

# Nairn Town Centre Meadhan Baile Inbhir Narann



Action Plan  
for  
**NAIRN**  
**TOWN CENTRE**





## Executive Summary

The Nairn Town Centre Action Plan highlights a range of proposals and opportunities identified by the community and stakeholders that can deliver regeneration in Nairn town centre. The purpose of the Action Plan is to provide a steer for the projects that could be delivered should funding opportunities arise, or where planning applications might help to make these a reality.

The Plan reflects a keen interest in signposting and strengthening connections between the town centre and the wealth of assets and attractions that lie within easy walking and cycling distance of the High Street, including the river, beach and harbour. It takes account of opportunities that will arise from the introduction of the Nairn by-pass and associated de-trunking of King Street, which have significant potential to increase the vibrancy of the town centre and make it more attractive for walking, cycling and outdoor social activity. The Plan also highlights that footfall to and along the High Street could be increased by improving the appearance of the High Street, reconfiguring open space and bringing redundant buildings and spaces back into use.

The draft plan was developed and tested by local stakeholders collaborating with public and private sector at a two-day public workshop that took place in May 2014. It builds on local stakeholder inputs, knowledge and understanding of Nairn town centre, including concepts and ideas recorded. Although the current economic climate makes it more difficult to deliver projects such as these, this document is important as it will put the town in a strong position to compete for any funding opportunities that do arise. Community groups will need to lead the regeneration of their town centre by continuing to work closely with public sector partners and land owners.

This Action Plan identifies 14 proposals for the development of an active, vibrant town centre that increases footfall, attracts more visitors and expands the range of shops, services and jobs available to local communities. These proposals have been categorised into three key themes:

1. Improve High Street environment and expand activities
2. Make better use of area between King Street and the High Street
3. Improve walking and cycling links between the town centre and surroundings.

This Action Plan has been configured to reflect these themes and proposals. It does not set out a timetable for delivery because it is anticipated that individual projects will be brought forward or amended as funding becomes available. Proposals are not prioritised but wherever possible the plan highlights relevant issues that could impact on timing, delivery and/or funding of individual projects.

Successful delivery of Town Centre proposals is likely to involve collaborative action on the part of a wide range of stakeholders. This document draws attention to a need for effective partnership-working and signposts potential sources of funding and support.

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# 1. Background and context

## Purpose

The Nairn Town Centre Action Plan highlights a range of proposals and opportunities identified by the community and stakeholders that can deliver regeneration in Nairn town centre. The Plan takes account of the opportunities that exist to improve the town centre and also considers opportunities that will be presented through changes in the future, such the delivery of a bypass, which will have a significant impact on King Street and its surroundings. It highlights a need to signpost and strengthen connections to the wealth of assets and attractions that lie within easy walking and cycling distance of the town centre, including the river, fishertown, museum, rail station, links, golf course, harbour, beach and campsite. There is also a need to make the High Street more active, attractive and accessible for the benefit of businesses, residents and visitors.

The purpose of the Action Plan is to provide guidance on future priorities for the town centre taking account of:

- Issues, concerns and aspirations of local stakeholders;
- Existing or emerging proposals and projects, in particular proposals for adaptive re-use of redundant buildings, and
- A need to align, co-ordinate and prioritise a diverse range of town centre initiatives.

The plan has been developed and tested by local stakeholders collaborating with public and private sector at a two-day public workshop that took place in May 2014. Participants included representatives from community groups, businesses, voluntary organisations and agencies. The Action Plan builds on local stakeholders' input, knowledge and understanding of Nairn town centre, including concepts and ideas recorded.

Although the current economic climate makes it more difficult to deliver projects such as these, this document is important as it will put the town in a strong position to compete for funding opportunities that arise. Community groups will need to lead the regeneration of their town centre by continuing to work closely with public sector partners and land owners.

The Action Plan has particular relevance in view of provisions within the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Bill introduced to the Scottish Parliament in June 2014. The Bill aims to broaden community control of land and buildings by extending "right-to-buy" to urban communities and enabling community organisations to take control of buildings or land. More information on the relevance of this legislation to the delivery of the Action Plan is presented in Section 3.

## Structure of this document

Section 1 of this document describes the purpose and context for developing the Nairn Town Centre Action Plan. Section 2 presents the Action Plan configured to reflect the themes and proposals put forward at through public consultation. Section 3 focusses on delivery, highlighting issues and funding sources that enable successful outcomes.

## Action Plan Process

The Nairn Town Centre Action Plan is part of the Scottish Government's programme to facilitate town centre regeneration, which includes a commitment to assess the strengths, weaknesses and resilience of town centres and develop proactive planning policies that enable appropriate action.

The Action Plan was co-funded by the Scottish Government's 2014 – 15 Town Centre Charrette Programme and The Highland Council. Nairn was one of three Highland towns selected for this programme because of its vital role in providing essential services and facilities that support a wide catchment area of rural communities and its reliance on tourism to sustain the local economy and jobs. Similar Action Plans were prepared for Tain and Fort William. All three plans were prepared by CH2MHILL with input from the Council's Development and Infrastructure Service.

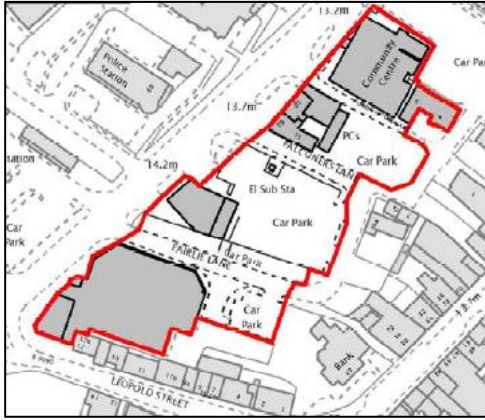
The Action Plan builds on local stakeholder inputs, knowledge and understanding of Nairn town centre, including ideas and proposals recorded at a two-day public workshop that took place at the Nairn Court House, High Street, Nairn on 30 April & 1 May 2014. The purpose of this workshop was to gather local people's views on developing an active, vibrant town centre that increases footfall, attracts more visitors and expands the range of shops, services and jobs available to local communities. Attendees were asked for their views on a wide range of issues including: environmental improvements; use of buildings, streets and open spaces; methods of travel to, from and around the town centre; shops, services and facilities in the town centre; and the type of jobs on offer.

Workshop participants scoped a wide range of opportunities for town centre renewal and diversification aimed at ensuring Nairn could maintain its relevance for local people, businesses and visitors. Online comments were received from a number of stakeholders who were unable to attend the workshop. Appendix A summarises the workshop process and outputs.

## Planning Policy

Local Development Plan policy for Nairn is detailed in the Inner Moray Firth Proposed Local Development Plan (IMFLDP), which sets out the Council's proposed policies and land allocations to guide development in the Inner Moray Firth area over the next 20 years. The development plan highlights a clear objective to strengthen Nairn's historic town centre with a specific focus on promoting uses that add to commercial vitality and viability, improve the physical appearance of the town centre and increase pedestrian links and footfall to the High Street. It confirms that the Council will not support development that is likely to have an adverse effect on the town centre's vitality and viability. Developers whose proposals generate significant footfall must apply a sequential "town centre first" approach to selecting a development site. Where an out-of-town site is proposed the developer must justify why locations in or near Nairn town centre are not suitable.

The Nairn Town Centre Development Brief (2011) focuses on the regeneration of the area between King Street and the High Street, where open space and vacant or underutilised buildings detract from the physical appearance and vitality of the town. The purpose of the



brief is to identify and promote opportunities and actions for the redevelopment of this important town centre gateway.

*Figure 1: Nairn Town Centre Development Brief Area*

## Extent of Town Centre

The extent of Nairn town centre put forward in this Action Plan is driven by outcomes and considerations addressed in the recent public consultation. The plan is focused around the main commercial and administrative activities on the High Street but also takes into account King Street (A96) to the west and the river to the east.



*Figure 2: Nairn, early 19<sup>th</sup> century, showing the structure of places and spaces*



*Figure 3: Aerial view of Nairn Town Centre circa 2010*

## Property Market Review

The Town Centre Action Plan takes account of relevant policy issues along with the following review of property market forces affecting the town centre, carried out in May 2014:

### Residential

The Highland Council has a target to provide 5,000 new homes across the Highlands by 2017, including at least 688 new council houses following a 15-year gap in council house-building. The Highland Council has partnered with local organisations to provide affordable housing. New housing projects delivered in Nairn include 24 units at Lochloy (with a mix of council and housing association rent and low cost ownership) and 16 affordable units at the former bus station within the town centre.

Land south of Lochloy Road has been subject to housing development over the past few years. This is set to continue with Springfield Homes having recently received planning permission for 178 homes. In addition, there is a proposals pending at Delnies for up to 300 homes.

### **Retail**

Retail units in Nairn town centre are located along the High Street and its immediate surroundings, including Leopold Street and the Co-op supermarket on King Street. These streets accommodate a variety of national and independent retailers including bakeries, delicatessens, pharmacies, newsagents, clothes and home furnishing shops, banks, a florist, hardware shop and book shop. Supermarkets include Co-op stores on King Street and the High Street, Scotmid (Forres Road) and Sainsbury (Forres Road). Smaller Co-op outlets operate at Moss-side Road and Inverness Road (Filling Station).

Retailing in Nairn town centre has faced a challenge in recent years, mirroring experience in many small to medium-sized towns across Scotland. This has led to the closure of a number of High Street businesses, some linked to national closures that affect various locations such as Blockbuster, Victoria Wine and DE Shoes. Nairn's retail market appears to be operating smoothly, however, with the High Street recovering relatively quick from shop closures. Although there is little demand from national retailers, vacancies tend to be filled by local businesses. In May 2014 two national retailers had a requirement to open a store in a location like Nairn, the Card Factory (Scotland) and Yorkshire Tile Company.

Across the UK, small to medium-sized towns are currently squeezed between prime city destinations, out-of-town retail parks and superstores, and migration of expenditure on-line. Against a background of weak consumer expenditure growth the retail sector continues to face a challenging outlook. According to the Scottish Retail Consortium/ KPMG in December 2014, total retail sales were 1.8% lower than December 2013 and in 2013, internet sales accounted for 10% of total retail sales.

### **Employment Property**

There is little demand for employment property in Nairn. This is mainly due to its close proximity to Inverness, which continues to expand steadily.

The majority of office space in Nairn is situated either within the town centre or at Balmakeith Business Park. In May 2014 there were approximately 22 office units on the High Street, including eight that were vacant and six units on King Street, of which five were vacant. Seven of the vacant office units were within Barron House, which was sold at auction in 2013 and has since been the subject of a full planning application and listed building consent to change the use class from offices to residential units.

Balmakeith Business Park has 13 units. There are 2 vacant units at Balmakeith Business Park, one of these is an office unit of 183 sqm.

Balmakeith Industrial Estate is Nairn's key industrial estate, comprising approximately 35 units containing a mix of commercial and industrial workshops/warehouses, stores and compounds. In May 2014 five units were vacant.

### **Tourism**

Nairn has 10 hotels and 28 B&B's and Guest Houses. Since the economic downturn in 2008, activity in this sector appears to have slowed with more leisure property becoming available than deals being made.



## 2. Town Centre Action Plan

### Themes and proposals

The workshop and public consultation held in May 2014 produced a range of ideas, projects and concepts for renewing Nairn town centre. These reflect the vision and principles addressed by workshop attendees while considering issues that affect the vitality and viability of the town, in particular: accessibility, economy, community and environmental impacts (see Appendix A).

The public consultation identified fourteen tangible proposals that could, over time, deliver economic, environmental and social benefits for the town and wider area. These have been categorised into three key themes:

1. Improve High Street environment and expand activities
2. Make better use of area between King Street and the High Street
3. Improve walking and cycling links between the town centre and surroundings.

### Town Centre Action Plan

The Town Centre Action Plan has been configured to reflect the themes and proposals identified in the public consultation. It summarises both the rationale captured at the workshop and issues that arose from more detailed consideration of each proposal.

It is important to bear in mind that the plan is intended as a decision-making tool for investment and fund-raising rather than a precise blueprint for the future of Nairn town centre. The plan does not set out a timetable for delivery because it is anticipated that individual projects will be brought forward or amended as funding becomes available. Some proposals are readily achievable whilst others are more aspirational and long term. Some require further work to identify whether or not they are economically viable.

Proposals are not prioritised but wherever possible the plan highlights relevant issues that could impact on timing, delivery and/or funding of individual projects. It should be noted, however, that feedback from the public consultation identified the short term priority to be improving the appearance, viability and accessibility of the High Street, while other property projects were medium-to-long term aspirations. The record of short, medium and long term priorities put forward at the public consultation is presented in Appendix B.

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# Nairn Town Centre Action Plan

## Theme 1: Improve High Street environment and expand activities

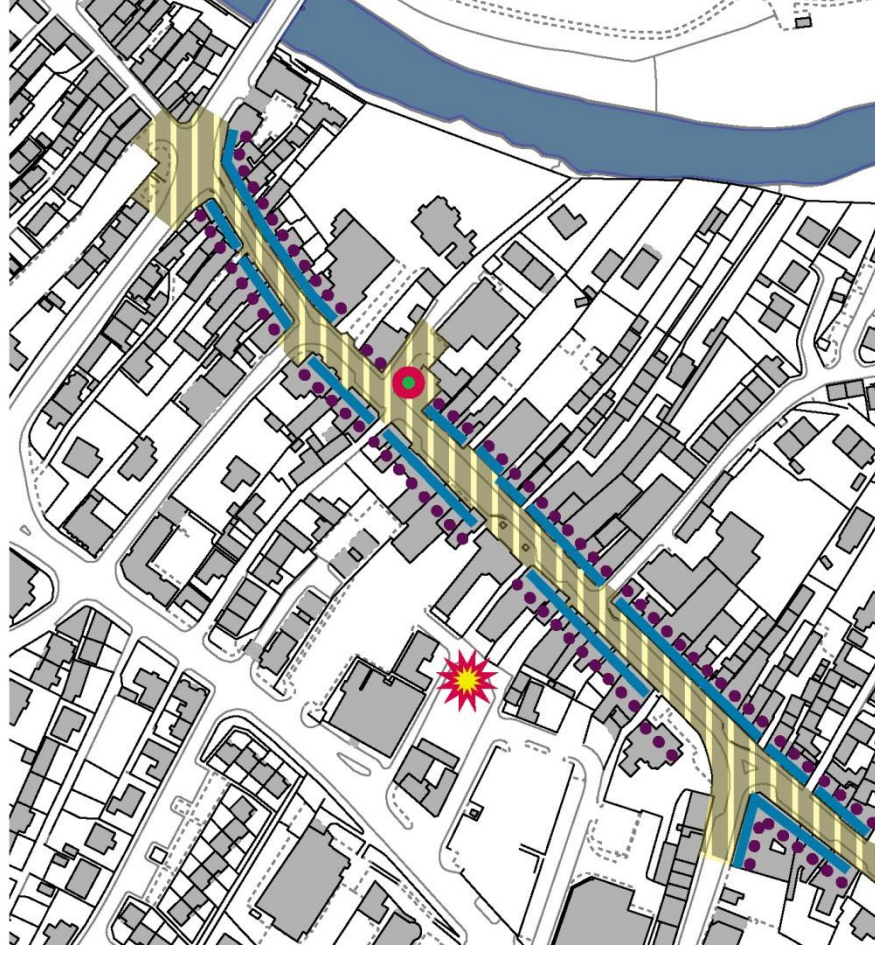
The proposals below were put forward at the public consultation event to develop this plan. They focus on increasing footfall on and to the High Street and enhancing vitality by bringing vacant property, particularly dwellings, into active use, and through development of a civic hub. They also take account of requests from workshop participants for a general clean-up of the High Street, including steps to remedy poorly maintained pavements and unattractive shop fronts.

### Proposals

1. Tidy-up High Street and improve the public realm
2. Bring upper floors back to productive use
3. Improve appearance and condition of shop fronts
4. Develop a civic hub
5. Improve appearance and amenity of Castle Square

### LEGEND

- Attractive public realm
- Shopfront enhancement
- Fully occupied upper floors
- Potential focus for civic hub
- Castle Square improvements



## Theme 1: Improve High Street environment and expand activities

### Proposals and rationale put forward at public workshop

### Issues and options arising from more detailed consideration

#### 1. Tidy-up the High Street and improve the public realm



The High Street is a key destination for residents and visitors and its appearance and condition have a significant impact on people's enjoyment of the town centre. Developing a more coordinated approach to tidying and cleaning up could encourage people to spend more time in the town centre. There is also scope to improve the quality of the public realm, including increased landscaping.

- The Council will shortly spend £130K on improvements to street lighting at a number of town centre locations including the High Street, where lamp posts will have projecting arms for the display of banners for festivals and events. In addition, new floodlighting will be installed at the Court House.
- This proposal is linked to interest in shop front improvements (Proposal 3).

#### 2. Bring upper floors back to productive use



More needs to be done to bring upper floor properties on the High Street back to productive commercial or residential use. Converting redundant space into dwellings is a viable and vital use of upper storeys and could expand the choice of housing type and tenure for Nairn residents.

- Nairn is one of three Highland locations identified by the Council's Housing team to pilot a Scottish Government scheme aimed at bringing empty properties back into affordable housing use.
- The Council is interested in hearing from property owners wishing to access funding to bring property up to a suitable affordable housing standard, or assist the Council or a partner organisation to purchase properties and bring them into affordable housing use.
- The Council is exploring the viability of converting the upper floors of the Victoria Hotel to residential accommodation because the building is currently for sale.

## Proposals and rationale put forward at public workshop

### 3. Improve appearance and condition of shop fronts



The High Street's traditional shop fronts make a significant contribution to the character and attractiveness of the town centre. Coordinating and improving their appearance, including repair and reinstatement of traditional features, could attract more shoppers and visitors.

### Issues and options arising from more detailed consideration

- The Council's Ward Manager has been working the Association of Nairn Businesses to review the existing small grants scheme for shop front improvements. The scheme will be re-launched in April 2015.
- Improvements will be funded by small grants matched by investment from shop owners/traders, which is typical of shop front schemes elsewhere in Scotland.
- This proposal is linked to interest in tidying up the High Street (Proposal 1).

### 4. Develop a civic hub



Workshop participants wished to see a civic hub in the town centre providing a range of community and visitor services, for example, the library, citizens' advice, tourist information, museum or other public services. Nairn Court House may have potential to accommodate some new services particularly if extended to the rear to create a new frontage to the space between King Street and the High Street.

- The Council is exploring options to consolidate and improve service delivery in Nairn town centre.
- Nairn Court House is a B-Listed Building and prominent town centre landmark. It has been in continuous municipal use since early 19<sup>th</sup> century and is currently the administrative centre for official Council business in Nairn-shire. It is the Council's local Service Point and also accommodates meeting rooms and offices for Council staff.
- New uses and services in the Court House would have to be compatible with the building's historic layout. Alterations would have to respect the fabric and character of the Listed Building.
- Nairn Library currently occupies a former supermarket premises on the High Street including rear car parking, leased to the Council by a private landlord. Its High Street location generates one of the highest footfalls of all Highland libraries. The library is operated by High Life Highland, a charity formed by the Council to promote culture, leisure and sport.
- Nairn Museum has no current plan to relocate from Viewfield House.
- This proposal could overlap with Proposals 6 and 7 to convert existing buildings, and Proposal 9 to establish a new town square.

## Proposals and rationale put forward at public workshop

### 5. Improve appearance and amenity of Castle Square



Castle Square is a valued, attractive town centre landmark. Its status as an important public open space should be maintained and enhanced. This could include, for example, use of vegetation to soften the space, or appropriate public art.

### Issues and options arising from more detailed consideration

- The Council recently undertook minor improvements to the square, including the introduction of a public notice board.
- The Council is scoping options for the installation of external power points at the Square for use during public events and activities such as film screenings.
- The Nairn Economic Initiative is scoping options for softening the appearance of Castle Square, such as the introduction of self-watering planters.
- It may be appropriate to carry out similar enhancements at Academical Square (west end of the High Street).

## Nairn Town Centre Action Plan

### Theme 2: Make better use of area between King Street and the High Street

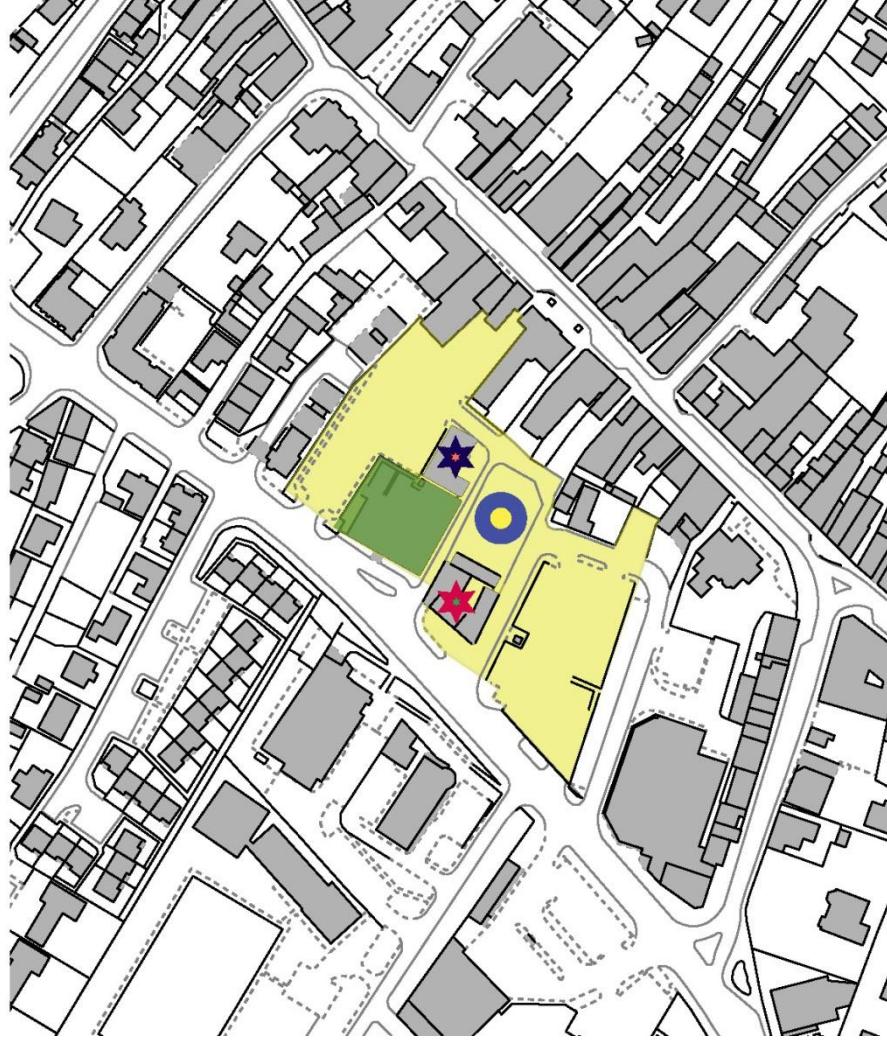
The proposals below were put forward at the public consultation event to develop this plan. They reflect a need to improve the attractiveness of open space in the town centre and increase vitality by finding new uses for buildings and spaces. This area has significant potential to benefit from the introduction of the Nairn by-pass, when King Street will be “de-trunked” and streets and open space could be made more attractive for walking, cycling, sitting and other social activity.

#### Proposals

6. Establish a new Town Square
7. Provide new multi-function space
8. Reconfigure car-parking to achieve more efficient use of space
9. Bring the Council’s former social work building back into use
10. Convert the Council’s Finance Office to civic use

#### LEGEND

- Reconfigured car parking
- Potential multi-function space
- Former Social Work office
- Council Finance Office
- Potential town square



## Theme 2: Make better use of area between King Street and the High Street

### Proposals and rationale put forward at public workshop

### Issues and options arising from more detailed consideration

#### 6. Establish a new Town Square



Nairn currently lacks a large, attractive outdoor space that can accommodate community activity in the town centre. A new town square could contribute to the viability of other proposals identified in the Action Plan. A flexible demountable canopy could maximise potential for all-weather use.

- A town square's vitality relies on it being well linked to popular walking routes, well-overlooked and surrounded by active ground floor uses.
- An appropriate location could be identified through the development of a masterplan for the area between the High Street and King Street, which should also set out proposals for buildings, land use, parking and movement, including improvements to east-west walking and cycling links (Proposal 11). The masterplan could be a key tool in identifying opportunities for this area following the de-trunking of the A96 (Proposal 14).
- A new town square has potential to overlap with the provision of a new multi-function space (10).

#### 7. Provide a new multi-function space



An attractive new multi-functional outdoor space would be an asset for the town centre because it could accommodate a range of economic, social and cultural activities as well as public events. When not in use it could serve as a town centre car park.

- The Council is currently investigating a suitable location and design for a demountable canopy with a view to preparing cost estimates and identifying funding options.
- This proposal could impact on the re-configuration of town centre car parking (Proposal 6).

#### 8. Reconfigure car-parking to achieve more efficient use of space



Car parks in this area need to be safer and more attractive with good pedestrian access, attractive landscaping, and improved surfacing, lighting and wayfinding. Consideration could also be given to coach parking.

- Car park rationalisation and/or environmental improvements need to take into account multiple ownership of parking spaces, including spaces dedicated to specific uses, properties and services.
- A mapping exercise to clarify ownership of open space, including parking, would be a useful starting point to address this proposal.
- The proposal would enhance the setting of surrounding buildings and increase potential for adaptive re-use (Proposals 9 and 10). It should address the need to improve east-west walking and cycling links to/from the High Street (Proposal 11).
- Car park reconfiguration would be addressed in a masterplan (see Proposal 6).



## Proposals and rationale put forward at public workshop

### 9. Convert the Council's Finance Office to civic use



If adapted to serve a more active public use, this attractive building could support the establishment of a new town square. Any change of use must ensure that Council employees based in this building are re-located within the town centre.

### Issues and options arising from more detailed consideration

- Council-owned, 19<sup>th</sup> C, B-Listed Building (former school) in active use as office accommodation.
  - Renovated and adapted to accommodate 19 Council employees as part of the Council's commitment to job dispersal that promotes economic activity in Highland towns. No Council funding is available to cover the cost of re-locating this team in Nairn town centre.
  - New uses would have to be compatible with the building's appearance and layout, and respect the fabric and character of the Listed Building;
  - This building has significant potential to become an attractive historic landmark if its setting can be improved, in particular the layout and character of surrounding car-parks (Proposal 6). The Council is currently investigating options for floodlighting the building to highlight its historic character and improve the safety/security of its surroundings.
  - Converting this building to civic use could complement Proposal 9 to establish a new town square.
- 
- Council-owned buildings, including public toilets. Office space vacant and no longer required for Council use.
  - Nairn Improvement Community Enterprise (NICE) recently considered options for adaption to community use.
  - As part of the ongoing rationalisation of the Council's property portfolio, this building will shortly be advertised for sale.
  - This building is suited to residential use, which would be particularly compatible with Proposal 14 to reinstate King Street's original town centre character following de-trunking of the A96.

### 10. Bring former THC social work site back into use



This former office building is vacant and its prominent site should be brought back to productive use, ideally serving a community/cultural purpose.

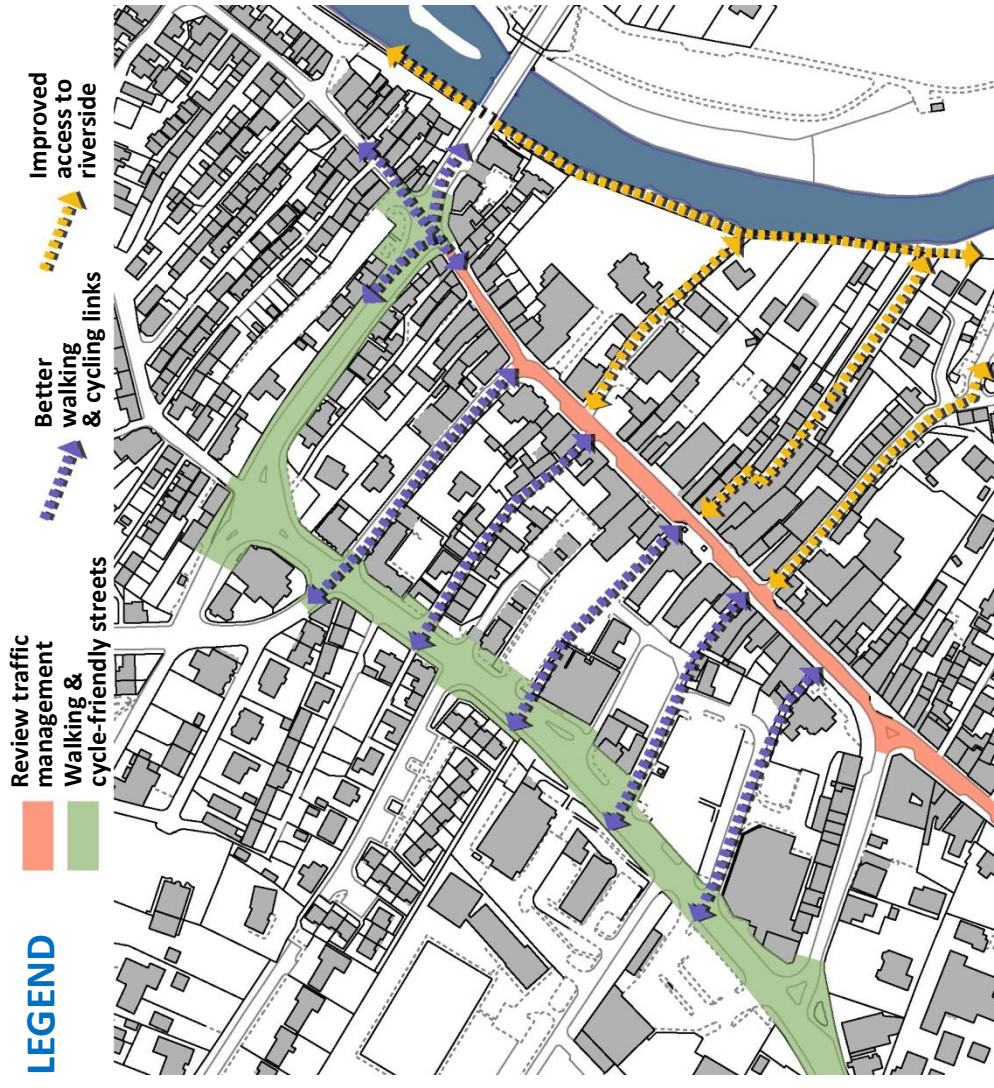
## Nairn Town Centre Action Plan

### Theme 3: Improve walking and cycling links between town centre and surroundings

The proposals below were put forward at the public consultation event to develop this plan. They reflect a keen interest in signposting and strengthening connections between the town centre and the wealth of assets and attractions that lie within easy walking and cycling distance of the High Street, including the river, fishertown, links, museum, rail station, golf course, harbour, beach and campsite. They are recognition that small improvements to connectivity within the town centre could have a big impact on increasing accessibility to and from the wider area.

#### Proposals

11. Improve walking and cycling links between the High Street and King Street
12. Promote better walking links between the town centre and the river
13. Review and improve traffic management on the High Street
14. Reinstate King Street (A96) as a vibrant town centre street that balances the needs of pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles



## Theme 3: Improve walking and cycling links between the town centre and surroundings

### Proposals and rationale put forward at public workshop

#### 11. Improve walking and cycling links to and from the High Street



Improving east-west connections is a key priority for the town centre, as is the need to strengthen walking and cycling links to the coast. The opportunity to create new links should be considered as and when development opportunities arise. Nairn has a rich tradition of pedestrian vennels connecting the High Street to adjacent surroundings. The appearance and condition of some vennels need to be improved, including better lighting, landscaping and where appropriate, tree-planting. Clean, well maintained vennels enhance the character of the town and provide excellent walking links.

#### Issues and options arising from more detailed consideration

- The Council will shortly spend £130K on improvements to street lighting at a number of town centre locations, including some High Street vennels.
- This proposal is linked to the requirement to re-configure car parking (Proposal 8). It should also be a key priority in delivering Proposal 14 to reinstate King Street (A96) as a vibrant town centre street.
- Some vennels are in private ownership, which means that maintenance is the responsibility of the owner.
- The Nairn Active Travel Masterplan produced for the Council in 2010 suggests a range of potential improvements to promote active travel in the town centre, including a Core Network of active travel routes, pedestrian crossings, cycle parking, cycle lanes/routes and signage.

#### 12. Promote better walking links between the town centre and the river



Although the river is just a few minutes' walk from the High Street, access from the town centre is very limited and some parts of the riverbank are unsuitable for walking. Paths need to be better signposted, more attractive and more accessible. Better links from the High Street, combined with an attractive riverside walk, would be a significant asset for the town centre.

- This proposal is a good fit with current government priorities to improve “green infrastructure” in Scottish towns.
- Sources of funding for community-led green infrastructure projects include the Highland LEADER programme and Scottish Natural Heritage.
- More information on potential funding sources is available in Section 3.

## Theme 3: Improve walking and cycling links between the town centre and surroundings

### Proposals and rationale put forward at public workshop

#### 13. Review and improve traffic management on the High Street



A review of traffic management is needed to address on-street car parking, traffic regulation enforcement, business/retailer servicing and to better balance the needs of all people using the High Street to access businesses, shops and homes. Suggestions include enforcing loading and waiting restrictions and the introduction of shared surfaces at key locations, such as the Court House.

#### Issues and options arising from more detailed consideration

- Since Police Scotland withdrew Traffic Warden Services across Scotland in February 2014, and in line with other Scottish Local Authorities, the Council is preparing to decriminalise certain parking offences including restrictions on “on-street” parking, waiting and loading. The Council will instead employ wardens to place penalty charges on vehicles parked in contravention of Traffic Regulation Orders. Unlike the previous system, these fines will be owed to the Council. It is expected these changes will be introduced to the Highlands in 2016.
- The Council is proposing to introduce a 20mph speed limit in Nairn town centre and some adjacent residential streets. Initial formal consultation has been completed, including consultation with local Members, statutory consultees and relevant Community Councils. Public consultation will be undertaken in 2015 and the scheme will be implemented, as appropriate, thereafter.
- The Nairn Active Travel Masterplan produced for the Council in 2010 suggests potential improvements to poor traffic management on the High Street including increasing pedestrian space; introduction of a contra-flow cycle lane, cycle parking, access restrictions, tactile paving.

#### 14. Reinstate King Street (A96) as a vibrant town centre street that balances the needs of pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles



Looking ahead, traffic levels on King Street will reduce significantly when the Nairn by pass is in place. King Street could be reinstated as a lively town centre street providing a safe, attractive route for pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles. Improvements should include traffic calming, tree planting and landscaping as well as easy crossing points to the museum, community centre etc.

- The reinstatement of King Street could be addressed through the masterplan suggested in Proposal 6 above, which should focus on bringing activity back to the street, particularly at ground floor level, and achieving a better balance between vehicle, pedestrian, and cycle movement.
- This proposal is linked to better walking and cycling links to/from the High Street (Proposal 11) and car park re-configuration (Proposal 8).

## 3. Implementation

### Partnership approach

Successful delivery of Town Centre proposals is likely to involve collaborative action on the part of a wide range of stakeholders, including local community groups, property owners, Council Services, Elected Members and Community Planning Partners such as HIE and SNH.

Nairn has a strong tradition of community spirit and an active voluntary sector that is already focussed on raising the profile of the town as a place to live, work, visit and operate a business.

Wherever possible, The Highland Council will align investment in Nairn town centre with proposals set out in this action plan. It is clear, however, that the Council's limited resources are not sufficient to deliver proposals single-handedly. The Council will encourage and support local stakeholders to work collaboratively on securing funding from external sources such as, for example, the Scottish Government, SSE, Highland LEADER 2014-2020, and the National Lottery.

It is likely that larger projects will require organisations and groups to work in partnership with each other to take ownership of individual projects, build relationships with local audiences, develop proposals and cost estimates, identify relevant funding sources and apply for and secure funding.

Collaborating with other Highland towns facing similar challenges may bring benefits and opportunities, including the potential to pool resources, share best practice and pursue large-scale funding packages.

In some instances it may be necessary or desirable to lever in private sector investment to secure public sector funding. Most private sector partners will prioritise an acceptable return on investment, whether in the form of capital receipt from site or property sales, or a steady rental income.

Both public sector grant funding and private sector investment are likely to require financial appraisal of project proposals to assess the potential to deliver acceptable outputs and/or return on investment. They are also likely to require clear evidence of community support secured through public consultation.

### Potential sources of funding and support

Sources of local and national funding that could be of direct relevance to Nairn town centre projects are highlighted in Boxes A and B on the following pages.

## Box A: Sources of grant funding for community projects in the Highlands

### Highland LEADER (2014-2020) Programme

LEADER is a European Union Community Initiative to support economic and community development within rural areas. The last LEADER programme ran from 2007-2013 and provided funding of around £14 million to 371 projects in Highland.

Following recent public consultation Highland LEADER finalised a Draft Local Development Strategy and Business Plan for the new 2014-2020 LEADER Programme that will determine the kinds of projects this funding can support over the next six years. Highland LEADER is finalising a Local Development Strategy for the new programme that will be submitted for Scottish Government approval in the next few months. If approved the programme is expected to allocate funding according to four strategic themes:

1. Stronger and more resilient communities
2. A growing and diversified economy that promotes sustainability
3. Increased and sustained local services and activities
4. Enhanced cultural, natural and heritage assets.

Information on the new programme will be available on the LEADER website:

<http://www.highlandleader.com/>

### SSE Highland Sustainable Development Fund

SSE launched its Highland Sustainable Development Fund in November 2013 as part of a programme of support for strategic projects in regions where SSE is developing its renewable energy projects. To date the fund has awarded £1million to Highland projects that include: a new visitor centre, shop and bespoke retail units for start-up businesses; fitting out new affordable housing; community runrigs; a community broadband service; renewable energy projects; skills development; and a community buy-out.

<http://sse.com/beingresponsible/responsiblecommunitymember/sustainablefund/>

## Scotland's Towns Partnership

Scotland's Towns Partnership (STP) is a member organisation launched in 2012 to share good practice, campaign for and support initiatives that improve the economic performance of Scotland's towns and high streets. Appendix C lists a wide range of funding sources identified in STP's Town Funding Finder. Detailed information on these funding streams is available from the Council's Ward Manager.

STP membership is currently restricted to companies and organisations but preparations are underway to expand the partnership to include community groups working on town centre initiatives. Membership benefits include access to a regularly updated Town Funding Finder containing a comprehensive list of live grant funds. Information on community membership will shortly be available on STP's website: <http://www.scotlandstowns.org/>

## Box B: Sources of grant funding for community projects in Scotland

### Scottish Land Fund

The Scottish Land Fund supports rural communities to become more resilient and sustainable through the ownership and management of land and land assets, including buildings. The fund is open to organisations that are community-led, community-controlled, and defined by a geographical area, including settlements with a population of less than 10,000. The Scottish Land Fund can fund up to 95% of project costs including the purchase price of the land or land assets, professional and legal fees associated with the purchase, and some initial help with running costs. Organisations can apply for a grant of between £10,000 and £750,000.

<https://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/global-content/programmes/scotland/scottish-land-fund>

### Investing in Communities: Growing Community Assets

Investing in Communities: Growing Community Assets is a Big Lottery programme designed to support communities to take more control and influence over their own future through ownership of assets. These are usually physical assets, such as land, buildings or equipment, but may also include other types of asset such as energy. Funding awards range from £10,000 to £1million. <https://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/scotland>

### Awards for All Scotland

Awards For All Scotland is a Big Lottery programme offering grants ranging from £500 to £10,000 for projects that involve bringing local people together, helping people learn, improving local spaces and getting people more active. The award scheme is open to not-for-profit / voluntary or community groups, social enterprises, community councils, schools and statutory bodies.

<https://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/global-content/programmes/scotland/awards-for-all-scotland>

### Heritage Lottery Fund

Since 1994 the Heritage Lottery Fund has been the largest dedicated funder of heritage projects in the UK supporting the full breadth of natural, cultural and built heritage.

HLF Scotland offers a wide range of options for organisations and community groups to secure funding for built heritage projects - from small scale Start-up Grants for the creation of a new organisation to look after heritage to Heritage Grants in excess of £100,000 to rescue a historic building. <http://www.hlf.org.uk/looking-funding>

## Highlands and Islands Enterprise

Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE) is the Scottish Government's economic and community development agency for the north and west of Scotland, whose purpose is to generate sustainable economic growth across the Highlands and Islands. HIE aims to increase the role of communities in the ownership and sustainable management of land and assets for the benefit of the community. Across the Highlands and Islands, over 420,000 acres (170,000 ha.) of land are now owned and/or managed by local

communities, ranging from large estates such as in South Uist, to smaller assets including community owned shops, industrial units and lighthouses.

Land and other assets can be vital resources in the development of resilient rural communities. HIE can support community groups considering the acquisition and development of assets with advice and information, and potentially funding. This can offer communities the freedom to develop valuable local services, create income streams and provide environmental benefits for their areas.

HIE is interested in supporting the purchase of income-generating assets that will meet an identified need within the community. There should be a clear vision of what the asset will be used for and how it will make a difference to the community. It is also important to consider how the asset will be managed once it is in community ownership. Together with community consultation, demonstrating the viability of a project through a business plan is a critical step in the process.

Box C below sets out a typical sequence of events in the acquisition of a development asset by a community with support from HIE. The sequence may vary and some activities will happen concurrently. Local circumstances and the type of asset to be acquired will also have an influence on the process.

### **Box C: Typical steps in community acquisition of a development asset**

- Identify needs within the local area through community consultation
- Prioritise the needs identified by undertaking a needs analysis
- Look at different ways to address the needs through an options appraisal
- Investigate two or three of the most appropriate options in a feasibility study
- Compile a business plan to give details of how the preferred option will operate
- Obtain a valuation of the asset. The valuation, which should be undertaken by a valuer registered with the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (RICS), may highlight some issues which need to be investigated further. A valuation report expires after a certain period of time and this should be kept in mind when deciding when to instruct a valuation as funders/lenders will not accept out of date valuations
- Remember that there will be legal fees associated with the purchase. This will include work to ensure the property has good title and also to manage the transfer of ownership
- Ensure the organisation's governing document allows it to own property
- Raise the funds to enable the purchase. Funding packages can involve grants, borrowing and fundraising. It is important to liaise closely with your proposed funding sources as each will have different requirements, obligations and timescales. This can become quite complex and needs careful management. Commercial borrowing is an increasing component of community acquisitions and the repayments need to feature in the business plan.



## Fiscal incentives

The Highland Council maintains a watching brief on support and funding opportunities arising from the Scottish Government's response to the recent National Review of Town Centres. Potential initiatives include a roll-out of Town Centre Investment Zones, where discretionary rates relief could support local businesses, and the promotion of Fresh Start rates relief to bring vacant premises back into use.

## The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Bill

The Scottish Parliament's forthcoming legislation on community empowerment could have a significant impact on Scottish town centres because it will enable greater community control over land and buildings. The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Bill was introduced to the Parliament in June 2014 and, on publication of the Action Plan, is in the first stage of becoming legislation.

The Bill defines community empowerment as '...a process where people work together to make change happen in their communities by having more power and influence over what matters to them.' It aims to broaden community right to buy land and buildings and make purchase easier including:

- Extending community right to buy to urban as well as rural communities, lifting the 10,000+ population exclusion so that all of Scotland is included;
- Enabling community groups to buy abandoned or neglected land and buildings, even if the owner does not want to sell, and subject to Ministerial approval;
- Streamlining the processes for purchase and clarifying aspects of the process including defining communities and group eligibility, ballot arrangements, extending the period for concluding sales, dealing with late applications and the valuation process.

The Bill recognises renewed interest in community growing, and re-defines allotments as land owned or leased by a local authority on a non-profit basis to grow vegetables, fruit, herbs or flowers. Councils must keep a waiting list for allotments and take reasonable steps to provide more allotments if the list becomes too long.

The Bill also provides for community organisations to request ownership, lease or management of publicly owned buildings or land, whether or not they are available for sale or deemed surplus to requirements by the owning body. The initiative is placed with communities and their requests must be granted unless there are reasonable grounds for refusal. Public bodies must also respond to information requests about the assets it holds. Communities have the right to appeal to Ministers where requests are refused; although for Councils the appeal route is through the Council's own appeals process. If an asset transfer is agreed, the public authority must make an offer to the community body within 6 months, unless the community body and public authority agree to an extension.

## Workshop process and outputs

On 30 April and 1 May 2014, a charrette was held to develop an action plan for Nairn town centre. The charette was a stakeholder engagement workshop that promoted a collaborative approach to considering the issues facing Nairn town centre. It focused on delivery and implementation.

The charrette for Nairn town centre ran at the Court House in Nairn on 30 April and 1 May 2014. It provided a process to build shared outcomes for regenerating the town centre. The approach promoted meaningful collaboration. By working together stakeholders developed solutions jointly and found common ground that allowed pragmatic and deliverable proposals to be developed.

The charrette provided a framework for developing a culture of collaboration, with stakeholders acting jointly to find solutions for the issues facing the Nairn town centre.

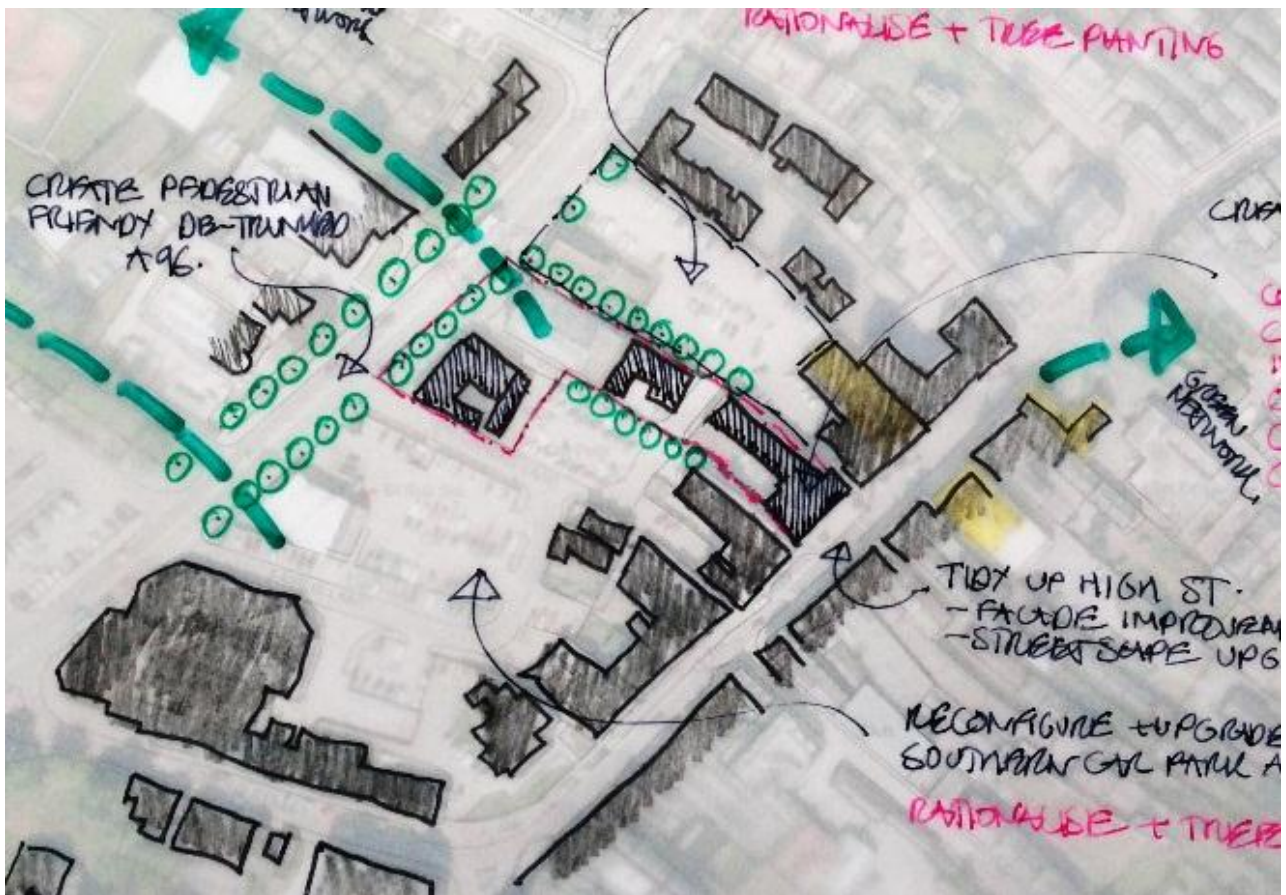
The charrette worked over two sessions where parallel events were held for stakeholders from:

- The Highland Council (THC).
- Local residents.
- Local groups.
- Elected members of THC.

**Session 1 - Option Development** – held on 30 April introduced and established the background to the charrette. Constraints and opportunities were examined. Stakeholders registered their expectations and requirements. The Town Centre Brief was briefly reviewed. Ideas and proposals were generated by the stakeholders. Principles and vision were developed. In developing proposals, stakeholders suggested that The Highland Council could lead on publishing information about what businesses and property owners can do for themselves, including potential sources of funding.



## Stakeholder Ideas and Proposals: Residents



**Vision: 'Shaped by the community: Valued by all'**

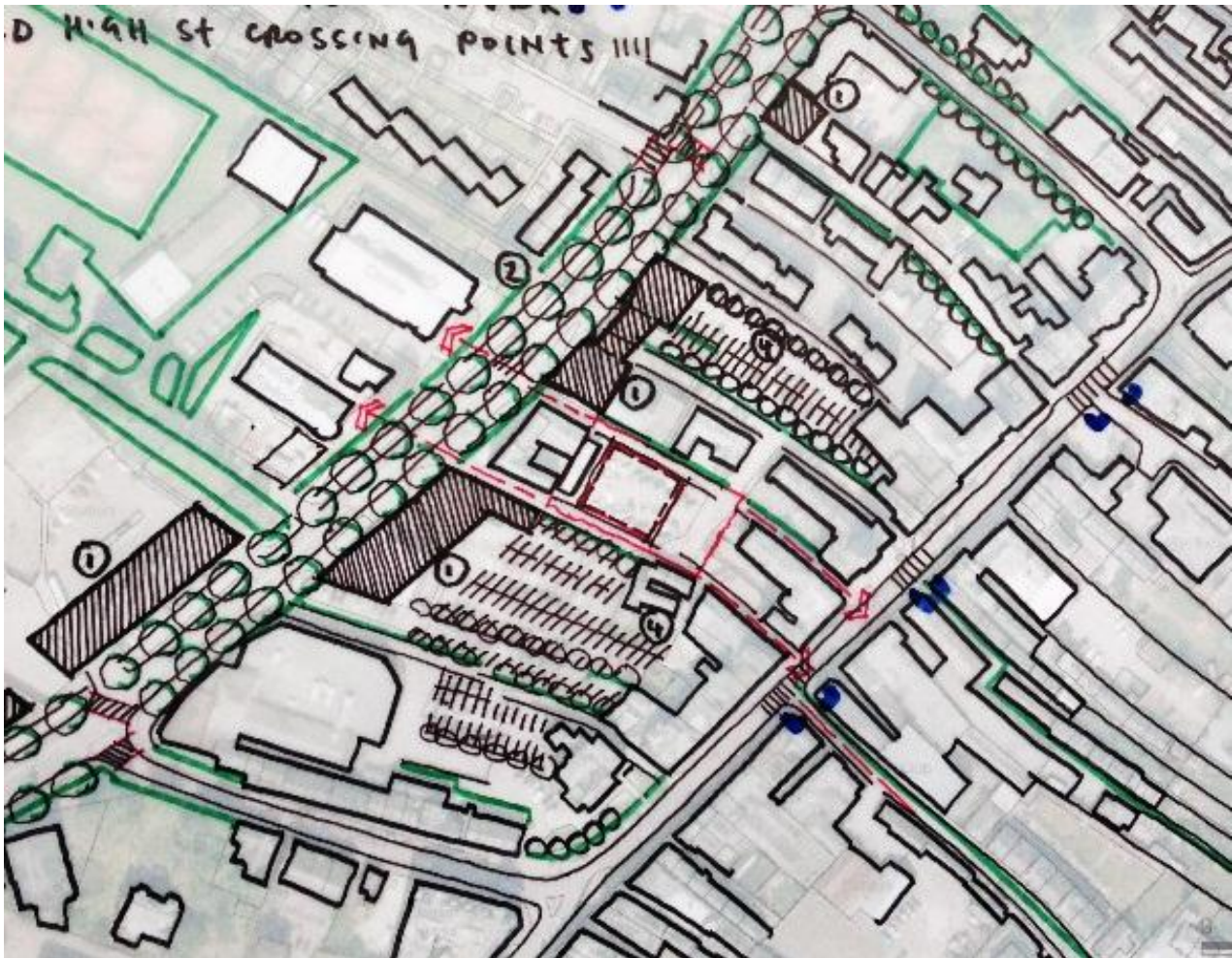
### Proposals

Focused around the Court House promoting a cultural hub. More efficient parking and using tree planting to promote better linkages to, from and in the town centre.

### Suggestions:

- Use the Court House as Tourist Coordination Centre/ Cultural Centre.
- Tidy up High Street
- Upgrade footpath network
- Attract big sporting events
- Need family focused evening economy
- Reconfigure car parking areas.
- Make King Street pedestrian friendly.
- Create tree lined links between King Street and High Street
- Facilitate linkages from town centre to wider attractions.

## Stakeholder Ideas and Proposals: Local Interest Groups



### Vision: 'Activity: Culture: Heritage'

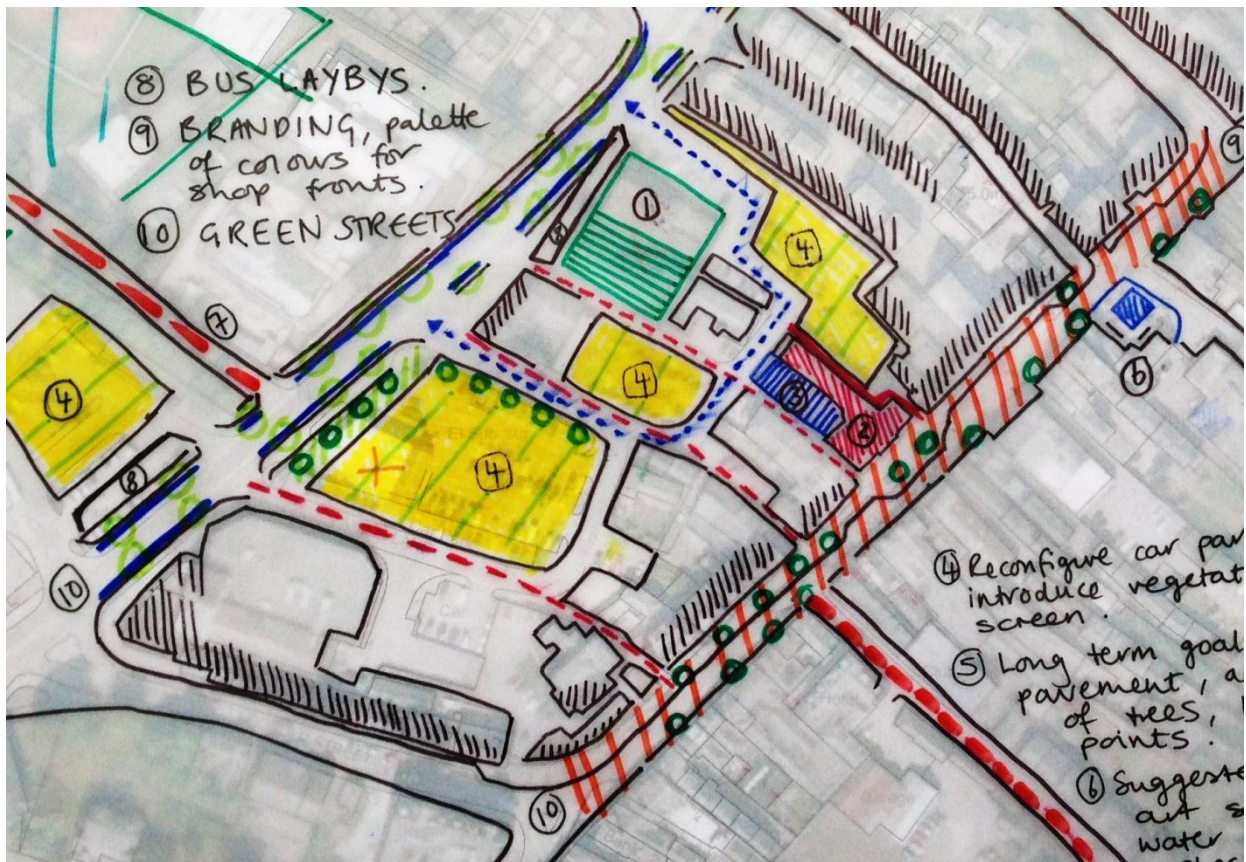
#### Proposals

Focused on re-establishing King Street as an important town centre street (with new buildings fronting). Ensure good linkages and crossings. Rationalise car parking as a result.

#### Suggestions:

- Improve connectivity to the park, river, through vennels, and at crossings (including *greening feus*).
- Rationalise parking.
- Create a new civic town square.
- Create new buildings fronting on to King Street.
- Green King Street.
- Improve crossings on King Street

## Stakeholder Ideas and Proposals: Elected Members



### Vision: 'Nairn town centre first'

#### Proposals

Focused around the Court House promoting a central community hub. More efficient parking and better use of space for different uses. Making sure linkages are attractive.

#### Suggestions:

- Create a central 'hub' of activity, located in the Court House including the library, Citizens' Advice Bureau, museum.
- A contemporary extension at back of Court House facing towards King Street.
- Create a multipurpose covered space for events such as markets (could accommodate parking when not being used).
- Configure car, bus and bike parking more efficiently.
- Strong, attractive links around town centre including trees and lighting.
- Public art at Castle Square.
- A *green* High Street and King Street.

## Stakeholder Ideas and Proposals: Council Officials



**Vision: 'Shaped by the community: Valued by all'**

### **Proposals**

**Ambitious proposals focused around new buildings or conversion with good linkages to river. Integrated car parking**

### **Suggestions:**

- Create a public plaza.
- Strong pedestrian linkage to High Street, River and Museum.
- Shared surface space on King Street and the High Street to improve linkage.
- Explore possibilities of a multi-storey parking building.
- New mixed use buildings fronting on to King Street.
- Restore semi-derelict church.

## Stakeholder Ideas and Proposals: Millbank Primary School pupils

Although unable to attend the workshop, 22 pupils from Millbank Primary's P4/5 class expressed the following views about the Nairn Town Centre:

### Things I like:

- Layout of pavements and paths
- Lots of places to eat
- The town clock chiming
- The grassy area beside the bank
- The flowers
- The architecture
- The library
- Tall buildings
- Big windows so you can see inside shops
- The church.

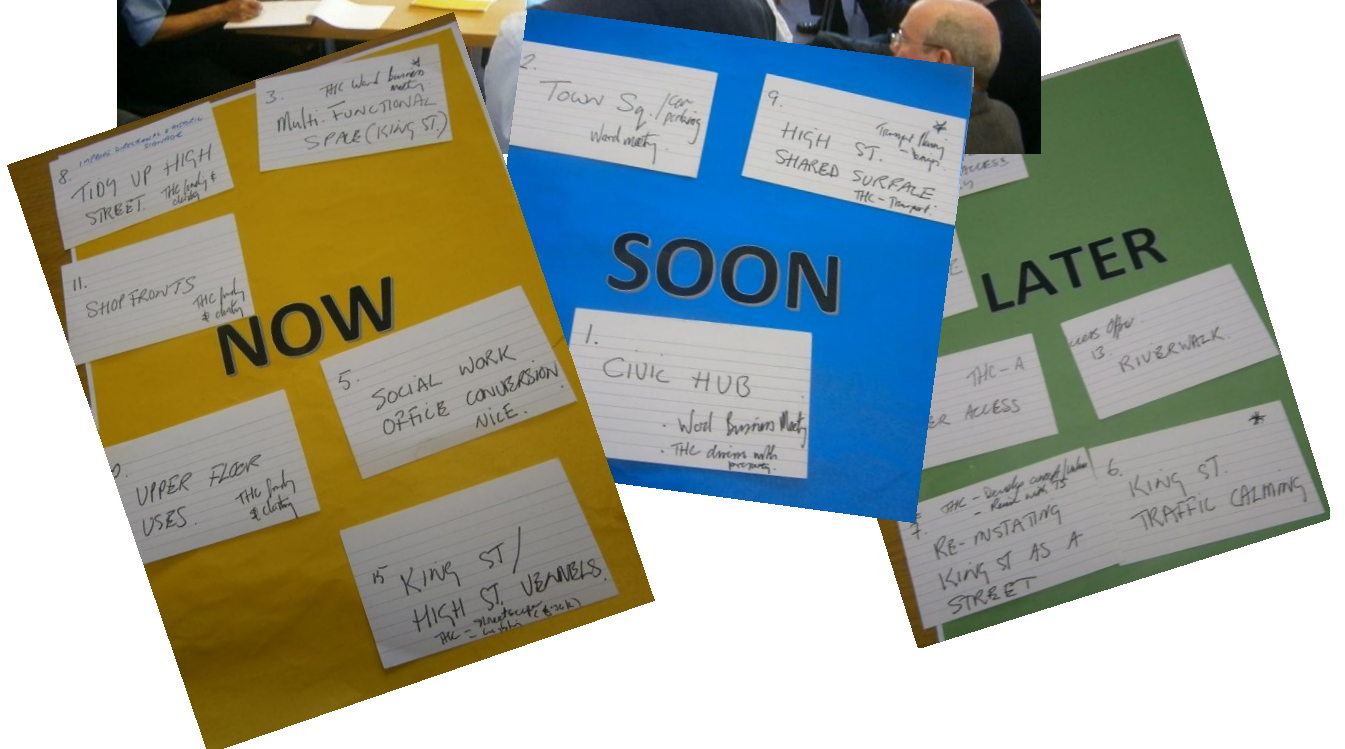
### Things I don't like:

- The one way system
- Closed shops
- Chipped paint on the walls
- Litter
- Dog mess on the pavements
- Bird mess on the pavements
- Abandoned buildings
- Lack of colour
- Dirty benches
- Cars parked badly
- Lorries unloading and blocking the street
- Graffiti

## Informing the Action Plan

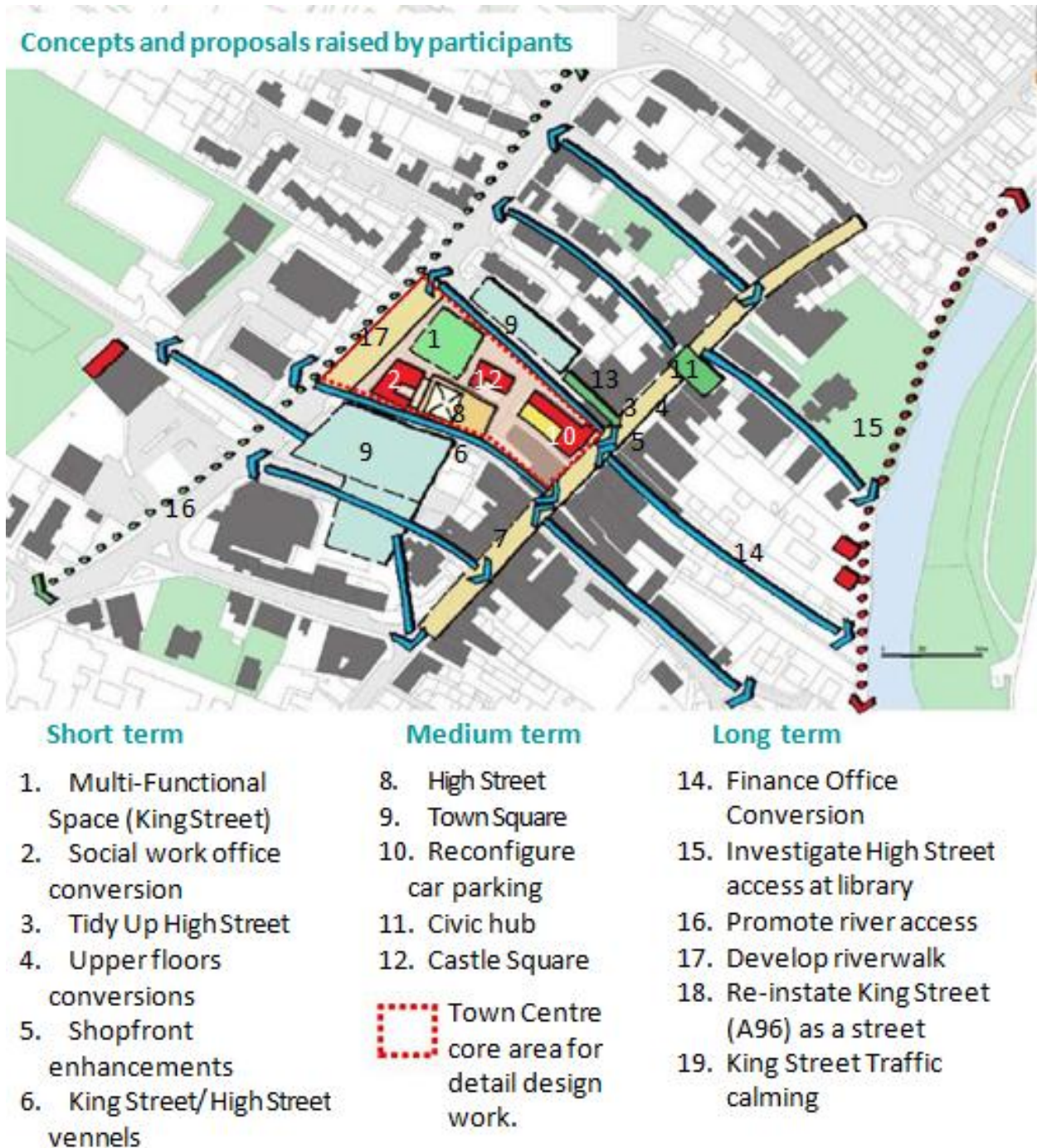
A **second session** held on 1 May assessed the ideas and proposals conceived in Session 1. This applied an appraisal to consider issues relating to accessibility, economy, community and environment – a sustainability appraisal.

Working in new groups the stakeholders considered the suggestions made for improving the town centre. The ideas were discussed. The resulted in the most attractive ideas being brought forward. These schemes and proposals formed the basis for Nairn town centre’s action plan.





## Priorities recorded at the workshop



## Scotland's Towns Partnership: Town Funding Finder (Extract)

NOTE: Detailed information on these funding streams is available from the Council's Ward Manager

### Community Funding

The Polden-Puckham Charitable Foundation  
 The MacRobert Trust - Monetary Awards  
 Peoples Postcode Trust - Small Grants Programme  
 Peoples Postcode Trust - Dream Fund  
 SITA Trust - Core Fund  
 Comic Relief Local Communities Programme  
 Trusthouse Charitable Foundation  
 The Weir Charitable Trust  
 Gordon Fraser Charitable Trust  
 Hugh Fraser Foundation  
 The Active Communities Funding Programme  
 Crerar Hotels Trust  
 Carnegie Dunfermline Trust  
 Charles Hayward - Small Grants  
 The Sylvia Waddilove Foundation UK  
 First World War: then and now  
 Comic Relief Grants - UK Main Fund  
 Communities and Family Fund – Big Lottery Fund  
 Awards for All Scotland – Big Lottery Fund  
 Glens of Foudland Windfarm Community Trust  
 Investing in Communities: Growing Community Assets  
 Investing in Communities: Life Transitions  
 Bernard Sunley Charitable Foundation  
 Rayne Foundation  
 Co-operative Membership Community Fund  
 Turemark Trust Grant  
 ASDA Foundation  
 Foyle Foundation Small Grants Charitable Trust  
 Garfield Weston Foundation  
 The Robertson Trust  
 Henry Duncan Awards - Lloyds TSB Foundation  
 Esmee Fairbairn Foundation - Main Grant  
 Foundation Scotland - Express Grants  
 Bursary Funds - Esmée Fairbairn Foundation  
 SSE - Community Funds  
 The Barrack Charitable Trust  
 Steel Charitable Trust

### Regeneration

Building Repair Grant - Historic Scotland  
 Heritage Enterprise - Heritage Lottery Fund  
 Association for Industrial Archaeology Grants (UK)  
 Sharing Heritage - Heritage Lottery Fund  
 Vacant and Derelict Land Fund  
 Business Premises Renovation Allowance HMRC

### Environment

Parks for People - Heritage Lottery fund  
 CSV Local Nature Reserve Awards  
 CSV Action Earth Awards  
 Community Action Grant - Scottish Natural Heritage  
 Natural Projects Grant - Scottish Natural Heritage  
 AquaFund  
 Recycling Innovation Fund  
 Grow Wild Funding  
 Patagonia Grant

### Healthy Towns

Cycle Friendly and Sustainable Community Fund  
 HRUK Healthy Heart Grants  
 Sport Facilities Fund - Sport Scotland  
 Barclays Community Sports Awards  
 2014 Communities – Big Lottery Fund  
 Esmee Fairbairn Foundation - Food Strand Boost  
 Think Local - SRUC

### Culture & Art

Cashback for Creativity - Creative Scotland  
 Public Art R&D - Creative Scotland  
 Public Art Sited - Creative Scotland  
 Public Engagement - Creative Scotland  
 Foyle Foundation - Main Grants Scheme  
 Foyle Foundation - Small Grants Scheme  
 BBC Performing Arts Fund  
 Creative Scotland TTS. Digital Fund

/over

## Scotland's Towns Partnership: Town Funding Finder (Extract) (con'd)

<b>Employment &amp; Training</b>	<b>Education</b>
Students Summer Placement Scheme - Comunn Na Gaidhlig	Wolfson Foundation Secondary Education Programme
Flexible Training Opportunities - Skills Development Scotland	Ernest Cook Trust (UK) Small Grants Programme
Low Carbon Skills Fund	Ernest Cook Trust (UK) Large Grants Programme
Training and Recruitment Grant Programme	<b>Energy</b>
	The Naturesave Trust



## Getting Involved

**If you would like more information or to get involved in the production of future plans please contact us in one of the following ways:**

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### Post

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### Email

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### Fax

(01463) 702298

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