

# THE GOVAN LETTER

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## THE GOVAN-PARTICK BRIDGE OPENS

*From our special correspondent Esme Clark*

**Friday 6<sup>th</sup> September 2024** marked an occasion that will long be remembered in Govan, when the **Govan-Partick Bridge** was officially opened, joining once again these two ancient communities.

The general public had to wait until Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> September, to experience the thrill of walking across the Clyde and they came to do that. They came in their hundreds with their children and their dogs, Govanites, friends of Govan, and anyone who wanted to boast that they had been one of the first to cross.



They were well rewarded, their children with ice creams well in hand, basked in the lovely autumn sunshine, and we were entertained by storytelling sessions and face paintings.

Their mums and dads enjoyed performances from groups like The Govan Allsorts Choir and Musicians in Exile. Later on the Footbridge Festival at Water Row saw artists like Horse McDonald and the fabulous Red Hot Chili Pipers gave us their best, including a rousing version of Queen's "We Will Rock You" that had arms waving in the air and the audience all on their feet. Shooglenifty finished the concert.

When the lead singer of a group calls out "Hello, Marbella" to a crowd in Govan and is greeted by cheers instead of groans you know this was a good day.

This Govan Footbridge Festival, organized by the Glasgow Barons, gave us a day to remember and we have a beautiful, elegant footbridge to remind us of the day when Govan and Partick came together. We hope that this association will lead to a new affinity and prosperity for all.



### GOVAN COMMUNITY COUNCIL WELCOMES NEW RESIDENTS

Govan Community Council was formed in 1976 under legislation to create a third tier of government to represent the views of local communities and defend their interests.

It meets monthly on the **first Monday and from November at 7 p.m., in Pearce Institute, 840 Govan Road.** Its meetings are open. All local residents are welcome. Its members are elected every five years – the next election will take place in October 2025. The Community Council seeks to represent a very diverse community – coming from many countries. Additionally, many in Govan have to battle with significant poverty. The Community Council seeks to include and represent everyone living here and to defend their interests.

**More details can be found on our website.**

**<https://govancommunitycouncil.org/>**

### OUR AUTUMN PUBLIC MEETING THURSDAY 14 NOVEMBER 7 pm PEARCE INSTITUTE

All welcome. Two topics for discussion

1. Cllr Richard Bell, City Council Treasurer, in personal capacity, will open discussion on the lack of finance-raising powers of the City Council and its consequences for services and for local democracy
2. Cleansing in Govan and its resourcing

# Maslows in Shaw Street



Maslows shop on the Shaw St/Langlands corner and Ruby Rowan working in it

**Community Council Associate Member Ruby Rowan Kelly provides the welcoming face at Maslow's 'advice centre' at the eastern corner of Shaw Street and Langlands Road – a gathering place that is open to all and which does its best to meet the many social needs of people in Govan, from youngsters to pensioners, asylum seekers and refugees and those from other parts of Scotland.**

Maslow's philosophy is about fulfilling human need – starting with the most basic ones of physical survival to those of 'belonging' and finding a fulfilling role. The two premises in Govan seek to help at all these levels, within their limited resources, and an understanding that many of these resources are provided by people in Govan itself.

Ruby grew up in Ayrshire, went to University in Dundee – a city with levels of social need approaching those in Govan – and first became involved in volunteering there. She came to work in Govan five years ago and has seen Maslows expand from one small shop to two - with Reza managing the shop across the road providing necessities such as clothes, shoes, electrical items, household goods and furniture. These are free to those who cannot afford them.

Ruby has been struck by how far Govan does still exist as a community, more than most other places, and also by how far its range of small charities work together. If one can't help, others usually can. At the same time she is also aware of how far basic health and welfare services and schools have been starved of resources and can no longer provide what is needed in a community among the top 5 percent in Scotland for deprivation and where asylum seekers particularly find it difficult get the required support.

The hub provides access for educational classes and recreational activity such as English language classes, music workshops, sewing classes, administrative support (booking doctors' appointments and making universal credit applications).

Ruby has a vision for local development that focuses on people. She sees the future in terms of people taking over vacant shops and premises, of community ownership, of making and growing locally, of food shops and cafes. She hopes the new Bridge will help this process and not lead to the social divisions of gentrification. Govan's many needs must be met for all the people of the area, new and old, working together.

## Community Council looks for answers on the police actions on 3 July outside Thales and the Govan Underground

The Community Council wrote from its September meeting to the local MSP Humza Yousaf requesting that he asks the Scottish government what steps have been taken to secure from Police Scotland an explanation of their actions in Govan on 15 May.

Demonstrators had gathered outside the Thales works at Linthouse to protest against the firm's continuing supply of components for the F35 warplanes that had been bombing civilians in Gaza over the previous eight months – actions being investigated as a war crime by the United Nations. The number of police outnumbered demonstrators. The police were described as using unwarranted force.

### Outside the Underground

As some demonstrators subsequently sought to leave Govan by underground they found the station closed and the police assembled and again using what was described as quite unwarranted force – with a number of people requiring hospital treatment. Press representatives were challenged when attempting to take pictures and one arrested.

The call for a response from the Scottish government, which is responsible for Police Scotland, came from local residents ashamed that their community is being used to manufacture weapons that continue to kill and maim men, women and children in Gaza.

## GOVAN'S FIGHT FOR A BANKING HUB – VETERAN SUPPORTER OF THE COMMUNITY COUNCIL CONTINUES THE BATTLE



**Gordon MacKay joined the Community Council when it was formed in 1976.** Today he is leading charge to ensure that Govan secures a banking hub. Gordon remembers when Govan had four banks. All have closed. Then the cash machines started to disappear and today Govan has no easily available free 'night and day' cash machines either. Over the past year Gordon and the Community Council worked with Chris Stephens as local MP to raise the issue with the banking authorities – but with little success.

Over the coming year the Financial Conduct Authority will get new compulsory powers to require banks, singly or collectively, to provide 'banking hubs', where services are not available. Gordon, with Community Council backing, will be continuing the campaign to secure either a full banking hub, for which he is confident Govan is qualified for in terms of population and the number of commercial premises, or a free, secure and fully available cash machine in the subway.



## Rescuing the Lyceum for the people of Govan

A Community Development Trust is currently being established by Central Govan Action Plan to restore Govan's famous Art Deco cinema. Originally established as an opera house in the 1898, it was rebuilt after a fire in 1938. It has been derelict and unused for the last decade.

The organisers are calling for those living in central Govan itself to sign the necessary petition to OSCAR, the Scottish charity regulator, to establish the Trust.

### “A community hub”

One of the organizers is the Community Council Secretary, Esmé Clark, who stresses Govan's need for a large community hub if it is to attract events that will draw people across the Govan-Partick bridge and bring new life to the community. Copies of the petition can be collected from the Action Plan office: 18 Orkney Street Glasgow G51 2BX. T: 0141 274 3217.

## Elder Park Library reopens



After a four-year closure the library was finally opened this autumn. The interior is now more user friendly especially for young children and parents – and with improved IT and audio visual services. The Community Council welcomed these developments at its September meeting.

At the same time there was disappointment at the restricted opening hours (5 p.m. does not help those doing homework) and, unlike Partick Library, it will not open on a Sunday. This is a very sore point. A condition of the grant from Mrs Elder in 1903 was that the Library must be opened on a Sunday. Community Council Chair Daniel O'Neill said this would be a priority issue. Below the opening of the Library.



## From Govan High School the Educational Institute of Scotland, the teachers trade union, writes on the projected cuts for the coming year



When Glasgow hosted the 2014 commonwealth games, the opening ceremony featured a model of the Finnieston Crane - a symbol of the city's shipbuilding heritage.

It is widely accepted that this industry was purposefully dismantled by hands of greedy politicians, and here it was in 2014 being used to celebrate Glasgow. Areas like Clydebank and Govan were decimated by the closures of the shipyards and have never really recovered; now finding themselves amongst some of the poorest areas in the city.

In 2024 it has been announced that Glasgow will once again host Commonwealth games in 2026 - a fantastic investment for the city yet simultaneously Glasgow City Council and The Scottish Government are proposing cuts to education services that will once again decimate those working-class communities that will no doubt be unfurled and waved about as iconography in the 2026 opening ceremony.

### ‘The community we serve is the driving force behind our work ethic’

Govan High school's history is one hundred and fifty years old - the building's interior was last refurbished over twenty years ago and the exterior still bears the brutalist facade of the nineteen seventies. As members of staff, we can confidently say that the community that we serve is the driving force behind our work ethic. The proposed cuts will impact negatively on this community and others alike for years to come - Our Head Teacher is already given the impossible task of where to spend the dwindling budget on a yearly basis.

Two years ago, the school among many others across the city in deprived areas, welcomed Ukrainian refugees with very little financial backing and staffing. The little help given was swiftly removed once the pupils were placed across the city. The facilities management company Amey, currently in charge of the building, refuse to provide adequate systems to regulate heating in the winter and ventilation in the summer, leaving areas of the school extremely difficult and uncomfortable for staff and pupils to work in.

### ‘Govan deserves better’

This is *before* we even get to the planned cuts to additional teaching staff, additional support needs and potential cuts to vital, often life-saving counselling services for some of the most vulnerable pupils. The developing young workforce department is now stretched over two schools and with the school roll increasing, this directly impacts job prospects of young people in Govan High. But staff will have to make it work, often to the detriment of their own well-being.

At the end of the school year struggling education staff across Glasgow, faced the widening attainment gap staff caused by this continued lack of funding and cuts, will be asked the question - “What can you do better?”. In the face of the devastation that these proposed cuts will cause, this question is a form of abuse. Enough is enough. There is no improvement without investment.

**Govan deserves better, young people deserve better, Glasgow deserves better.**

# WHY WE MUST STILL FIGHT FOR PUBLICLY OWNED BUSES



**Danny O'Neill, Chair Govan Community Council**

**Govan Community Council has long campaigned for buses to be taken back under public control. In our April newsletter we reported on the good news that the regional transport authority, Strathclyde Passenger Transport (SPT), had announced plans to introduce franchising.**

This would enable councils to control bus fares, routes and timetables and private bus companies would simply bid for the contracts to run these services. Franchising has worked successfully in London for years and was introduced by Manchester last November. SPT held a public consultation in April/May on the franchising proposals. This produced a big public response in favour of bringing buses back into public control through franchising.

The public were also overwhelmingly against SPT's plans to set up a 'Bus Service Improvement Partnership' (BSIP) with the private bus companies. Thankfully, SPT has listened to public opinion and the BSIP idea has now been scrapped. The private bus operators have been complaining bitterly about the franchising plan, and that means it must be a good thing for bus passengers and the general public.

## Quicker and Easier to take back Control

The new UK Government has also announced plans to make it quicker and easier for councils in England and Wales to take control of their buses. We believe the Scottish Government should do likewise. Manchester was able to introduce franchising 6 years after the power to do so was introduced in 2017. The equivalent Scottish legislation was passed in 2019 but there is no chance of SPT introducing franchising by 2025. This is partly due to delays by the Scottish Government but also because the current process in Scotland is far too slow and cumbersome. Unless the Scottish Government changes the process, franchising here will probably take another 5 to 7 years.

The other piece of bad news is the decision of the Scottish Government to reintroduce peak rail fares. This will hit passengers in the pocket and do nothing to get people out of cars and onto public transport. If the government wants to reduce transport costs and fight climate change they should be investing more rather than less on public transport.

If you are interested in public transport (and it affects all of us in one way or another) we would encourage you to get involved in the community council and take part in our campaigns on the issue. Please also make your voices heard by supporting grassroots campaigns for better public transport, such as Get Glasgow Moving (<https://www.getglasgowmoving.org>) or Better Buses for Strathclyde (<https://www.facebook.com/BetterBusesSPT>).



## The Mary Barbour Bridge ?

Govan Community Council has written to the City Council asking that the new bridge be named the Mary Barbour Bridge – commemorating a woman who united tenants of both Partick and Govan to demand public sector council housing. The meeting noted that currently Govan has a statue but nothing to explain what Mary Barbour achieved.



## DUMPING AND WASTE IN GOVAN

**Over the past years issues of cleansing and waste dumping have worsened.** So also have the challenges facing the reduced numbers of workers based in the Shieldhall depot. The physical strength of an ageing workforce is challenged by ancient closes and ever bigger bins. The Community Council has sought to liaise with the City Council, housing associations and the GMB union on the resulting issues.

The City Council is now undertaking a programme for the phased introduction of street-based bin hubs. These are designed to enable physically less stressful removal work and enable the reintroduction of waste recycling with labelled bins. The new system has been introduced in parts of the south-side with some success – in others with less. It is hoped to introduce them in Govan in 2025,

**Over the coming period the Community Council will seek to liaise with Cleansing and Housing Associations to ensure that maximum information and support is given to households to ensure the new system works.**



## OUR NEW WEBSITE

September's meeting of the Community Council gave a round of applause to Andre Videla when he unveiled our new website. This provides minutes, notes of future meetings and copies of past issues of the Govan Letter. Andre is looking for others who can help in this work. If you would like to help, contact Andre at [andre.videla@gmail.com](mailto:andre.videla@gmail.com). The website can be found at <http://govancommunitycouncil.org/>

## Officers of the Community Council:

Chair Daniel O'Neill 07753 126153

Secretary Esme Clark 0141 425 1318

**The Govan Letter is funded by a grant from Glasgow City Council. Our boundaries are from the River to the Motorway and from the Fire Station to Drive Road.**