



PRESS RELEASE 18 MARCH 2014

SAVE OBJECTS TO PERTH AND KINROSS COUNCIL'S PROPOSED DEMOLITION OF PERTH CITY HALL – THIS WOULD BE AN ACT OF CIVIC VANDALISM

SAVE has written to object to an application seeking consent to demolish the Category B listed Perth City Hall, which this year is celebrating its centenary.

Perth and Kinross Council, that is both the owner of the Hall and the acting planning authority, wishes to demolish the building for replacement with a public square in front of the Category A listed St John's Kirk.

SAVE considers that this would be an act of civic vandalism, and the proposed replacement with an open square is significantly flawed. Such a space would be underused and windswept for much of the year, and the perimeter buildings, St John's Kirk excluded, are unassuming and not befitting of a grand civic open space. The council's rhetoric overlooks these points.

The proposed scheme would also cost £4 million, funds which could be used to bring City Hall back into use.

There have been overwhelming public objections to the plans – over 850 people and organisations have voiced their objection, including the Royal Institute of Architects in Scotland (RIAS).

There are two alternative conservation-led schemes for the site, including a new proposal to convert the building for hotel use. Historic Scotland, in a letter of 14 March 2014, expressed their view that alternative schemes “should be given every opportunity to progress” before an application for demolition can be fully considered.

Perth City Hall was built between 1909 and 1914 to handsome neo-classical designs by H E Clifford and Lunan, as a concert hall. In a recent letter to the

Perthshire Advertiser, David Walker, the former Chief Inspector of Historic Buildings for Scotland, said that he considers the Hall to be the finest public building of the period.

The building served its purpose as a concert hall until 2005 when a new venue was built nearby as a millennium project. Since then City Hall has remained empty, although there has been interest in the building from prospective developers.

The West front of Perth City Hall, with its Ionic portico and Putto figures



This is the second time in three years that such an application has been submitted.

In 2011 SAVE objected to identical proposals for demolition. Permission was granted, but Historic Scotland then overturned Perth and Kinross' approval, on the grounds that the building had not been offered to the market for alternative uses, and the economic benefits of a new square as claimed by the Council could not be substantiated.

SAVE believes little has changed since then. A marketing exercise was carried out last year which resulted in an application by Perth City Market Trust to

turn the building into an indoor market, with associated restaurant and exhibition space. This proposal had been developed with the Prince's Regeneration Trust who continue to support it.

However the council dismissed this proposal on viability tests which SAVE considered to be flawed. These tests did not take into account the availability of grant funding for such a project, including the Heritage Enterprise Grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund, which is available to private developers.

SAVE Caseworker Mike Fox said: "Perth City Hall is a majestic civic building, one of the finest in Scotland, and has a strong presence in the surrounding streetscape. Its category B listing marks it out as a building of national importance and all efforts should be made to find a new use for it. It is clearly capable of reuse, as demonstrated by recent and current proposals, and we call upon Perth and Kinross Council to fully consider these alternatives to demolition."

For more information and images, please contact **Mike Fox** on:
Mike.Fox@savebritainsheritage.org/0207 253 3500

NOTES TO EDITORS:

SAVE Britain's Heritage has been campaigning for historic buildings since its formation in 1975 by a group of architects, journalists and planners. It is a strong, independent voice in conservation, free to respond rapidly to emergencies and to speak out loud for the historic built environment.

Press release issued by SAVE Britain's Heritage, 70 Cowcross Street, London
EC1M 6EJ. Registered Charity 269129
Tel. 0207 253 3500
office@savebritainsheritage.org www.savebritainsheritage.org
Twitter: [@SAVEBrit](https://twitter.com/SAVEBrit)