TOWN CENTRE TOOLKIT

'Why are town centres so important that they deserve such special treatment? ... they are places of creativity and enterprise ... town centres allow us to share resources and services ... these long established places are our true eco-towns, resources whose health is critical to our sustainable future.'

'**Town Centres First**: at the heart of our key actions and recommendations, and running through this Review, is the need for the implementation of a Town Centre First Policy: a request to government, local authorities and the wider public sector, and the communities, institutions and people of Scotland; that to achieve a social, bustling and sustainable Scotland we must put the health of our town centres at the heart of our decision-making processes.'

Malcolm Fraser, Chair of the Scottish Government's External Advisory Group on town centres (from the Group's report 'Community and Enterprise in Scotland's Town Centres', 2013)

Foreword

Since the Town Centre Review group report published in 2013, it has become readily accepted that many town centres need new directions in order to realise their potential in Scotland's future economic, social and cultural landscape.

The Town Centre Action Plan fully acknowledges this need for new direction and aims to foster local visioning, while setting the right conditions to enable change to happen. The plan is reinforced by the Scottish Government's agreement with COSLA of the Town Centre First Principle, now being played out across the wider public sector. The principle is a commitment to consider the health of town centres and take account of the medium to longer term impacts of any investment decisions that are being taken.

At local level, the action plan promotes a raft of measures designed to support enterprising communities and vibrant local economies whilst at the same time underpinning the tenets of the Scottish Government's Economic Strategy, boosting economic growth, increasing competitiveness and tackling inequality.

First and foremost, the Town Centre Toolkit fulfils our commitment in the action plan to 'develop a masterplanning toolkit, specific to town centres, that includes guidance on specific transport and design details, focusing on the development of quality, accessible public realm and the use of town assets.'

However, the basic premise of this toolkit is that everyone, not just those assumed to be responsible for producing formal masterplans , has the potential to invest more – whether of their time, money, creativity and efforts. The tools and associated case studies referenced here aim to reach further than raising general standards of urban design and quality of place, vitally important though these are to a vibrant and fully functioning town centre. They are also set out to inform, encourage and inspire more people to step forward and want to get involved.

The toolkit is written for those who want to understand the breadth of areas that impact on town centre vitality, or where and how we might start to use our town centres to transform ideas into new opportunities – whether our interests lie in delivering services against best value, supporting community and civic amenity, developing business, enterprise or untapped individual ability and talent.

Lastly, the toolkit is not presented as a fully comprehensive document. It reflects some but not all of the work that is underway across Scotland and further afield. It is intended as a pragmatic start point, one which we hope will continue to be developed beyond publication, actively promoted and tested and built upon locally.

Alex Neil, Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Communities & Pensioners' Rights

People need to be encouraged to make positive choices to use town centres.

Introduction

Town centres are a vital part of Scotland's past, present and future. Revitalising them is a priority for Scotland.

People are the lifeblood of town centres. They spend money, support businesses and bring activity. But people have more choices than ever before. We can choose where we go shopping, meet friends, see a film, listen to music or eat out. Businesses and organisations can choose where they invest and grow.

To attract people and investment, town centres have to offer better choices in lots of ways – what they have to offer, how pleasant they are to be in, and ease of access. We are living in a time of fast paced change, economically and socially. Town centres need to keep pace with changing habits and lifestyles. Doing nothing means falling behind.

The Town Centre First Principle agreed with CoSLA in 2014 recognises town centres' role at the core of community and economic life. The principle emphasises the need for collective responsibility amongst government, local authorities, the wider public sector, businesses and communities to help town centres thrive. It reflects a wider Scottish policy ethos rooted in building on our assets and empowering local action.

This toolkit contains ideas and examples of how people and organisations can make their town centre more attractive, more active, and more accessible. It should be used as a source of inspiration rather than a set of recommendations.

Securing investment to improve town centres is difficult as public sector budgets are tighter than ever. Many of the ideas in this toolkit demonstrate how worthwhile improvements can be made through more effective use of existing assets and resources, and by better co-ordination and organisation, to make Scotland's town centres better places.

Kilwinning Public Realm

The Toolkit

The toolkit is divided into three themes: Attractive, Active and Accessible. This recognises that town centres must be all of these things to offer a positive choice to people.

The most successful strategies will incorporate aspects of all of these themes.

ATTRACTIVE

Is it a nice place to live, work and spend time in?

- Making the most of a town's physical assets
- Design of streets and spaces
- Parks and green space
- How to appraise the quality of public space

ACTIVE

Are there things that people need or want to do in the town centre? Will other people be there?

- Business and enterprise
- Retail, leisure and culture
- Public services
- Town centre living
- Marketing and promotion
- Digital strategies

ACCESSIBLE

Is it easy to get to and around the town centre?

- Walking and cycling
- Cars and car parking
- Public transport
- Delivery and servicing
- Strategic transport thinking

Making It Happen

Positive action is needed to implement real change. This section covers:

- Local people leading
- Agreeing a collective vision
- Information and data
- Planning and action
- Proactive town planning

The toolkit also includes a section called Making It Happen. This is in recognition that to enable real positive change, engaging local people is fundamental.

Making It Happen explains how people, business and organisations can work together to make town centres better.

Key

Throughout this document, there are signposts to further information and related reading.

Related reading and policy documents

> **Related sections in toolkit**

Useful places for further information and web addresses

Making places better for walking can boost footfall and trading by up to 40%.
— *'Living Streets'*

Introduction

Our perception of a town centre is largely shaped by its physical environment. Town centres must have attractive streets and public spaces where it is pleasant to walk around and spend time, otherwise people will choose to go elsewhere.

This section of the Toolkit sets out the key considerations for designing attractive public spaces in Scotland's town centres. By 'public spaces' we mean the areas between buildings that are accessible to the public: pavements, streets, parks, squares and open spaces.

Evidence shows that people-focused street design has far reaching positive impacts, which can be economic as well as environmental and social. Making a place more attractive to be in means that people are more likely to spend time and money there. This is fundamental to the revitalisation of town centres.

Designing streets and public spaces around people rather than around vehicles is important in making town centres attractive places to visit. This can be a critical factor in positively influencing people's choices and habits to spend more time in town centres.

This should be achieved by creating a better balance between vehicles and pedestrians, rather than by excluding vehicles, as town centres will attract more people if they are easy to move around and affordable to get to and from.

The tests for good public spaces that are listed here can also help to evaluate the conditions that will help to make town centres more attractive to people on foot which is the basis for creating a vibrant and busy town centre.

KEY PRINCIPLES

Putting people first

- Designing spaces around people rather than vehicles.
- Focusing on quality and amenity of public space.
- Designing around how people can flexibly use spaces.
- Focusing active uses where people are and want to be.

Making the most of existing assets

- Identifying and building upon the existing and physical strengths and physical assets of the town centre.

Testing for good public spaces

- Do they feel safe and usable at all times of day and night?
- Do they provide shelter and respond to climate conditions?
- Can social interaction be encouraged on a formal and informal basis?
- Can spaces provide amenity and interest?
- Can streets and spaces be used by people of all ages and abilities?

Developing identity and place

Techniques to analyse character and help to enhance or develop identity and place

Successful masterplanning may often best begin by the identification and analysis of those physical or social characteristics that make a town unique. By undertaking this preliminary analysis, an understanding of those factors that give a town its distinctive identity can be gained, and ways to develop these characteristics into key strengths can then be explored. Each place has its own history, traditions, and artefacts that make it special and these can present strengths and weaknesses that may be targeted.

Although the factors that help to define a town's identity can be complex and interlinked, there is a simple analysis technique that can help to capture an understanding of the key attributes of a place by way of straightforward questions such as:

- What are the best parts of the town?
- Where do people like to go?
- What are the less good parts?
- What makes these parts less good?
- How do others see the town?
- What pictures are on the local postcards and visitor websites?

Although such questions may seem simple and straightforward, they can be very effective in gathering revealing answers that can form the basis of an analysis of the town's strengths and weaknesses in order to identify the areas for prioritising actions.

Such tools are often used in charrette-type workshops to help a community establish a long-term, common vision for its town, but they are equally useful to individuals and organisations who wish to establish a strong basis for revitalising a town centre.

The diagram on the following page charts a process which was used in the Callander charrette to establish a long-term vision and series of principles for revitalising the town.

The outcome of this type of exercise should be a clear understanding of the areas that require physical improvements to enable a town to become the best it can by enhancing the identity that makes it unique.

Some of the key features of a town may have remained relatively unchanged over the years. As there may often be limited resources available to initiate and carry out change, the advantage of this approach is that those resources can be focused where they will have the most positive impact by making the most of what is already there.
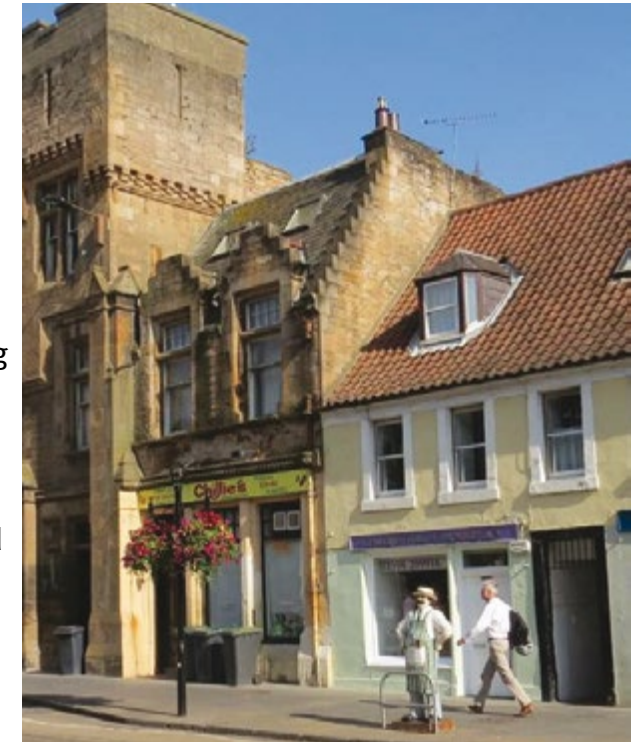
Linlithgow

The Scottish Government, in conjunction with NHS Health Scotland and Architecture and Design Scotland, is developing a Place Standard which will be an easy-to-use tool, framed around a set of key questions that are central to the delivery of successful, sustainable places.

Visual techniques to evaluate strengths and weakness, set priorities and develop vision

The use of visual materials can provide valuable tools to help identify strengths and weaknesses and to develop a vision.

For this stage, it can be very helpful to use as much visual material as possible and ways of doing this may include:

- identifying the answers to 'strengths and weaknesses' on maps, in photographs/video or by the creative use of dynamic tools such as Lego; and
- using postcards or visitor surveys/websites to assess external perceptions of the town.

1 Strengths and weaknesses

Sample questions and answers

Things people really like about living or working here?
- Community spirit
- Scenery and setting
- Historic main street
- Proximity to outdoor activities
- Good local shops and services

If one thing could be changed...?
- Improve the High Street
- Use the town's setting more to attract visitors
- More affordable housing

Things that frustrate/aren't so good?
- Flooding
- Traffic on the High Street
- Town turns its back on the river

2 Vision and the future

Sample questions and answers

What should the town be like in 30 years time?
- 'Outdoor Capital of _____'
- An attractive visitor destination
- Safe and friendly pedestrian environment
- An inclusive community for all ages
- A range of job opportunities for young people

What are priorities for action?
- Reduce impact of traffic on High Street
- Build a new footbridge to make the town more connected
- Create a riverside walk
- Improve the historic buildings in the heart of the town
- Identify places for new housing

3 Next steps

Vision

A town's vision can be encapsulated in a picture or collage, as well as a written set of principles. Using visual material such as images and sketches helps to focus on what physical changes need to happen.
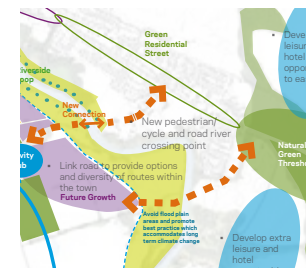
Strategy

An overall physical strategy for the town helps to tie together a series of short and long-term projects.

Actions

Well-defined projects with time frames, key milestones (such as grant-funding application deadlines) and identified ownership.

Samples: Callander Town Charrette

Mapping the quality of pedestrian experience

Much can be achieved in evaluating the success of a place as a 'people place', by experiencing it, observing others and asking questions. Doing this can quickly establish generally what's working and what's not.

This tool can form the second part of the process outlined earlier in Developing the Identity and Place, particularly if pedestrian environment in the town was identified as a key issue. However, it is also useful to carry out this exercise independently and on a fairly regular basis to assess changes over the years.

Anyone can carry this out, though a broad range of people will have a range of perspectives that will make the output more comprehensive:

- Regular users of the town centre will have built up a detailed knowledge based on day-to-day experience.
- Young people are particularly observant and focus on different issues to adults.
- People with mobility issues and older people will highlight particular needs from their physical environment.
- Business owners will focus on footfall and quality of experience.
- Visitors will highlight first impressions.
- Local authority officers will highlight maintenance considerations and on-going projects.
- External consultants such as designers and transport engineers can offer professional advice on ways to improve the environment.

Drawing over a map to highlight observations and help to devise and overall strategy and key areas for focus.

Visual record of pedestrian environment highlights a key junction that affects overall impression of the town centre.

In carrying out this exercise, you may wish to consider ensuring that:

- observations are based on actual experience. It is important to walk around and to observe things critically, focusing on what works, what isn't working as well as it might and possible ways to improve things;
- pictures are taken to record observations; a visual record can often communicate the issues more easily than a written record;
- a map is used and observations noted/drawn onto it, so that the resulting output is based on real spaces and places and it is possible to identify patterns and areas for focus;
- observations are discussed and ideas shared;
- priorities for action are identified and the people who can lead them are committed. For example:
  - » Redesign and upgrade of a junction that doesn't work very well for pedestrians – the local authority.
  - » Flower boxes and tree-planting initiative – interested community group.

- » Improving a pedestrian link through an unwelcoming narrow street or path – local community group in collaboration with local authority.
- » Widen pavement and use space for active use – local businesses in collaboration with local authority.

Steps to Take

- Map the area concerned.
- Mark key nodes of activity, where do people go and why? Where do people gather?
- Mark key 'gateways', the arrival points, train and bus stations, car parks.
- Map a network of popular movement from gateways to key nodes of activity.
- Highlight areas that work well and feel nice to be in and move through.
- Highlight areas that don't work so well and don't feel that nice to be in.
- Do this for day time and night time.

Mapping exercise, Helsinki

Appraising existing assets

Landscape Context

Scotland is a country blessed with beautiful and dramatic landscape. In some cases, Scottish towns are characterised by strong local landscape features and settings, such as local mountains or hillside forests. In a similar manner to waterside locations, such features are assets which may offer opportunities to improve the experience of a town.

- Can spaces be created or improved to celebrate distinctive local context and capitalise on key views or links to walks?
- Can this make a significant difference to the town's environment and its connection to local context?

Waterfront

The distinctive character of coastal towns attracts people who want to live or spend time by the sea. Similarly, towns that sit by rivers also tend to have a special character that can make them pleasant places to spend time. Waterside locations thus offer a valuable asset to towns and opportunities for vibrant seaside and riverside development. Over the passage of time, the positive physical relationship between the town and the waterside may have been diminished or lost and its level of use significantly reduced. Where the waterside is an underexploited resource, consideration may be given to matters such as improving the quality of the public realm and its connections, stimulating leisure and recreational activities, providing of social and economic amenities and develop tourism opportunities. Waterside locations may also provide opportunities for employment though the reintroduction of traditional industries as well as through retail. Bridges are strategic links and focus movement networks.

- Does the town embrace or turn its back on the water?
- Are there ways to create links to the water's edge and then create nice sheltered places to spend time overlooking the water?
- Can waterside space be integrated into local walk networks with links to key town centre spaces to support local business?

North Berwick

Stonehaven Harbour

How can a town embrace its waterfront?

Nithraid Art Festival and Sailing Race, Dumfries

BUILT HERITAGE

Our historic environments can bring added value, not only in cultural terms, but as economic drivers, attracting inward investment, helping communities to regenerate and playing a vital part in local tourist economies. Many Scottish town centres have a rich built heritage. Where this is the case, it is important for towns to recognise the significant value of their historic built environment as a resource, possibly with greater further potential, to contribute to local distinctiveness and identity. Some towns may have only a few historic buildings or artefacts, but thought might usefully be given as to how they could better contribute to a town's character and vitality:

- Can creative and self-sustaining re-use of these buildings be enabled?
- Do public spaces around them support their use and give them room to act as was originally intended when they were built?

For all of the reasons above, it is always important that any proposals to remove historic buildings are seriously interrogated to determine whether removal is really necessary.
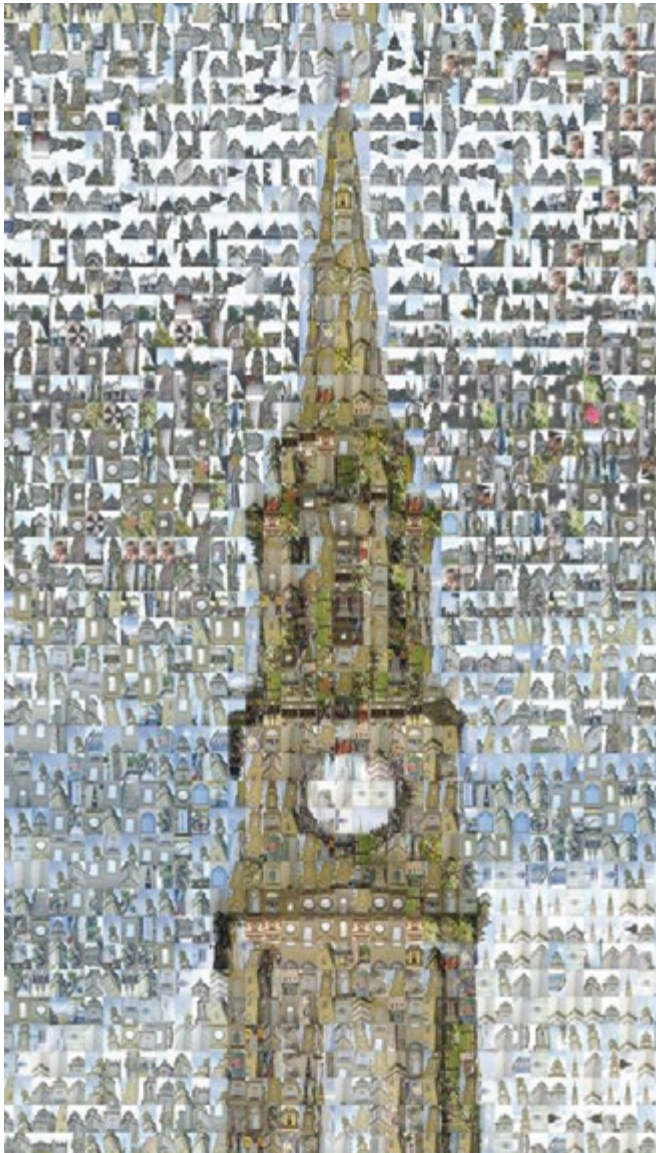
'Historic Environment Strategy for Scotland – Our Place in Time' (March 2014) is a high level framework which sets out a 10 year vision for the historic environment.

Birks Cinema, Aberfeldy

Linlithgow

CASE STUDY:

Strengthening identity through a focus upon historic landmarks

HISTORIC HEART OF FALKIRK

- improvements to key landmarks related to the identity of the town
- building upon links between the location of landmarks and retail location
- improved pedestrian links between retailing zones

In a project lead by Falkirk Council in 2011, Falkirk town centre saw the delivery of a scheme of improvements centred around the 'Faw Kirk', Falkirk Old and St. Modan's Parish Church and churchyard, a location which has long been a focal point for the identity of the town centre.

These improvements allowed visitors to appreciate the tombs and monuments of important historical figures from the Battle of Falkirk of 1298. Notable tombs include William Wallace's right-hand man Sir John de Graeme, and Sir John Stewart. Other memorials from the Jacobite Battle of Falkirk of 1746 are also featured in the Faw Kirk historic graveyard. The churchyard is being promoted as a further reason to visit Falkirk town centre. Focusing action on these landmarks was a strategic move for improving the town centre environment as they are also situated directly opposite the prime retail core of the town.

The implementation of this strategy was accompanied by provision of quality visitor and shopping information signage. These improvements were achieved with a combination of Scottish Government Town Centre Regeneration Funding and Heritage Lottery Funding.

The scheme resulted in a strengthening of the town's historic environment, an alternate footfall opportunity to support retail use and improved pedestrian links between retailing zones.

Key existing asset enhanced through high quality design
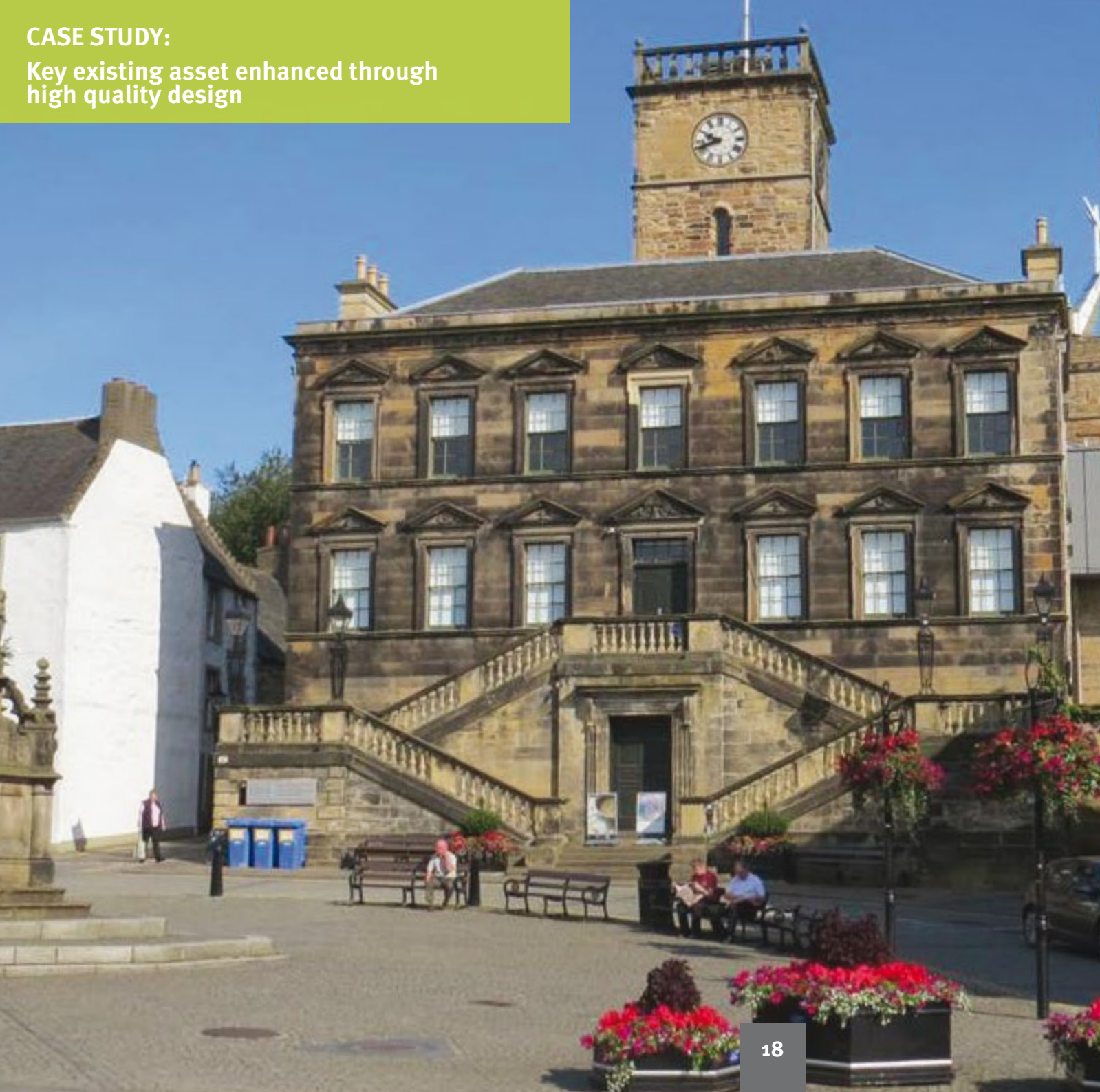
LINLITHGOW BURGH HALLS

- importance of key historic building on the overall perception of town
- high quality design reinvigorating existing building
- multiple uses – cultural and commercial – enlivening community life

Linlithgow Burgh Halls is a Category A listed building occupying a key position in the centre of Linlithgow. Prior to its restoration, the Halls had major problems of fabric deterioration accumulated over a number of decades. It also had inadequate fire escapes resulting in reduced capacity for events, substandard access for disabled and it generally presented a neglected air, affecting impressions of the town centre. A £5.2 million restoration was led by West Lothian Council and taken forward in partnership with the Heritage Lottery Fund, Historic Scotland and The National Lottery through Creative Scotland.

The building now provides a lively range of uses for the community including gallery, event space, education room and audio visual facility. The design, by Malcolm Fraser Architects of the building. As well as elegantly housing these new facilities, the design opened up the building to take best advantage of its garden and views both for events and for use by the new café. This project, which sympathetically positions modern design alongside period features, has been recognised as an example of how high quality design can reinvigorate existing buildings.

The project is also an example of how work targeted on a single significant building can have a major influence on perceptions of a town. In addition, the drawing together of well-considered uses has added a place of vitality to the town centre.

Public Spaces

Squares may often be historic market places, particularly in rural contexts, that now act as gathering places for local events. It is important to critically appraise how well a town square supports the variety of uses that it is expected to support.

- Does it feel like a single place, from building frontage to building frontage, or is it split in half, or feeling like a traffic island?
- Are there active uses on its edges that create interest and draw people?
- Does it allow for casual sitting as well as town gatherings?
- How does it work as an event space?
- What is needed?

High Street

Most Scottish towns have a main or High Street which acts as a central spine for footfall and activity. Towns can develop in various ways around their High Streets, and not always to the benefit of pedestrians, so it is important that their success as an active and bustling thoroughfare for people on foot is continually appraised.

- Does the High Street feel busy and active at all times of day and during the evening?
- Is it pleasant to walk down, with a great deal to see and do? Are there many people there?
- Is it easily accessible without vehicles dominating the space?
- Is there potential to use it to hold events, and to decorate it at various times of the year?

Stove network, Dumfries

Christmas lights, Kilmarnock

Working with existing buildings

The maintenance and continued use of existing buildings, particularly buildings with historic or cultural significance, is an important part of ensuring that towns are attractive places.

This tool is split into two, in response to two major categories:

- Vacant or badly maintained properties that become a blight on public streets and spaces.
- Ensuring that town centre buildings don't become a burden on owners, discouraging investment.

In the case of vacant or badly maintained buildings, there is an argument that doing something is often better than doing nothing at all in terms of perception of a place and thus, assuming matters of safety are first in hand, initiatives to carry out cosmetic improvements, repairs and repainting can have value.

1. Identifying vacant buildings that, through lack of use or maintenance, are not contributing positively to the town environment.

You may wish to consider keeping a local register of vacant properties with details of ownership, previous use and continued strategies for re-use and maintenance. This is a substantial task, but it can provide essential information for bringing vacant buildings back into use. You may also wish to consider supporting community or social enterprise initiatives for temporary use, purchase or maintenance and promoting cost effective 'meanwhile' rejuvenation of buildings. The temporary use of vacant buildings or land for a socially beneficial purpose until such times that they can be brought back into commercial use can contribute to a better quality of life in town centres while the search for commercial uses continues.

Whilst responsibility for maintenance of a building rests with the owner, local authorities have the discretion to use certain powers, under the following:

- Dangerous or defective buildings: Building (Scotland) Act 2003, sections 28-30.
- Listed Buildings: Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997, section 49 onwards.
- Sub-standard housing: Housing (Scotland) Act 2006.
- Condition of land: Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997, section 179.
- Building repairs and maintenance of private open space: Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982.
- Power to advance well-being: Local Government In Scotland Act 2003.
- Compulsory Purchase Orders.

CASE STUDY:
Prioritisation of key buildings in town centres for restoration and creative reuse

KILMARNOCK OPERA HOUSE

- identification of key elements detrimental to perception of place
- analysis of potential for creating characterful assets from existing buildings
- appropriateness of re-use function

The Kilmarnock Opera House was awarded 'Town Centre Project of the Year' at the inaugural Scottish Property Awards 2014 for its restoration and transformation into office accommodation. The Opera House, which was historically significant to the town, had been devastated by fire in 1989. The extent of the site deterioration, its proximity to the railway station and the fact that its frontage to John Finnie Street is on the main thoroughfare through Kilmarnock, resulted in its being considered the most prominent derelict site within Kilmarnock Town Centre. It was regarded as causing economic blight and holding back town centre regeneration.

The KLIN Group repaired and conserved the B-listed façade and rebuilt and modernised the interiors to create high quality accommodation for 250 Council staff via private enterprise. The redevelopment is considered to be a significant boost to the regeneration of Kilmarnock town centre and has resulted in increased footfall, which has helped to stimulate the local retail trade and contribute to the town centre economy.

2. Promoting, supporting and implementing high quality maintenance and improvement of historic buildings.

When considering historic buildings in town centres, it is important to promote and implement high quality in the maintenance of existing parts and design of new additions. With this in mind, it is also important to provide help, guidance and ensure that the benefits of this approach can be seen in return on investment.

Most towns have applicable design guidance in place as part of local planning guidance. The emphasis of this guidance will tend to be on the following:

- Use of materials that relate to existing context and historic character.
- Improvements and upgrades that respect and respond creatively to local context and character.

Owners/occupiers/developers should work with experienced consultants, the local planning authority and Historic Scotland where applicable from an early stage in a project.

The stories of successful projects can be shared with the wider community to inspire others.

Local authorities can set up key contact points that help to make the process of owning and maintaining a building in town centres more straightforward.

CASE STUDY:

Restoring and renovating the historic character of shop frontages

STIRLING HISTORIC SHOPFRONT RESTORATION

- reviewing the appropriateness of shop frontages
- conservation and restoration
- strengthening town centre character

Stirling City Heritage Trust (SCHT) commissioned Lindsay Lennie, a Perthshire-based specialist heritage consultant, providing conservation and restoration services for historic shopfronts, to undertake work as part of the King Street Funding Initiative in Stirling.

The approach is to renovate and, where possible, retain historic shopfronts as a positive and sustainable alternative to their wholesale replacement with modern materials, which may detract from the street's character. This approach can also benefit the retail business occupying the property in that a high quality period shop front is a potential asset to business.

Integrating new buildings

Where new buildings respond creatively to their context they can make a positive contribution in terms of enhancing a town's character and built heritage. The publication 'New Design in Historic Settings' offers joint guidance from Historic Scotland, Scottish Government and Architecture and Design Scotland and aims to set out the means by which we can raise the standard of new design in historic settings. It demonstrates how contemporary interventions can energise and enhance our historic areas.

'Creating Places', the Scottish Government's policy statement on Architecture and Place, highlights that good design can enhance the quality of our lives through:

- Physical value – enhances a setting
- Functional value – meets and adapts to the long-term needs of all users
- Viability – provides good value for money
- Social value – develops a positive sense of identity and community
- Environmental value – efficient and responsible use of our resources

All of these values can be important to the long-term success of new building interventions in town centres as a positive contribution to the town's built environment.

Particular aspects to consider in relation to building in the town centre include:

- Built context – town centres may have a range of existing built heritage to which to respond, in terms of scale, massing, material use and character. This will naturally result in a range of possible design solutions. Creative and sensitive responses to built context can not only produce a well-designed building but can also have a positive impact on the surrounding environment.
- Active frontage – when a new building is located on a public space, or street with a concentration of footfall, it is important to maximise the potential for active frontage. This can include a range of design solutions, from cafe and shop/business frontages to residential front doors. The key is to consider how people can come and go and that blank facades at street level are generally avoided.

- Local climate – new buildings can contribute positively to local climate, through the creation of shelter from rain or wind and this can be considered at early stages in the design development.
- Public space – new build interventions in town centres can contribute positively to existing public spaces, or make new ones. It is important to consider how this may fit in with the existing pattern of public space in town and how these are used.

CASE STUDY:

Community facilities housed in a new town centre building of appropriate character

BIRNAM ARTS AND CONFERENCE CENTRE

- appropriate new building in a conservation area, contributing to town character
- provision of facilities creating day and evening town centre activity
- creation of enduring revenue stream through flexibility of uses

The 2001 extension to the Birnam Institute demonstrates where new building in the centre of a town can make a significant contribution to the attractiveness and activity of a town centre.

The new building provides a mix of uses, such as community facilities, a cafe, a branch library, the offices of Community Learning, a Beatrix Potter exhibition and shop and facilities for conference activities. This range of uses helps to ensure an enduring flexibility and revenue stream, as well as providing much needed local facilities and day and evening activity.

The building is sensitively designed to create a positive part of the town centre and is respectful of the conservation area in which it is set, using appropriate form and materials and also providing external seating and landscaping.

Funding took three years to assemble from a variety of sources including Scottish Arts Lottery, the European Regional Development Fund, Millennium's 21 Century Halls for Scotland, the Gannochy Trust, Perth and Kinross Council, Scottish Enterprise Tayside, the Carnegie Trust, the Dunkeld Village Hall Fund and many members of the community.

› www.birnamarts.com

Creating active frontages

Buildings fronting onto main streets and spaces benefit from having active frontages. The doors to shops, businesses and public buildings are best located so that people come and go directly off the street. While this is commonly implemented for cafes, restaurants and shops, it is also important that business and leisure uses and residential development have front doors onto the street, windows and activation of the ground floor.
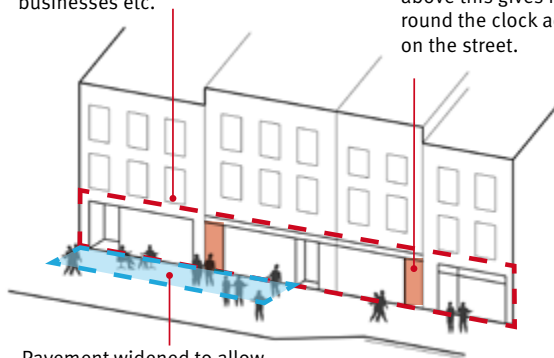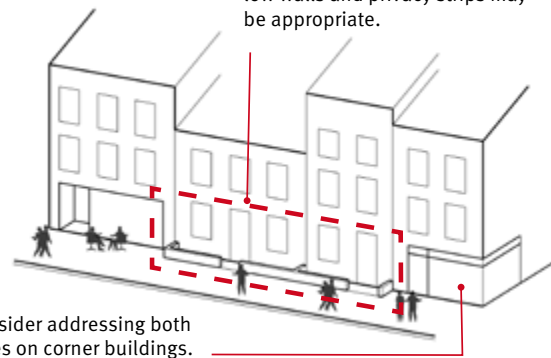
Linlithgow

Stirling

Continuous frontage that allows visual links between inside and outside – shops, cafes/restaurants, small businesses etc.

Doors to upper floors also on street – if residential above this gives more round the clock activity on the street.

Residential buildings can go to ground – front doors and windows addressing the street – low walls and privacy strips may be appropriate.

Buildings may be set back from the street – providing opportunities for active frontages addressing the space that is created.

Pavement widened to allow comfortable use of pavement space for outdoor cafe/dining.

Consider addressing both sides on corner buildings.

Improving and enhancing shopfronts

The appropriate design of shopfronts and their continued maintenance can be a critical part of ensuring that town centres are attractive places.

Ways of helping businesses to improve their shopfronts include:

- having good local design guidance that is simple and straightforward, without being prescriptive or cost prohibitive and a local authority contact who can advise shop owners and tenants;
- instigating a local shopfront improvement scheme – grant funding can be sourced from a variety of places; and
- supporting individual initiative in good shopfront design through, for example, publicity, an award or sharing the story with others.

Working with empty shops:

- It is undesirable for empty shops to be allowed to become progressively rundown. For owners, this makes it harder to find new tenants, for adjacent business owners, this affects perceptions of their businesses and for the town this has a negative impact on its economic success. It is therefore in many people's best interests to invest some money to ensure vacant properties do not become a visual blight on the street.
- Temporary and low-cost measures can be employed, for example maintaining an external cleaning and painting regime or applying graphics to windows. Imaginative solutions can have very positive results.

Paisley temporary shopfront and advertising

Canopy adds interest and gives shelter.

Clear and simple signage.

Continuous line above fascia.

Traditional details such as cornices repaired/maintained.

Hanging plants and flowers soften appearance.

Simpified details and views in/out.

Simple and consistent colour palette.

Selective approach to signage on windows – less is more.

Recessed doorways and traditional detail in tile floor.

Signboards should be carefully considered as they can contribute to pavement clutter – here they are set in close to the shop and away from primary walking routes.

Designing public spaces to feel safe

Most people prefer to be in places that feel safe. Many things can make places feel unsafe: people's behaviour; poor lighting; a lack of activity; or busy traffic. If people don't feel safe in town centre spaces, they won't use them regardless of crime statistics.

Perth

DESIGNING THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

There are advantages with regard to improved safety when places promote a range of users, are overlooked and have natural surveillance, active frontages, high permeability, through routes, and ease of movement for all users on foot and bicycle.

- Visual links between internal spaces and outside are desirable. Building frontages onto streets and paths benefit from being 'active' – having front doors from which people come and go, windows, and the encouragement of ownership and use of the space immediately in front. Conversely, blank facades may often bring disadvantages.
- It is important for safety that pedestrian routes are wide and well-lit. Non-vehicular routes may be less popular at night due to perceptions of crime, so ensure pedestrians are also accommodated safely on heavier trafficked routes alongside vehicles.

OWNERSHIP

There are benefits to be gained from encouraging ownership of in-between spaces between privately owned property and public spaces and from including a range of potential users in design and change, particularly young people.

- Buildings, especially residential buildings, can be designed with semi-private buffer spaces to encourage occupation and care of street space.
- Large municipal spaces with continuous surfaces, for example large expanses of either grass or hard paving surface with no planting or other human-scale elements, can deter people from using these spaces. This lack of regular use can lead to issues around neglect. Consideration of the scale of space relative to how people congregate and want to use it helps encourage increased use, collective ownership and feelings of safety.
- There are benefits to be accrued from designing public realm interventions and improvements in consultation with the widest range of stakeholders. Enabling contribution from all user groups is important, and also helps promote ownership and care of the space.

Maintenance

Having a system for maintenance to avoid graffiti, litter and signs of decay helps to avoid the creation of negative perceptions that such elements cause. There are practical benefits to be gained from designing the public realm in close consultation with those tasked with maintaining it.

- This relates to the broken window theory – that visible signs of vandalism or lack of maintenance can normalise lack of care for the town environment. Continuing maintenance of public spaces is critical to their success and may be considered an investment in the town centre as a whole. Better results can often be achieved when local communities and business associations work together with local councils.
- The materials and public furniture specified for new public spaces can be designed and chosen in collaboration with the people tasked to look after them. This does not imply that materials come from a 'standard' list or that the potential for creativity or innovation is removed, but rather that there can be a dialogue that seeks to best balance design aspirations with long-term care and appearance.

Daytime / Night Time

Key considerations include avoiding a significant change in character from day to night and ensuring that routes are well-lit and that places still have active use and surveillance during the evening.

- A range of complementary uses that encourage footfall at all times of day and evening helps to avoid a significant change in character at night. For example, evening leisure and cultural uses can sit amongst retail and business uses. Residential use throughout the town centre helps with 24-hour activity and natural surveillance.
- Lighting schemes can help to improve the night-time character of a town's streets. However, it is also important that consideration is given to lighting which focuses on the streets' adjacent spaces, side streets and closes. By integrating lighting into public space design, the town centre environment can be improved for pedestrians. You may wish to consider lighting prominent buildings or key town centre landmarks as features. Innovative lighting projects can become a feature, attracting visitors and providing a focus for evening events, supporting the town's evening economy.
- Evening town centre events can significantly help with the feeling that the town centre is a friendly and safe place after it gets dark.

Some Ideas

Design spaces to accommodate night time and cultural uses, with flexible space serviced with power and flexible lighting.

Purple Flag Accreditation Scheme
> **www.atcm.org/programmes/purple_flag/ WelcometoPurpleFlag**

Secured by Design Accreditation Scheme
> **www.securedbydesign.com**

Designing for the weather

Scottish weather is changeable. It can be wet and cold or dry and pleasant, often in the space of a single day. We can't completely protect our town centres from the elements, but we can design them to be more attractive for people to move around in when the weather is poor. We can also design them to be places that people are attracted to when the sun is out, particularly as an urban environment can provide more shelter from the wind on sunny days. The perception of a town can improve dramatically if it is bustling on a sunny day, and this is a particular consideration for towns that depend on the visitor economy during summer months. New development should take microclimate into account in design and orientation. For instance, seating and spill out from bars and cafes into public spaces should be focused in sheltered south-facing areas where possible.

Designing for the weather can take various forms such as:

- encouraging new buildings to provide public shelter;
- where appropriate, using planting and street trees to provide shelter from the wind;
- erecting shelters over footways;
- bringing traditional shopfront awnings back into use;
- installing moveable protection allowing public spaces to be sheltered in poor weather; and
- providing cafe customers with blankets and awnings.

Shop awning in West End, Edinburgh.

Covered outdoor event, Dumfries.

Seating on the sunny side of the street – North Berwick.

Creating places to sit

When spaces are designed for casual use they can respond to a range of daily opportunities for occupation. People like watching other people. A large part of this is having somewhere to casually sit down, either by creating permanent benches as part of a landscape scheme or temporary tables and chairs.

The location of seating can be guided by some of the other tools in this section, such as 'Designing public spaces to feel safe' and 'Designing for the weather'. Seating can respond to need, for example the need for people to rest or sit and eat, or to an aspiration for what a space should look and feel like and how it should be used. Outdoor charging points and WiFi should become more common and attract people as well as events and interactive installations. An integrated approach that pulls together a number of elements can be the most successful.

Walls can be designed to double up as seating, where something permanent is appropriate.

Bench seating creates places to congregate particularly when combined with shelter.

Busy places need seating for people to rest or wait.

Outdoor cafe seating is flexible and can be used throughout the year if it's dry or even in the rain under a canopy.

Improving greenspace

Greenspace, like parks, river banks or temporary community gardens, is a valuable part of the network of public spaces in town centres. Evidence shows that the better the quality of greenspace, the more it's used and contributes to people's health.

- Greenspace can benefit from being designed for flexible use – for events, cafes, outdoor markets and allotments as well as casual use.
- Parks and greenspace can offer things to do for all ages and abilities. You may wish to consider activities for older children, seating, outdoor gyms and sensory gardens.
- Playparks can be imaginatively designed, appropriate to context and well-maintained. Safety should be a key part of design considerations without excessive use of fencing/signage.

- It is important that parks and greenspace feel safe at all times of day and evening. Issues to consider include overlooking and active edges; round the clock use, including as a walking/cycling link; lighting; avoiding eye-level enclosure that creates secluded spaces; and ensuring that ongoing maintenance deals quickly with repairs and environmental incivilities.
- Parks and greenspace should contribute to wider access networks supporting walking and cycling as methods of accessing town centres.
- Town centre design and management should seek to integrate greenspace with streets and civic spaces – this might involve coordinated signage or improved access links or the running of events and activities which use both streets/squares and greenspaces as venues.

CASE STUDY:
Park improvement project

FRESH AIR festival
In the public park Dunfermline
Saturday 31st May 2014

DUNFERMLINE PUBLIC PARK PROJECT

- increased safety and attractiveness through lighting strategy
- link point between walking, cycling and public transport routes
- arts project to help make the park a destination in its own right
- community engagement and events

A Park Improvement Group (Central Dunfermline Community Council, Fife Council, Visit Dunfermline, the Carnegie Trust, Fife Coast and Countryside Trust) and facilitated by Greenspace Scotland have been engaging with the local community and initiating a number of projects to breathe new life into Dunfermline's Public Park as well as creating a park for the future that can help to cope with the challenges of climate change.

A range of projects include:
- A lighting improvement implementation strategy
- Reviewed and improved cycling and signage
- A public arts project
- A Landmark sculpture project
- Fresh Air Festival

Introducing green streets

The introduction of green elements such as street trees, pocket parks and other small greenspaces into streetscapes has a positive impact on the aesthetics, usability and climate resilience of town centres. Street trees and pocket greenspaces will provide cool shaded areas for pedestrians and also protect neighbouring buildings from the worst impacts of the weather. Street trees have been shown to reduce the levels of airborne pollutants at street level. Green roofs, rain gardens and green drainage swales can greatly reduce the risk of surface water flooding and will also contribute to cooling town centre streets and buildings.

This 'green infrastructure' can be designed into temporary improvements of vacant land and into road narrowing and realignment measures aimed at improving pedestrian safety and the shopping experience. The resulting small greenspaces can incorporate seating, WiFi hotspots etc. – creating comfortable places for people to linger.

A residential mixed use neighbourhood in Malmo integrates vegetation and stormwater management.

Portland

Central Scotland Green Network Trust
› www.csgnt.org.uk

● Creating new greenspace

The creation of new greenspace, either on a temporary or a permanent basis, can have a number of benefits:

- Greenspace and planting can improve the attractiveness of the town centre environment.
- Greenspace provides leisure uses, contributing positively to a range of uses in the town centre with opportunities for play, sport, learning, events and community building.

- Greenspace helps to moderate air quality and create more people friendly and healthy spaces.
- Urban parks help to tackle the challenges of climate change.
- There are opportunities to diversify town centre activity and greenspace still further with initiatives such as community food growing. For example, Fife EATS spaces are unfenced public spaces planted with fruit, vegetable and flowers which can be harvested by the public or for community groups.

Fife EATS
> **fifeeats.wordpress.com**

Use of vacant land on a temporary basis for community growing

CONCRETE GARDEN, POSSILPARK

The Concrete Garden is a community space for growing fruit and vegetables in Possilpark, North Glasgow. The garden is located on land reclaimed from industrial use and is designed in a modular system of grow boxes and bags made from recycled materials. The project came about following a major scoping study on the opportunities for community food growing commissioned by the Glasgow and Clyde Valley Green Network Partnership, called Sow and Grow Everywhere.

› www.gcvgreennetwork.gov.uk

Information on Stalled Spaces Scotland, which is a Legacy 2014 programme inspired by Glasgow City Council's Stalled Spaces programme is provided on page 39.

Installing street trees in public spaces

Street trees can give relief to otherwise 'hard' public spaces. Mature trees are an investment and seeking out the appropriate guidance is advised to give them best chance of longevity.

Trees can have a hugely positive impact on streets and spaces, as they provide a softness with which people generally feel more comfortable; break down the scale of a space; and moderate environmental factors.

- You may wish to consider the selective siting of street trees to reinforce a key route or space. Street trees can provide shelter from the wind for areas of seating and moderate microclimate and are also very good at moderating air pollution. Trees can be used very effectively to break up larger areas of car parking and should be encouraged in this context.
- Tree specimens should be selected to respond to context, be robust, and be appropriate for an urban environment. Common specimens that can be used in Scottish urban environments include Silver Birch, Rowan and Scots Pine.

- Careful consideration needs to be given to appropriate tree selection, their location and how they are planted. Detailed advice is contained in the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology document, Tree Roots in the Built Environment.
- If possible, semi-mature trees should be planted. Slow-growing species with narrow trunks and canopies above 2m should be considered.
- Maintenance arrangements for all planted areas need to be established at an early stage, as they affect the design, including the choice of species and their locations. The approval and maintenance of proposed planting within the street boundary will be required to comply with Sections 50 and 51 of the Roads (Scotland) Act 1984.
- Alternatives to formal adoption may require innovative arrangements to secure long-term management of planting.

Tree planting in existing town centre locations can often present challenges to fit them between underground services and their continuing maintenance. However, the benefits that trees add to a town centre can outweigh these challenges.
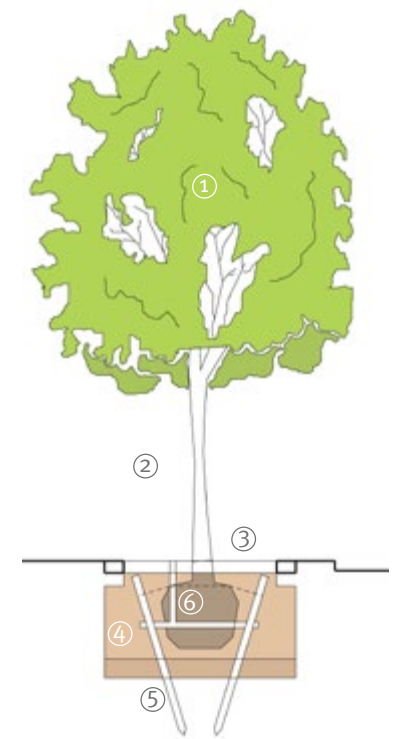
The diagram and notes show how trees can be planted despite limited space.

1. Tree species should be appropriate to environment and soil type.

2. Tree spacing should be considered relative to expected canopy and height dimensions.

3. Options for surface finish include tree grilles and resin bound surfaces – consideration should be given to load bearing capacity if vehicle overrun is likely.

4. Tree root growth can be managed with a root barrier installed to the edges of the tree pit or a root director and by compacting earth around the pit or director.

5. Below ground tree support looks better such as with three stakes as shown, or with structure or straps over the root ball however, where this is not practicable, above ground staking can be used.

6. An irrigation pipe leading from the surface to approximately 2/3 depth of root ball and encircling the root ball gives best irrigation.

De-cluttering streets and public spaces

The public spaces of town centres are often compromised by visual clutter such as highway signage, multiple poles for lighting and traffic lights, bins, and pedestrian barriers. This is damaging to the attractiveness of town centres, whereas an approach which rationalises and reduces signage and clutter is not only better but can be more cost effective.

An approach should be taken to design spaces and implement change so that streets and spaces are simplified and uncluttered, with good quality materials that are executed well.

Considerations for de-cluttering include those following:

- Removing or relocating freestanding signage – working with local shops to work out an appropriate strategy – for example one sandwich board per shop, next to shop frontage.
- Removing bollards and pedestrian barriers.
- Rationalising bin numbers and locations.
- Encouraging slower speeds, avoiding the use of speed limit signs where possible, as this can be encouraged with other measures.
- Removing road signage that is out of scale and only replacing if absolutely necessary, with signs appropriate for slow speeds.

- Avoiding the use of multiple poles for different uses.
- Designing lighting columns to be of an appropriate scale for street, rather than road, use. Building mounted lighting may be more appropriate.
- Working with shop owners to suggest a de-cluttered approach to shop windows and entrances.

Considerations for a continuing strategy include those following:

- Setting out clear zones for signage.
- Working with local business owners to find ways to advertise their shops/products without creating street clutter.
- Ensuring that departments within the local authority work together for a joined-up approach – avoiding the implementation of new signs or poles next to existing ones and sharing budgets to create something better.
- Setting out a consistent approach to street furniture – bins, lighting, signage, seating etc. lighting, signage, seating etc.

Pedestrian Barriers

Our town centres are full of guard rails, encouraging cars to go faster and contributing to the impression that the streets are unsafe. As part of making people-friendly town centres, the need for these barriers to movement should be reviewed.

Excessive use of pedestrian barriers may cause a number of problems:

- Barriers can prevent desirable movement, particularly affecting those with reduced mobility.
- They can reduce the available pavement space in busy areas.
- There is evidence that they can encourage drivers to increase their speed.
- Barriers can pose a safety risk for cyclists
- They can undermine efforts to make town centres more attractive.

'Designing Streets' highlights that guard rails should not be provided unless a clear need has been identified and measures to reduce traffic flows and speeds help to support their removal.

In Norwich, in the scheme at Prince of Wales Road, guardrails were removed from most of the street together with other improvements such as defined parking, widened footways, rationalisation of street furniture and better use of kerb details to define safe routes to cross for less confident users. In the three years after implementation, the average number of casualties had reduced by 60%, despite an increase of 16% in pedestrian footfall. For more information see the UK Government (Department of Transport) 2010 publication 'Manual for Streets 2'.

A holistic strategy can be implemented to ensure that streets are designed to be attractive and pedestrian friendly, starting with de-cluttering and working toward a better balanced solution.

1 De-cluttering

- Tidying up – removing obstacles from pavements and indicating clear zones for signage etc.
- Removing road signage that is out of scale, designed for high speed roads and used in streets
- Merging use – signposts, lighting poles
- Evaluating the need for pedestrian barriers
- Evaluating the need for street furniture – will one bin suffice? etc.

2 Re-thinking

- Can a lane be removed and replaced with parallel parking and extended pavement zones?
- Can the carriageway be narrower to allow clear delineated cycle ways?
- Can a junction be redesigned to take up less space?
- Can more crossings be installed to reflect pedestrian desire lines?

3 Re-creating

- Is this street fit for purpose as a town centre gathering place as well as part of a movement network? Should a holistic approach be taken to create a pedestrian priority zone to create the best possible environment for a range of uses?

Existing

1. De-clutter

2. Re-think

3. Re-create

Testing and implementing temporary strategies

Temporary modifications to streets and spaces can be an important tool to demonstrate the benefits of a better balance between pedestrians and vehicles when it is difficult to reach a consensus for change.

Entrenched positions can sometimes be encountered when a proposal to recalibrate the balance between vehicles and pedestrians is put forward. There can be fears about congestion, safety, or journey times. An effective way of allaying such fears is to test the proposal outwith a temporary reduction of vehicle lanes or a partial road closure.

This can be simply done, at low cost, with paint and barriers for a temporary period. It is much easier to get agreement to a test than a permanent change and the outcome will be there for all to see if the case has been proven or not.

During the Commonwealth Games, part of the Merchant City in Glasgow was temporarily closed to traffic which brought the streets alive with activity.

A similar initiative has been implemented in New York City where the temporary proposals have been so successful in making the spaces more attractive to pedestrians that they have been replaced with permanent changes.

In Copenhagen, examples include a temporary beach at the Carlsberg brewery. Although these are both city examples, the same principle of testing and demonstrating change through temporary proposals applies equally in town centres.

Copenhagen Street Beach

● Ways of temporarily utilising underused and derelict spaces

Taking underused and derelict spaces and transforming them into productive, active assets is a means to make a significant impact on local environments within relatively modest budgets. There are very many interlinked benefits to the inventive use of stalled spaces, including opportunities for:

- strengthening community relations;
- improving social equality;
- contributing to the sustainability agenda;
- improving general well-being; and
- creating vitality.

STALLED SPACES SCOTLAND PROGRAMME

Stalled Spaces Scotland is a national programme commissioned by the Scottish Government and delivered by Architecture and Design Scotland (A+DS) to facilitate the temporary use of under-used green spaces, stalled development sites or vacant and derelict land throughout Scotland. Through this programme, A+DS has been supporting local authorities to develop their own initiatives, using the knowledge and learning from the Stalled Spaces initiative developed by Glasgow City Council. This supports community groups to create temporary activity on under used open spaces in their area. Local authorities throughout Scotland have had the opportunity to bid for a small fund to help kick start the project and have access to a package of seminars and workshops to support them and the communities in their area to realise their plans.

Projects receiving support from the Stalled Spaces Scotland programme, which runs from July 2014 to December 2016, have already been selected, however guidance has been produced by A+DS which should be of benefit to those considering their own stalled spaces projects:

www.ads.org.uk/access/features/stalled-spaces-scotland

Stalled Spaces, Glasgow

Active

Introduction

Town centres have always been hubs of activity, places where people go shopping, meet friends, do business or have an evening out. Now, people have more choice: we can watch a film or do our shopping without leaving home. This means that town centres have to work harder to be the focus of activity.

Without people, many businesses – particularly shops, pubs, restaurants and hotels – would close their doors. Without businesses, fewer people would come into town centres. And the staff employed by town centre businesses spend money and bring activity. That's why encouraging business and enterprise in town centres is so important.

The liveliest town centres offer a mix of uses. They may also offer attractions such as music, markets, theatre, sport, exhibitions, festivals and all sorts of other activities for young and old alike. They have public buildings that attract people and generate footfall, like colleges, clinics, schools and public services. And they have a choice of housing so that people can enjoy the convenience of living centrally.

This section of the toolkit is about creating more of those things in town centres. It contains tools that are designed to give people more reasons to come and spend time in town centres, whether it be to live shop, learn or dance!

KEY PRINCIPLES

Town centre first

- Locating buildings and services such as colleges, clinics, offices, schools and leisure facilities in town centres generates footfall and supports other activities.
- More housing in town centres supports local businesses and makes town centres more vibrant.

Business and enterprise are key

- Shops, supermarkets, offices and businesses are big attractors of people.
- Town centres offer premises, footfall, accessibility and opportunities for interaction – so they can be great locations for entrepreneurs, social enterprises and small businesses.
- Collaborating for success: businesses working together can often improve and market their town centre far more than they could individually.

Re-using empty buildings

- Often, the best solution for empty property is to use it to re-invigorate town centres, because that can make it more attractive to potential investors. Encouraging landlords to bring empty buildings back into use can therefore be very worthwhile in terms of both their wider impact and their own potential future.
- Improving the most prominent derelict buildings or streets may often be the best use of scarce public resources for town centre improvements .

Supporting music, arts, sport and culture

- Investing in sporting and cultural events attracts footfall, increases spend, boosts local pride and bring communities together.
- Year-long events programmes attract local residents as well as visitors.
- Cinemas, theatres, music and other venues provide hubs for community activity and draw trade for other businesses.

Cultivating a range of activities and uses

Shopping will continue to bring life to town centres, but in times when town centre retailing is facing many challenges, it is important to consider that people also come into town for lots of other things, to meet people, do business, to pay their bills and to live.

The contemporary town centre needs to be the location offering a full range of activities to draw people to it, improving choice and enlivenment as well as providing necessities:

- Shops.
- Non-retail uses like banks, offices and dentists.
- Clinics, schools, colleges, government and council offices and other public buildings and services.
- Pubs, clubs and entertainment and recreational venues.
- Cultural and community activities.
- Social enterprises and flexible business spaces.
- Housing – particularly on upper floors and on the edges of town centres.

SOME IDEAS

A continental flower market creates additional activity and uses for a street space, and a mobile coffee cart in Copenhagen services people spending leisure time in public space.

Benefits of Employing a Range of Initiatives

Town centres have been subjected to many changes in the economy, technology, shopping and work patterns in recent years. Many of these changes have drawn people and footfall away through the re-location of public services or the competing pull of out-of-town shopping and online retailing.

Town centres need to find ways to adapt to these changes by focusing on necessity and choice. They need to make sure the things that people need to do and would like to do are located there. There is no single solution to this which is why drawing on a range of initiatives to improve a town's offer is the most effective approach.

CROSS ARTHURLIE FAMILY FUN DAY Saturday 28 August 11

The Wedding Street
SOUTH STREET · ELGIN

THE TOWN IS THE VENUE / Deveron Arts

Ready Steady Gallop!
readysteadygallop.com

30 WEST KILBRIDE
Craft Town Scotland

Here are some ideas to consider.
Click on the images for more information.

Locating public services in town centres

Town centres have traditionally been the places to access local services like the post office, the GP and often a local school, all of which help make up the DNA of a town centre and generate footfall for local businesses.

The Town Centre First Principle, agreed and adopted by the Scottish Government and COSLA, applies to decisions taken by those in central and local government as well as to a broader range of national agencies and public bodies. Simply, the principle asks that the public sector put the health of town centres at the heart of proportionate and best value decision making; that it adopts a collaborative approach which supports a longer-term vision and plan for each town centre. This will mean that, where practical and beneficial, public services like education, health and government offices could continue to be located in town centres, adding to the overall mix of facilities, amenities and activities which are on offer and attracting in different types of footfall.

The principle therefore focuses considerations around the potential impacts of relocating public services to a town centre's long-term health and vitality. It is about open, measured and transparent decision making that takes account of medium to longer-term impacts on town centres. It also recognises that town centre locations are not always suitable, but requests that the rational for locating elsewhere is evidenced and transparent.

LOCATING PUBLIC SERVICES IN TOWN CENTRES OFFERS A NUMBER OF BENEFITS BECAUSE IT:

- provides ready access to joined up public services;
- generates regular footfall which can support local businesses;
- supports the town centre's role as civic and social centre – and the stronger the attachment that people feel with their local town centre, the more they will use it; and
- can make them more accessible to all, as well as lessen reliance on the car.

PUBLIC INVESTMENT DECISIONS BENEFIT FROM TAKING A PLACE-BASED APPROACH

The work of the Scottish Futures Trust (SFT) highlights the potential benefits from a 'place based' approach to decision making on public sector services, involving questions such as:

- Is there scope to leverage new public sector capital investment to enable town centre ambitions centre?
- Can a joint approach to strategic asset management deliver better ways of repurposing town centre sites for shared public services?

John Gray Centre, Library and Archive
Haddington.

Civic Centre, John Dickie Street, Kilmarnock

'Government, local authorities, the wider public sector, businesses and communities put the health of town centres at the heart of proportionate and best value decision making, seeking to deliver the best local outcomes regarding investment and de-investment decisions, alignment of policies, targeting of available resources to priority town centre sites, and encouraging vibrancy, equality and diversity.'

The Scottish Government and COSLA, 2014

Creating more town centre flats and houses

Creating more good quality homes in town centres, close to shops and facilities, is an excellent way of bringing life back into town centres, particularly in the evenings and at weekends. A growing residential community also supports local shops and businesses. Most town centres have plenty of under-used or empty property on upper floors or around the edges of the town centre. Conversion to residential use is often the most appropriate long-term use, although it may need financial incentives to make it commercially viable.

To help identify the opportunities for new town centre housing, it will help to gather together the following information (some of which may already have been collected by the local authority housing department):

- Where are the gaps in supply of existing housing and flats (including student and older persons' accommodation) relative to demand?

- Where are there opportunities to develop new housing and flats without compromising active use of ground floors and public spaces?
- What related initiatives would protect and improve residents' quality of life?
- What incentives are available to support new development? The Scottish Government, Historic Scotland, lottery funding and individual local authorities regularly offer grant or loan schemes.
- Lessons from the most recent Empty Homes Loans Fund and Town Centre Housing Fund will inform future projects.

Before   **After**

Glengate Hall

CASE STUDY:

Conversion of historic building at risk into affordable housing

GLENGATE HALL

- partnership between private sector and local and national government
- innovation in both the conversion of the property and the funding package
- conserving town character, enlivening town centre and supporting residents through guaranteed rent levels

The transformation of category C listed Glengate Hall into nine units of affordable housing was undertaken as a partnership involving the private sector and local and national government including; Perthshire based housing developer PJ Redford Homes Ltd, Angus Council, Historic Scotland and Scottish Government. A £255k investment was made by the Kirriemuir Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme with a further £225k from the Scottish Government's Empty Homes Loan Fund. Angus Council was central to pulling the project together and provided support at every step of the way.

Glengate Hall was originally built in 1846 as a church. It was latterly used as a hall and became vacant in 2005. Its condition deteriorated and soon featured on the Buildings at Risk Register. PJ Redford Homes carried out a sympathetic restoration and conversion of the historic building, this resulted in nine units of affordable housing in Kirriemuir town centre, offering residents peace of mind that there would be no rent increases for a period of 10 years and enabling them to live close to local amenities and services.

This project demonstrated a high level of innovation both in the conversion itself and the funding package used to make the project viable. It stands as a fantastic example of what could be possible across other communities throughout Scotland.

Keeping property in use

In the majority of town centres, most land and buildings are owned by the private sector. Most buildings may be in active use and well-maintained, but every town centre has some buildings and sites which are vacant or even derelict. Invariably, these reflect badly on the rest of the town centre and are a source of local concern.

Getting privately owned property back into active use is challenging. Local authorities cannot make it happen by themselves, but they can play an important enabling role. There are some things that can be done as follows:

- Bringing more people and activity into town centres, using all the tools in this toolkit can help to increase the market value of empty sites and buildings and make it more viable for owners to invest in them.

- Contacting landowners and encouraging them to bring their property back into use. Helping them to source grants and loans and to navigate through the consents that they need, particularly for historic buildings.
- If landlords and leaseholders do not behave responsibly, using statutory powers such as Planning Section 179 notices, the Power to Advance Well-Being, repairs notices and Compulsory Purchase Orders.
- The local authority can submit planning applications for key sites to gain planning consents for speculative proposals which can then be used to market sites.
- Focusing resources on improving the most prominent buildings or streets that could deliver the most benefit. The local community will know which those buildings are.

RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL FEASIBILITY STUDIES

- low-cost feasibility studies on derelict sites
- identification of opportunities and costs
- assessment of viability and funding requirements

Renfrewshire Council undertook a series of low-cost feasibility studies with viability assessments on key derelict sites in Paisley town centre to understand the opportunities and costs of redevelopment. This gave the Council and site owners a clear idea of development viability and likely additional funding requirements, which in turn informed the council's property investment strategy for the town centre.

Supporting entrepreneurs

People with the ideas and drive to start new businesses and enterprise are critical to creating active town centres.

These entrepreneurs might be in the private sector, social enterprise or a community group. They can potentially bring enterprise, life and activity to town centres. Social enterprises offer the added benefit of tackling local needs that might not be addressed by traditional business models, such as giving opportunities to young people or helping vulnerable families.

Town centres offer an ideal location for entrepreneurs and new enterprises and as a meeting place for home workers. They are generally accessible locations offering opportunities to develop underutilised or empty property into business and flexible, coworking space. This section covers two particular challenges for town centre entrepreneurs: premises and funding.

Falkirk Business Hub

PREMISES

To make the most of town centres' potential for new enterprises, entrepreneurs are likely to need help with matters such as:

- information about available premises;
- low cost space on short term rentals; and
- accessible high speed broadband.

Many town centres have empty and underutilised space in private and public ownership. An audit of these spaces can help to unlock opportunities for private and social enterprises, translating good ideas into activity.

New or refurbished accommodation such as Falkirk Business Hub, Belford Mill in Kilmarnock and Westbourne Centre in Barrhead provide purpose-built space and facilities for businesses. Kilmarnock's Belford Mill has a specific focus on social enterprise.

http://falkirkbusinesshub.co.uk

Exploring opportunities for funding

Funding is always a challenge for new enterprises. To supplement bank funding, Business Gateway and the Scottish Government Business Portal are good places to start finding out about what finance might be available. Social enterprises can access additional information from Just Enterprise.

PUBLIC SECTOR FUNDING
Public sector funding for enterprises is awarded for specific reasons, such as high growth potential or a link with the Scottish Government's key economic sectors. Publicly funded business loans and investment can address the need for funding that banking institutions may not fully meet. Public-private partnership widens the pool of possible sources of funding, for example the Aspire Fund for high growth women-led businesses.

The Scottish Government Business Portal has a comprehensive list of over 400 opportunities for public and public/private funding for businesses and start-ups. Public funders can help enterprises access funding by co-ordinating their support.

MEMBER-LED ORGANISATIONS
Member-led organisations such as the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB in Scotland), Social Enterprise Scotland, Scottish Chambers of Commerce and Scottish Retail Consortium also offer advice, support and networking.

YOUNG ENTREPRENEURS
Young entrepreneurs can access additional funds and support. A good place to start is Youth Business Scotland, part of The Prince's Trust, which gives practical support and funding to 18-30 year olds seeking to set up or grow a business. Carnegie Test Towns organise national competitions to encourage young entrepreneurs to create innovative new businesses that bring energy back to flagging high streets, with projects across the UK including Dunfermline and Kirkintilloch.

CROWD-FUNDING
Crowd-funding is a relatively new and growing way for new enterprises to generate finance. Websites like fundable.com, crowdfunder. co.uk and kickstarter.com offer the chance to get funding from around the world. Most work on the principle of securing finance through advance commitment to purchase a service or goods once, which creates a guarantee of sufficient income to start the business. This new funding environment is constantly evolving and represents another option for enterprise funding.

COMMUNITY SHARES
Community shares refers to the sale of shares in enterprises serving a community purpose. This type of investment has been used to finance shops, pubs, community buildings, renewable energy initiatives and local food schemes, along with a host of other community-based ventures. Community Shares Scotland is a dedicated support service for those interested in and involved with community share offers.

> Business Gateway
> Scottish Government Business Portal
> 'Can Do Towns' Innovation Challenge
> Carnegie Test Towns
> FSB in Scotland
> Just Enterprise
> Scottish Chambers of Commerce
> Social Enterprise Scotland
> Scottish Retail Consortium
> Scotland's Towns Partnership
> Youth Business Scotland

Adapting to changing shopping habits

Shopping, whether in or out of town centres, provides around 5% of Scotland's Gross Value Added (GVA) and 10% of Scotland's employment. Shops aren't the only activities that attract people to town centres, but they are a vital part of the mix.

The twin pressures of out of town shopping and internet retailing have made life very difficult for town centre retailers, creating pressure to constantly invest and improve what they offer their customers. No change is therefore not an option for shops: successful retailers often repeat the mantra 'innovate or die'. This need to constantly invest and change is important to remember for planners and other professionals in organisations like local authorities who support and regulate town centres.

Small independent retailers can do many things to help themselves, particularly when they group together to form a common voice and commit to action.

Here are two examples of initiatives of schemes led by retailers themselves and by local authorities:

Let's Talk Shop
This is a programme of visits by a 'Shop Doctor' to help local retailers improve their retail offer, sponsored by local authorities in Dumfries and Galloway, East Lothian and Argyll & Bute.

Perth Farmers' Market
This is one of the very first modern farmers' markets to have been established in Scotland. The market has now grown to over 40 stalls and has expanded to other locations, craft products and activities such as cooking demonstrations.

Perth Farmers' Market

Monthly themed events to attract custom to town centre

Fraserburgh Super Saturdays

- community run initiative with support from local businesses and council
- monthly themed events featuring product stalls alongside free entertainment
- town economy boosted, attracting new custom and promoting repeat visits

Shopping trends in Fraserburgh have changed considerably in recent years, with Saturday being one of the quietest trading days for most retailers as shoppers turn to leisure and recreational activities at the weekend.

In response, monthly 'Super Saturdays' were developed to celebrate and promote the town centre with monthly themed events that feature a variety of product stalls alongside free entertainment and leisure opportunities such as live music and cooking demonstrations. Super Saturdays is a community run initiative, developed and managed by Fraserburgh Development Trust with support from local businesses and Aberdeenshire Council.

The footfall on Saturdays has increased substantially as a result of the popular events, and the shops, cafes and restaurants that take stalls have benefited from increased custom in their normal premises. Before Super Saturdays there were 34 empty units in the town centre – at the time of writing there are just eight.

On the back of this greater demand, new town centre businesses have emerged, including a delicatessen that sells healthy and locally sourced produce. Employment opportunities have risen accordingly. Super Saturdays have also provided an effective communications channel for local groups, with the result of greater participation in arts classes, sports clubs and other community activities as well as cutting antisocial behaviour.

● Building loyalty

Businesses and residents can work together to keep more money circulating locally. A good way to do so is through adopting town-wide supermarket-style loyalty card schemes, like the Huntly Rewards scheme which now operates in Aberdeenshire. Those with a card earn points as they spend and participating local businesses offer additional incentives and rewards to those who spend there.

› www.huntly.net/business/rewards

There are now a number of commercially available loyalty programmes for local business to adapt to their area and requirements. Swipii is one such example.

Alternatively, there are examples of towns now setting up their own local currencies. Proponents of the 'town pound' see this as an approach that helps money to remain and circulate within the local area, encouraging strengthened links between, and amongst, local communities and their businesses. Examples of local currency schemes operating in the UK are the Lewes Pound in Sussex and the Bristol Pound.

Huntly Rewards

Use your card here!

'The local way to shop and save'

www.huntly.net

CASE STUDY:

City-wide local currency to support local businesses

BRISTOL POUND

- electronic accounts managed by regulated financial institution
- helping commitment to spend and do business locally
- not-for-profit social enterprise

The Bristol Pound is the UK's first city wide local currency with electronic accounts managed by a regulated financial institution. The Bristol Pound supports independent business by helping people commit to spend locally and businesses to forge new local spending relationships. It enables continual circulation of money within the local city economy. The Bristol Pound is run as a partnership between the Bristol Pound Community Interest Company and Bristol Credit Union. It is a not-for-profit social enterprise.

The Guild of Independent Currencies has been created by the Bristol Pound to help others launch their own independent currencies, supporting them through shared technology, best practice and with anything else they may need.

Ciaran Mundy, Director of the Bristol Pound, explains the concept behind the currency: 'Big companies just hoover up money from a local area. Money goes into their financial system and typically out into London and into the offshore sector.' But by definition, Bristol pounds must stay in the city. Spend a tenner in a Bristol bakery, and they must use it to pay their suppliers or staff. In turn, those companies will have to use the money within the local economy. Already more than 100 firms are signed up. A family bakery, the Tobacco Factory Theatre, the Ferry company, dozens of small cafes – even the local cider makers will accept Bristol pounds.

'We'll be driving more business to independent traders, and ensuring the diversity of our city, which is one of the things people love about Bristol.'

› www.bristolpound.org

› http://guildofindependentcurrencies.org

› www.thelewespound.org

Embracing the digital high street

Digital technology is often viewed as a threat to town centres, but it can be an asset, as these tools show.

INVEST IN BROADBAND

The Scottish Government's ambition is for Scotland to be a world leading digital nation by 2020. Improving town centre broadband is an important part of achieving this target.

Access to fast and reliable broadband is essential for many town centre businesses. High speed broadband infrastructure can make town centres much more attractive to businesses, allowing them to widen their customer base and stay on top of changing trends and business demands. When combined with affordable business space and access to other businesses, good broadband helps town centres to become locations of choice for business.

Local communities can play their part in improving local connectivity, as Innerleithen demonstrated in 2011 when it won BT's Race to Infinity Competition for fibre-to-premises superfast broadband.

PROVIDE FREE WiFi

A fast, reliable and joined-up town centre WiFi network attracts residents and visitors, and encourages them to spend longer in the town centre.

Here are some examples of local digital technology initiatives to support town centre businesses:

MOTHERWELL

A three-year £140,000 scheme funded by North Lanarkshire Council and the owner of a local shopping centre began in Motherwell in 2013. WiFi transmitters have been installed in key locations across the town centre, and the scheme has been welcomed by local businesses.

HAWICK

This project, which combines digital connectivity, visitor orientation/ signage and other improvements won a £350,000 Scottish Government grant. The project includes free WiFi and a network of information boards covering sport , recreation, cycling, walking, museums, history and parks.

MANSFIELD, DERBYSHIRE

Using crowd-funding, Mansfield BID installed free town centre WiFi with around 40 hotspots and a 100 Mbs fibre-optic data link. It began operation in 2013. The focus was on installing a system that was reliable, robust and would provide coverage in the busiest parts of the town centre.

Further reading:
> www.atcm.org/programmes/digital_high_street

Harnessing Mobile Technology

Smartphone apps are great tools to inform visitors and residents about what is on offer before they arrive or as they move around the town centre.

Applications that can link digital interactive mapping information with physical signboards and markers are a developing technology, but one that gives great opportunity to town centre attractions and businesses. Linking places to social media gives a powerful way of organically advertising places with inbuilt endorsement by others. This can then lead to real time feedback and market analysis, helping businesses to focus on the things that make them attractive and successful. Making the most of this new technology supports town centre vitality.

The best town centre websites and apps tend to often be:

- easy to use and navigate, without endless scrolling through information;
- current and frequently updated;
- eye catching, engaging and fun to explore; and
- designed for multiple formats – smartphone, tablet and desktop.

› www.visitstandrews.com/plan/maps-apps

Mi Scotland

This series of local smartphone apps and associated websites – like mi falkirk and mi peterhead – have special offers, discounts, events and promotions for town centre businesses. The app/website gathers information on all town centre businesses in one place, and connects local businesses with consumers. The digital platform has been developed by Scotland's Towns Partnership (STP) and is being deployed in individual town centres in partnership with local authorities and Business Improvement Districts.

› www.mi-falkirk.co.uk
› www.mi-peterhead.co.uk

Socialistreet

SOCIALiSTREET aims to support an entire town or city by promoting retail, catering, professional services, tourism and leisure through web and social media channels. This has been used in Kirkcaldy and Perth in Scotland to date.

› www.socialistreet.com

Swipii

With this scheme one card, key ring or phone app works at all the favourite local shops and businesses. This allows the local trader to get to know customers and tailor bespoke rewards in exchange for their loyalty. This type of scheme offers the opportunity for local companies to grow their businesses by tracking frequent customers, turning new or casual customers into loyal ones and attracting increased numbers of customer visits.

› www.swippicard.com

Making supermarkets work for the town centre

Supermarkets present stiff competition to locally based retailers, who play an important role in the vitality and diversity of town centres. They are, however, a recognised part of a great many people's shopping habits. If supermarkets are present in a town, then Scottish Planning Policy sets out that they are better to be located in the town centre, rather than competing with it for footfall from an out of town location.

Consideration should be given to the location and design of town centre supermarkets in order to best channel footfall and activity that can be used to benefit the town centre as a whole. Ideally, the aim would be to make the most of that, while mitigating their impact on other retailers, also ensuring that their scale and parking areas are designed in such a way as to avoid a negative impact on the character of the town centre's streets and spaces.

- If they are carefully positioned, they can act as 'anchor' stores in prominent locations to draw footfall past other shops.

- Narrow and active frontages can help to avoid disrupting 'High Street' character.
- Parking, though best limited, can be used to provide additional short-term parking for the town centre.
- The impact on other retailers may be mitigated if it is possible to limit the range of produce they sell.
- Supermarkets and national retailers can add strength to local initiatives like business associations or BIDs and there are thus benefits in endeavouring to ensure that they are involved.

When national retailers are interested in opening new stores, it is important that any discussions with them about how they can help the town centre are held early. The potential benefits to be accrued might be through factors such as siting the new shop in a central location, building the store right on the street, designing an active frontage to make the street feel safer, creating new pedestrian connections or a shared car park, or a financial contribution to town centre initiatives through 'planning obligations' (such as contributions to Development Trusts in Lesmahagow and Haddington). Discussions like these are usually handled through the local authority planning department in connection with planning applications.

The three examples on the next page show different ways of achieving some of these objectives.
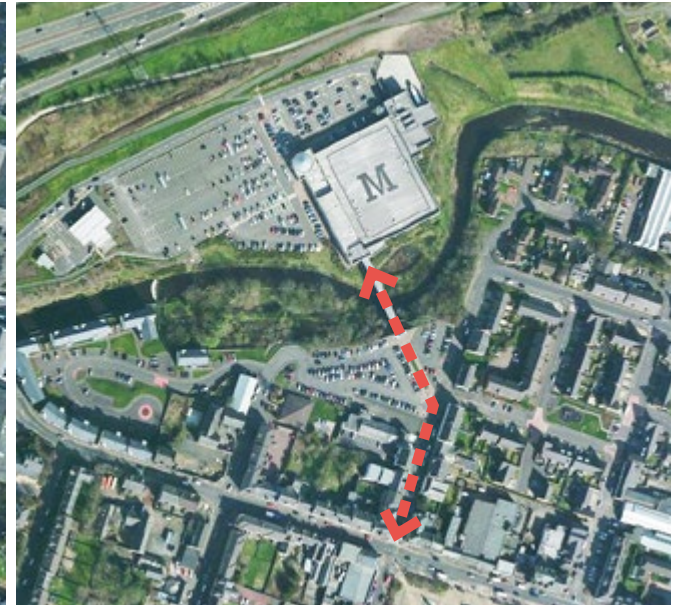
Smaller convenience store forms part of the street frontage with only a small setback, as shown by the red line.

Centrally located supermarket with parking adjacent presents an active frontage to the High Street and draws people in to the town centre as shown by the red line. The parking facilitates drop-in visits to other shops and businesses in the area.

A supermarket located on the fringe of the town centre, but not out of town, with a footbridge and path leading to the High Street, meaning people can easily use the car park to access both the supermarket and the town centre.

● Being distinctive

It is important to build upon what your town does well to generate more publicity, trade, footfall and pride, as the following three examples in Dumfries and Galloway show. None of these initiatives happened overnight; they are long-term projects which need sustained leadership, enthusiasm and collaboration between businesses and the public sector.

CASTLE DOUGLAS

Castle Douglas Food Town is based around 50 or so local businesses which produce or sell food and drink. A Facebook page and website have details of every business and events such as the 'Food Town Day' every summer with stalls and activities, a 'Meet the Producers' event later each year, 'Flavours Fortnight' and Christmas late night shopping and entertainment.

› www.cd-foodtown.org

KIRKCUDBRIGHT

Kirkcudbright is Scotland's Artists Town. Like Castle Douglas, it built on an existing strength. The town has long been home to artists such as Hornel and the Glasgow Boys. More recently, national exhibitions have come to town, all contributing to an increase in the number of year-round local galleries and studios in in the town centre. All this activity generates business and attracts more visitors.

› www.artiststown.org.uk

WIGTOWN

Wigtown is Scotland's National Book Town. The town only had one book business before the project started and there was no particular existing strength around books. Instead, the town won a nomination to become National Book Town, which attracted European and Lottery funding. Now there are eighteen book businesses attracting people from all over Scotland.

› www.wigtowwn-booktown.co.uk

Author Event: Wigton Book Festival

Organising an events programme

Regular events like farmers' markets and concerts or one-off local events can attract people into a town centre to spend money, as well as generating positive publicity and helping to boost civic pride. In order to keep visitors and residents coming to the town centre, it can be very worthwhile to consider the development of a year round programme of events.

Big events can attract thousands of people to towns. The Royal Scottish Pipe Band Association's European Championships attracted over 17,000 people to Forres in 2013. The annual Royal National Mod typically attracts around 8,000 people and £2 million additional spending in the host community, and has been hosted in a number of towns including Paisley, Dunoon and Oban over the last decade as well as in cities.

Of course, these large events do not happen by themselves: significant investment is required to attract, organise, market and stage them, however, they attract footfall, increase spending, generate local pride and put towns on the map.

For all events big and small, the basics are simple. Get the right people together, spot an opportunity or need, and work hard to make it happen.

Look for inspiration on the websites run by local authorities and Scotland's cultural and tourism bodies, such as Creative Scotland, VisitScotland and EventScotland.

Equiping Outdoor Spaces for Events

Make sure that the towns centres important outdoor spaces are equipped to host events. They should be uncluttered to handle large numbers of people or stalls, and have easy access to power for lighting, amplification and so on. Other key areas to consider would include access, insurance, policing and food preparation. It is worthwhile contacting those who have set up similar events for the lessons they can offer.

Creative Scotland:
www.creativescotland.com
VisitScotland:
www.visitscotland.com
EventScotland:
www.eventscotland.org

CASE STUDY:
Portsoy Boat Festival

The Portsoy Boat Festival has allowed the community to acquire community based assets to enable the whole town to become an event space on an annual basis.

During 2011, Scottish Traditional Boat Festival (STBF) completed the acquisition of assets of the former Portsoy Maritime Heritage, assets which include the Shore Street buildings, now known as the 'PORT's Boatshed' and a number of boats of heritage interest.

STBF has secured funding from Aberdeenshire Council, Portsoy's conservation Area Regeneration Scheme (CARS) and the European Fisheries Fund (EFF) and is now progressing the development of the Shore Street buildings to be opened at the 2016 Festival incorporating:
• A workshop for building and renovating boats,
• A public viewing area,
• Toilets, showers, launderette and changing facilities for sail training and visitors,
• Storage

› www.stbfportsoy.com

● Supporting local cultural activities

Cultural activities are powerful ways of reinvigorating town centres, bringing a local community together and attracting footfall which helps to support business, particularly in the evening. Music, arts, sport and recreation all attract people.

Major cultural events commonly require funding, but a lot can be achieved by nurturing a culture amongst businesses and the local authority of encouraging and supporting people and community organisation to run with their ideas and develop ground up cultural initiatives. Venues are often the biggest cost but creative use can be made of empty properties.

Princess Royal Sports and Community Trust, Banff

Princess Royal Sports and Community Trust, Banff is a social enterprise which has developed a gym and astroturf sports facilities in the town centre since it was established in 1997. These facilities bring people into the town centre during the day and in the evening. From this town centre base, the Trust also provides: sports outreach programmes to local schools, nursing homes and village halls; GP referrals to their health and fitness facilities; multi activity holiday programmes; diet and drug/alcohol workshops; and work experience for local school and college students.

› **www.princessroyal.org.uk**

IOTA – Inverness Old Town Art

IOTA Inverness Old Town Art has been working in Inverness for a number of years. Its members organise: one-off events from seminars to light displays; design and install temporary and permanent public art installations; and use empty shops for temporary pop-up arts uses.

› **www.invernessoldtownart.co.uk**

CASE STUDY:

Arts network contributing to town centre regeneration

The Stove Network, Dumfries

- re-use of former shop unit to create a hub for local artists and public participation
- activities contributing to vitality of town centre
- arts / cultural contribution to regeneration projects locally and across broader region

The Stove Network, Dumfries is a community-based arts organisation which was founded in 2011 and is active across Dumfries and Galloway. It sees the arts not as something solely for an 'arts audience' but as a vital contribution to society on all fronts – including the regeneration of Dumfries town centre. From its public arts space in a former shop on the High Street, it organises participatory public arts events to engage the citizens of Dumfries in constructive and practical action in the town, and supports a network of artists in the wider region. It generates life in the day and evening, and adds a new cultural dimension to the town centre which previously didn't exist. The member-based collective champions the creative regeneration of urban and rural communities across the region and its members are engaged with a wide range of projects, which have included:

- a series of 14 creative town centre regeneration projects in Dumfries, funded by the local authority and Creative Scotland;
- supporting the physical regeneration of Creetown, Stranraer and other places in the region by engaging with local communities in the production of public artworks;
- promoting the regeneration potential of the River Nith through its 'Nithraid' art festival and sailing race; and
- delivering the inaugural Environmental Arts Festival Scotland, which resulted in more than 4000 visits to 28 local events.

› **www.thestove.org**
› **www.creativescotland.com**

Promoting the town centre

A town centre might have the most amazing activities going on but, if no-one knows about them, they won't attract people.

It can be over-presumptuous to assume that everyone within a local community is aware of what their town centre has to offer – even commuters who live in the town's own suburbs and work elsewhere may hardly ever visit the town centre. Many potential visitors may have outdated ideas of what the town centre is like, and there can thus be benefits in challenging them to see it differently. These are among the reasons why marketing is so important.

Tourists are important in town centres with a visitor economy, from Kirkcudbright to Kirkwall. Local people also need to be kept informed about what's happening in the town centre, whether it's special offers, gigs, farmers' markets, family activities or new businesses opening. This may prompt them to reimagine the town centre and what it can offer them.

DEVELOPING A MARKETING STRATEGY

A town centre marketing strategy benefits from the generation of a strong message about what the town centre offers, and how to turn that into visits and spend. Just as individual businesses need to establish their selling points and a marketing strategy, town centres require the same. Town centre strategies are best produced collaboratively with input from businesses and public agencies. Town centres like Paisley, Stirling, Cumbernauld, Dumfries and Haddington have each recognised the importance of investing in marketing.

A town centre marketing strategy can help to focus minds and make sure that the marketing is co-ordinated. Items that it may cover include:

- what the town centre has to offer – businesses, heritage, shops, culture, events and leisure;
- to whom it should be marketed – residents, visitors and businesses. The proportions will vary from town to town;
- how it will be marketed – including 'what's on' information such as that at paisley.org.uk; and
- who will take what action to make things happen.

CASE STUDY:

PAISLEY

Paisley: The Untold Story is a set of ambitious plans to use the town's internationally-significant cultural and heritage assets to turn the town into one of the key destinations on Scotland's tourist map. Proposals in the Paisley Town Centre Heritage Asset Strategy draw upon the town's outstanding cultural, architectural and industrial heritage as the basis for a wide-ranging programme of regeneration. Plans include the refurbishment of Paisley Museum to become a national museum of textile and costume, the building of a Paisley fashion and design centre on the town's High Street and a study into a new 300-seat theatre space.

The strategy document features the iconic Paisley pattern print. At its launch several hundred people gathered in the Thomas Coats Memorial Church to hear about the plans and enjoy theatrical and musical performances. At the launch a display on the steps of the church included 30 handmade trees, with Paisley pattern leaves on which 1,000 'wishes for Paisley' were written by local schoolchildren, and children joined hands to stand in the formation of the Paisley print.
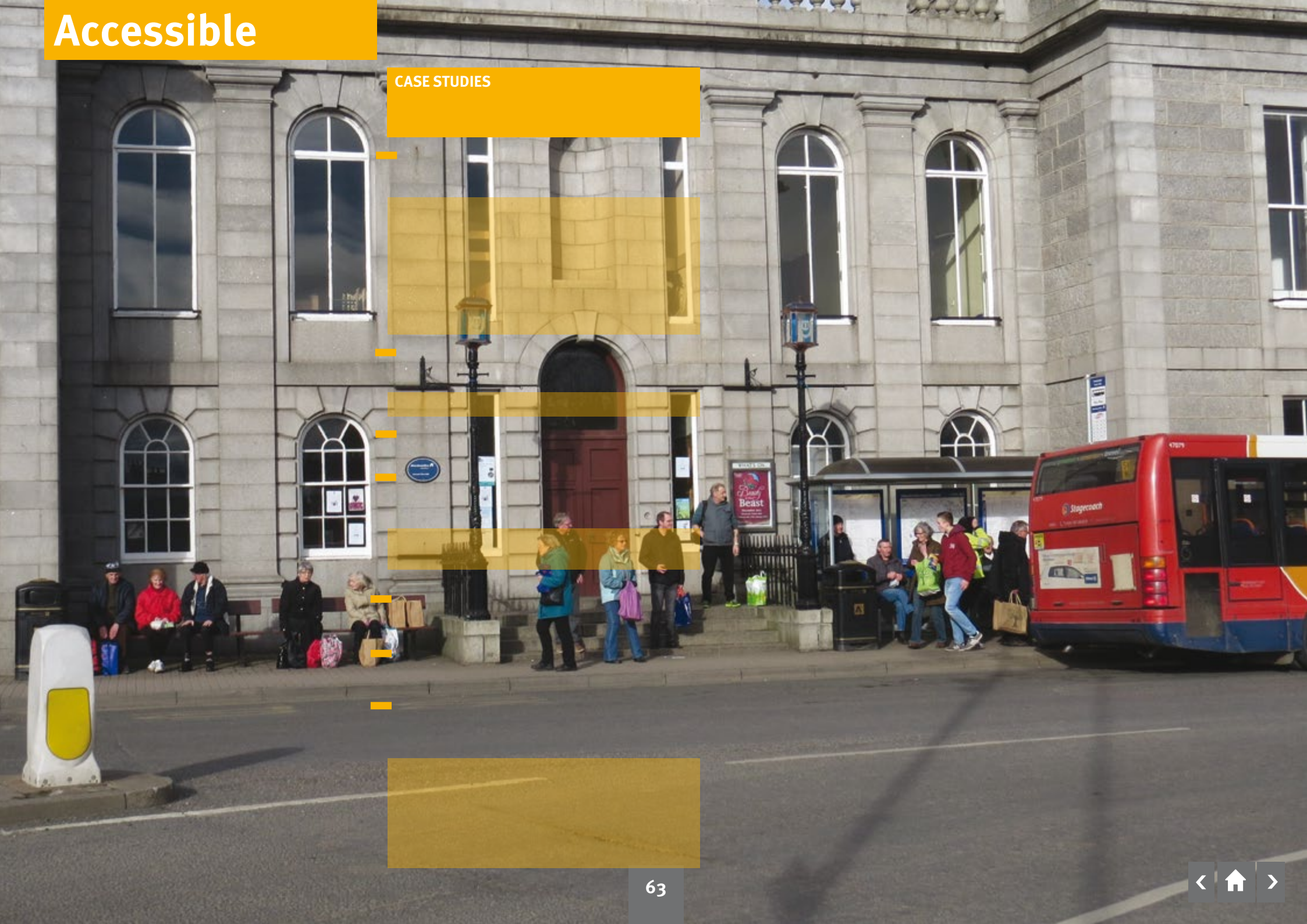
› Paisley: The Untold Story

Accessible
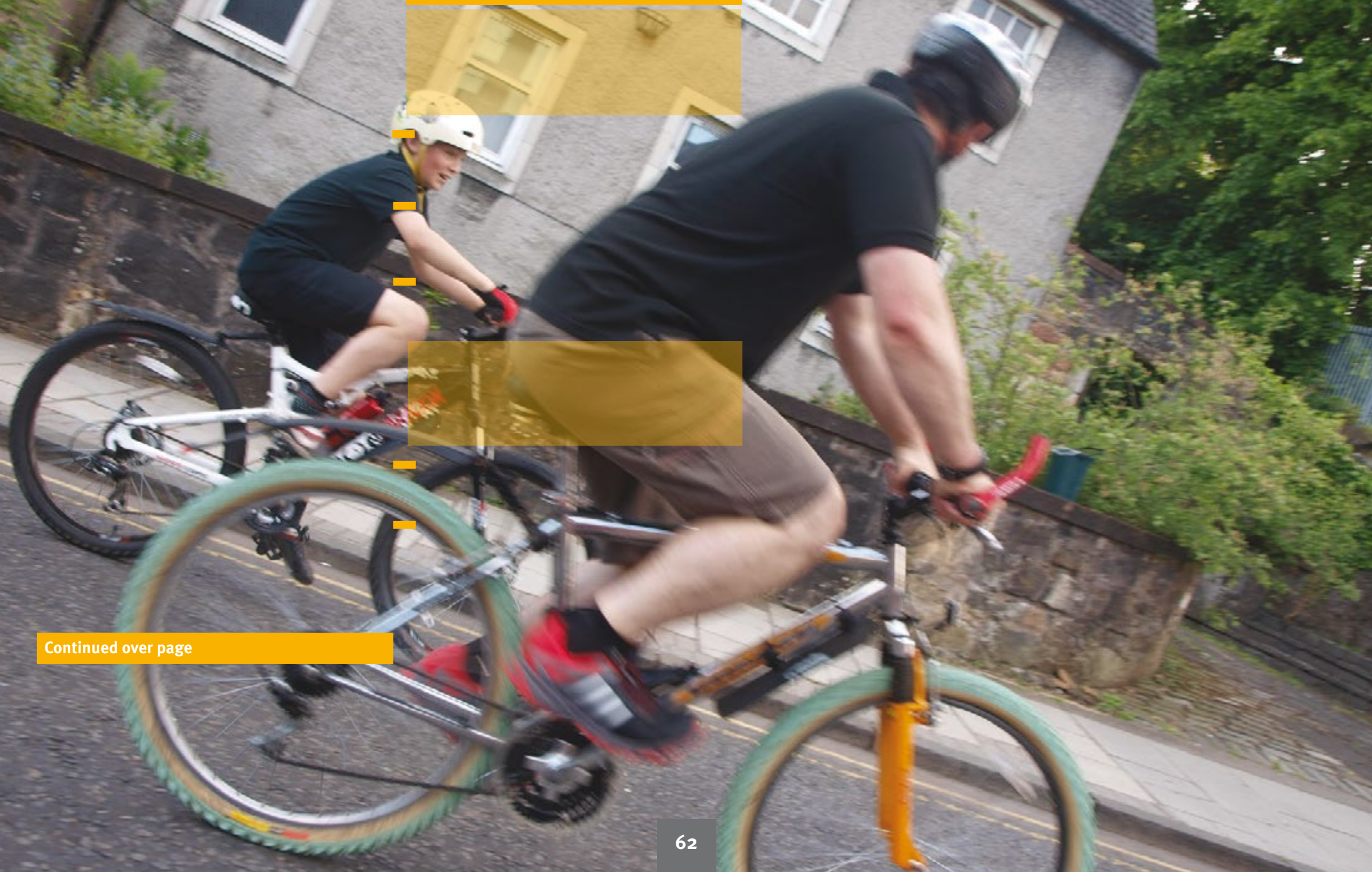
CASE STUDIES

Introduction

For centuries, town centres have generally been the most accessible places in Scotland's towns. But that centrality has been challenged in the last 50 years as an increasing amount of shopping, leisure, business, office and education facilities and homes have moved out of town centres.

This has coincided with an increase in car ownership and use, which has resulted in many of our towns and streetscapes incorporating infrastructure designed to optimise vehicle movement and to segregate people from vehicles. Whilst the intention may have been to keep people safe, the upshot is that the car dominates. Providing for cars with an efficient parking offer in town centres is vital to avoid discouraging trade, but this should be balanced with other forms of transport to improve the quality and attractiveness of the town centre environment.

To be competitive, town centres need to recapture their position as the most accessible places for all users and modes, with a clear priority given to walking, cycling and public transport. This section of the toolkit looks at how this can be achieved. A number of the tools draw on the Scottish Government policy publication 'Designing Streets'.

KEY PRINCIPLES

Prioritising pedestrians

- Ensuring that the movement of people on foot comes first.

Considering all users

- Ensuring town centres are accessible for everyone.

### Encompassing all movement modes

- Taking an integrated approach to the movement network, including all modes and interchange.

Balancing different needs

- Balancing the personal, commercial and operational movement needs that the town serves.

A bespoke parking offer

- Providing a bespoke parking offer which is less about volume of spaces and more about a range of users and uses to encourage and support flexible economic activity.
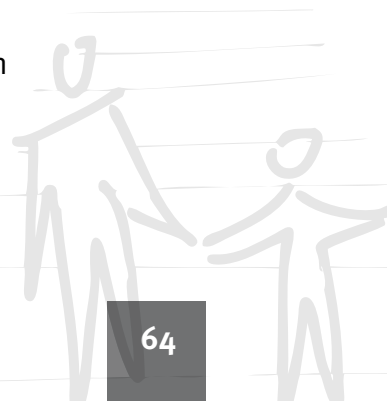
● Thinking strategically – people first

Making a town centre more accessible means making it very easy and affordable for people to get there and move around. Transport strategies too often focus on vehicle movement first and pedestrians last. This needs to be reversed to encourage more people back into town centres. An approach which considers co-ordinated and integrated networks of movement and which gives the highest priority to pedestrians is desirable.

Returning town centres to their position as the most accessible places in towns involves balancing different modes of transport, competing demands from large numbers of people, businesses and landowners, and the constraints created by urban environments.

Where there is competition for limited road space, the golden rule should be to favour the pedestrian, the cyclist, public transport and the private car – in that order. All transport modes are necessary to make town centres attractive, accessible and active, but the aim should always be to make town centres people-friendly.

This section of the toolkit contains many suggestions regarding how to achieve this, but no single town centre could implement them all. Working out what to do and where to start needs to be planned and co-ordinated in the context of each individual town centre's ambitions and circumstances. That means thinking strategically about how town centre accessibility links with attractiveness and activities, preparing a plan of action, and delivering on it.

● Creating joined-up movement networks

Town centres are best designed primarily for the convenience of people on foot. Creating a safe and comfortable environment for pedestrians in the form of a connected network throughout the town takes priority over vehicle movement.

Town centres are ideally accessible by all modes of transport. For decades, the car has been king – many of our town centres are scarred by roads or junctions that were built to help motor vehicles get through town centres more easily. Drivers need to be able to get in and out of town centres, but this should not be at the expense of people using other forms of transport or the quality and character of the town centre environment.

- Scottish Government policy is now quite clear that walking, cycling and public transport should be prioritised ahead of the private car.
- Just like roads or railways, pedestrian routes should connect up, without any gaps, and be linked to public transport. It has to be easy and pleasant if people are to be encouraged out of their cars.
- Transport strategies should be integrated networks of movement with pedestrians at the top of the tree.

Pedestrian footfall is the lifeblood of town centre businesses. Being directly linked to economic activity, footfall is also a measure of the vitality of a town centre.

Putting people and pedestrians first, while integrating other modes
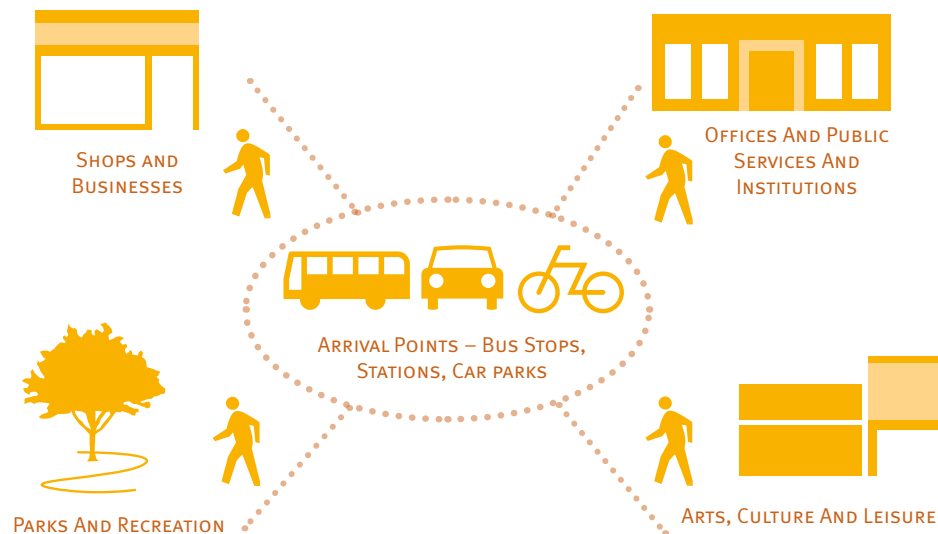
Whether people begin their journey by bicycle, bus, train or car, most people will eventually become pedestrians once they reach the town centre. This section explains how to create a more attractive, comfortable and safe way to move around town – to encourage people to choose to use town centres to increase footfall in shopping areas and support local businesses.

There are some key principles that can help to achieve this:

- **Giving pedestrians greater priority.** A better balance between vehicles and pedestrians will make town centres more attractive and safer places. Pedestrian priority encourages greater confidence among pedestrians, as drivers become more considerate and alert to both them and other hazards. It also increases footfall which can have a positive impact on local businesses and retail. Various ways to increase pedestrian priority are explored in detail in other tools in this section.

- **Integrating pedestrian routes within the street network.** Routes separated from vehicular traffic may become quiet outside traditional busy hours and pedestrians will typically feel safer where there are other people about. Safety and security is a key issue to encourage people to walk, so routes are best to be short, over-looked and, wherever practicable, wide enough to ensure that there is plenty of space to walk, gather, manoeuvre a buggy etc.

- **Keeping streets clean and providing and maintaining quality infrastructure.** The condition of the pedestrian environment is important to its attractiveness and can affect perceptions of security, and so encourage or discourage footfall. Lack of maintenance can also result in a liability for injuries to pedestrians.

SHOPS AND BUSINESSES

OFFICES AND PUBLIC SERVICES AND INSTITUTIONS

ARRIVAL POINTS – BUS STOPS, STATIONS, CAR PARKS

PARKS AND RECREATION

ARTS, CULTURE AND LEISURE

Creating an effective pedestrian network

When deciding whether to walk, people are influenced by the perceived and actual distance to a destination and the difficulty of getting there, as well as the quality of the experience. Making it easy for pedestrians and giving them priority encourages walking.

Planning for pedestrian movement is similar to planning for vehicular movement, and involves consideration of the operation, connectivity and effectiveness of the entire network, rather than individual routes. However, people who walk and cycle should be considered first, and the pedestrian network must cater for access to all parts of the town centre by users of varying physical capabilities.

- Routes are often better to be continuous and connected to make walking easy, safe and quick.

- Accessibility is maximised by making routes between origins and destinations as direct as possible. The shortening of walking distances is desirable where practicable to reduce journey times and, in particular, to help those with mobility impairments.

- There are thus benefits in reviewing the town centre pedestrian network and giving consideration to the routes between key origins (like car parks, stations and bus stops) and destinations (such as public spaces, shopping areas and offices).

- Identifying pedestrian desire lines is useful to establish the most appropriate locations for pedestrian routes and crossings. Pedestrians should have priority over the shortest and quickest routes. Well-placed crossings can reduce pedestrian delay, help increase footfall and improve road safety.

- It is important to identify where gaps exist in the pedestrian network, whether these gaps can reasonably be filled and further opportunities to improve the connectivity of pedestrian routes. Ideally, the town centre should be as permeable as possible for pedestrians.

- Good street design caters for, rather than counters, pedestrian movement. It is important to review pedestrian infrastructure provision; if it is not located where it is helpful to pedestrians, it is likely to be ignored and may in fact hinder safe pedestrian movement (e.g. excessive guard rails). Infrastructure can be costly and therefore requires justifification.

A joined-up, high quality and convenient pedestrian network with connected nodes.

CASE STUDY:

Creation of connected and navigable pedestrian network within town centre

HAWICK TOWN CENTRE REGENERATION

- addressing limited accessibility, resolving traffic issues and poor pedestrian environment
- simplifying vehicular movement, improved signage and clarifying pedestrian routes
- safer and more comfortable pedestrian environment provided

Hawick was dominated by large expanses of tarmac and parts of the town had limited accessibility due to through roads restricting pedestrian crossing, chaotic parking and vehicular conflicts being a common issue. Pedestrian safety was also compromised with vast areas of road to be crossed and no clearly defined crossing points. Scottish Borders Council in conjunction with community planning partners successfully won funding from Scottish Government's Town Centre Regeneration Fund in July 2009.

The regeneration works sought to make town centre streets safer and more pedestrian friendly, by simplifying vehicular movements, installing new signage, clarifying pedestrian routes and introducing shorter crossing points. Works also included resurfacing of pavements and roads to create an environment more inviting and friendly to all users. Additionally, the regeneration included the South of Scotland Broadband Pathfinder network and so provided free broadband access within the town centre.

The resultant scheme helped to create a connected and navigable pedestrian network within the town centre, providing a safer and more comfortable environment for pedestrians. The scheme helped to reduce through traffic, congestion and air pollution as well as making the streets more pedestrian-friendly.

Making pedestrian networks accessible for all

For a town to be fully accessible, it must cater to the needs of all users regardless of age or physical ability. Ensuring that destinations and journeys are connected and accessible provides people with confidence to travel. Considerations for improving accessibility in towns include:

- creating routes which link up to form an integrated barrier-free network, with clear alternative routes for any steps or steep slopes that it would be impractical to make accessible to mobility impaired people;
- rationalising street furniture and reducing clutter to remove obstacles, and ease wheelchair movement along streets;
- managing the placement of advertising boards and on-footway trading;
- taking account of the needs of people with visual and other impairments when undertaking street design in order to ensure that the street environment is navigable by all; for example, by way of contrast and definition of materials, such as tactile pacing/surfacing;

- providing audible signals and tactile indicators where controlled pedestrian crossings are installed (audio function may not always be practical, but tactile supports must be provided); and
- supporting and encouraging town centre Shopmobility schemes, which provide mobility equipment and services at frequently visited destinations such as malls, supermarkets, car parks and stations.

CASE STUDY:

Mobility aids and support for those otherwise unable to access facilities

EAST KILBRIDE SHOPMOBILITY

- **providing access to facilities and opportunities for social interaction**
- **provision of mobility scooters, wheelchairs, power chairs and walking frames, with training**
- **supplemented by sight guides, shopping escorts and provision of transport**

East Kilbride and District Shopmobility is a registered charity supported by South Lanarkshire Council, East Kilbride Shopping Centre, the Scottish Government, and the South Lanarkshire Rural Partnership.

The service has expanded significantly over the past few years and has become one of the largest and busiest Shopmobility services in Scotland. The service provides mobility scooters, wheelchairs, power chairs and walking frames for hire on a daily or weekly basis. Sight guides also assist visually impaired people, and shopping escorts can also help individuals by pushing wheelchairs or carrying shopping bags. East Kilbride and District Shopmobility also runs a minibus which will transport users between their homes and the town centre.

Town centre shopping and social interaction is open to a range of users who would otherwise not be able to access these facilities, which is positive for the health and wellbeing of the people concerned as well as for the local businesses benefiting from their custom. Full training is given on all equipment offered, ensuring that users are confident using whatever piece of equipment they have chosen.

> **www.eastkilbrideshopmobility.co.uk**

Informing and guiding pedestrians

Wayfinding initiatives can support and encourage journeys on foot especially in areas popular with tourists through:

- creating easy-to-follow walking routes, with good sightlines and forward visibility to contribute to personal security and wayfinding;

- providing well-designed surfacing, signage and public art, which can help orientate people so that they can navigate easily and, at the same time, give clear indications of the route to popular destinations at key decision points;

- including, where practicable, distance and journey times on signage;

- designing signage to be appropriate to the town's character, with the style and quantity carefully measured against the size and scale of the town and the number of route decision points; and

- helping to assess and reduce visual clutter in a town centre and reinforce its identity through the wayfinding strategy.

Glasgow City Council implemented a wayfinding strategy in the Merchant City with a series of complementary installations, including orientation boards and stainless steel signs. The design approach complements the built context and creates a strong identity in the area.

CASE STUDY:

Transformation of an unwelcoming road into a high quality streetscape

EXHIBITION ROAD, LONDON

- improved access through street design, traffic flows and parking arrangements
- removal of barriers and clutter, logical street layout and reduced speed limit
- provision of a safe and welcoming nocturnal environment

Exhibition Road in London is home to some of the most important visitor attractions in the country including the Victoria and Albert Museum, the Natural History Museum, the Science Museum, the Royal Albert Hall and Imperial College London. Though used by millions of visitors, as well as students, local workers, and residents the public realm was filled with street clutter and vehicle traffic. This was confusing to visitors and unfriendly to pedestrians.

The street design, traffic flows and parking arrangements have been changed to improve access for all members of the community, both disabled and able bodied. These changes include: a kerb-free single surface; visual and tactile lines to distinguish pedestrian areas from those used by vehicles; no barriers or street clutter; a logical street layout with large pedestrian areas; a 20 mph speed limit; new high quality street lighting; and a wide and direct crossing in Cromwell Road.

Kerbs, barriers and street clutter have been removed so that pedestrians can move around the area more freely, particularly those using wheelchairs, motorised buggies and pushchairs. Black cast iron drainage channel covers run along each side of Exhibition Road, about 4 metres out from the respective building lines. Alongside the paving drainage channels strips of corduroy tactile paving warn blind and partially

sighted people that they are moving into or out of vehicle-free areas. Tall, sleek street lighting masts have been specifically designed to complement the grand buildings of Exhibition Road and provide a safe and welcoming nocturnal environment for residents and visitors.

The way traffic moves through the area has been changed in order to improve road safety and to make Exhibition Road more enjoyable for both drivers and pedestrians. By way of these changes, an unwelcoming road has been transformed into a world-class streetscape.

› www.rbkc.gov.uk/subsites/exhibitionroad.aspx

KIRKWALL PLACEMAKING PROPOSALS, ORKNEY

The **Kirkwall Placemaking Proposals** report outlines a range of conceptual approaches to improve public realm, create a strong sense of place, and express a hierarchy of spaces promoting shared space principles.

Pedestrianisation or pedestrian priority?

Careful consideration is required on whether pedestrianisation or pedestrian priority is most appropriate for a specific town centre. Achieving a better balance is often the most appropriate action to make the town feel active and safe at all times of day.

Many town centres have pedestrianised streets or zones – where vehicular traffic has been removed or restricted, either as a permanent arrangement or temporarily during controlled periods. In some places, full and part-pedestrianisation has been good for the revitalisation of the town centre but, in many cases, this has actually reduced footfall and the economic vitality of the town centre.

Shutting a street to cars will often result in an unacceptably low level of activity in those streets after shops shut and could reduce footfall while shops are open. An empty pedestrianised street with little or no activity can feel unsafe at night without the perceived safety of a passing car. It is therefore not advisable or practical to seek full pedestrianisation of streets in many Scottish town centres where there is insufficient 24-hour footfall to make them active places that feel safe at all times.

In most cases, however, Scottish town centres would benefit from greater levels of pedestrian priority. Some ways of achieving this are shown here.

TEMPORARY PEDESTRIANISATION FOR PARTS OF THE DAY, WEEK OR YEAR

Where a town has a clear reason for encouraging high levels of footfall at particular times – such as a weekly market, outdoor entertainment events or a seasonal tourist attraction in the town centre – temporary, planned pedestrianisation can be useful. It needs appropriate alternative infrastructure to make sure that properties remain accessible when the pedestrianisation is in force.

During temporary pedestrianisation, pedestrians will expect to have absolute priority and for vehicular access to be restricted to emergency access only, with service delivery vehicles allowed at certain times of day. Within such areas, consider how pedestrians are likely to be aware of the potential presence of vehicles at particular times.

The town of Tenby in Wales, for instance, implements a temporary pedestrianisation of the town centre during the summer months, to make it a nicer place to visit and in which to spend time. This is supported by a Park & Ride scheme.

Pedestrian Priority Streets

These are streets that look and feel like pedestrianised streets, but still allow vehicles to pass through at all times of day. Often used in areas of high pedestrian use and low vehicle use, vehicles have right of access, but must move slowly and wait for pedestrians to pass before moving forward. Their characteristics are as follows:

- Streets look and feel like pedestrianised streets, but vehicles are allowed access throughout the day and night, primarily for emergencies, servicing and parking.
- Vehicles will move slowly and pedestrians will need some awareness of the possibility of vehicle presence.

This option is more appropriate for mixed-use streets with residential uses.

Shared Space/Shared Surface

This is an approach to street design which helps to: improve the ambience of a place; introduce freedom of movement; enhance social interaction and economic vitality; and improve safety. This approach is suitable for streets that still need to accommodate some through traffic as well as higher levels of pedestrians. A continuous level paved surface covers the entire street including footways with subtle demarcations in paving and layout to indicate pedestrian and vehicle zones. Their characteristics are as follows:

- Pedestrians largely stick to pavement-type areas, but there is freedom to cross in any location rather than at designated points.
- These are appropriate for central areas or town squares, where both through-flows of low traffic volumes at slower speeds and a high quality people-friendly environment are desired.

- Consideration should be given to ensuring that shared spaces are well-designed for all, including people with visual impairments.

Better Balance

In this approach, modes of transport are segregated with specific crossing points, but streets are designed to prioritise the comfort and experience of pedestrians and cyclists. Many of the tools in the remainder of this section are based on this approach as a governing principle to good street design. Their characteristics are as follows:

- Traffic dominance is reduced and more space given to pedestrians and cyclists. Segregation still exists, but not in the form of pedestrian barriers and signage.
- Pedestrians generally cross at designated points located with pedestrian desire lines in mind.
- Slower vehicles speeds are encouraged by street design and/or speed restrictions.

Cycling

Cycling can play an important role in supporting the vitality and economic success of our town centres and a wide array of benefits can result from encouraging and facilitating travel by bike. These range from benefits to the individual, such as improved physical, mental and social health, to community-wide benefits, including reduced motorised traffic, improved air quality and lower traffic speeds.

All streets are for use of cyclists at least as much as for motor vehicles, Scottish Government policy for streets 'Designing Streets' says that cyclists should be considered before private motor vehicles. Increasing cycling activity depends on the provision of attractive, safe and direct cycling connections into and through town centres.

Creating a complete network of cycling routes

Many good examples of urban cycling networks are in northern European countries such as Denmark, the Netherlands, Germany and Sweden. Towns and cities in these countries have managed to achieve and sustain over 40% cycling mode share by providing dedicated and safe cycling infrastructure that meets the needs of cyclists of all ages and abilities.

Effective planning for the movement of cyclists is carried out in a similar way to other modes of movement: considering the operation and effectiveness of the entire network and the ability to connect and tailor journeys, rather than having set individual routes. An efficient cycle network may be expected to cater for access to all parts of the town centre and allow safe, continuous and direct connections between key journey origins and destinations. Fragmented cycling infrastructure is not likely to be sufficient to meet the requirements of existing or future cyclists. In a true network, routes connect up and help take cyclists to places they want to get to, with good, secure facilities to park their bike.

Interconnectivity and continuity of routes is critical to encouraging greater cycle use beyond enthusiasts. Cycle routes need to feel safe throughout their whole length, and be quicker and easier than vehicular transport to encourage people to use them.

The creation of an effective cycling network involves:

- **placing the needs of cyclists and cycle movements ahead of motorised vehicles but after pedestrians;**

- **creating routes which allow cyclists to get to and from the town centre safely and comfortably with minimal interaction and interruption from vehicular traffic;**

- **reviewing the town centre cycle network as a whole and giving consideration to routes between key origins (for example stations, residential areas and bus stops) and destinations (like public spaces, shopping areas and offices);**

- **identifying where gaps exist in the cycle network, whether these gaps can reasonably be filled and where further opportunities exist to improve connectivity;**

- **integrating on- and off-road cycle route sections to create a true cycling network across the town and within the town centre;**

- **not constraining cycle movement by measures to restrict motorised traffic. It may be possible to take advantage of measures to restrict vehicle movement: for example, if a side street is blocked off to stop rat-running onto a High Street, then consider the opportunity to make the side street a shared cycle/footpath;**

- **scrutinising the environment in which cyclists will find themselves at the end of any defined cycle route sections you provide. (Is the road environment safe for cyclists? Are routes well-lit? Is there accessible cycle storage facilities without lifting up stairs etc?);**

- **providing lighting and, wherever practicable, locating routes within view of properties of other activities to encourage passive security;**

- **ensuring that cycle routes are safe for use all year round; and**

- **ensuring that cycle routes are well-signed and maintained to provide easily navigable connections between origins and destinations.**

● Creating a safe and encouraging cycle environment

The perception of road safety can be more influential than actual accident statistics on people's decision to cycle.

- The safest and most effective approach is to provide dedicated cycle lanes which are physically segregated from vehicles by a kerb or change in level.
- Where this cannot be achieved, then cycle lanes which are clearly demarcated by colour or markings on the road surface should be used.
- Continuity and priority of cyclists over vehicles at traffic lights and junctions is also important. If just one section of a route is perceived as unsafe then it will discourage people from using it.

Dedicated cycle lanes in Copenhagen, separated from moving vehicles by a change in level and parked cars.

Key factors influencing perceived safety include the volume of traffic, average vehicle speed and amount of heavy traffic such as HGVs and buses. Ways to improve safety and perceived safety include:

- reviewing key origins and destinations for cycle journeys; gaining a comprehensive understanding of the existing road network (or likely conditions on future networks); and reviewing traffic volumes of appropriate solutions;
- reviewing accident data to identify any common accident locations involving cyclists; analysing movements involved, establishing likely reasons; and identifying potential measures to reduce conflicts; and
- considering traffic volumes and vehicle speeds when planning and designing cycle infrastructure; ('Cycling by Design' provides guideline criteria for assessing cycling facility requirements).

Good infrastructure design responds to the local built environment context. Traffic flow and speed are guides and shouldn't dictate design which is inappropriate to local context. Generally:

- where the traffic volumes and vehicle speeds are low (equivalent to 20 mph streets) – informal on-road cycle provision is appropriate; and
- where vehicle speeds and traffic volumes are higher, formal cycling facilities can be considered using the adjacent hierarchy.

Traffic Volume Control
Traffic Speed Control
Junction and Crossing Treatment
Carriageway Space Re-allocation
Off-carriageway Facilities
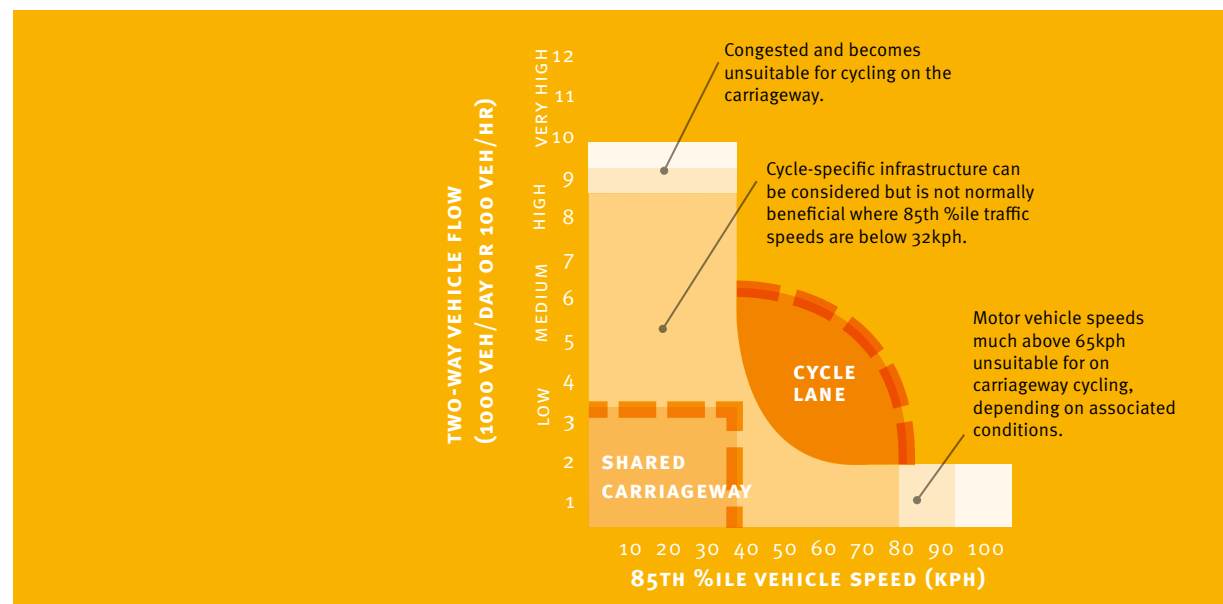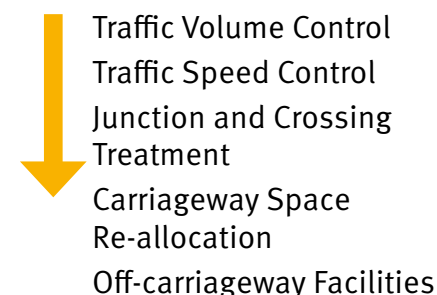
Diagram adapted from Cycling by Design.
(CbD), refer to CbD for advice on how to apply it

Increasing awareness of cycling routes and schemes

Promoting cycling facilities helps people make positive and informed choices about how they travel, for both daily necessity and leisure. Car drivers should be the main target for this promotion, encouraging a shift in travel behaviour to healthier and sustainable travel modes.

A key requirement to start cycling is motivation.

Measures to increase awareness and usage of existing and new cycling routes include:

- making use of existing infrastructure and rectifying or improving where there is wear and tear – which may be an indicator of frequent use;
- providing cycle route maps in visible town centre locations such as: libraries, public squares, shopping centres and car parks;
- using key locations to promote signs and directions to off-carriageway routes;
- promoting schemes such as 'Bikeability Scotland' in schools to encourage children to try cycling and to give them the necessary skills to cycle competently and safely;
- using local promotion campaigns with print and social media, as well as using local sporting events to advertise the local cycling facilities and future upgrades;
- encouraging private companies to take up cycle to work programmes;
- advocating the health, wellbeing, environmental and cost-saving benefits associated with regular leisure and commuter-related cycling;
- making a 'Just Do It' message needs inherent in the design approach for cycling in town centres as well as in attitudes of the general public, professionals and decision makers; and
- Promoting the use of journey planning resources like www.cyclestreets.net

Dumfries Bike2Go Cycle Hire Scheme. Total of nine bikes with two payment options – half day or full day fees aimed at visitors and a membership scheme for regular users.

The Edinburgh Innertube Cycle Routes Map

At the start of 2011, The Bike Station and Edinburgh and Lothians Greenspace Trust won funding from The People's Postcode Lottery Dream Fund for a project called 'Inflating the Innertube'. The idea was to create a simple but striking visualisation of Edinburgh's many off-street pathways, which can be used by thousands of cyclists and pedestrians every day. Based on the iconic London Tube Map, the design shows the surprising extent of the routes. Nearly 70,000 copies of the maps have been distributed throughout Edinburgh to date.

> www.thebikestation.org.uk
> www.innertubemap.com

CASE STUDY:

Infrastructure schemes to enhance cycle network

BRIGHTON AND HOVE CYCLING TOWN

- analysis of transport network attributes
- assessment of changes to encourage cycling
- city centre infrastructure schemes developed to enhance cycle network

Brighton and Hove 'Cycling Town' is one of the original six cycle demonstration towns in England.

The local authority identified the existing transport network's positive and negative attributes for cycling and assessed ways to change the network to encourage cycling. For example, on busy roads such as Lewes Road, there were problems with heavy traffic congestion and inconsiderate parking, creating a perception that it was unsafe to cycle. A series of focused city centre infrastructure schemes were developed to enhance the cycle network through segregated cycle lanes, improved streetscapes and city centre permeability.

Widespread cycle parking provision in Brighton was installed across the city centre and suburbs. This included innovative on-street parking, with sections of former car parking repurposed as cycle parking. Speed reductions were implemented on busier roads, for example Lewes Road. Advance cyclist stop lines were rolled out at junctions to improve safety and priority. The existing cycle network was widened and extended, and 1.5km north/south fully segregated cycle highway built. Network lanes were designed to be flexible and open, giving cyclists freedom to move. Ramps were installed to help cyclist access local facilities such as public parks. Widespread toucan crossings were installed to complete a comprehensive package of infrastructure improvements in the town.

Cycle use grew by 27% between 2006-2009. Lewes Road saw an increase of cycle trips by 14% and general reduction of traffic by 13%.

Segregated cycle lanes help to avoid disrupting public transport and keep cyclists safer.

Segregated contraflow cycle lanes, allowing cyclists to avoid dangers from parking and vehicle movement.

Providing convenient cycle parking

The provision of cycle parking and storage is as important as providing cycle routes and facilities. Some key considerations when providing cycle parking include:

- locating it in highly visible locations, close to key destinations, commercial premises and transport interchanges to maximise use and raise the profile of cycling within the town centre;
- locating it adjacent to the cycle route – facilities need to be part of the cycle network, not remote;
- making parking facilities convenient and visible, well managed and maintained – efficient to use, clean and free from abandoned bicycles;
- making facilities safe, secure and sheltered, overlooked, well-lit and protected from the weather;
- providing charging points for electric bikes where appropriate; and
- making cycle parking design appropriate to the character of the surrounding area and complementary to other street furniture.

CASE STUDY:

Five-year masterplan for the incremental creation of cycling infastructure

PETERHEAD CYCLING DEMONSTRATION TOWN

- cycling growth fostered by identifying and removing barriers and working with community partners
- five-year masterplan for cycle infrastructure, with network built up on annual basis
- awareness raising through close working with the local community

In 2008, Aberdeenshire Council designated Peterhead as a Pilot Cycling Demonstration Town. The overall aim was to foster cycling growth by identifying and removing barriers and working with community partners. A five-year masterplan was developed which sought to deliver a hub and spoke network of cycle infrastructure, building up the network on an annual basis. Awareness of the project was promoted by working closely with the local community.

Existing cycle facilities in Peterhead didn't work well, had limited permeability and interconnectivity, routes not fully connected to town centre – users did not feel safe, and routes were not convenient or direct.

The scheme used a combination of hard and soft measures to address known barriers to cycling and encourage modal shift through:

- the introduction of 20 mph zones;
- lifting prohibition for cycling within pedestrian areas;
- constructing new routes and upgrading existing routes, including extra lighting;
- providing route information panels at key locations;
- promoting the scheme through an inaugural Bike Event;
- providing new cycle maps at key locations;
- providing information displays at public events;
- promoting cycling in local schools;
- supporting a local bike recycling scheme; and
- using seasonal advertisement campaigns.

The project has been delivered with a high level of community partnership working, instilling a greater sense of community ownership which has contributed to the overall success of the project.

Data collected from permanent monitoring sites indicates that cycling has increased year on year by a factor of 50%, from a base of 388 total trips in 2009, to 945 in 2011. Attitudinal surveys confirm that the project has encouraged around 38% of residents to cycle more often. Awareness of the Cycling Demonstration Town project has increased from 18% in 2011 to 66% in 2012.

Cycling must seem like an easy, safe and straightforward option for people to choose it over driving.

STIRLING CYCLE HUB

This project is based on the principle of working towards a healthier, greener future by encouraging and supporting more people to cycle. The hub is located at Stirling train station and has become Scotland's second largest self-service cycle hire scheme. The cycle hub provides free membership to Stirling students, events including rides and refreshments, free bike maintenance sessions and 'recyke-a-bike' scheme.

› www.stirlingcyclehub.org

● Reducing the impact of cars in towns without excluding them

Access by car contributes to the economic viability of towns, and so being able to get into town centres by car is important. Consideration is, however, required to ensure that the accommodation of cars is not at the expense of the attractiveness of town centre environments and other modes of transport.

Ways to reduce the impact of cars in town centres include:

- discouraging through traffic and unnecessary journeys that otherwise could be made by other modes of transport;
- promoting a range of complementary measures which increase priority for pedestrians, cycling and public transport users. These might include:
  ◊ introducing traffic management improvement measures that disincentivise town centre routes for through traffic. For example, installing pedestrian crossings can increase pedestrian movement options while also slowing vehicle speed;

◊ installing advance cycle stop lines at junctions to positively reinforce opportunities to cycle, while demonstrating that motor vehicles don't have priority over other travel modes; and
◊ influencing driver behaviour through a range of infrastructure improvements such as reducing carriageway widths, in favour of increased pedestrian space or cycle lanes, or removal of guardrails.

- avoiding the creation of unexpected, intimidating environments for pedestrians and cycles. For example, one-way streets can contribute to increased traffic speeds and act as a barrier to movement between businesses, activities and services on opposite sides of town centre streets; however
- if one-way streets are identified as a practical measure to achieve more space for pedestrians and cyclists in narrow streets, consider the detailed design to ensure pedestrians, cyclists and, if relevant, public transport are prioritised.

Copenhagen one-way street, with cyclists on.

Re-allocating space to create better balance

Think about the overall place, before movement issues. In most Scottish town centres, achieving a better balance will be more about rethinking existing streets than designing new ones.

Existing streets have a finite amount of space between building frontages with which to work. However, when town centre streets are measured, the space occupied by the vehicle carriageway is often more generous than it needs to be. This squeezes pedestrians and cyclists into less space; increases traffic speeds because wider roads encourage higher speeds; reduces safety; reduces the scope for on-street car parking; and generally creates less attractive, vehicle dominated spaces.

It doesn't need to be like this. There are four steps to re-allocating road space and achieving a better balance, and these are:

1. measuring space allocation as it exists in comparison to what it can and should be;

2. deciding on the most appropriate zones of use of space, where these can overlap (for instance retail streets, residential streets or in front of open space), and designing a scheme appropriate for your town;

3. implementing change initially on a temporary or low cost basis to test the design, building support and getting the details absolutely right (optional step); and

4. implementing change permanently.

Concerns are often raised about the increased liability risk of moving from existing street layouts. However, design risk is in fact very low and most liability arises from maintenance failures.

2m+

TOWNS RELY ON PEOPLE WHO ARE MOVING AROUND ON FOOT. THE ALLOCATION OF SPACE SHOULD ENSURE THAT THERE IS PLENTY OF SPACE TO WALK, GATHER, MANOEUVRE A BUGGY ETC.

2m

CYCLISTS NEED TO FEEL THAT THEY HAVE A SAFE SPACE AROUND THEM. IN MANY TOWNS, THIS SPACE WILL BE SHARED WITH VEHICLES BUT AT SLOWER SPEEDS.

A 5M ROAD WIDTH ALLOWS LARGE VEHICLES TO PASS AT LOWER SPEEDS. APPROPRIATE FOR LOCALISED NARROWING ON MAIN STREETS AT JUNCTIONS AND AT TOWN CENTRE THRESHOLDS.

A 6M ROAD WIDTH ALLOWS LARGE VEHICLES TO PASS AT LOWER SPEEDS, WHILE STILL BEING CONVENIENT FOR CROSSING. APPROPRIATE FOR GENERAL APPROACH TO TOWN CENTRE STREETS.

A 7.5M ROAD WIDTH IS GENERALLY REQUIRED WHERE THERE IS A TRUNK ROAD PASSING THROUGH A TOWN. Localised narrowing at key POINTS CAN ALLEVIATE TRAFFIC DOMINANCE.

IN MOST CASES, CYCLISTS AND VEHICLES WILL SHARE SPACE AND THIS IS OKAY IF DESIGN SPEED IS LOW AND JUNCTIONS ARE DESIGNED ACCORDINGLY

SHARED SPACE WHERE ALL USES OVERLAP

Some Suggested Ways of Balancing Street Space
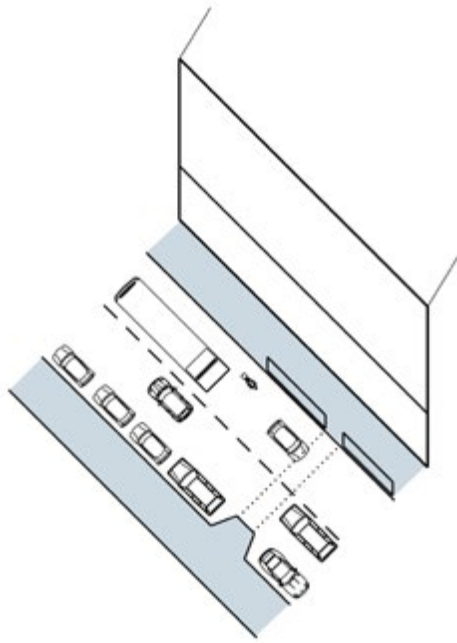
1. Typical Existing Street

- Typical streetscape, particularly where High Streets double as through routes.
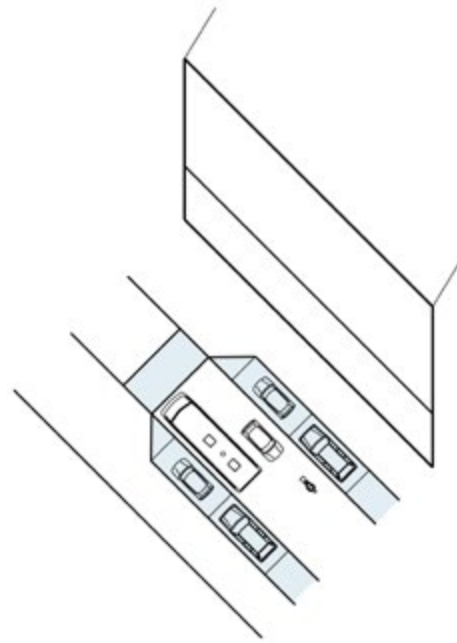
2. Parking-focused Design

- Carriageway reduced.
- Allocated parking areas – both sides of street to support businesses on both sides and avoid overuse of double yellow lines.
- Generous crossing where street narrows.
- Widened pavements relating to popular use, or creating space that can be used for street trees.
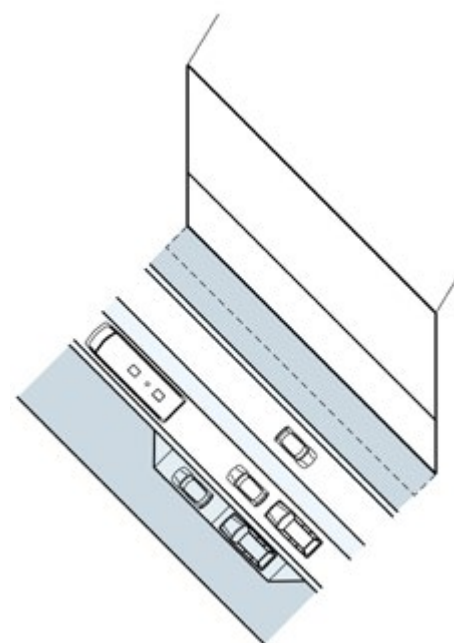
3. Pavement-focused Design

- Priority given to sunny side of the street, with zone for seating or active use.
- Perception of carriageway broken up with change in material.
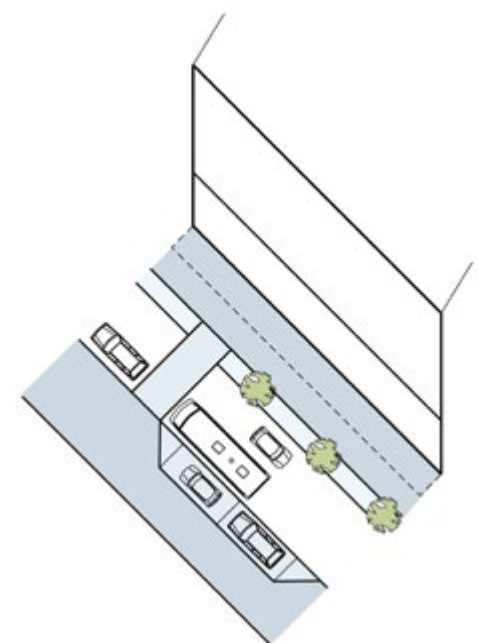
4. Space for Greening

- Priority given to sunny side of the street, with zone for seating or active use.
- Carriageway reduced.
- Alternate approaches to each side of street, to integrate parking and green space.

Multiple Lanes

Maximising people space and minimising vehicle space without compromising accessibility is highly important. Consideration should be given to the avoidance of third and fourth lanes of traffic in town centres unless absolutely necessary. Multiple lanes of traffic create an overwhelmingly vehicle-dominated environment. Wide streets become difficult to cross, deterring people from visiting the shops or businesses across the road.

If it is absolutely necessary to have right or left turn lanes, consideration should be given to designing these with generous pedestrian islands located at crossing points that reflect desire lines, with minimal street clutter and no pedestrian barriers.

18.5m

pavement
parking/extended pavement
refuge to break perception of road
pavement

Diagram 1
Where three lanes are deemed necessary, break the carriageway up with textured paving which acts as a refuge space.

18.5m

pavement
parking/extended pavement
parking/extended pavement
pavement

Diagram 2
Where on-street parking is a priority, use both sides of street, but break for crossings, tree planting and use a different surface material to that of the carriageway.

18.5m

pavement
parking/extended pavement
cycleway
pavement

Diagram 3
Where a separate cycleway is deemed appropriate ensure it is clearly demarcated and continuous – avoid stopping or re-routing for parking.

Trunk Roads Through Towns

Trunk roads passing through town centres pose particular challenges. There is no reason why the pedestrian-friendly design and better balance measures outlined in this section cannot be implemented to trunk roads.

The trunk road through Comrie narrows through the town – drivers are aware that they are in a built-up area and drive accordingly.

Biggar High Street is also a trunk road – however, its impact is moderated by avoiding the use of blacktop anywhere except on the carriageway itself.

How This Might be Applied to a Main Street

Maximise width of pavement space, particularly on south-facing side of street.

Use this space to alternate between extended pavement areas for trees and seating and on-street parking.

Minimise width as per previous guidance. Where deemed to be appropriate to widen, break up with pedestrian refuge space and/or central parking (see diagram 1 on previous page).

Parking surface should be a different material from carriageway material.

Lighting columns on main street should be no higher than predominant eaves height of buildings.

Road signs should be avoided on main streets but where deemed absolutely necessary, should be at an appropriate scale for slower moving traffic.

For detail on tree planting see 'Street Trees in Public Spaces'.

Shop awnings and recessed doorways give shelter and presence to shopfronts.

For detail on crossing design see 'Create better pedestrian crossings'.

Projecting shop signage including sandwich boards should be adjacent to shop front.

Extended pavements can be used for extra space, seating and/or planting and green infrastructure.

Building zone | Pavement zone | Parking/ Extended pavement zone | Vehicle carriageway | Parking/ Extended pavement zone | Pavement zone | Building zone

Reducing vehicle design speed to 20 mph or less

The 'design speed' is the traffic speed for which the street is designed; it is not the same as the speed limit, nor does it demand the installation of numerous speed limit signs or speed bumps. Reducing the design speed in town centres from the norm of 30 mph to 20 mph enables more pedestrian and cycle friendly environments to be created with negligible impact on vehicle journey times.

There are various ways to suggest an appropriate speed to drivers including the following:

- reducing carriageway widths;
- removing road markings;
- changing surface material;
- 'Gateway' traffic calming, such as raised sections of road and localised narrowing;
- designing adjoining spaces to encourage the presence of people; and
- considering extending town squares, public gardens and playparks across streets so that vehicles pass through people spaces in a controlled and safe manner, rather than the other way around.
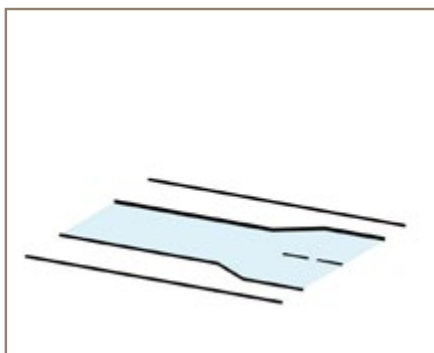
Narrowing the carriageway.
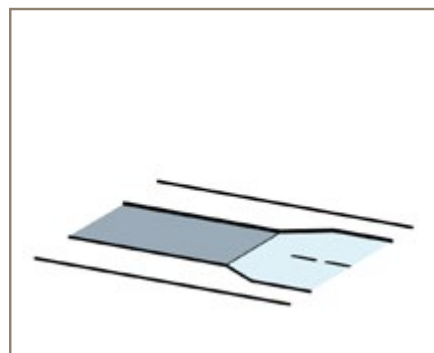
A change in surface material.
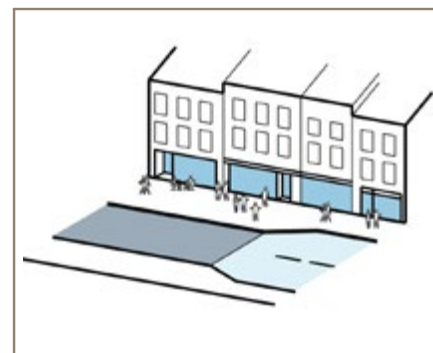
Active building frontage and presence of people.

CASE STUDY:

A low-speed town centre environment

POYNTON REGENERATED

- creation of attractive, open streetscape in which free-flowing traffic interacts sociably with pedestrians
- reduction in accidents, street clutter and journey times through town
- revitalisation of town centre – improving footfall and trading activity

Poynton town centre sits astride a busy main road with 26,000 vehicles passing through every day, including a significant number of heavy goods vehicles. The road previously acted as a barrier through the middle of the town centre. Simply adjusting signal timings had failed to improve vehicle flows. Something different needed to be done.

The solution comprised a number of measures, first tested on a temporary basis and thereafter implemented, including:

- taking out the traffic lights;
- reducing the space for vehicles;
- creating wider footways;
- creating a sequence of informal crossings; and
- adopting a 20 mph design speed.

The intersection at the centre of town was reconfigured, replacing traffic lights with two roundabouts, which are level with the street surface and are defined by paving patterns of varying colours and textures. Vehicles negotiate the roundabouts without the guidance of traffic signs.

Despite initial scepticism, the scheme has delivered the following measurable benefits:

- One minor accident in the first three years of operation, compared to several serious incidents each year before that.
- Average traffic speeds have fallen to a more people-friendly 20 mph, but journey times through Poynton have significantly reduced and pedestrian delays in the town centre have dropped.
- 80% of town centre retailers report increased footfall and turnover.

> Poynton Regenerated

● Creating people-friendly junctions

Junctions are where pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles come together. Consideration should be given to making their design people-friendly, prioritising pedestrians, then cyclists, then vehicles.

The word 'junction' is more suggestive of road engineering than a quality place. However, in many town centres, important road junctions also double as key public spaces. Due to the increasing demands of motor vehicles coupled with prioritisation of vehicle movement in recent decades, these spaces often tend to feel simply like traffic intersections rather than places for people. A 'place' might reasonably be described as somewhere people might wish to stop to chat or meet one another in a civilised environment – not somewhere that they feel herded by guardrails or have to shout over the noise of traffic to have a conversation.

Improving junctions is about recognising the fundamental importance of these spaces to town centres, placing importance on the quality of public space as well as safe and efficient interaction of pedestrians, cyclists and motor vehicles. Measures to improve the quality of junctions for pedestrians include:

LOWER DESIGN SPEED
This unlocks more options to improve the design of junctions, creating a safer environment for people on foot and on bicycles.

REDUCING THE RADIUS OF KERBS
Reducing the radius of the kerbs around junctions requires drivers to turn more slowly and carefully which, in turn, creates a safer environment.

DESIGNING PEDESTRIAN CROSSINGS TO PRIORITISE PEDESTRIANS
There is a tendency for the design of junctions and location of crossings to force people to go out of their way to cross a street, making the pedestrian feel second-best. This can also create potentially unsafe conditions for those who don't behave in ways intended (for example, ending up on the wrong side of a guardrail). It is important to consider ways in which crossings can prioritise pedestrians and be both safe and convenient.

ALLOWING FOR SELF-REGULATION
There is evidence that providing lots of instructions actually reduces road safety, as people tend to rely on the signs rather than their own common sense. Creating an environment in which people take more responsibility for their movement not only looks more attractive, it can also improve safety.

DESIGNING FOR CONTINUOUS SLOW MOVEMENT
In some cases, a policy of continuous slow movement (as in shared surface schemes) rather than stopping and starting at traffic lights can mean smoother flow of traffic as well as a more hospitable environment for cycling and crossing.

Pedestrian and cycle crossing at key desire line.

Some Suggested Ways of Improving Junction Design
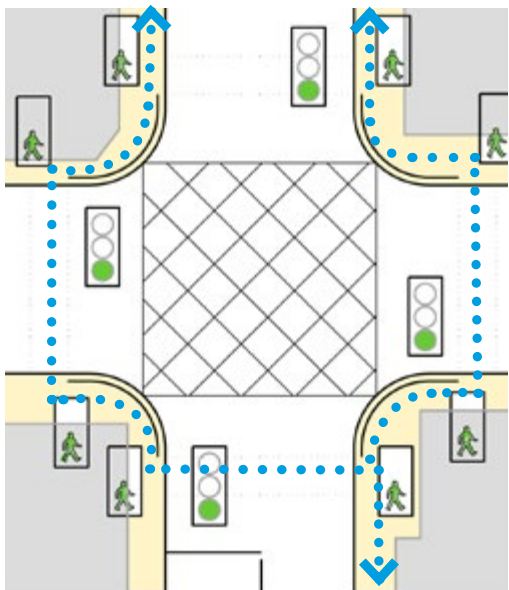
Typical Approach

- All movement is managed by traffic lights and painted lines giving instruction.
- Pedestrian guard rails ensure the use of dedicated crossings and keep pedestrians and vehicles separate.
- Typical walking routes are dotted in blue and involve multiple stops at lights.
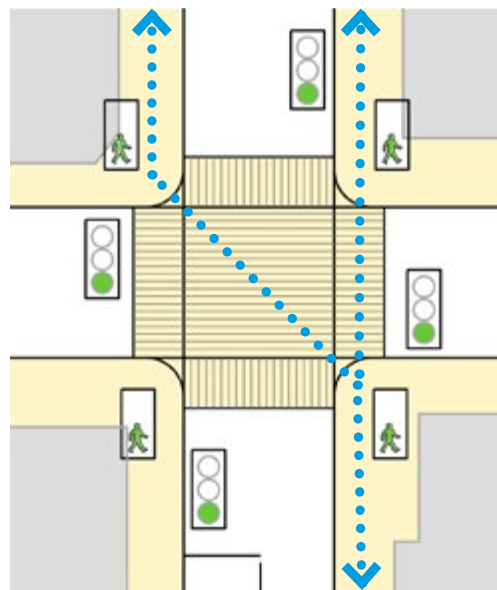
Better Balance Approach 1

- Space is more evenly distributed, with road width and turning radii to suit slower speeds, and an increase width of pavements in front of key corner buildings.
- Slow vehicle turning provides more comfortable environment for cyclists.
- It is possible to follow desire lines, crossing diagonally as well as straight on.
- Option to raise junction area to pavement level to further suggest mixed mode crossing.
- Option to remove traffic lights and rely on natural self-regulated movement.
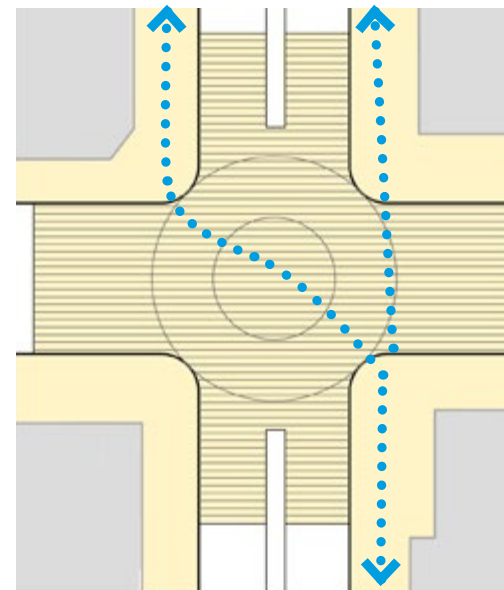
Better Balance Approach 2

- Traffic movement is based on slow speed constant movement with a significant reduction in stop/start movement for all users.
- The junction feels like a place that stretches all the way from building frontage to building frontage.
- All modes of movement are self-regulated and the space feels like it is shared, albeit that there are zones of movement that relate to how people are used to using streets.

Creating better pedestrian crossings

Ease of movement is fundamental to encouraging footfall and the perception that a town is easy in which to walk around.

- In people-friendly town centres, people like to feel that they can cross the road at will, wherever they want. The way that crossings are designed can help to create town centres where people of all ages and abilities can feel comfortable and safe.

- Consideration should be given to locating crossings where people want to cross rather than where it suits vehicle movement. This can be best informed by close study of how people move around between shops, businesses, offices, bus stops, public spaces and so on. It is important to have plenty of places to cross, and that pedestrians should not have to wait for long periods of time to cross, so consideration should be given to on-demand crossings.

- Raising a crossing so that it is level with the pavement (or creating a level surface throughout) makes crossing easier for people, and also signals to drivers to slow down.

Crossing features a change in material and texture and follows pedestrian desire line.

On demand crossing between shops and services.

The road is raised to feature a continuous level kerb for an extended area, creating a more generous space that pedestrians can cross at will.

Considerations for Locating Crossings
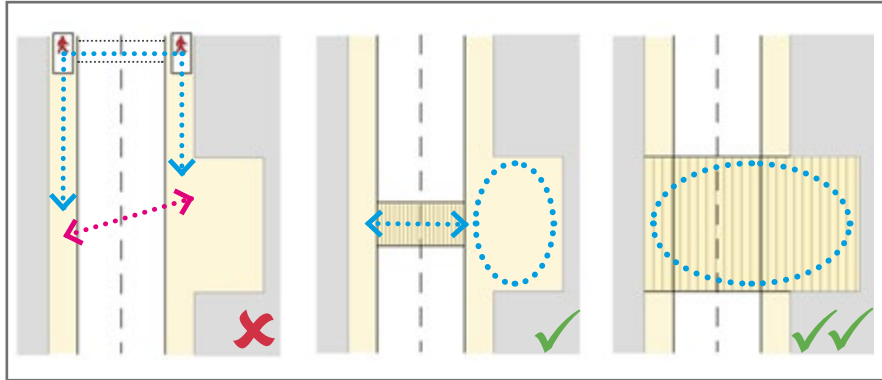
Crossing does not relate to desire lines, or support use of the space.

Crossing follows desire line and supports use of the space.

Crossing extends space across the street so that it feels like a people-friendly place that vehicles can still pass through.
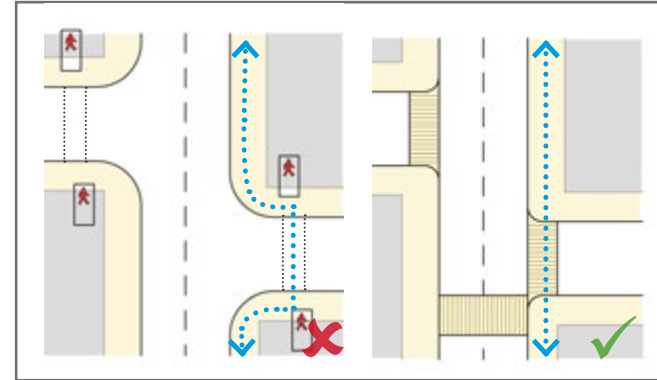
Where smaller roads meet bigger roads crossings are often offset and require stopping and waiting.

Continuity of pedestrian movement is prioritised, and smaller kerb radii encourage slower turning that can respond to pedestrian movement.
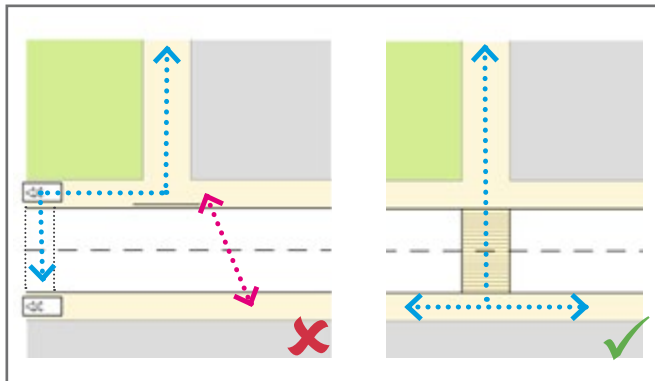
A walking network should be continuous and avoid going out of the way to cross roads – people will most likely just follow the pink dotted route anyway.

A crossing where people will naturally want to cross.

Fraserburgh

Parking Offer

Providing a bespoke parking offer is less about volume of spaces and more about a range of users and uses to encourage and support flexible economic activity. When planning parking provision, it is important to develop strategies specific to individual town centres that aim to strike the optimum balance between making a town accessible and avoiding harm to its environmental attractiveness.

Car parking needs to be planned carefully to avoid excessive provision of spaces, which can encourage unnecessary car use. However, it is important that sufficient space is provided to prevent inappropriate parking, which might be detrimental to the safety, amenity and function of a place.

A flexible approach, tailored to the particular needs of a town, can help to achieve the best balance.

● Understanding current parking provision

It is important to understand existing conditions, not just perceived parking problems, before planning new parking infrastructure or amending existing provision. Parking surveys don't need to be complex to be informative and can be based upon:

- obtaining parking survey data where it is available. In some instances new surveys will be needed. Three key types of survey are useful as follows:

  ◊ Parking inventory surveys, which identify existing provision and consider: where parking is available; how many vehicles can be accommodated (standard and accessible); duration of stay permitted; vehicle types permitted; parking charges; and any discount or promotional parking schemes in place.

  ◊ Parking use surveys, which provide data on actual parking usage, consider the number of spaces used, duration of usage and turnover.

  ◊ Qualitative user surveys, which explore the car parking patterns and needs of the community residents, local businesses and visitors to the town. They may consider why people are using one particular parking facility rather than another, and where these people come from.

- undertaking a SWOT analysis once a satisfactory level of detail is obtained on existing usage. This will help inform thinking on next steps and provide an indication of the type and scale of further planning work required; and

- offering a workshop or charrette to help identify the issues and opportunities and what changes will work for both the local community and the business community.

Haddington

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Integrating parking within town centres

Car parks can be intrusive in town centre environments, particularly if they are large. Consideration should be given to ways in which their design and location can complement the character of the town centre while providing spaces to encourage trade.

Parking within town centres can be a sensitive issue. Excessive numbers of vehicles can destroy the quality of the environment, however, retailers and shoppers will want to park close to

This parking in the centre of North Berwick is tucked away within a block so it has little impact on the surrounding streets.

the shops. Finding the right balance between those two positions is the key to establishing the right solution for your town. Many French towns, for example, hide parking underground, often under a market square. In most cases, however, there isn't the budget for such a solution but there are a range of other ways to improve parking in town centres including:

- clustering a number of smaller parking spaces around the main shopping areas. This would have less negative impact on the town's environment than one large parking space and, ideally, it may be possible to tuck these out of sight within street blocks or on gap sites;
- locating and marking on-street parking to minimise intrusion, particularly in more attractive or historic parts of town centres;
- avoiding the negative visual impact of rows of parked cars by limiting on-street parking to small groups of three to five spaces separated by pavement build-outs and street trees;
- considering informal parking arrangements, such as the use of subtle street end-on, or angled parking;
- incorporating undercroft parking in new developments in order to reduce the visual impact of parking, particularly where space is at a premium;

- providing signage on walking routes between car parks and key town centre areas. With regard to walking routes, it is important to consider how they can be properly maintained, well-lit and offer natural surveillance as far as practicable;
- ensuring that car parks are well maintained, safe and secure;
- providing a level of disabled parking which correlates with the demographics of the locality by collecting and reviewing locally gathered information about any key issues, including which areas are most desirable for access; and
- considering the following in determining the location for disabled parking provision:

    ◊ proximity to services and facilities and easy and direct onward access to wider areas and amenities;
    ◊ whether pavement widths are capable of accommodating mobility scooters and wheelchairs within the normal range of pedestrian activity;
    ◊ whether it is safe, well-lit, secure and socially inclusive with other town activities and functions; and
    ◊ siting and orientation of street furniture and the removal of barriers and physical features which create unnecessary severance.

Managing parking to support economic vitality

A carefully balanced strategy for parking provision can help to make town centres attractive as well as accessible and economically viable. The development of a parking strategy in discussion with relevant partners, which is based on available local data and research, will help outline existing issues and develop objectives specific to your town.

Developing a Parking Strategy

When developing a parking strategy, consideration should be given to carrying out the following:

- reviewing the outcomes of the (earlier) SWOT or equivalent analysis and current planning policy on parking and standards;
- liaising with partners such as roads, planning, economic development, estates and environmental officers within the local authority as well as representatives of local business and community organisations and agreeing the next steps;

- developing a parking strategy in which the scale, content and level of detail are commensurate with the nature of your town and are informed by:

  ◊ the scale and layout of the town;
  ◊ the type and severity of problems associated with parking, such as a shortfall or surplus in supply or a general imbalance between supply and demand;
  ◊ the anticipated levels of future supply and demand;
  ◊ the degree of traffic congestion, circulating traffic and air quality issues; and
  ◊ the quality of access, ineffective or otherwise, from car parks to local businesses, residences and services.

- establishing objectives for the parking strategy that are specific to parking but which also represent the wider outcomes that stakeholders would want to achieve regarding links to economic vitality. As part of this, consideration should be given to using available data (collated as per above) or obtaining additional data to establish:

  ◊ the amount of off-street parking supply;
  ◊ the amount of on-street parking supply;
  ◊ current usage and trends in usage; and
  ◊ future supply and demand.

- reviewing the parking offer in terms of local competing centres, access and opportunities for improvement;
- developing a range of measures (see next page) to address the identified issues and evaluate their ability to achieve the parking strategy objectives; and
- if possible, trialling a revised parking offer or scenario informally, before it is put into practice.

Dumfries Car Club

Rationalising Parking Provision

In conjunction with improved signage, rationalising parking provision can help to achieve improved access to town centres without increasing traffic volumes or unnecessary mileage, by delivering those who need to park to a suitable destination as directly as possible.

With the correct combination of measures in the parking strategy, it is possible to balance economic performance, environmental sustainability and visual amenity. Consideration should be given to the following potential measures for inclusion:

- devising a charging regime which best meets the needs of end users while managing the impact of cars in town centres; This may include:
  - ◊ offering cheaper parking on the edge or periphery of the town centre to help reduce town centre traffic flows;
  - ◊ offering limited free parking at certain times of the day/week/year, provided this is matched with an acceptable level of benefit and appropriate promotion of times;
  - ◊ providing time-limited on-street parking in areas immediately adjacent to shops for high turnover parking spaces, provided there is also an appropriate level of enforcement; and

  - ◊ providing free parking permits to local residents to encourage them to shop locally rather than driving further afield.
- locating longer-stay car parks on the edge of town centres and short-stay, shopper car parks in more central areas;
- determining whether the town is of the appropriate size and with a strong retail or visitor offering to accommodate a Park & Ride (P&R) facility. This is an effective way of removing traffic from town centre roads, particularly where issues of congestion and air quality exist. In such circumstances, consideration should be given to ways in which P&R could complement existing public transport and interchange services;
- considering temporary P&R facilities for special events or the Christmas shopping period; and

- considering the introduction of car clubs where there is sufficient demand, with designated parking provision in optimal locations. Suitable and highly visible locations for the reserved parking for car club vehicles are best located close to concentrations of potential users, for example, students and people who are keen to avoid the expense of running their own car. http://www.carplus.org.uk/projects/car-clubs-in-scotland/car-club-case-studies-scotland-2

Whatever strategy is adopted, it is important that it is specifically tailored for the needs of your town and can be flexibly adapted to changing needs and circumstances. It's more than just provision of spaces at all times; numbers and charging mechanisms can effectively influence the balance of vehicle trips to towns and the dwell times of visitors, which can boost footfall.

'Free After Three' – Falkirk

In Falkirk, all town centre pay and display car parks are free after 3pm in order to encourage people to visit the town centre on their way home.

- 12-month trial period in 2014 – the first in Scotland. Anecdotal evidence from businesses is positive.
- Estimated £50,000 drop in Council income is seen as an investment in the local economy.
- Joint initiative from Falkirk Deliver Business Improvement District and Falkirk Council.
- Supported by other initiatives such as visitor itineraries, suggested routes by sustainable travel modes which encourage people to visit the town centre (funded by VisitScotland Growth Fund).

First Half-hour Free – Inverurie, Aberdeenshire

In Inverurie, parking is free on street, and in Council-owned car parks for the first 30 minutes, which encourages people to pop in to shops and services in the town centre.

GoSmart Car Club – Dumfries and Galloway

Dumfries and Galloway Council introduced a car club in 2012. The original scheme included a fleet of six vehicles which could be collected from three locations in central Dumfries. The scheme went from six to 70 members in little over a year, becoming one of the fastest-growing car clubs in the UK.

Using signage to minimise vehicle movements

Informing drivers where available parking spaces are located through signage is a key part of optimising the use of spaces and reducing vehicle movement.

Consideration should be given to ensuring that signage is readily interpretable, and that it efficiently routes visitors to car parks, Shopmobility schemes and interchanges, while minimising circulation on the road network and improving the overall visitor experience. When developing a signage strategy, consideration should be given to:

- encouraging vehicles onto the most appropriate routes through effective and strategically placed signage, while avoiding areas of high pedestrian footfall;
- planning for effective and strategically placed car park signage to manage the flow of vehicles around the town and reduce unnecessary circulation;

- undertaking a review to understand the current extent of signage, the known missing links, and areas which would benefit from extra guidance and direction; and
- considering the introduction of Variable Message Signs (VMS). VMS are effective for informing visitors of the numbers of spaces available at specific town centre car parks, preventing unnecessary trips to full car parks and improving visitor experience. These should be sited on key routes into the town centre to enable advance decision making and route choice by drivers.

CASE STUDY:

Using Variable Message Signing to increase car park utilisation

STIRLING VARIABLE MESSAGE SIGNING

- existing fixed signage supplemented with Variable Message Signs
- outer ring – directs cars to nearest Park & Ride schemes
- inner ring – cars are shown most direct route to available spaces

Stirling had three main car parks, two of which quickly reached capacity and one of which was left underused. This caused queuing and congestion. The introduction of VMS aimed to reduce journey time and congestion within town centre by directing cars to the nearest Park and Ride schemes and showing the most direct route to available spaces.

Using the VMS for guidance, Stirling succeeded in modifying drivers' behaviour and increased utilisation of the car parks.

Improving Public Transport

Good accessibility by public transport is a vital component of vibrant town centres. Good quality and accessible public transport services and facilities are a clear benefit to the high proportion of people without access to a car, including many younger and older people. However, in order to encourage uptake within wider society, public transport improvements also require to be attractive to those who might otherwise travel by car.

It is important to consider improvements to public transport in the context of what already exists in a particular town. There may be a mix of unsubsidised commercial services and local authority supported and funded bus services (sometimes specific journeys, for example evenings and weekends, on otherwise commercial routes).

Transport operators and local authorities have limited budgets, and so efforts to improve services need to be supported by good information and clearly-focused in order to obtain best value for the most effective service.

Assessing how well current public transport meets needs

In order to obtain value for money from public transport improvements, the first step is to assess how well current services meet local needs. Understanding the strengths and weaknesses of existing public transport provision allows investment to be focused where it will be most effective.

A basic study can be undertaken using the following steps:

The public transport team at the Council (and/or SPT for authorities in the Strathclyde Partnership area) will have considerable information and expertise on local services, whether there are any gaps in provision and possible ways of addressing these and suitable contacts with commercial and community-based transport operators. If there are gaps in information, it may be necessary to carry out some basic research such as:

- examining the frequency of services and times of operation and also journey times. When looking at the levels of service from different parts of the town and rural catchment into the town centre, it can be useful to ask the following questions:

  ◊ Where do people's journeys commonly start and end?

  ◊ Do public transport services efficiently link these points, and how far away from these points are stops, stations or interchanges?

  ◊ Do public transport services offer competitive door-to-door journey times, relative to car travel?

  ◊ Are there measures that could assist this?

- reviewing local demographics. It is useful to establish whether there are parts of the town with higher concentrations of households without a car, or with particular concentrations of young or older people who would benefit in particular from improved bus services. The census can provide information on local demographics accessed census data online via www.scotlandscensus.gov.uk.

- carrying out surveys of existing and potential bus users. Printed and web-based surveys can produce a lot of useful information such as whether or not the quality of bus travel is as comfortable and physically accessible as other modes of transport, taking into account the whole journey; how people most commonly find out about public transport service provision; whether information is easy to access; how people view public transport in a town; and the most commonly cited concerns. From this, you may wish to consider whether perceptions are accurate and, if not, why that might be; and

- speaking with commercial bus operators and any community transport groups as well as the Council public transport team to discuss undertaking any surveys, the results of your analysis and to understand what improvements they could or could not make.

Having developed a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the existing public transport, you may wish to consider moving on to next steps such as:

- promoting both existing and any new services through local 'Use it or lose it' campaigns and considering whether there are better ways of letting people know about services such as, for example, timetables in community magazines. Where people don't use services, hard decisions may have to be taken about whether they can continue to run; and

- exploring different ideas to encourage people to try out services such as free or reduced travel for trial days; talking with local organisations and schools.

Ensuring that public transport information is readily available

People don't like waiting for buses. In modern times, when we have so much information at our fingertips, it is essential that public transport services keep up with and take advantage of technology, without reducing the quality of information provided for the less technologically minded.

There are many practical steps that can be taken to improve information on services such as:

- examining how real time data could be incorporated on busier routes with higher passenger demand to help improve public transport and passenger planning; control public transport operations; and ensure up-to-the-minute and accurate information is available;

- providing clear information on timetables, services and routes which is up to date (showing date last updated), readily available and accessible to both existing and new users;

- providing information in various media, including audio (where relevant), visual and tactile to meet the needs of all passengers;

- ensuring information is accessible via mobile phone apps. This allows people greater control over their journeys and can reduce bus stop waiting times. To maximise data accessibility, public transport providers may wish to consider making their timetable data available for use in journey planning apps and online services, such as Traveline Scotland;

- ensuring that bus stops and shelters provide timetable, service and route information as well as details about fares, payment mechanisms and on-board facilities such as WiFi, buggy and wheelchair space and cycle racks;

- producing simple public transport maps and leaflets for both local people and visitors. You may wish to consider including this in local community magazines and newspapers as well as using public noticeboards; and

- providing map-based information at town centre stops visited by multiple services. Bus maps can be useful for orientation for people who do not know the area well, and to assist getting on and off at the most appropriate stop.

CASE STUDY:

The Banchory Quality Bus Corridor
Problem

Perceptions of bus travel being a poor quality choice as a mode of transport

Action: Service Improvements

- Eleven new state-of-the-art wheelchair accessible coaches were purchased which feature environmentally-friendly engines and CCTV, improving passenger and driver security.
- Passengers using the services have also benefited from enhanced infrastructure, including 30 new solar-illuminated bus shelters, 12 new bus stops, and 53 additional boarding platforms along the route.
- Information provision has also been improved with new timetable displays provided at all boarding stops and new bus stop flags at all stops. At-bus stop timetable information is maintained to a high standard under a separate partnership arrangement between Aberdeenshire Council and Stagecoach Bluebird.

Action: Marketing and Awareness

Stagecoach Bluebird also undertook a high profile awareness campaign to coincide with the launch of the service and is implementing a market research plan in the following years to develop on the already identified potential for market growth.

The campaign consisted of extensive local press advertising, an informative mail drop to 10,000 residents in Deeside, radio, outdoor and on-bus advertising, as well as promotional give-aways to passengers and local residents. A follow-up campaign celebrated a year of operation, with further promotional media and re-launch. Additionally, a range of additional money-saving 'Megarider' tickets were introduced, offering commuters significant discount on their travel.

Results

The scheme brought about an increase in patronage of 29.7% along the Banchory to Aberdeen route. A bus passenger satisfaction survey undertaken in March 2009, on behalf of Aberdeenshire Council, highlighted the following levels of customer satisfaction:

90% with service reliability;
90% with on-bus comfort;
92% with on-bus safety and security;
82% with bus stop information;
85% with condition of bus stops/shelters; and
91% with safety and security at bus stops/shelters.

Ensuring bus waiting facilities are comfortable, accessible and convenient

Passengers wish to feel safe and comfortable while waiting for their bus to arrive. When providing stops and shelters, it is important to consider whether they are:

- well-lit, and preferably overlooked;
- large enough to give shelter and to accommodate passenger demand; and
- constructed from durable, resilient and environmentally-sound materials requiring minimal maintenance.

Bus services must be easy to access, and it should be borne in mind that a journey by bus also includes the trip from the home to the stop and the journey from the stop to the final destination.

In order for bus services to be convenient and keep journey times to a minimum, it is important to consider the provision of stops that:

- serve, and so connect, more than one route wherever practical;
- enable buses to stop parallel to the kerb, which should be of a sufficient height to allow access ramps to be deployed;
- are located close to preferred passenger destinations, and which complement town centre functions and traffic management arrangements; and
- are flexible and allow relocation to satisfy changing movement needs.

Where practicable, cycle parking should be provided adjacent to or within close proximity to bus stops, particularly those close to key services and destinations and longer distance routes.

Whiting Bay bus stop, Arran

Responding to non-standard public transport needs

In developing a town's local transport strategy (LTS), it is important to recognise the need for other forms of public transport, such as taxis, Community Transport (CT) and Demand Responsive Transport (DRT).

Taxis are able to provide a level of travel convenience comparative to individual car travel for those without access to cars, but without the need for the equivalent volume of parking at the destination. As such, they provide a key element of the overall transport mix in town centres. It is important to consider the provision of good waiting and drop-down facilities where taxi use is frequent and also to consider such facilities to accommodate other Demand Responsive and Community Transport services where these exist.

DRT is a type of public transport which can fulfil many different and often non-standard requirements for travel. DRT is defined as 'any form of transport where day to day service provision is influenced by the demands of users'. These services are usually pre-booked by phone. DRT services include taxis, taxibuses, car share schemes, dial-a-ride, community transport, and other similar schemes. They may target particular users, for example those with disabilities or living in more remote rural communities, or the wider public.

CT is the term used to describe passenger transport services which are owned and operated by local community groups. Community Transport schemes typically serve people who do not have access to conventional public transport or are unable to use it. The Community Transport Association (CTA) can provide detailed advice on operating such schemes and appropriate design considerations.

To improve the attractiveness of taxis and also support the provision of CT/DRT services in town centres, consideration should be given to:

- locating taxi ranks in close proximity to key services and amenities and allowing for an appropriate number of vehicles to wait at the rank without inconveniencing other users or exacerbating congestion issues;
- taking action to ensure that taxi rank waiting facilities are safe, comfortable and accessible to all during day and night. When waiting facilities are being provided, it is important to consider whether they offer a good quality environment which is well-lit; provides protection from the elements; has seats or rest bars (very important for many elderly and disabled people); and is overlooked in order to promote good personal security;

- incorporating sufficient adjacent footway widths at taxi ranks to accommodate access for all, located in such a way that passenger loading and unloading can occur from the nearside kerb, particularly for wheelchair access;
- providing similar facilities for DRT and CT vehicles with suitable clearance for rear-mounted tail-lifts and ramps and dropped kerbs at crossing points adjacent to the facility to allow easy access for wheelchair users;
- providing taxi marshals to control and monitor taxi ranks in areas where there is a significant night time economy and supporting marshalling by additional lighting and CCTV coverage. Such schemes have been shown to reduce queue jumping, anti-social behaviour, and serious violent crime; and
- offering subsidised taxi travel for those suffering from mobility impairments. TaxiCard schemes can assist people with mobility difficulties to travel independently.

› **Safer Glasgow**
› **Community Transport Funding**

CASE STUDY:

Local subsidised travel scheme for disabled residents

DUNDEE CITY COUNCIL – TAXICARD TRAVEL CONCESSION SCHEME

- **for disabled residents who have serious mobility impairment**
- **discounted taxi fares within concession limits and annual quota**
- **must give up entitlement to hold a blue badge**

Taxis can provide door-to-door transport for disabled people unable to use buses, but many may not be able to afford to use them regularly. Dundee City Council set up a TaxiCard scheme to address this concern which is linked to the national entitlement card.

The scheme is a local subsidised travel scheme making taxi travel more affordable for disabled residents of Dundee who have serious mobility impairment and have difficulty using the ordinary local bus services within the City. The scheme was first introduced in January 1992 by Tayside Regional Council and has been continued by Dundee City Council since 1996.

The TaxiCard scheme offers discounted taxi fares where the holder pays half the total metered fare up to a maximum concession cost per individual taxi journey. The maximum number of concessionary taxi journeys permitted within a twelve-month period is limited to 104 trips (an average of two individual journeys per week).

Those who apply for a TaxiCard must give up their entitlement to hold a blue badge, as individuals are not permitted to hold both.

To qualify for the TaxiCard concession scheme, the applicant must be permanently resident within the boundaries of Dundee City and be five years of age or over and either:

- **be in receipt of the mobility component of Disability Living Allowance at the higher rate and be a wheelchair user;**
- **be in receipt of Attendance Allowance at the higher rate; or**
- **be registered blind with the local society.**

www.dundeecity.gov.uk

Transport Interchange

The term 'transport interchange' covers all those situations/locations where transport users switch vehicle either within the same mode or between modes of travel. Transport interchanges have a significant role in setting the overall accessibility level, quality of experience and image of the public transport network. A transport interchange will often be an arrival point into a town, and so a good quality experience is important in presenting a positive first impression.

With increasingly complex patterns of movement using different modes of travel, high quality interchanges have a key role in improving accessibility to and within town centres.

Kirkcaldy

Improving existing bus and rail interchanges

Improvements to existing bus and rail interchanges can deliver real value from constrained budgets by concentrating and co-ordinating where those budgets can potentially have the most impact. Ideally, the key features of an effective interchange are:

- having all transport modes in one place; and
- that the interchange is located in the right place.

Good interchange facilities allow users to make a seamless transfer between and within modes of transport to facilitate journeys which cannot be made through direct bus and rail services and might otherwise be dependent on car use.

The scale of interchange required will vary enormously according to size and nature of a town; but even a modest grouping of good quality bus shelters with associated taxi rank, cycle parking and suitable information provision can improve accessibility to and within a town and encourage travel by more sustainable modes.

Transport for London's 'Interchange Best Practice Guidelines' set out principles that should be considered during the design, operation and management of interchanges. Although these have been produced for London, the overarching themes of efficiency, usability, understanding and quality form a useful framework for design or upgrade to almost any interchange.

› http://www.tfl.gov.uk/info-for/urban-planning-and-construction/interchange

Effectively locating transport interchanges in towns

Where possible, consideration should be given to locating transport interchanges in close walking distance of key town centre facilities and other concentrations of users.

Some towns in Scotland are fortunate in that existing rail and bus stations are located in very central positions. Whilst this may cause difficulties for access by car, it does allow the interchanges to act as a key arrival and departure point right in the heart of the town centre and cater for a wide range of trip purposes. However, in some towns there is often either a lack of a clear interchange or, for topographical or historic reasons, the facility is less central.

It will rarely be practical to move an existing rail station, but moving a bus interchange may be possible. Historic bus stations may be very inefficient in terms of space utilisation, though this may allow for other opportunities such as redeveloping an interchange on a current site or moving it to an alternative location. There can also be opportunities in larger interchanges to incorporate retail and refreshment businesses.

There are benefits to locating interchanges close to key town centre concentrations of residential development where possible, particularly where this focuses on sections of the population with low car ownership, for instance housing for students and elderly people.

Interchange facilities should be as accessible and permeable as possible, allowing access from multiple points and streets for the purposes of convenience and reducing congestion.

Ensuring ease of use of transport interchange

Careful thought is required in the design of interchanges in terms of layout and orientation in order to balance the needs of passengers and transport operators, and a simple and legible design is a desirable outcome.

Consideration should be given to:

- the way in which wider patterns of movement and the location of adjacent facilities might affect where people wish to enter and exit the interchange;
- how to ensure that appropriate access points are provided, and that the interchange is as permeable as possible;
- the start and end points of the most common movements within the interchange, and the likely desire lines between these points. Identify whether any conflicts might naturally occur between flows, and take account of these in design;
- the ways in which the design can permit intuitive navigation between locations/ connections – providing unobstructed pedestrian routes that follow desire lines as far as possible and minimise distances between connections;

- focusing firstly on removing barriers to movement and rationalising signage and furniture to aid circulation when upgrading an existing interchange;
- providing signage to clearly indicate the direction of (and appropriate exit for) key locations and facilities in the surrounding area (e.g. taxi rank, city centre, cycle route);
- carefully siting signage, street furniture and lighting so that it does not obstruct movement;
- designing the interchange in such a way that pedestrian desire lines do not intersect with large expanses of vehicular space, and connections between modes of transport are short; and
- ensuring that those zones in which passengers and vehicles do meet are safe, providing clearly defined boundaries and routes through these spaces, installing pedestrian crossings as necessary and, where possible, implementing low speed limits.

● Providing a safe and high quality experience for interchange users

The design of interchanges should provide a quality and secure experience at all times of operation.

In the design of interchanges, consideration should be given to providing:

- level access for all passengers and on and off vehicles (bus or rail) to allow for easy access for people with mobility impairments and those with luggage and young children;
- sheltered waiting facilities – taking account of prevailing wind direction in the design;
- well-lit facilities, offering high level of personal security at all times of operation;
- clear signage within and to the interchange;
- a taxi rank close by;
- clear information on services and connections to different modes, e.g. taxis and pick-up points; and
- cycle access and parking/secure storage.

For larger interchanges, consideration should be given to also providing:

- a staffed information and ticketing facility;
- real-time information provision;
- a shopmobility facility with electric scooter/wheelchair and assistance for others with sensory/mobility difficulties;
- a drop-off/pick-up facility by car;
- luggage lockers; and
- café and retail facilities.

Fife Quality Interchange

For the purposes of personal security, consideration should also be given to:

- designing interchanges in such a way that there are limited recesses and/or isolated locations which might harbour anti-social behaviour;
- featuring staff duty zones, where there is good natural surveillance, and staff are both visible to passengers and able to effectively monitor what is happening within the interchange;
- using durable, vandal-proof fixtures and fittings; and
- CCTV to further promote high levels of personal security.

The perceived quality of the interchange environment is further influenced by materials and finish, the cleanliness of the facility and level of maintenance.

Providing and maintaining service access

A flexible and pragmatic approach is vital when planning and managing servicing arrangements in town centres in order to meet businesses' operational requirements without impacting on the quality of the town centre environment. In carrying out processes of this kind, consideration should be given to:

- adopting a comprehensive and multidisciplinary approach which respects the local context, physical and environmental constraints and user needs when planning and designing service vehicle access; consulting early on with designers, road, planning and building control officers and neighbouring authorities where appropriate;
- planning strategically; looking for synergy between uses and users in order to optimise servicing facilities and generate efficiency gains;
- responding to current interests, changing functions and potential opportunities over the longer term; designing infrastructure and design in ways that are flexible and responsive to change;

- considering existing and future vehicle access requirements and avoiding over-design for ageing or over-sized vehicles. In historical or physically constrained town centres it may be necessary to restrict delivery vehicles to a smaller size that cause less disruption to town centre accessibility and can better navigate narrow streets;
- advocating sustainable resource management to reduce waste and frequency of collections wherever practicable; and
- considering the following issues in order to best manage conflicts:

  ◊ introducing bespoke operational times or restrictions to complement user needs;
  ◊ avoiding routing arrangements which involve reversing wherever possible;
  ◊ providing adequate signage of restrictions and lighting, particularly when deliveries may occur during hours of darkness; and
  ◊ ensuring there is satisfactory space for existing and future anticipated loading provisions.

Noise abatement and other technologies have advanced significantly and support a tailored and common sense approach to efficient and effective service access and management.

It is important to discuss the needs of emergency vehicles with the relevant Fire Authority, who can specify the requirements for emergency vehicle access.

Oxford Access and Delivery

Using a zoned management approach for town deliveries, Oxford's pedestrianisation permits vehicular access to certain zones at particular times and locations. This allows pedestrians to move freely without hindering the town centre economic vitality. The restrictions in most cases do not apply to local buses, taxis, pedal cycles, licensed private vehicles and emergency services.

Determining whether a bypass is needed

Bypasses can remove traffic in towns. However, given this often also opens up opportunities for direct and convenient access to other centres or destinations, the need for a bypass or other major transport improvements should first be established through carrying out a transport appraisal, which will include consideration of impact on the local economy and consultation with relevant stakeholders and local community.

Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance (STAG) is recommended as best practice transport appraisal when considering improvements to the transport network. A transport appraisal using STAG is required when Scottish Government funding, support or approval is sought for making changes to the trunk road network or rail network.

The key stages of a transport appraisal include:

Issues and Options
- Issues: The first step involves forming an understanding of the transport issues, problems and opportunities which need to be addressed in an area and gathering the information and data to support these.
- Data collection: Using existing data and other relevant information, if available, minimises the need to collect new data. There may well be significant data already available from a local authority and other sources including transport and economic data and past studies and census analysis.
- Objectives: will be set to reflect the changes which are being sought to address the issues, problems and opportunities.

- Transport options: A range of transport options across different forms of transport which could meet the objectives should be considered. Also, if appropriate, options may be grouped. For example, a bypass option could be grouped with other options to 'lock' in the benefits of removing through traffic in a town centre. These other options may include: imaginative approaches to street design within the town centre; local traffic re-routing; speed reduction; signing for through traffic; and/or public transport improvements.

Early Appraisal
The early appraisal of the transport options using qualitative information will involve:
- assessing if, and to what extent, an option is likely to meet the objectives;
- it is also important to assess the impacts or benefits an option would create with respect to: environment; safety; accessibility and social inclusion; economy and integration (with the existing transport network and relevant national and/or local policies). With regard to integration with relevant policies it may be appropriate, for instance, to consider

how well an option fits with land use polices and/or polices related to the economic vitality of town; and
- the feasibility, affordability and likely public acceptability of options.

Detailed Appraisal
At this final stage, quantitative information will be needed to assess the performance of each option in greater detail.

Engagement
It is usually helpful to engage with key stakeholders with knowledge related to the issues or options being considered in a transport appraisal. It may also be appropriate to engage with members of the public.

Establishing the Need for a Transport Improvement
A completed transport appraisal will usually establish the need for one, or more, transport options and will assist in decision making associated with the further assessment and development of transport improvements.

STAG is accessible at
www.transportscotland.gov.uk/stag

FESTIVAL TOWN (ARTS, MUSIC, FOOD, BOOKS)

HADDINGTON

RURAL CAPITAL? OF COUNTY TOWN EAST LOTHIAN

HADDINGTON

HADDINGTON CULTURE, VIBRANT ARCHITECTURE

Introduction

The biggest single asset of any town centre is the energy of its people. Whether they work in business, social enterprise, local government, voluntary groups, health, education or other public agencies – ultimately, it is the energy of local people which generates town centre activity and civic pride.

That is why it is so important that everyone involved decisions about a town centre collaborates for the good of its future, recognising and supporting each other's contributions. Even in times of limited budgets and resources, something can always be done to improve a place by working together on a common vision.

This section of the toolkit explains how people and organisations can work together to make town centres better places through collective thinking and actions.

KEY PRINCIPLES

Involve the right people
- Harness the knowledge and enthusiasm of local people and businesses
- Get a wide range of people involved
- Support local people to lead initiatives that will make the town centre vibrant
- Raise interest and awareness

Know your town centre
- Understand the issues, gather up-to-date information about the town centre, its issues and people's aspirations for it
- Make connections between groups and individuals

Agree a plan
- Agree a plan for the town centre and clear actions to achieve the vision
- Don't resist good innovative ideas in the meantime

Take action and make it happen
- Apply the Town Centre First Principle
- Collaborate
- Encourage business and social entrepreneurship
- Be proactive and facilitate appropriate development and projects
- Support delivery and change on the ground so people can see real results happening
- Celebrate and build on success
- Ensure the right structures are in place to drive delivery and access funding

Local people leading

This toolkit is underpinned by a simple principle: that local people and enterprises have the power to take the lead in making their town centre a busier and better place, supported and encouraged by professionals in the public and private sectors. Making that happen means a wide range of people working together towards an agreed plan and ambition.

Where local people are leading, a wide cross-section of the local community need to agree a way forward for the town centre that will deliver the best balance for all interests: business, entrepreneurs public sector, community groups and local residents of different ages. That broad involvement is also needed to turn the plan into action, because delivering the ambition of a vibrant town centre will rely on input from a range of partners.

BUSINESSES, ENTREPRENEURS AND COMMUNITY GROUPS

Businesses, entrepreneurs and community groups make things happen in town centres. They spot opportunities and create activity. They run shops, start businesses, and may organise everything from arts and music events to food festivals and sporting activities. They are also busy people who have countless demands on their time. It is important that they can be supported and involved in efficient and practical ways, which may be through an umbrella organisation such as a business association, Business Improvement District or Development Trust.

LOCAL AUTHORITIES

Local authorities have multiple roles in town centres: from leadership, encouragement and co-ordination, to service delivery roles in planning, transport, economic development and environmental health. Local authorities may help the success of town centres through:

- Applying the Town Centre First Principle to focus new public sector investment in town centres, wherever possible;
- using proactive planning to encourage development in town centres;
- strategic asset management of their estate;
- supporting and encouraging businesses, social enterprises and community groups to get on with activity that helps the town centre;
- championing the importance of town centres and those who work to improve them; and
- managing public sector assets and service delivery in line with the overall collective vision for the town centre – streets, business rates, clinics, local government offices, colleges, schools, public spaces, parking, refuse collection.

Local residents, businesses and Council working together can make their town centre a busier and better place.

Bo'ness fun day

Work together to agree a clear collective vision and sense of ambition for your town.

CASE STUDY:

Town Centres First in Fife

Fife Council has rolled out local community planning in the seven areas that make up Fife, basically to deliver the general Fife Community Plan outcomes in local communities and support community action and involvement. This extends to applying the Town Centre First Principle in Cupar, for example, where the Council is working closely with the NHS and Police to co-locate their services in a refurbished town centre building.

In Levenmouth, the Council has used a charrette engagement process to generate proposals and interest on the back of the local Community Plan for regeneration of the Bridge Street/Shore Head area of the town centre.

Agreeing a collective vision

Fort William styles itself as the 'outdoor capital of the UK'. West Kilbride is 'Scotland's craft town'. Inverness is the 'capital of the Highlands'. These straplines give a sense of what each town wants to be – a guiding vision for the future. Having a clear sense of ambition and vision gives a framework for action that everyone can understand and into which they can buy.

There can be benefits in examining what is unique about a particular town centre, its assets, and what strengths it has that can be built upon. It is also useful to ask questions about what people would want the town to be like in the future and in what kind of town people want future generations to grow up.

STARTING A CONVERSATION

People love talking about their places – both the good parts and the not so good parts, and so agreeing a common sense of direction is ideally creative, imaginative and energising. Good conversations about the future of the town centre generate information and interest, which will in turn help the town centre by:

- agreeing a shared vision for the town which can be developed into a framework for action by businesses, community groups and the public sector;
- building trust and collaboration amongst businesses, politicians, residents and public officials – the glue that is needed for people to work together and improve the town centre; and
- generating momentum around a common cause – the energy, enthusiasm and commitment that will be needed to turn the plan into action.

Three simple questions are enough to start town centre conversations and lead to much wider discussions:

- What do you like about your town centre?
- What's not so good?
- What are your bright ideas for the future?

Involving Everybody

Realistically, asking every single resident, business and visitor about the town centre would be impossible, it's important, however, to hear the views of a good cross section of:

- **community organisations:** such as Business Improvement Districts, Community Councils, Development Trusts and Civic Societies. It is useful to find out what organisations people see as core to their town and work with them. There may already be community organisations in the town, or people may want to set one up to represent their views. In some places it may be a Community Development Trust, in others a local Heritage Trust or Amenity Group, or it might be the rugby club or the gala committee. Where there is social housing, a Community Controlled Housing Association may act as an anchor for community activity, or a Tenants and Residents Association. What matters is not what the body is called, but that it is open and inclusive, and local people are in control and feel it belongs to them;
- **businesses:** shops, small businesses, pubs, cafes, hotels, social enterprises and professional firms as well as representative groups like Chambers of Commerce, Business Associations or Business Improvement District boards;
- **residents:** children, young people, working folk and older people. People will have a wide range of experiences and perspectives, enthusiasm and imagination that they can bring along, which will be important to capture. It is important to consider how to include and enthuse people from all groups in the town, including the new housing development as well as long-term residents – and also to think about how to reach those people who might not necessarily put themselves forward to be involved;
- **local authority and public agencies:** local authorities play a vital role in empowering local communities through providing leadership, technical expertise and public services. Other community planning partners have town centre responsibilities too: for example the police, NHS, rail and bus operators, Scottish Enterprise or HIE and Visit Scotland; and
- **visitors:** people from the surrounding area who use the town and tourists from further afield to understand how others see the place.

The single most important principle for reaching these different kinds of people and organisations is to go to them rather than expecting them to turn up at a meeting. Using existing organisations and channels as much as possible can be very useful, for example:

- going along to schools and youth groups;
- starting a Facebook page and blog; using Twitter and Instagram – so everyone can join in;
- organising business breakfasts with the local Chamber or BID;
- contacting parent and toddler groups;
- visiting old people's homes;
- meeting the BID committee, Development Trust, Community Council and other local groups; and
- working pro-actively with local reporters.

Reaching Agreement

Combining community input with town centre health check data can reveal a good picture of:

- **the town centre's assets:** the good things that future improvements can be built around, such as historic buildings, popular events, good car parking, a great number of visitors or simply a good sense of community;
- **problems that need to be tackled:** it can be surprising how often people aged nine to ninety share the same priorities, be they dealing with traffic congestion, providing 'what's on' information or targeting key derelict buildings;
- **what appetite local people and businesses have to take things forward:** be it investing in new businesses, marketing the town centre, putting on festivals and events or erecting hanging baskets in the summer; and
- **what supporting action the local authority and other public agencies can offer.**

Once the picture of a town centre's health has been established, the aim is then to reach agreement on what needs to be done in order to make the town centre better – the big priorities for action. Reaching agreement needs specific 'facilitation' skills. Those skills might be available in the local community or you may need to bring

in a specialist facilitator. The impartiality of independent external facilitators helps to avoid discussions being dominated by stronger voices. DTA Scotland, Planning Aid for Scotland, or a specialist consultancy such as Space Unlimited are good starting points for finding a facilitator.

Charrettes and other community engagement techniques can be very useful ways of agreeing a collective plan and course of action for a town centre. More information on charrettes and assistance on funding them can be found on the Scottish Government website.

Further advice on engaging effectively with communities is available through the National Standards for Community Engagement and the associated tool VOiCE, available from the Scottish Community Development Centre (http://www.scdc.org.uk/what/national-standards).

The best way to find out what is really involved is often to talk to the community and organisations that have done it. Most of them will be happy to share their experiences.
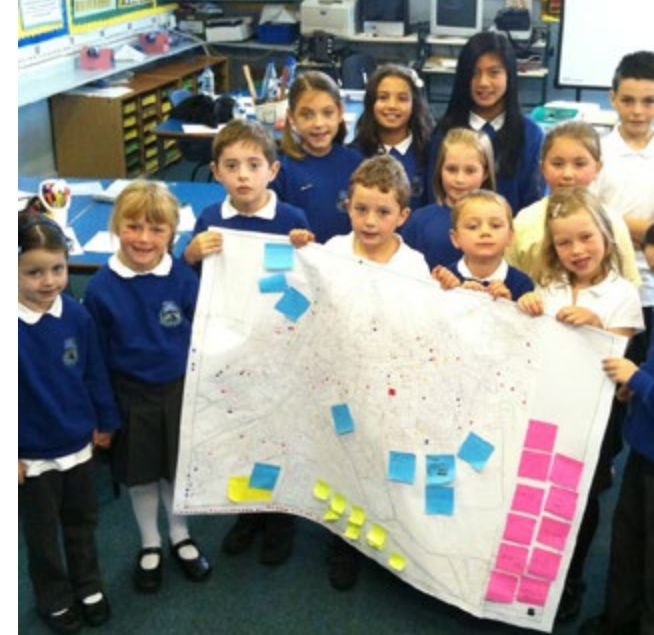
Development Trusts Association Scotland: advice for community organisations

BIDS Scotland: support for businesses, communities and local authorities considering a business improvement district

PAS (Planning Aid for Scotland): mentoring and advice for community groups

Space Unlimited: social enterprise who work with young people to deliver town centre projects

Scottish Government Charrette Mainstreaming Programme

Involve | People and Participation: how to put citizens at the heart of decision making

Information and data: knowing your town centre

Revitalising a town centre is difficult without fully understanding the key facts and issues such as how businesses are performing; how public spaces are used; and who owns vacant buildings. Without knowing the answers to questions like these, it is difficult to decide what action to take.

A town centre health check can be used to gather information and best covers the topics outlined in Scottish Planning Policy such as:

- activities in the town centre;
- the physical environment;
- property;
- accessibility; and
- community attitudes, perceptions and aspirations.

The last item on the list – community perceptions and aspirations – is key. Understanding people's concerns and aspirations is as important as technical data. It will inform the priorities and appetite for change, as well as potentially generating momentum for action.

Town Centre Health Check Indicators

Activities

- retailer representation & intentions (multiples & independents)
- employment
- cultural & social activity
- community activity
- leisure & tourism facilities
- resident population
- evening/night-time economy

Physical environment

- space in use for the range of town centre functions & how it has changed
- physical structure of the centre, condition & appearance including constraints, opportunities & assets
- historic environment
- public realm & green infrastructure

Property

- vacancy rates, particularly at street level in prime retail areas
- vacant sites
- committed developments
- commercial yield
- prime rental values

Accessibility

- pedestrian footfall
- accessibility
- cycling facilities & ease of movement
- public transport infrastructure & facilities
- parking offer
- signage & ease of navigation

Community

- attitudes, perceptions & aspirations

Some of the information needed for the health check will already be held by the local authority or their Community Planning Partners (CPP), while some may need to be gathered afresh.

● Seeking support

There are organisations and tools being developed that can help communities to set this information and data within the local context.

Scotland's Towns Partnership (STP)

STP was launched in 2012. Membership is drawn from practitioners and professionals across the public, private and community sectors. The group has received funding from the Scottish Government to further develop their role as the 'go to' towns body in Scotland, complementing delivery of the actions contained within the Town Centre Action Plan and helping to sustain the longer-term impact of town centre investment. STP collaborates with a broad range of organisations to ensure strategic links between organisations with town centre interests, sharing learning and information through their networks and website. They are also developing a range of activities designed to support and assist town centre regeneration at the local level.

www.scotlandstowns.org

Understanding Scottish Places (USP)

USP is a new online platform funded by the Scottish Government that is currently being developed by the Carnegie UK Trust, Scotland's Towns Partnership, Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLES) and the University of Stirling. The aim is to create better, shared, user-friendly information and town centre audit tools. It enables individual towns to generate better local data on how their town economies function, and learn how they sit alongside other towns in Scotland. This will enable better understanding of town centres, make the case for planning and investment, and monitor the impact of interventions over time.

www.usp.scot

Community Ownership Support Service (COSS)

The Community Ownership Support Service (COSS) is funded by the Scottish Government to support community-based groups in Scotland, enabling them to take a stake in, or ownership of, land or buildings presently in public ownership. The COSS advisory service is delivered Scotland-wide and aims to provide individual community groups and local authorities with a bespoke support service. The support offered by COSS is likely to include a combination of:

- Expert advice on all aspects of asset transfer;
- Training courses on the asset transfer and asset development process;
- Sign-posting to other support agencies; and
- Web access to information on good practice, toolkits and case studies.

COSS also supports local authorities wishing to transfer a building or land asset.

www.dtascommunityownership.org.uk

In addition, national bodies, such as Architecture + Design Scotland (A+DS) and Historic Scotland provide information and guidance which will be useful in helping to understand local context.

www.ads.org.uk
www.historic-scotland.gov.uk

Planning and action

Some people like to plan, others like to do. Town centres need both. Plans only come to life if people create new businesses, organise shows, develop new buildings, market the town centre, clean the streets and do all the other actions in the plan.

Action doesn't need to wait until the perfect plan is ready. Apart from causing tension and delay, there will never be the perfect plan; life will have moved on before the ink is dry.

It is important, however, to have an idea of where the town centre is heading – that's why a vision is so important.

Actions already being implemented, such as fund-raising for a new theatre or preparing a shop-local campaign, can be usefully incorporated into the plan.

The Town Centre Plan

A good plan contains the steps that will be taken to make the town centre more active, attractive and accessible. It is important to have quick wins to demonstrate that it's worth getting involved, and to have medium-term actions and long-term ambitions. A good plan is both aspirational and realistic and explains who will be responsible for doing what.

The actions in the plan will vary from town centre to town centre. They might include support for entrepreneurs; better cycling infrastructure; new arts and cultural programmes; re-using key derelict buildings; tackling antisocial behaviour; or a host of other things. A good plan will have projects relating to each of the different sections of this toolkit.

It is important that the main players meet every few months to check progress on their actions. Every couple of years, a town centre summit involving local media, businesses and schools can be a great way of celebrating progress and re-energising people. Plans generally need to be revisited around every 5 to 10 years as people and context change.

CASE STUDY:

The development of a 10-year strategy for a town centre

Biggar: The Value of a Plan

- 10-year strategy combining aspirational thinking with existing projects
- prepared in collaboration with local people businesses and organisations
- illustrative proposals for possible transformations along with physical works and proposed organisational change

The Biggar Agenda, prepared with help from South Lanarkshire's Rural Development Trust, is a 10-year strategy which combines aspirational thinking about the town centre with existing projects which Biggar's businesses and on which 70 or so community groups were already working, including a rugby club extension, youth club expansion and path network. By incorporating these projects in the Agenda, they should find it easier to tap into future funding streams like, for example, community income from a large wind farm.

The study was undertaken by consultants in collaboration with local people, businesses and organisations in order that their aspirations and concerns would form the basis of a proactive agenda for the next decade. It includes illustrative proposals showing how the face of the town could be transformed – streets, public places, parks, green spaces, getting out into the countryside and future development. Some parts of the Biggar Agenda involve physical works like road surfacing or new footpaths, while other sections seek to change how people and organisations behave. It sets out an action plan which prioritises each action in the Biggar Agenda and identifies who should be involved in taking them forward.

› The Biggar Agenda – a community strategy for the next decade

Taking Action

Action is about doing real work on the ground that will begin to make a difference. Some will be physical projects involving bricks and mortar, like making streets friendlier for pedestrians or repairing historic buildings. Other projects will be enterprise-related initiatives, such as new businesses, town centre marketing or pop-up shops. Others will be social or cultural, tackling antisocial behaviour or organising band contests.

Once a plan is in place, it is critical that those involved in the process can see real change happening as a result of their contributions in order to maintain their support and enthusiasm.

CASE STUDY:

Establishment of a Development Trust by local people

Local Action in Huntly

- programme of town centre improvement projects by three public sector partners
- establishment of a Development Trust by community members to continue aims
- Development Trust working with businesses and local groups to deliver a range of town centre initiatives

The Aberdeenshire Towns Partnership (ATP) was an alliance of three public sector partners – Communities Scotland, Scottish Enterprise Grampian and Aberdeenshire Council. The ATP programme pooled the resources of these partners to match community aspirations to help participant towns become better places to live, work and visit.

Between 2005 and 2008, the Aberdeenshire Towns Partnership helped community groups in Huntly to carry out various town improvement projects in line with the community's 2020 vision and its related action plan for Huntly. Projects included establishing Huntly Farmers Market, Huntly Rewards loyalty card scheme, www.huntly.net and part-funding the Huntly Shop Enhancement Scheme.

The community then established Huntly Development Trust with support from Aberdeenshire Council and the Development Trust Association Scotland.

Following the end of the ATP programme in December 2008, a group of active community members established Huntly Development Trust (HDT). They organised fact-finding visits, hosted facilitated workshops to learn how to best to set up such an organisation and arranged open community sessions to decide on priority projects. They had support from both Aberdeenshire Council and the Development Trust Association Scotland (DTAS) during this process.

Since then, the Development Trust, town centres businesses and other local groups such as Huntly and District Tourism Action Group and Deveron Arts have worked to deliver a range of town centre initiatives. Recently, support from Creative Scotland's Creative Place Awards in 2013 allowed the Huntly Cultural Fund to award 38 grants to local artists and crafters.

● Getting organised

Engendering a spirit of genuine engagement, collaboration and co-operation is vital. It's important that no one organisation or group – whether public, private or community sector – has a veto over what happens in the town centre.

Good leadership is also key. Someone needs to drive the process forward: often from the community, the local authority, Business Improvement District or Development Trust. It can be very important, however, that they encourage participation rather than dominate, and inspire rather than control. That is why collaboration is so much more appropriate than top-down or bottom-up approaches.

Choosing the Right Structure

There are various ways of organising collaboration. It is important to choose a structure that best suits the people involved and what you want to achieve. This might be a Business Improvement District, a Development Trust or a town centre forum or steering group. Each model has different advantages, as follows:

Business Improvement Districts: are focussed on businesses collectively working together to promote and improve the environment in which they operate. They can generate income from local businesses and spend it on initiatives that their members agree are in their common interest. There are, in early 2015, now around 30 BIDs in Scotland, with a further 20 or so in the pipeline. Town centre examples include

Kirkcaldy4All – www.kirkcaldy4all.co.uk
Falkirk Delivers – www.falkirkdelivers.com
Queensferry Ambition – www.queensferryambition.co.uk.

Development Trusts: are owned and managed by the local community to implement processes which will benefit the community. They may include business people but are likely to have a broader community perspective. They aim to generate income through enterprise and ownership of assets. All surpluses are principally reinvested in the organisation or the community. For more information on Development Trusts see www.dtascot.org.uk.

Town centre forums and steering groups: are looser forms of organisations where different stakeholders in a town centre come together to discuss and co-ordinate action. They are commonly found across Scotland. Some are formally constituted, others are simply discussion groups.

Tailoring your organisational structure to local circumstances

Whichever organisational structure is used, it is best tailored to local circumstances using the principles that:

- everyone with an interest in the town centre should be represented – public, private and community sectors;
- power is shared equally amongst these partners;
- it is based upon transparent decision making and membership;
- collectively, the members should have sufficient influence to make change happen;
- a good, proactive member of staff will enable the group to achieve a lot more; and
- regular discussion and review are important.

Ideally, business, local authority and community representatives will all agree on a town centre vision, sign up to common goals and an action plan, and work together to deliver it.

Neilston Town Charter

In 2009, the village of Neilston produced the Neilston Town Charter with support from East Renfrewshire Council amongst other organisations. The Charter contained a vision for Neilston in 2030 with an action plan of projects to turn it into reality.

Local authority officers have had an important role in helping members of the Trust, often with very limited resources, to start to deliver the projects in the Charter. This included bringing together organisations like the Development Trust, Council departments, Community Planning Partners, the Housing Association, local and outside businesses, the Community Council and others as a 'Town Team'.

Neilston Town Charter

The Callander Partnership

The Callander Partnership brings together key community and statutory agencies with an interest in Callander to collectively review action. It comprises:

- **Callander Community Council** – the elected community representative body;
- **Callander Development Trust** – which has responsibility for developing and actioning the Callendar Community Action Plan;
- **Callander Youth Project** – the representative body for young people in Callander;
- **Callander Enterprise** – the local organisation representing business interests;
- **Stirling Council** – the local authority; and
- **Loch Lomond &Trossachs National Park** – the planning authority.

The Callander Partnership

● Working together

Throughout the country, town centre businesses have proven that working together to improve a town's offer increases footfall, generates more income, saves costs and shares risks. Whether it's marketing, security or parking, there are plenty of improvements where speaking with one voice will achieve more than individual businesses ever can on their own.

Working together can take place in different ways: loose groupings of businesses on the same streets, chambers of commerce, town centre business associations, chambers of commerce, or more formal structures like Business Improvement Districts.

The basic rule is that the more formal methods of association are potentially better able to access financial incentives as they provide a stronger and more coordinated voice.

Set up a Business Improvement District (BID)
BIDs help town centre businesses work together to improve the town centre, over and above what local authorities already do. For example, they can invest in better security, environmental improvements, events, marketing and publicity.

BIDs can only be set up after a ballot is held amongst all businesses within the proposed BID area. If the vote is favourable, businesses must pay the compulsory BID levy for a set period of time to create a pot of money. Businesses then use the BID to decide collectively how to spend the pot of money.

The focus is on investment and action. BIDs are powerful vehicles to implement most of the tools contained in this toolkit. BIDs can also be useful for a businesses and and local government to work together.

Around 30 BIDs have been set up in Scotland in the last decade, with a further 20 in the pipeline. Plenty of positive outcomes have been demonstrated by town centres BIDs over the last decade, such as Kirkcaldy4All, Falkirk Delivers, Inverness City and Queensferry Ambition.

› www.bids-scotland.com

Proactive planning

Local authorities have an important role in controlling what can be built in town centres, but proactive planning means actively facilitating appropriate development and encouraging business and social entrepreneurship.

Some ways in which local authorities and their planning services can help to re-vitalise town centres are:

- applying the Town Centres First Principle for public services and investments. This will drive up investment activity and footfall, encouraging other landowners to follow suit;
- creating a one-stop shop or key council contact to help town centre businesses navigate through statutory consents including negotiating planning, building control and environmental protection requirements, for example Edinburgh City Council has prepared a one door approach to development consents charter (October 2013);
- offering sources of advice for businesses who may be interested in developing or changing their premises for example Moray Council provides information upfront in its Advice Note for Small and Medium Businesses;
- using town centre visioning and community engagement to set the agenda for Local Development Plans so help to deliver a common community vision;

- developing a strategy for re-populating town centres with residential use;
- making planning policy for town centres simple and proactive, which encourages private and social enterprises to be creative and take risks. All enterprise is potentially welcome in town centres provided that it does not cause problems for neighbours through noise, smell or pollution, and provided that it does not damage historic buildings;
- devising strategies for low cost/vacant property to help support business enterprise, start-ups and community or social enterprise;
- creating a dedicated team to bring town centre property back into use, approaching landlords, leaseholders and developers to encourage investment – including sharing town centre data and helping to prepare funding packages;
- using statutory powers such as Section 179 notices, the power to advance wellbeing, repairs notices and Compulsory Purchase Orders where landlords and leaseholders are not behaving responsibly;
- proactively marketing prominent town centre sites and properties for a range of acceptable potential uses – including obtaining planning consent for speculative proposals to attract investor interest;

- securing town centre funding through the Townscape Heritage Initiative, Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme and other sources of government and lottery funding;
- developing proactive strategies to support small businesses and business start-ups, such as helping to establish town centre Business Improvement Districts; and
- tailoring local business rates relief schemes to help town centre businesses in specific areas.

Considering fiscal planning initiatives

Small businesses are key drivers of local economies and activity in town centres. Property costs are a critical component in the overall viability of such businesses, and thus fiscal initiatives are a key consideration in encouraging them to locate in town centres and grow their businesses there.

This is recognised in the Scottish Government's Town Centre Action Plan, which highlights how Scottish businesses benefit from business rates initiatives such as the Small Business Bonus Scheme and Fresh Start business rates relief.

The Action Plan also suggests:

- continued monitoring of the effectiveness of the Business Rates Incentivisation Scheme;
- creating powers for local authorities to establish a Town Centre Investment Zone, using discretionary rates relief to encourage local business; and
- completing the actions identified in the Scottish Government's review of the rating system.

Business rates will continue to be a key factor influencing small businesses locating in town centres and any business rates review should take that into account.

Useful guidance for businesses to calculate their likely business rates liability when setting up a business and what support is available is available at www.business.scotland.gov.uk/businessrates

CASE STUDY:

'Planning obligations' money funding town centre improvements

BARRHEAD TOWN CENTRE RESILIENCE FUND

- combination of 'planning obligations' money and council's capital fund
- consultation with town centre businesses and retailers on priorities

A resilience fund of £140,000 has been created which will allow improvements to shop fronts, lighting, business promotion and car parking in Barrhead's town centre following a decision by East Renfrewshire Council to approve a planning application for a proposed supermarket in the town centre.

The fund of £140,000 is made up of £100,000 of 'planning obligations' money from the supermarket plus £40,000 from the council's General Fund Capital Programme for 2013/14.

East Renfrewshire Chamber of Commerce and the local authority have consulted with Barrhead town centre businesses and retailers on how they would like to see the money spent. Suggestions from businesses include shop front improvements, local advertising and car parking improvements.

* Planning obligations have a limited, but useful, role to play in the development management process where they can be used to overcome obstacles to the grant of planning permission. In this way development can be permitted or enhanced and potentially negative impacts on land use, the environment and infrastructure can be reduced, eliminated or compensated for. Planning obligations should be agreed between the parties involved; developers should not be required to enter into a planning obligation. Where known in advance, the need for a planning obligation can usefully be set out in the development plan or as part of pre-application discussions.

* Scottish Government Circular 3/2012: Planning Obligations and Good Neighbour Agreements, December 2012

Funding

Some town centre projects can cost virtually nothing, for example, a social media marketing campaign. At the other end of the scale, new buildings or changes to streets and traffic can cost millions of pounds. The more money that is available, the easier it will be to achieve things, but much can be gained by pulling together funding and resources from a range of sources – provided everybody in the town centre is working to the same vision.

Professionals in your local authority or organisations like Scotland's Towns Partnership (STP), BIDS Scotland and DTA Scotland should be able to point you in the right direction for grant or loan funding from the Scottish Government, lottery funds and charitable foundations. Local businesses in the town centre may know local sources of money.

Keeping up with grant funding is a full time job in itself. Grant funds are constantly changing and have specific requirements, so you're best to look for help. Many local authorities employ people with specific expertise who will be able to signpost you to the various sources of funding for different kinds of projects.

The STP 'Funding Finder' provides information on town centre specific grant funds.

Here's a flavour of the kind of projects that can attract support – please note this is not a comprehensive list, and not all of these funds are available in every part of Scotland:

Acquiring community assets to generate income	DTA Scotland
Broadband Infrastructure	Community Broadband Scotland
Business growth	Business Gateway
Carbon reduction	Climate Challenge Fund
Culture and creative arts	Creative Scotland
Fishing towns	European Fisheries Fund
Historic buildings	Heritage Lottery Fund Historic Scotland
Housing	Scottish Government housing grants Scottish Government Empty Homes Loan Fund
Local business levies	BIDS Scotland
Regeneration	Scottish Government
Social enterprise and third sector	Third Sector Interfaces

Designing town centres to be attractive, vibrant and accessible to all users.

Applying the Town Centre First Principle.

There is no single answer to improving town centres. It requires a blend of initiatives that are right for your place.

Create a better balance for town streets that prioritise people.

Positive action is needed to implement real change.

A town centre's local people are its greatest asset. A lot can be achieved by working together.

Marketing, promoting and supporting an active town centre.

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