

Tain Town Centre Action Plan

Plana-gnìomh Meadhan Baile Bhaile Dhubhthaich



November 2015

**TAIN
TOWN CENTRE**





Executive Summary

The Tain Town Centre Action Plan highlights a range of proposals and opportunities identified by the community and stakeholders that can deliver regeneration in Tain 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 also takes account of the opportunities that will be presented through changes to public service provision in Tain, for example the relocation of the Health Centre and Care Home, and options being explored for new education facilities. There is also a need to protect and enhance the town's significant built heritage for the benefit of both local community and the tourism industry.

This plan was first drafted and tested by local stakeholders collaborating with public and private sector at a two-day public workshop that took place in May 2014. A Draft Tain Town Centre Action Plan was prepared to reflect local stakeholder input, knowledge and understanding of the town centre, as recorded at the workshop. This draft was issued for public consultation over nine weeks between March and May 2015, which included a public exhibition and facilitated evening meeting.

Although the current economic climate makes it difficult to deliver town centre improvements, this plan is important because it places Tain in a strong position to compete for funding opportunities that arise. It also enables community groups to lead the regeneration of the town centre, working 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 town centre environment and diversify activity
2. Improve movement networks and accessibility
3. Develop new uses for redundant space and buildings.

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 Tain Town Centre Action Plan highlights a range of proposals and opportunities identified by the community and stakeholders that can deliver regeneration in Tain town centre. The Plan takes account of the opportunities that will be presented through changes to public service provision in Tain, for example the relocation of the Health Centre and Care Home, and options being explored for new education facilities. There is also a need to protect and enhance the town's significant built heritage for the benefit of both local community and the tourism industry.

The purpose of the Action Plan is to highlight improvements that could be delivered should funding opportunities arise or where planning applications might help to make these a reality, based on:

- 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.

This 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. Participants included representatives from community groups, schools, businesses, voluntary organisations and agencies. It builds on local stakeholders' input, knowledge and understanding of Tain town centre, including concepts and ideas recorded. A Draft Tain Town Centre Action Plan was prepared to reflect local stakeholder input, knowledge and understanding of the town centre, as recorded at the workshop. A nine week public consultation on the Draft Action Plan took place between March and May 2015, which included a public exhibition and evening workshop.

Although the current economic climate makes it more difficult to deliver many of the plan's proposals, this document is important as it will put the town in a strong position to compete for funding opportunities that arise. It also enables community groups to lead the regeneration of the town centre, working closely with public sector partners and land owners.

This plan has particular relevance in view of provisions within the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Bill introduced to the Scottish Parliament in June 2014. The aims of the Bill include broadening 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 Tain Town Centre Action Plan. Section 2 presents town centre proposals put forward by the community,

configured by theme. Section 3 focusses on delivery, highlighting issues and funding sources that enable successful outcomes.

Action Plan Process

The Tain Community Town Centre Plan is supported by 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. Tain 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 Nairn 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 Tain town centre, including ideas and proposals recorded at a two-day public workshop that took place at the Tain Parish Church Hall, Queen Street, Tain on 7 & 8 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 Tain could maintain its relevance for local people, businesses and visitors. These included a remarkable visual display of "Taintastic" ideas prepared by Craighill Primary School and input from a team of pupils from Tain Academy. Online comments were received from a number of stakeholders who were unable to attend the workshop. A summary of the workshop process and outputs is available on the Council's website.

A Draft Action Plan was prepared to reflect shared priorities aimed at maximising footfall and delivering town centre regeneration, as recorded at the public workshop. Its purpose was to highlight improvements that could be delivered should funding opportunities arise or where planning applications might help to make these a reality. A consultation on this draft ran from 12 March to 15 May 2015. Members of the public were invited to provide written feedback by means of a form available online or in hard copy. On 23 March 2015 a consultation event took place at Tain Parish Church in collaboration with Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE), and Highlands and Islands Social Enterprise Zone (HISEZ) and Business Gateway. This consisted of an exhibition, public drop-in session and facilitated evening meeting attended by members of the public, Elected Members, and representatives from Community Councils, community and

business organisations. A summary of issues raised and priorities identified through the consultation is available on the Council’s website.

Planning Policy

Local Development Plan policy for Tain 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 the opportunity to re-focus development closer to Tain town centre prior to significant expansion beyond the existing settlement. 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 Tain town centre are not suitable.

Acknowledging the significant contribution that Tain’s historic core makes to the unique character of the town, the IMFLDP identifies a need to prepare a Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan. It also encourages residential uses within the upper floors of town centre buildings.

Extent of Town Centre



Figure 1: Tain, late 19th Century, showing the structure of places and spaces



Figure 2: Aerial view of Tain Town Centre circa 2010

The extent of Tain town centre put forward in this Action Plan is driven by outcomes and considerations addressed in the recent public consultation. Whereas its key focus relates to residential, commercial and administrative activities on the High Street, the plan also takes into account Duthac House to the west, the BT Exchange in the south and the railway station to the north.

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. Tain is one of the first Highland towns to receive new council houses with the development of a mix of 14 flats and bungalows at Jackson Drive.

Retail

Retail units in Tain town centre are located along a small stretch of the High Street and its immediate surroundings, including Market Street, Morangie Road and Lamington Street. These streets accommodate a wide variety of independent retailers, including shops specialising in bridal wear, crafts, flowers, gardening products, and toys. There is little to no presence of national retailers in the town centre, nor any national retailer currently seeking to locate to Tain.

Since 2010 Tain town centre has displayed a trend of change of use applications from retail to other use classes, – including residential (2), business (2) and hot food takeaway (1). This suggests that Tain may be struggling to attract enough demand in its town centre to sustain its retail offer but is in the process of diversifying its town centre.

Supermarkets in Tain include a newly built Asda (Knockbreck Road), Tesco (Shore Road), Co-op (High Street), and Lidl (Morangie Road).

Across the UK small to medium-sized towns such as Tain 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 very little demand for employment property in Tain and what exists is more likely to require small industrial employment property rather than office space. Tain has a small number of office properties, with no units currently vacant.

Tourism

Tain has five hotels and 13 Bed and Breakfast and Guest Houses.

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 Tain 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.

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 town centre environment and diversify activity
2. Improve movement networks and accessibility
3. Develop new uses for redundant space and buildings.

Action and Priorities

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 May 2014 workshop and issues that arose from more detailed consideration of each proposal, including actions and priorities identified through public consultation on the draft plan in 2015.

It is important to bear in mind that the Town Centre Action Plan is intended as a decision-making tool for investment and fund-raising, rather than a precise blueprint for the future of Tain town centre. The plan does not rank proposals in order of priority, nor does it 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. The plan notes, however, that the following priorities were identified during the public consultation on the Draft Tain TCAP:

- Shopfront enhancement
- Revival of an outdoor market
- Better signage and wayfinding
- Improved traffic management
- Re-use of Duthac House
- Outdoor venue in the town centre for public events

Wherever possible it highlights relevant issues and action that could impact on timing, delivery and/or funding of individual projects.

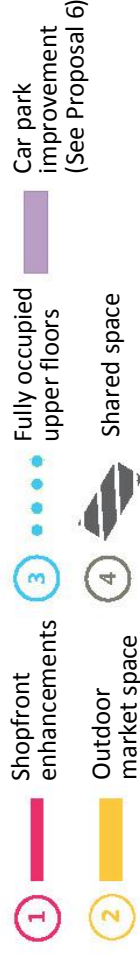
Tain Town Centre Action Plan

Theme 1: Improve town centre environment and diversify activity

The proposals below were put forward at the public consultation event to develop this plan. They take account of the need to safeguard Tain town centre's significant built heritage, increase footfall on the High Street, and enhance vitality by bringing vacant property, particularly dwellings, into active use. This theme overlaps with Proposal 6: Improve town centre car parks.

Proposals

1. Promote a shopfront enhancement project that re-instates traditional frontages to shops in the High Street.
2. Promote a regular street market that can provide an outlet for local arts and crafts complementing local shops as well as attracting visitors to the town centre.
3. Bring empty upper floor properties back to residential use.
4. Provide a shared surface around the Court and Royal Hotel to support the historic core of the town centre and provide an accessible streetscape.



Theme 1: Improve town centre environment and diversify activity

Proposals and rationale put forward at public workshop

1. Promote a shopfront enhancement project that reinstates traditional frontages



A shopfront conservation scheme could restore and enhance traditional shopfronts, which are a key feature of Tain High Street and surroundings. Coordinating and improving the appearance of traditional shopfronts is likely to attract more shoppers and visitors to the High Street.

ISSUES AND OPTIONS FOR ACTION

- This proposal was identified as a **priority** at the public consultation event on the Draft TCAP in March 2015 as a means of enhancing civic pride and making the area more attractive for businesses and shoppers alike. Feedback acknowledged a need for (1) community participation in securing grant funding, and (2) support for traders/shop owners to source and apply for grant funding.
- Support for traditional shopfront repair and reinstatement is available through Historic Scotland's Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme (CARS), which provides partnership funding to Local Authorities to grant-aid restoration and conservation of original shopfront features using traditional materials and high standards of workmanship. See Section 3 for further information.
- To qualify for CARS funding, the Council must prepare two reports: a Conservation Area (CA) Character Appraisal, and CA Management Plan. The Council will shortly appoint a consultant to draft these reports for public consultation before summer 2016.
- More work is needed to identify whether town centre shop owners are willing to contribute towards the cost of this work, which is a condition of securing HS grant. The funding bid must also demonstrate strong community buy-in to proposed regeneration, including partnership working between local organisations.
- A CARS scheme could also contribute to the delivery of Proposal 9 to re-develop the Old Picture House.

Theme 1: Improve town centre environment and diversify activity

Proposals and rationale put forward at public workshop

2. Develop and promote a regular High Street outdoor market



A market could become a regular attraction in the town centre, increasing footfall and providing a route to market for local home-based arts and crafts businesses.

ISSUES AND OPTIONS FOR ACTION

- The revival of an outdoor market was identified as a **priority** at the public consultation event on the Draft TCAP in March 2015. Suggestions included a seasonal market, or a market linked to the annual “Taste of Tain” event. Open space at the Duthac Centre was suggested as an appropriate venue, which has previously accommodated a farmers’ market.
- A growing number of Highland towns host a regular farmers’ market, usually monthly, often increasing town centre activity and footfall.
- A market is likely to incur road closure charges and fees for use of public space.
- The Scottish Association of Farmers’ Markets provides detailed advice on the procedure for establishing a new market: [Scottish Farmers Markets](#)

3. Bring empty upper floors back to residential use



Converting redundant space into residential accommodation is a viable and vital use of upper storeys on the High Street. This could expand the choice of housing type and tenure for Tain residents and could also be used for tourist accommodation.

- There is a sound economic argument for owners to bring upper floors back to active use: redundant property incurs ongoing maintenance and tax costs, while rented accommodation attracts income.
- The Council’s Housing team is piloting a Scottish Government scheme to bring empty properties back into affordable housing use. Officer support and funding is available from the Council to assist owners to bring property up to a suitable standard. Alternatively the Council or a partner organisation can purchase a property for upgrading to affordable housing use. Conversion costs could be met by income from property rental and this work has potential to attract grants to improve energy efficiency.
- Empty upper floors occupy a short stretch of the High Street. Any intention to take forward this proposal will require a survey of conversion potential, including size, configuration and property condition.
- A CARS scheme could provide grant-aid for external repairs, including roofs, chimneys and rainwater goods (Proposal 1).

Theme 1: Improve town centre environment and diversify activity

Proposals and rationale put forward at public workshop

4. Provide a shared surface around the Court and Royal Hotel



Shared space would enhance the setting of nearby historic buildings, provide a strong western gateway to the town centre and balance the needs of all street users, including pedestrians, vehicles, and cyclists.

ISSUES AND OPTIONS FOR ACTION

- Shared space design balances the needs of all street users by slowing traffic speed and reducing traffic management features that prioritise vehicle movement.
- The carriageway at this important High Street junction is already used, on an ad-hoc basis, as an outdoor gathering /performance space.
- Shared space has been introduced at key locations in many Scottish cities and towns to enable pedestrians to move more freely and safely.
- Traffic volume and safety of all road users are important considerations in assessing a location's shared space potential. Vulnerable groups (particularly visually-impaired pedestrians) are concerned that shared space prevents them from detecting when they are coming into potential conflict with traffic.
- Alternatives to shared space could include the introduction of enhanced surface finishes combined with measures to reduce traffic speed.
- This proposal is linked to the review of traffic management in the High Street (Proposal 5) and the creation of an attractive outdoor venue for public events (Proposal 8).

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Theme 2: Improve movement networks and accessibility

The proposals below were put forward at the public consultation event to develop this plan. They reflect a need to make the town more welcoming and attractive to visitors along with a wish to improve pedestrian experience on the High Street by reducing the impact of heavy vehicles.

Proposals

5. Promote a review of traffic management rules and enforcement on High Street to ensure it is operating effectively and fit-for-purpose.
6. Improve town centre car parks to make them attractive and safe.
7. Ensure linkages to and from the town centre are accessible and well signposted to allow people to move easily and access services.



Theme 2: Improve movement networks and accessibility

Proposals and rationale put forward at public workshop

5. Promote a review of traffic management rules and enforcement on High Street to ensure it is operating effectively and fit-for-purpose.



This review is needed to address: management of on-street car parking; traffic regulation enforcement; business/retailer servicing; and diverse needs of High Street users accessing businesses, shops and homes.

ISSUES AND OPTIONS FOR ACTION

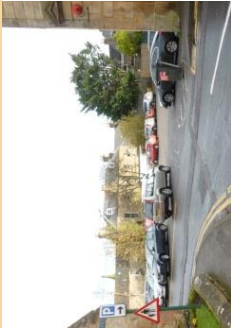
- This proposal was identified as a **priority** at the public consultation event on the Draft TCAP in March 2015 because there is a need to:
 - prevent buses interfering with parking;
 - provide disabled spaces on the High Street;
 - enforce parking and traffic management.Improvements suggested through the consultation:
 - Restrict large delivery vehicles from using the High Street.
 - Set time restrictions for deliveries.
 - One-way traffic on the High Street.
 - Restrict High Street parking to those with mobility issues.
- The Council is proposing to introduce a 20mph speed limit in Tain, focused on the town centre. Traffic counts have been conducted and details of the scheme are currently in development. The formal consultation process will be completed in 2016 and the scheme implemented as appropriate thereafter.
- Following Police Scotland's withdrawal of Traffic Warden Services in 2014, and in line with other Scottish Local Authorities, the Council will shortly employ Traffic Wardens in all Highland towns to place penalty charges on vehicles parked in contravention of Traffic Regulation Orders. These fines are expected to be in place by the end of 2016.
- The Council will shortly update the Traffic Order that controls on-street parking in Tain, including facilities for disabled parking and use of double-yellow lines.
- This proposal overlaps with the provision of a shared surface around the Court House and Royal Hotel (Proposal 4). It is also linked to car park improvements (Proposal 6), and linkages & signposting (Proposal 7).

Theme 2: Improve movement networks and accessibility

Proposals and rationale put forward at public workshop

ISSUES AND OPTIONS FOR ACTION

6. Improve town centre car parks to make them attractive and safe



Town centre car parks need safer, more attractive pedestrian access, better landscaping, and improvements to parking surface and lighting.

- Free parking is considered vitally important to the economic viability of the town centre and local interests seek to maintain this position. The Council's position in relation to car parking charges will be the subject of future review.
- The provision of attractive, free car parking is expected to relieve traffic pressure on the High Street. The public consultation event on the Draft TCAP in March 2015 queried the feasibility of using the health centre site as car-parking (Proposal 8), and the potential for the community to take ownership of car parks to generate income, e.g. through the introduction of a modest parking charge.
- The Council has already identified a need to re-surface King Street carpark and sketch proposals have been drawn up to cost this and other environmental improvements. Work will proceed as soon as funding is available.
- Car park work contributes to improving the town centre environment (Theme 1). It is also linked to improved traffic management (Proposal 5), and linkages & signposting (Proposal 7).

7. Ensure linkages to and from the town centre are accessible and well signposted to allow people to move easily and access services.



There is a need to improve links and signage between the town centre and Tain railway station and promote key attractions (Tain Museum, Rose Garden, parks and out-of-town attractions, e.g. Glenmorangie Distillery).

- This proposal was identified as a **priority** at the public consultation event on the Draft TCAP in March 2015. A lack of direct access between car parks and the High Street was a particular concern, along with the need for:
 - A new pedestrian crossing at the clock tower
 - Improvements town centre wayfinding (identification of easier routes), and pedestrian & car park signposting
 - Interpretation boards to promote attractions (e.g. Glenmorangie, Glasstorm, links).
- Tain has an acute shortage of signage and other wayfinding features, which detracts from the visitor experience. Wayfinding, combined with strong, attractive routes between key destinations, would benefit businesses, tourists, visitors and local

residents and is likely to increase town centre footfall.

- Potential sources of grant funding for active travel infrastructure include Highland LEADER 2014-2020, Sustrans Scotland's Community Links Programme and Visit Scotland's Growth Fund. There may be a role for the Tain Initiative in fundraising.
- Similar community-led projects are underway in Elgin (Urban Freedom), Wick (Telford Trail) and Strathpeffer.
- This proposal is linked to improved traffic management (Proposal 5) and car park improvements (Proposal 6).

Tain Town Centre Action Plan

Theme 3: Develop new uses for redundant space and buildings

The proposals below were put forward at the public consultation event to develop this plan. They reflect a strong wish to bring properties back to active use, along with associated opportunities and challenges. Tain has recently experienced a sharp rise in the number of vacant properties as a result of ongoing rationalisation of public sector assets and service provision. Meanwhile there is a shortage of affordable accommodation for some activities, e.g. mother and toddler groups.

Proposals

8. Create an attractive urban space that could be used as an outdoor venue for public events
9. Promote redevelopment of the Old Picture House as an arts hub that can support a range of arts and crafts endeavours (including theatre/cinema)
10. Promote the re-use of Duthac House for a viable use in the longer term. Temporary uses in the shorter term could be considered
11. Promote redevelopment of The Grove for community or tourist use
12. Investigate the relocation of the Sheriff Court in order to support wider civic use of landmark building (including a use for Tain Museum)
13. Promote available space within the BT building for small business and business incubator use
14. Promote effective use of the rail station building as a gateway to the town centre.

Buildings with potential for adaptive re-use



- | | |
|-------------------------|------------------------|
| 8. Former health centre | 12. Tain Sheriff Court |
| 9. Old Picture House | 13. BT Building |
| 10. Duthac House | 14. Tain Rail Station |
| 11. The Grove | |

Theme 3: Develop new uses for redundant space and buildings

Proposals and rationale put forward at public workshop

8. Create an attractive urban space that could be used as an outdoor venue for public events



Workshop attendees wished to see the former health centre site retained for public use. Options include a multi-functional outdoor space, which would be an attractive asset for the town centre, providing car-parking when not in use. Alternatively the site could accommodate start-up businesses, a gym or artist studios.

ISSUES AND OPTIONS FOR ACTION

- This proposal was identified as a **priority** at the public consultation event on the Draft TCAP in March 2015. Feedback highlighted the space in front of the Royal Hotel as an obvious venue for public gatherings (Proposal 4).
- The former health centre is for sale and the site may be suitable for re-development as housing.
- Other venues are already used or have potential to accommodate outdoor activity including Duthac Centre, the grounds of Duthac House, the High Street, and the Rose Garden.
- Vacant retail properties (e.g on Stafford Street) may have potential to accommodate some required uses.
- Differing views on potential uses for the health centre site highlights a need to identify demand for and viability of a range of accommodation, including rental space for small and emerging businesses, options for business start-ups, pop-up units etc. This could inform options appraisals for other vacant properties.

9. Promote the redevelopment of the Old Picture House as an arts hub



This redundant building is an important part of Tain's built and cultural heritage and has considerable potential to serve as a venue for film, performance and exhibitions. Substantial investment is required to undertake necessary repair and restoration including bringing the building up to current access standards.

- Cinema closed in 1968 and now redundant and owned by Tain Heritage Trust responsible for a longstanding campaign to secure funding for repair, restoration and re-use. The public consultation event on the Draft TCAP in March 2015 confirmed strong community support for adaptive re-use, while acknowledging a need for sensitive conservation of the historic fabric, and a viable economic use. Suggested uses included:
 - Cinema /arts centre – e.g. Strathpeffer pavilion
 - Accommodation for Tain Museum
 - Venue to promote community based products – whisky, cheese and Glasstorm
 - Creative industry hub
 - Low-rent workshop – combining working/selling space.

- Similar community-led projects to restore and convert former cinema buildings in Scottish towns have received support from a wide variety of funders including Historic Scotland, the Big Lottery, Scottish Rural Development Fund Creative Scotland and the Heritage Lottery Fund. Examples include: The Birks Cinema, Aberfeldy; The Picture House, Campbelltown; Phoenix Cinema, Oban; and The Hippodrome, Falkirk.
- Elsewhere in the Highlands, Thurso has an independent cinema run by a private sector business. A similar venture is under consideration for Fort William.
- HIE provides funding for community representatives and groups to visit projects elsewhere in Scotland run by communities tackling similar issues.
- More information on potential funding sources is available in Section 3. Funders usually require evidence of a project's long term sustainable use, e.g. a viable business plan.

10. Develop a viable re-use for Duthac House in the long term while accommodating temporary short-term uses



Longer-term viable uses for Duthac House need to be investigated and should not rule out residential conversion or the potential to relocate the Court here from the High Street. In the meantime there may be scope to accommodate small scale uses that support small businesses and local community initiatives, providing both short term and temporary occupation

- This proposal was identified as a **priority** at the public consultation event on the Draft TCAP in March 2015. Consultation feedback identified the need for sensitive conservation of the historic fabric, and the following potential uses:
 - Respite Centre
 - Respite Centre for community care (private, not residential)
 - Venue for artists in residence
 - Sherrif Court and Police Station
 - Youth hostel
 - High Life Highland culture/leisure centre.
- Duthac House is a redundant listed building, former Council-run care home with substantial garden grounds. As yet there are no long term plans for the property's future. Temporary buildings within grounds are used by the Council for educational purposes, including a children's nursery.
- The Council wishes to enter into dialogue with interested parties, such as the Scottish Youth Hostel Association, to gauge interest in acquiring the building for hostel use.
- Temporary use: in the short term it may be worth scoping options to re-use the centre as an independent backpacker/youth hostel, which would make efficient use of the building's care-home facilities.

Theme 3: Develop new uses for redundant space and buildings

Proposals and rationale put forward at public workshop

ISSUES AND OPTIONS FOR ACTION

11. Promote redevelopment of The Grove for community or tourist use



The Grove occupies a key town centre site that deserves to be brought back to productive use. Due to the dilapidated condition of the house and grounds, this is likely to involve significant investment. The possibility of having to re-develop the site cannot be ruled out.

- Large traditional detached house and grounds in private ownership, extensively damaged by fire in October 2014. The public consultation event on the Draft TCAP in March 2015 questioned the viability of delivering this proposal, given the extent of fire damage.
- The property has been vacant for many years and in need of substantial repair and renovation. Its prominent town centre location makes it ideally placed to increase footfall on the High Street.
- Located in Conservation Area (but not listed), which will inform options for re-development.

12. Investigate options for re-locating Sheriff Court and enabling wider civic use of landmark building



Relocating the Court could enable this landmark building to become a significant visitor attraction, provide new accommodation for Tain Museum and turn this part of the High Street into an important tourist hub.

- This proposal was recognised as challenging to deliver at the public consultation event on the Draft TCAP in March 2015. The proposal to re-locate court activity from the Town Centre was recognised, however, as a key priority. Court activity congests pavements and roadway at certain times of day/week. The consultation identified two sites that should be considered as alternative Court locations: Knockbreck Primary School and Duthac House.
- Ownership of this property is split between the Scottish Court Service (court accommodation) and The Highland Council (building flanking Castle Brae). Part of the Council's property is leased to Tain Museum. The Council Chamber frequently used for Council /Community Council business. The building is an important source of employment in the town centre.
- Scottish Courts has no current plans to relocate from the High Street. The service recently invested in substantial building renovations, including double-glazing.
- Finding a new use for the Courthouse may bring less immediate benefit to the Town Centre than re-developing a redundant building.

Theme 3: Develop new uses for redundant space and buildings

13. Promote available space in BT building for small business and business incubator use



There are very few opportunities for new and existing small businesses to acquire office space in Tain. Unused space in this telephone exchange could be converted into business incubator units.

- Former telephone exchange, owned by BT, which still uses some accommodation.
- BT expected to dispose of a portion of the site in the near future.
- A property market review undertaken for this Action Plan revealed little demand for employment property, particularly office space, in Tain. Possible demand for small industrial space.
- More work is needed to identify demand for and viability of renting space to small and emerging businesses, including options for business start-ups, e.g. pop-up units.

14. Promote effective use of the rail station building as a gateway to the town centre



The rail station's recent redundant status did not present a welcoming gateway to Tain for visitors arriving by rail.

- The station building is no longer redundant and was recently removed from the Buildings at Risk register for Scotland. Following the 2014 charrette a private developer secured planning permission and building warrant to convert the building to a restaurant, gift shop and tourist information centre. Building work is nearing completion and the restaurant (Platform 1864) is due to open in November 2015.
- The pedestrian route from rail station "gateway" to town centre would be substantially improved by bringing THC-owned site on Station Road into active use (formerly occupied by Tain Environmental Garden). This site may be suitable for re-development as housing subject to planning considerations such as conserving amenity and tree-cover, including compensatory planting.
- This proposal overlaps with improvements to linkages & signposting (Proposal 7).

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 NHS, and Historic Scotland.

All stakeholders need to be proactive in sourcing and coordinating funding opportunities. It is likely they will also have to work collaboratively on securing support from external sources such as the Scottish Government, SSE, Highland LEADER 2014-2020, and the National Lottery. Wherever possible, The Highland Council will align its investment in Tain 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.

Tain has a strong track record as a forward-thinking community whose active voluntary sector is already responsible for maintaining key assets such as the Rose Garden, public flowerbeds and a fine display of hanging baskets. The Tain Initiative acts as an umbrella group for many local groups and, as a constituted body, is very effective in community engagement and fundraising for project development. Over 30 local projects, identified as priorities by the community, have been delivered since 2002. The town is also celebrated for a vibrant arts and crafts sector, which is instrumental in attracting visitors.

The consultation on the Draft Action Plan demonstrated that local groups and organisations are committed to town centre regeneration. It highlighted considerable concern, however, at the apparent lack of resources, particularly funding, to deliver proposals. Community representatives emphasised a need for external support, such as the appointment of a development officer, to prepare bids for grant funding and initiate delivery. Discussions also highlighted the potential for a community business to be created, which could generate income to employ a development officer.

The following community support mechanisms were highlighted during the course of this consultation:

- HISEZ can host and facilitate an event in Tain to identify mechanisms and options that will enable local groups and community organisations to deliver town centre improvements.
- HIE provides funding and support, on a project-by-project basis, to develop community-owned assets that are viable and income-generating.
- HIE can also make funding available for community representatives and groups to visit projects elsewhere in Scotland run by communities tackling similar issues.

Collaboration with other Highland towns could also generate opportunities such as the potential to pool resources, share best practice and pursue largescale 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 Tain 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 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/>

Highlands and Islands Social Enterprise Zone

Highlands and Islands Social Enterprise Zone (HISEZ) is the support and development agency for social enterprises in the Highlands and Islands. HISEZ helps social enterprises and communities towards economic growth and increased sustainability and social impact.

HISEZ IS available to assist businesses, voluntary organisations and the local community, either through the Scottish Government's Just Enterprise contract or through direct consultancy work.

HISEZ also runs networking events throughout the year in various locations.

<http://www.hisez.co.uk/>

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.

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. The STP website hosts a number of useful resources supporting town centre regeneration, including:

- **Understanding Scottish Places** - an online platform for towns' practitioners and communities that promotes understanding of the function of the towns and provides the opportunity to compare and contrast towns across Scotland.
- **Town Centre Toolkit** – showcasing ideas and examples of how people and organisations in Scotland can make their town centre more attractive, more active, and more accessible.

Until 2015 STP membership was restricted to companies and organisations but the partnership recently expanded to include not-for-profit organisation, including 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. Membership Information on is available on this link: <http://www.scotlandstowns.org/join>

Historic Scotland

Historic Scotland's programme of Conservation Area Regeneration Schemes (CARS) provides financial assistance, over a five year period, for Conservation Area-based regeneration and conservation initiatives undertaken by Local and National Park Authorities, community groups and other 3rd sector organisations experienced in delivering multi-funded projects. Since 2005 Historic Scotland has awarded £27m of investment in CARS schemes. At present 28 schemes are in operation across Scotland including one in Dingwall.

A Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Plan must be in place to bid for funding to run a CARS project. The bid must reflect priorities set out in the management plan and evidence partnership support and buy-in from key local stakeholder groups.

A CARS project can fund:

- The appointment of a dedicated project officer to promote the scheme and provide support and guidance for grant applicants.
- A repairs programme for priority projects (e.g. The Picture House, Tain).
- A small grants scheme (e.g. supporting home/property owners, retailers etc).
- Community engagement through education programmes and training opportunities in traditional skills.
- Training opportunities for traditional craftsmen.
- Public realm conservation and restoration.
- Administration costs.

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.

Extract from Scotland's Towns Partnership's Town Funding Finder

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

Extract from Scotland's Towns Partnership's Town Funding Finder

(con'd)

Employment & Training	Education
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	Energy
	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:

Telephone

(01349) 886608

Post

Director of Development and Infrastructure, The Highland Council, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness IV3 5NX

Email

devplans@highland.gov.uk

Fax

(01463) 702298

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