MOVEMENT OF FREEDOM

What if our rulers and guardians were dreamers, thinkers, and philosophers who comprehend, appreciate and embrace the real human goodness of society?

If this was the case, our Prime Minister would perhaps be a tea-sharing, nature-loving empathetic scholar. The cabinet would be made up of academics, theorists, intellectuals and sages; gardeners, writers and artists. They might discuss a world without borders. Or an economy without money; an intricate network of crafts, skills and ideas.

At the time of putting this spring newsletter together it is still unclear whether, how and if our government’s withdrawal agreement with the EU will come into force. And then we would move into a long transition period.

Wearyed by continuous waiting, we now contemplate following in the UK government’s footsteps through this next passage of the unknown. Our freedom of movement – it feels – is moving in new and unpredictable directions. The Macbeth-like Westminster performances daily dramatise the physical and psychological effects of political ambition on those who seek power for their own sake. All we can do is make our own Movement of Freedom.

Taking our cue from our government’s and politicians’ course towards a ‘transition’, we must set sail through uncharted waters. We must imagine ourselves the thinkers, artists and philosophers who govern our floating island.

Through creativity-diplomacy, we will adapt this transition for our own work by building safety nets for all eventualities, striking our own cultural trade deals with other European and non-European countries. We respond through weeping willows, linen circles, Brexfasts, and merged textile patterns, to keep our own creative vessels afloat.
On the day we didn’t leave the EU

On Friday 29th March the United Kingdom was supposed to leave the European Union. Although that plan did not (yet?) materialise, this particular date will always carry the echo of political and historical significance.

In Huntly, to mark 29 March Day, people dedicated a full day’s events to the discussion around citizenship - both in the UK and the European Union - and what it means to be a part of a bigger international family.

The day started at the steps of the town library as Curator Alix Rothnie took folks through the streets, shops and community buildings on a Euro-tour around Huntly’s Town Collection. On the route, past works from Deveron Projects’ European artists in residence were highlighted. Those included Danish artist Elsebeth Jørgensen’s Cinemagic Tour II, San Sebastian based Maider Lopez’s How do you live this Place? and Colonel from France’s Made in Huntly works. The tour quickly gave way to the opening of the Room to React exhibition created by Huntly’s younger citizens as part of the Year of the Young People People’s Act project. The works turned an insightful mirror on the media and their town, amplifying how much their generation is affected by current politics, and Brexit in particular.

What followed next, the Eurovision Talk Fest, saw a quick-fire Skype discussion with past and current Deveron Projects’ artists, team members and partners about their own personal sentiments on Brexit, as well as their national media’s views. Among the 14 callers were our own Joss Allen of Town is the Garden, currently in Finland; our former Project Manager Anna Vermehren who now lives in Norway; and former Art & Community Worker Elisabetta Rattalino, calling from her native Italy.

Interesting sentiments came from all the callers. In Poland there is a total lack of understanding as to why the UK would want to leave the EU when it took their country so long to join. In Italy there was little interest in Brexit: plenty turbulent politics of their own. Meanwhile in Germany, it dominates the news and people feel this overshadows other concerns such as health.

This combination of serious and tongue-in-cheek dialogue was streamed live on social media, compered by artist David Sherry as Sherry Wogan in homage to the longstanding UK commentator of the Eurovision Song Contest. Harry’s Bar then hosted a UK Citizenship Pub Quiz – accompanied by the ‘traditional British fish & chips’. Some passed – some didn’t.

During the evening’s Historic Ceilidh with the Easdale Band we were linked with the Literaturhaus in Berlin, from where they watched the Strip the Willow dance unfold next to our guest of honour, the unplanted weeping willow tree. The very first Huntly Vision Song Contest - karaoke at another classic Huntly social venue, the Royal Oak - rounded off the day with the renewal of our more local friendships.

The 29th March ended as the day the UK almost, but yet not quite, left the EU. In Huntly we ended our day having expanded the conversation about what that means to us here and to other people around Europe - through creative play, feasting, dancing and the contemplation of a tree.

The last Brexfast

Recent addition to the team, Will Gore, entered the six month Think Brexit project in its final weeks. His introduction to the project was as a fly on the wall, retrospectively revisiting events by way of Deveron Projects’ archived audio recordings and minuted notes. His fresh experience allowed us to step back and see the project as a whole with new eyes.

In attempting to decipher the confusion of so many events and discussions, it became apparent that the project work in Huntly mirrored the unfolding of the Brexit process nationally. The monthly Brexfasts invited community members and academic or industry specialists to enlighten each other on what Brexit might mean for areas such as healthcare, education, language, the environment, and the arts.

Despite a palpable backdrop of anxiety caused by continuing disruption in government, Will was struck by a sense of resilience in these conversations. The act of talking about such uncertainty was a positive catharsis. Stronger ties were forged locally and internationally. And above all, it showed the strength to imagine how we might create opportunities and carve alternative paths in a new and unfamiliar post-Brexit landscape.
People’s Act: Room to React

In our current political climate, many young people have been voicing more reasonable opinions than the adults in power. Whilst the professionals in the Houses of Parliament have been squabbling over the same Brexit conflict arguments for the past two years, individuals not yet old enough to vote in a general election (including students in Huntly) have been protesting to save our planet, shining an interrogatory light on our archaic and outdated democratic system in the process.

Over the past three months, People’s Act has investigated democracy, politics and the media with the next generation of voices in Huntly. Through discussion and creative workshops, People’s Act Youth Worker Lauren Campbell has been working with young people, asking them to respond to what is happening locally and nationally around us.

During this process, the young people involved have been engaged in discussing issues which matter to them, investigating them through self-authored fiction, comedy and satire. Subjects are as diverse as their authors: living in Huntly as a young person; reliance on social media; the hypocrisy of adults; informed consent and ethics of the media; anonymity; bullying; mental health; gender politics; climate change; the economy; maintaining and cultivating relationships with Europe; Brexit; and escapism from Brexit and political issues.

The end of March saw an exhibition of young people’s work co-curated by student Megan Anderson, exploring these and other themes. Work exhibited was created primarily through the People’s Act workshops, but also independently via an open call for submissions, and through art and design classes at the Gordon Schools. A wide range of creative responses were produced and shown, from video content, sculpture, memes, printmaking, poetry, photography and re-imagined Huntly town planning models.

The project concludes with a farmer’s market stall on April 6th, where students Amelie Bowden and John Kidd will be leading bike and walking Creative Tours of Huntly they have devised themselves, as an evolution of Clyde Williamson’s concept Crap Tours. We look forward to joining them for popcorn, souvenirs and sightseeing from an alternative perspective!
April: MPs to debate extension
possible further vote of PM's deal

- Default 1: No Deal Brexit
- Default 2: Revoke Article 50
- Further Extension
  - UK takes part in EU election

Options:

* Further vote on May deal
* Renegotiate
* Second referendum
* General election
* Cancel Brexit
* Just Leave

Emergency Planting
Do we plant at all?
Bring tree to voting station
How long can tree be in the pot?
I am confused
Too tall
Conversation between Clemens Wilhelm and Claudia Zeiske, March 2019

CZ: Hi Clemens, what made you think of planting a weeping willow with us as an artwork to mark Brexit here in Huntly?

CW: Hi Claudia, the weeping willow came to me as a symbol for Brexit on a long walk along the former Iron Curtain line in Germany. Being aware of the ongoing Brexit debate I developed the idea as I went along. Two things that I had read combined in my head. The weeping willow came into my mind because I had remembered hearing about the healing potentials of willows in relation to the discovery of Aspirin. The second thing was reading about the significance of weeping willows in the history of Romanticism and the Middle Ages. These two aspects of sorrow and loss on the one hand and of healing and medicine on the other seemed to strangely come together in this tree, and also to resemble the situation of Brexit with such a divided vote.

CZ: Brexit has caused a lot of tension among people and politicians in this country. What do you think such a living monument can achieve?

CW: The tree is first of all a living being. A tree does not exist in isolation but in interdependence with the soil, the rain, the clouds, the wind, the ocean, the insects and animals, other trees and so on. The shape of a tree tells you that it is connected to forces that shape the whole universe. If you look closely at trees, there is a lot to learn from them. There is a reason why knowledge is so often represented as a tree.

The tree as a living monument will serve as a reminder of the moment in time where it was planted. Future visitors will be able to get a sense of the time that has passed since the planting by looking at the tree. The life and survival of the tree depends on all the influences in the area. Planting a tree together might also remind us that we should not get lost in political divisions - which are all temporary, mostly in the mind, and often distracting - but that there are other pressing issues at the moment besides Brexit. Climate change is not a hoax, and nature is not friendly; we won't be able to negotiate a deal with nature.

CZ: I hear what you are saying. But I guess one of the things the EU has been providing is a kind of watchdog on all those things that concern us, such as climate, clean beaches, free movement, minimum wage... Without an overseer, many rules can fall by the wayside concerning those politics. But I also wanted to talk to you at this point about the use of monuments. Do you see the weeping willow that will be planted once the UK leaves the EU as a living monument to Brexit?

CW: Yes - should Brexit be cancelled, it does not change anything for the tree as a living monument. Once it is planted, it will still mark the moment in history when Britain decided to leave or stay in the EU. The tree has an ambiguity in its symbolic function: it can resemble loss and healing at the same time. I see it as a paradoxical tree.

CZ: There was a lot of controversy around this tree locally here in Huntly. However, this had little to do with the Brexit issue itself... CW: This is to be expected with such a hotly debated and divisive topic. I guess that a lot of people in Huntly had a strong emotional response.

The media attention we received focused mainly on the aspect of “loss and sorrow”, which is only half of the story and concept. It was unfortunate timing that a lot of people heard the news about the tree from national media sources before they had a chance to be involved. This happened for a number of reasons, none of which were in our control. I wanted this to be a tree that could resemble the views of both opposing camps, the Brexiteers and Remainers. I don’t want to take sides in this. I wanted this to be a symbol for Brexit itself. And a new meeting place in the community.

The location for the tree seemed to be another talking point. I think that with the community engagement and help from the local council we eventually found a good spot for the tree and for its future in Huntly.

CZ: What would be your wish of this living monument in years to come?

CW: Weeping willows grow very fast and have short lives. They only live up to 50 years but they grow about a meter a year. This timespan will probably resemble the historical echo of Brexit Day. The people in Huntly will have the chance to observe this tree grow just as they will see the developments of the Brexit process unfold. My wish for this tree is that it grows up to be a meaningful site for the community. I hope that once it is planted, people will start to like it. Isn’t it rather difficult to fall out with a tree, especially such a beautiful one as a weeping willow?

CZ: I hope that people will embrace it over time and sit around it like the elders in Africa around the Baobab tree. That is my wish for it. Clemens I thank you for this conversation, your time with us and above all for giving us the tree.

CW: Thank you for the invitation to come here. It is wonderful to be in Huntly, I like it here very much.
A Note From the Garden
As Spring begins to take hold and the growing season begins, we are shifting from our Winter dormancy into action. We’ve got a good stock of seeds available from our shop and will have more as the season develops, so come pay us a visit.

We’ve got a series of documentary films lined up, in partnership with Take One Action Film Festival. These will take place every two months, the next one in May. Through each film we hope to travel across the world to visit places where the effects of human induced climate change and ecological destruction are already having a significant impact on local communities and find out how they are taking action.

Alongside our regular programme of workshops we’re starting a school of local skills and knowledges. So if you have a particular skill or are knowledgeable about a certain topic please get in touch. Maybe you make interesting jams or know how to build a reed bed? We want to hear from you!

And finally, we have a very exciting project starting this year. So stay tuned!

Gardener’s Lunch
Join our gardener Lindy for a series of lunch time workshops, every fortnight 12.30 till 13.30. Aimed at the novice gardener, but open to all levels of experience, the series will cover the basics of horticulture and growing food in the garden. We will cover such things as sowing seed indoors and outdoors, looking after your seedlings and providing the right conditions for your plants as well as making compost, pruning fruit trees, pest control, container gardening and garden planning.

Meet in the Brander Building Garden, next to our main office. Occasionally we might take a trip to the community orchard or Glamourhaugh allotments. Booking is not required, but best to check in advance in case the location has changed. A simple picnic lunch will be provided. See the calendar for dates.
Friday 5, New Moon

Friday 5, 1pm, Friday Lunch, Brander Kitchen
Christine Borland, artist’s talk: Threads & Circles - a project with flax

Saturday 6, 9am-1pm, Huntly Farmers Market
Creative Tours - How do young people see Huntly? Bike and walking tours with souvenirs and popcorn

Saturday 6, 10am - 4pm, 8 Castle St.
Organising for Climate Action with Tripod
A workshop on community organising skills and tools. Booking essential

Thursday 11 & Saturday 13, 10am, 8 Castle St.
Book binding workshop with Norma Hunter. Help Norma make books for our poetry-inspired Slow Marathon. Booking recommended

Friday 12, 1pm, Friday Lunch, Brander Kitchen
Brexit Day #2 Lunch with our Brexit expert

Friday 19, Full Moon

Friday 19, No Friday Lunch (in prep)
Slow Marathon weekend

Saturday 20, 7pm, Gordon Arms Hotel, Huntly Square
Pathmaker’s Gathering (included in Slow Marathon ticket). Pick up your registration pack and hear from speakers on this year’s themes of poetry, land use/ownership and our common right to roam

Sunday 21, 7am, starting Huntly Square
Slow Marathon. Explore your own poetic pathmaking over a 42 km walk inspired by a local Huntly poem. Booking essential / £30/£15/£10

Friday 26, 1pm, Friday Lunch, Brander Kitchen
Stuart Masson, HDĐT: Huntly’s Green Travel Hub

Monday 29, 6-8pm, Brander Kitchen
Food Chain cookery workshop
Tortilla Española with María José Santos Guzmán
Booking essential / £5

Saturday 4, New Moon

Saturday 4, 9am-1pm, Huntly Farmers Market
Spring Rainbow activity with the LGBTQ+ club from the Gordon Schools

Thursday 9, 10am, meeting Brander Garden
Minor Path Bashing. Help us maintain this community path and Town Collection artwork by Alan McPherson. Pruning, picnic and discussion

Friday 10, 1pm, Friday Lunch, Brander Kitchen
Catrin Jeans, Children’s Parliament: A rights based approach

Saturday 18, Full Moon

Saturday 18, 10am - 2pm, The Brander Garden
Plant Party No. 3. A party to celebrate the start of the growing season with workshops, talks and food

Monday 27, 6-8pm, Brander Kitchen
Food Chain cookery workshop
Turkish Mantı (dumplings) with Zeynep Yıldız
Booking essential / £5

Friday 31, 1pm, Friday Lunch, Brander Kitchen
Sue Mahony: Shared Lives community support scheme

Saturday 1, 9am-1pm, Huntly Farmers market
Plant giveaway with Town is the Garden

Friday 3, New Moon

Friday 7, 1pm, Friday Lunch, Brander Kitchen
Margaret Thompson: Teaching with the Maasai

Friday 14, 1pm, Friday Lunch, Brander Kitchen
Piotr Teodoroski: EU Citizens’ Mental Health & Wellbeing

Saturday 15, 10am-2pm, 8 Castle St.
Workshop, Queer Ecologies. Plants and animals have rich and varied ways of expressing their gender identity and sexuality. In this workshop we’ll be exploring more-than-binary in the more-than-human

Monday 17, Full Moon

Friday 21, 1pm, Friday Lunch, Brander Kitchen
Lyra Sevencats: World bellydance and the American Tribal Style

Friday 21, 6pm, meeting at Brander Garden
Summer Solstice walk to the White Wood

Monday 24, 6-8pm, Brander Kitchen
Food Chain cookery workshop
Syrian cakes with Hayat Shahoud and Abeer Alhalabe. Booking essential / £5

Friday 28, 1pm, Friday Lunch, Brander Kitchen
Christine Rew: Gallery Glimpses - Aberdeen Art Gallery’s redevelopment project
People

Welcome
Clemens Wilhelm, Artist
Christine Borland, Artist
Zeynep Yildiz, Intern
Will Gore, Intern
Mikaela Zou, Intern
Leo Gibson, Volunteer
Patrick Tumelty, Volunteer

Goodbye
Alix Rothnie, Town Collection Curator
Lauren Campbell, People’s Act Youth Worker
Natasha Natarajan, Intern

Interested in flax?
Artist Christine Borland is looking for people from the Huntly Community to get involved in a flax growing trial towards her project, Threads & Circles, which will look at Huntly’s connection to the world through its historic linen industry.

If you are interested in growing flax, or following the process from plant to textile, get in touch!

Email info@deveron-projects.com, or come and see us in the Brander Building.

Our Guests

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Deveron Projects is based in the rural market town of Huntly, Scotland. We connect artists, communities and places through creative research and engagement. The *town is the venue* describes the framework in which we work and contribute to the social wellbeing of our town. We have engaged with local people, and their clubs, choirs, shops, schools, churches, bars and discos since 1995.