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Fort William Regeneration: Two Bold Ambitions

**Town Centre
Regeneration Plan**

**Maximise the
Potential
of the Waterfront**



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Why Fort William High Street Matters

- The High Street is the best place to bring the people of Lochaber together – a historic and attractive traffic-free space at the heart of the community
- The heart of the town can bring facilities together in one place, creating a community focal point and reducing reliance on motor vehicles
- We are often first point of contact for people arriving in Lochaber
- Visitors (and locals) need provisions, guidance, entertainment and a warm welcome to the Highlands
- Our place on the A82 and at the foot of Ben Nevis makes Fort William both a natural stop-off point for those venturing further North or West and a unique holiday location from which to enjoy the splendour of the Highlands
- At a time of separation, anxiety and economic difficulty it has never been more important to support and develop our community, our connection with our visitors and our local economy with good all year round jobs.

Fort William High Street Now

- Unattractive arrival for visitors and locals arriving from Transport Hub towards the High Street
- Many of our buildings are scruffy and down at heel
- Many local people have no reason to use the High Street



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Fort William High Street Now

- State of rear of High Street deters visitors travelling along A82
- Access routes from Middle Street to High Street are unappealing



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However...

- The town has 'good bones'
- Longstanding businesses in the High Street
- There are increasing numbers of good cafes and restaurants
- Some quality new shops have opened
- Entertainment is key.



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Positive Changes in Other Towns That Fort William Can Make Too

- Attract quality retailers to fill empty shops and increase the diversity/range of retail offerings
- Energise the town centre with new visitor attractions and experiences
- Repurpose premises with facilities such as gyms and nurseries
- Bring life into the High Street by building homes in existing but underutilised buildings
- Create a more welcoming environment for everyone who comes
- Increase visitor and local numbers in the quieter months with events etc

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Existing Ideas and Studies

- There are many excellent examples of towns in the UK that have succeeded in adapting and improving their centres
- Paisley, Dundee, Prestwick, Peebles, Kelso have all made steps towards transformational and sustainable change
- Treorchy in Wales (Great British High Street winner, 2019) is another great example of what can be done



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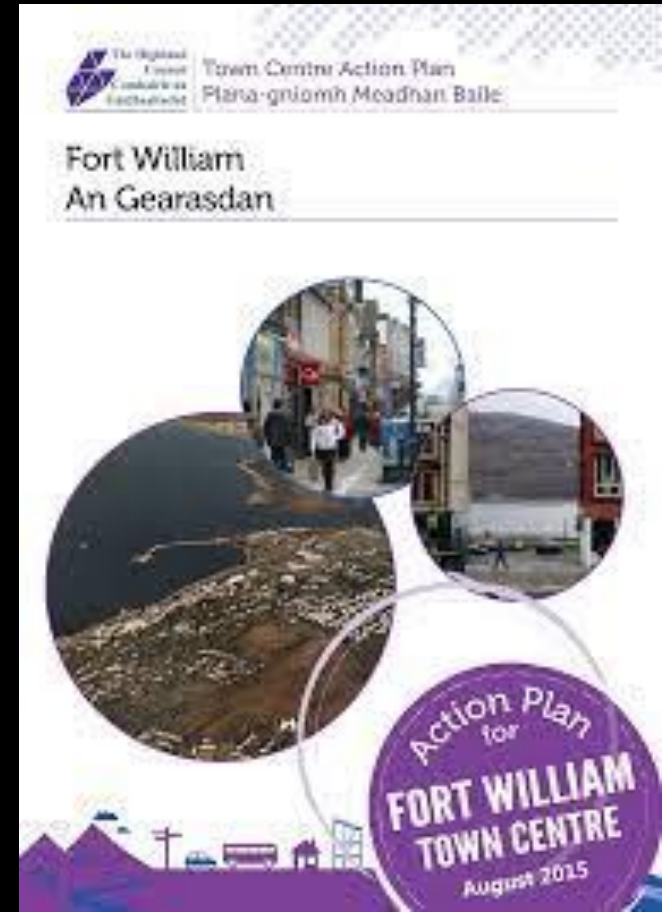
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Existing Ideas and Studies

Fort William Town Centre Action Plan of 2015 offers ideas for improvements, supported by the Scottish Government's programme to facilitate town centre regeneration

Upgrade fabric of town/create mixed use gateways/heritage based refurbishment/refurbish the underpass

Database and active attempt to get redundant retail units back into use.



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What We Can Do

- Build on existing ideas and plans from Fort William Town Action Plan 2015 and FW2040
- Find two year funding for Town Centre Project manager post, reporting to Rejuvenate Fort William board within Lochaber Chamber of Commerce.
- Create a bold vision of what Fort William High Street can be in the short and long term
- Engage the people, agencies and public bodies to advise and support our vision
- Lead consultation and discussion with Councillors, Council Executive, Chamber of Commerce, Town Team, businesses and residents.
- Maintain momentum, commitment, enthusiasm and vision to make things happen



Hoped For Outcomes For High Street

- Shared understanding of the opportunities for Fort William
- Vision of what Fort William can be by focusing on the High Street
- Understanding of what it will take to realise the vision
- Community consultation
- Stakeholder advice and support
- Small committee pulled together to progress ideas and actions
- Project manager appointed for two years
- Ambition: Fort William 'Great British High Street of the Year 2027'



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- The A82 dual carriage bypass has been a strategic disaster. It has cut the town off from its key advantage; access to the sea.
- Passing visitors see the rear of buildings which are in a state of decay, graffiti, scrap vehicles, waste areas, car parks.
- Tourists see no incentive to park and visit the town. Related to this is the severe traffic congestion during summer months.
- Key findings from Town Centre Action Plan and FW2040 'Maximise the potential of the waterfront' There is a clearly identifiable solution should public funds be available



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‘Getting Our Shore Back’

- We will need a fully costed and justified Development Framework for a waterfront project.
- Following extensive community consultation this could include evaluation by master planning consultants/ transportation specialists/ civil engineers/ property consultants/ quantity surveyors or cost consultants and environmental consultants, among others.
- The Development Framework will set out a Vision for the waterfront, but also carry out sufficient technical and design evaluation to enable a robust preliminary cost plan to be prepared. It will also quantify the potential for development opportunities that will be created.
- The Development Framework will ultimately support a planning application in principle. It will be supported by a full environmental evaluation (EIA).

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- Come and talk to the FW2040 Board and local Elected Members at our stall
- Give us your thoughts and ideas on town centre regeneration and waterfront development
- Complete feedback forms available at each stall
- How do YOU want the town to develop going forward?