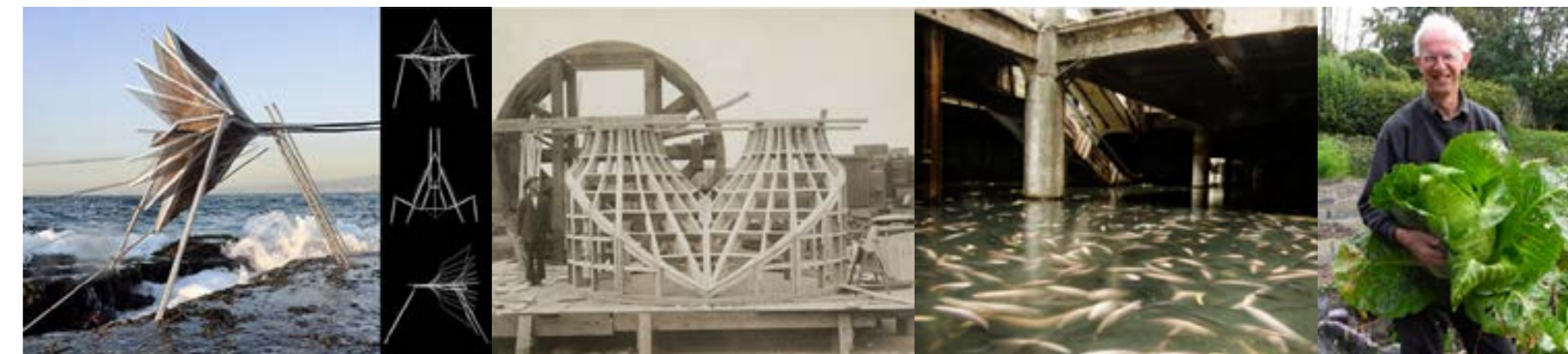
'Dead-eye.' She says.

I say, 'Dead-eye? What's that?'

'It is idea, shitter. It is idea I give you.' She taps her temple with a crooked finger, 'Something to think about.' And she blinks. I see the tongue emerge but all is frozen.



Dr Ludmilla Van Der Graaf



# DUMFRIES RIVER TOWN 2065



## HIGH STREET



Cross-sectional drawing through Dumfries River Town from Maxwelltown to the High Street



# DUMFRIES VOICES 2065

After a couple of minor hiccups (ewes with waterlogged fleeces and foot problems, Limousin cattle jumping the boardwalk and running away, water-cress becoming an invasive weed, requiring herbicide) we adapted to the times and diversified. Then it was all plain sailing.

Merse-produced organic sea-kale, garlic and an impressive range of mushrooms and bog-herbs, on the collective land, provide enough for local consumption and export to needy areas. River-shrimps, seaweed-sauteed eels and high-tide fence-caught fresh salmon are a local delicacy.

The Gulf Stream expanding to Dumfries, local soil analysis and pH were perfect for rice production. I completed a form, writing that water-buffalo farming would be a USP (unique selling point) offering local employment and corroboration with our now-flourishing tourist industry, drawing up an imaginative business plan, and was awarded a substantial GADSHFCWID\* grant. Exhausted by completing all the forms, I sent my son for his NVQ in rice-farming and we acquired two slightly temperamental water-buffalo from Sealon Zoo in Fife, and a sack of rice seed. Water-buffalo are hardy beasts. We've started a breeding project. Roan offshoots irrigate the paddy fields during low-water.

The rice quickly expanded in everyone's saucepans and into a great industry. Curry being the swtapple diet of Doonhamers' since the beginning of time, and rice-milk being so popular since the extinction of dairy cows in the milk-price-drop phenomenon of 2015, it's good business sense to produce our own rice, especially as importing anything from the Far East is tricky with only a canister of fracking gas.

(\*Government Agriculture Department Still Hasn't A Fracking Clue What It's Doing)



My Mum's eighty-four now. She brought me up, here in Dumfries, all on her own. I never realized how poor we were; she took me out and about, to parks, the Museum, and on country walks. I was never bored. We both particularly loved the Dock Park, as the area by the lower stretch of the Nith was called then, though Mum thought the play equipment was rubbish.

One evening Mum was reading the Standard, the paper which preceded our "Current News Flow". Suddenly she yelled: "Barney, I'm going to be a friend of the Park!" I didn't understand. How could a park have friends? Mum explained. "There's going to be a group of people who will study the Park and find ways to improve it. We'll be called Friends – with a capital F, Barney."

I knew what capitals were. They made things important.

After a five year programme of meetings, research, and consultations with the public, the redesigned Park was opened by Prince Edward and his wife, Sophie. Mum was ecstatic, especially when all the Friends were formally presented to the royal couple.

My friends and I revelled in the brand new Peter Pan themed equipment. In our teenage years we became Junior Friends. In 2030 the Council removed the play equipment, "to enable the Park to revert to its natural state". Thirty-five years on, Mum thinks it's an utter waste of the two million pounds spent. I still mourn the dismantling of my childhood idyll.



# DUMFRIES VOICES



With the collapse of Disneyland Saturn due to the oil-end (the solar-powered truck journey too slow for a weekend-break), and the global epidemic of brain-scramble from the dark ages of wi-fi and mobile-communication in the early 21st century, we've all had to adapt, but Dumfries is the best possible environment. Elsewhere the unfortunate EBSBs (Extreme-brain-scramble bracket – 45 to 60 year olds) are considered a burden on society. Here they're included.

Bonita Smith-Will-do, a rare 50-something unscathed by the disease, and skilled in the ancient craft of outdoor-play due to thorough training by eccentric parents, runs courses in this craft. It's fast becoming a new craze, particularly for kids and EBSBs.

Children and EBSBs can play here, and do non-challenging jobs. Some can roam free. For instance they harvest collective vegetables and herbs, and fetch fresh salmon trapped, during high-water, in the rye-lock live-stock-fencing running down to the low-water line. They can even go along the boardwalk unsupervised, thanks to their bungee safety cords.

Old Nicky, once an equine-equipment supplier, has reopened her sunken shop, long-abandoned after the 2013 flood. She now sells miniature saddles, bridles, seaweed-nets and water buckets for seahorses. The children love this. The EBSB's have trouble seeing her wares.

A health and safety reassessment was re-done on the solar-powered hover-tyres from Continental Tyre Boathouse. After 50 years of prohibition, they've been re-introduced, running well on land, water and intermediate terrain, even allowing EBSB passengers, with their bungee safety cords.

As an EBSB, I wouldn't live anywhere else.

I investigated the multi-vessel nautical-pile-up at Venisands in 2016. The incident was initiated by a male Doonhamer, drunk-in-charge of a Continental hover-tyre, proceeding downstream in a wavering fashion from the Boat and Horses towards Spar-Spa with its chlorine-free swim-up bar.

A Salvation Army ship, sailing upstream towards Ivano's Island (offering the freshest fish-supper in the land, rearing high welfare organic haddock in the basement), performed an emergency avoidance tack, nudging the bow of a posh gondola from number 99 Venisands (accommodation for discerning professionals - en-suite sunken Jacuzzis, aqua-gymnasium with tread watermill etc).

A former Whitesands boy-racer, in a souped-up canoe and unfeasibly large outboard engine, exceeding the nautical speed-limiby 20 knots, hotly pursued by the water police, careered into the disorientated gondola, flying upwards, shattering the RBS loan-shark aquarium-glass.

The newly-released loan-shark spotted the meandering hover-tyre, biting it. The deflating disc with the drunken Doonhamer whirled skywards towards Dominoes Dolphinarium with floating pizzeria, emitting a high-decibel rude sound, the baffled Doonhamer exclaiming "ma heid's spunnin".

Meanwhile the shark circled the discerning professional. The landrover- parts salesman leant out of his newly invented amphibious landrover, flailing his now-redundant water pump by the hose and warded off the animal. I ascertained that the canoe originated from the former café, newly restored to its ancient original use as Dumfries Canoe Club Store by Duke Marconi (OBE in 2035 for conservation of Historic Dumfries).

I concluded that these vessel-types were unseaworthy and that these businesses must be shut down with immediate effect.



# WE LIVE WITH WATER

Was coordinated by The Stove Network with contributions from:

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2015 - Tarmac roads and carpark contribute to flooding



2065 - Re-Wilded Flood Plain soaks up river surges

