

**City and Area of Inverness Economic Recovery Sub-Group
Monday 17 May 2021 at 11:00am**

ACTION NOTE

Present:

Cllr Alex Graham (AG); Cllr Bill Boyd (BB); Cllr Carolyn Caddick (CC); Cllr Duncan Macpherson (DM); Cllr Elizabeth McAllister (EM); Cllr Helen Carmichael (HC); Cllr Margaret Davidson (MD); David Haas (DH), Inverness City Area Manager; Alan Rowlinson (AR), Visit Inverness Loch Ness; Allan Maguire (AM), Head of Development and Regeneration; Malcolm Macleod (MM), ECO Infrastructure and Environment; Stewart Nicol (SN), Inverness Chamber of Commers; Mike Smith (MS), Inverness BID; Anthony Hubbert (AH), 360 Architecture; Graham McCorkindale (GM), Hub North Scotland; Rory Kellett (RK), 360 Architecture; Ian MacPherson (IM), Kevin Murray Associates; Kevin Murray (KM), Kevin Murray Associates; Rim Chouaib (RC), Kevin Murray Associates; Craig Baxter (CB), Planner; Scott Dalgarno (SD), Development Plans Manager; Alison MacNeill (AM), Senior Public Relations Officer.

Items	Note/Action Agreed	Action For	Action Undertaken
1. Welcome/Apologies for Absence			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cllr Graham Ross has asked to take a step back for a while. A chair for today's meeting and an interim chair needs to be agreed. The Group AGREED for the Provost to join the meeting and chair today's meeting. It was then AGREED to go back to the City Area Committee to appoint an interim Chair as appropriate. • NOTED apologies received from Cllr Alasdair Christie, Cllr Ken Gowans, Cllr Trish Robertson, Cllr Andrew Jarvie, Cllr Graham Ross, Cllr Isabelle Mackenzie, Cllr Janet Campbell. 		
2. Marketing			
	<p>Alan Rawlinson briefed Members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-catering are doing really well. B&Bs and guest houses are slow this is due to the short lead in times from the domestic market and the uncertainty within the international travel market. Hoteliers are quite happy with where they are, but it could be better. • Continuing to reach over 700,000 through social media activity. Website continues to grow with both added content and functionality designed to attract visitor's attention and encourage bookings. • City recovery market project: partner campaign with LNER using combined networks for a campaign including new content, influencer and a competition to bring prize winner to a destination with new blogs added online. • Skye Ads campaign ran again in April and potentially looking to expand that over the coming months to some of the Cities with direct flights into Inverness. • MFR City Reopening Ads: they are currently deep in the planning phase for the new videos. First video is the Business events video which will be used at trade shows. This is looking to be ready in time for the main trade shows starting in September. Also working on seasonal destination videos to help promote for the all year-round visitors and looking to procure city content to use in a shared library for all Members to use to help promote the destination. • A joint campaign between Visit Scotland and Lochaber Chamber of Commerce is being planned for August to encourage lengthening the season into the following months. • In discussions with North link and Caledonian Sleeper about partnership opportunities with a view to bringing people domestically to the destination. • Over the next couple of weeks new banners will be going up throughout the City to promote businesses and also the destinations around the area. 		

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting the Highland Food and Drink Trail with social media and other media and map sharing projects. • Looking at planning the next phase of Inverness Travel Influencer launch project to be held first week in September with 12 renowned influencers from France, Germany and Netherlands (subject to travel being permitted at that time). Influencers will be here for a week to look at promoting, producing content and looking to extend the season. • Over 60 one-two-one meetings with the international travel trade. • Attended Site Nite which is a global virtual event for the society for incentive travel market. Produced a video that was broadcast to all attendees all around the world at the event. • Now looking to attend live events. Two of the biggest world trade events are looking to go ahead in October/November this year. • Currently working with local photographers and videographers to procure some drone footage, photography and video of the area. <p>Mike Smith updated on the MFR phased campaign:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The first phase was local/low key when hairdressers and barbers returned. • April 26th there was another campaign which was about using the City Centre when it was reopening. • The main campaign which is currently running. This is a staycation campaign which is through MFR, North Sound (covers Aberdeen and Aberdeen-shire) and through Tay FM (covers Dundee and Perth). This is campaign is to reinsure people to come use the City Centre and come for a staycation. <p>David Haas advised on marketing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tying in with Environmental Health and Police to make sure there are support mechanisms in place to advise businesses what they can and cannot do, to make sure there are joint patrols, so the public are reassured. There will also be patrolling outside areas such as Aird & Loch Ness and other country areas that are very popular with locals at this time. Working with Phil Waite and the Countryside Rangers on this. • Promoting the use of outside areas in the City Centre to use appropriately. 		
3.	Inverness City Centre MasterPlan/Presentation and Discussion			
		<p>Allan Maguire gave an introduction before handing over to Scott Dalgarno and 360 Architecture:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As Members are aware funding was secured from Scottish Government just prior to the end of last Financial Year to try and revenue fund various projects. One of which was to look at the Inverness City recovering projects masterplan. • 360 Architects have been appointed. 		

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Scott Dalgarno introduced how this will tie in with other existing plans/strategies:

- This is a piece of work to make sure that the City Centre remains one of our important assets for the region and continue to support during recover stages and beyond. Today is to get Members views at this early stage about the attended approach to this piece of work with the early analysis carried out by the project team and the intended scope of the final project that will be put before you.
- One thing that has been done is trying to set clear outcomes for the City Centre, making sure we have understood what we are all trying to work towards for the City Centre so it is a really clear foundation for everything that we can look at for the City Centre for this point on and also a way of checking things that are currently underway now and the things we can look at as potential for the future are helping to contribute to the things we agree we need to achieve for the City Centre for the short term for recovery and in the longer term.

Rory Kellett from 360 Architecture gave an overview of their methodology:

- Have published Scottish Government guidance for the regeneration of Town Centres. A lot of the work undertaken for that Scottish Government will be applied to this project.
- Methodology – agreed a strategic brief, the aims of the study and define a study area. Started to undertake some contact analysis and looking at options.
- Currently at stage 4 which is engagement – looking for feedback, advise and ideas from Members today.
- After today's meeting, develop brief and focus on an 18 point manifesto which is part of Scottish Government guidance.
- After the 18 point manifesto a report will be populated in to a structured and compelling narrative.
- Start to engage with the public once reached a conclusion. How to engage with the public due to the pandemic will be reviewed.

Anthony Hubbert, 360 Architecture gave an overview of the analysis:

- Begun with analysis and mapping of the City Centre to get a better understanding of the physical and special nature of the City. It helps inform of any opportunities or moves that are proposed to make as part of the study going forward.
- Looking at uses, existing uses, where there are gaps in the uses, looking at the prevalence of listed buildings and heritage, looking at building heights and public space and routes.
- The nature of retail is changing, and the City Centre cannot solely rely on retail. The pandemic has accelerated the changes in retail patterns, you also have the prevalence of out of town retail park developments that have bled the traditional retail from the Town Centre. Need to get an understanding of the current status within Inverness with the 3 external retail areas that are popular and taking a lot of retail out of the City Centre.
- Looking at heritage – the City is blessed with a great amount of heritage properties.

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- Looking at conservation areas of the Old Town and the Crown.
- Looking at building heights where the City is denser.
- Looking at the prevalence of ground floor use. Looking at vacant properties which are potential opportunities. This helps to see where there are gaps and a lack of residential in the heart of the City Centre.
- Public Transport and linkages to the wider areas. Mapping bus routes, cycle routes, primary roads and walking distances to show how the city is currently connected and how to better connect it and for better interconnections between the recovery project.
- Looking at where car parking currently exists and the different types within the city centre boundary.
- Urban Grain - look historically how the City has developed over time and looking back to inform what to do moving forward where streets or routes that have been lost over time could be reintroduced to the street scape.
- Important to look at positive moves in what has already happened - WASPS Academy, Refurbishments of the Town House, Raining Stairs, Rose Street Foundry, Justice Centre.
- Looking to provide information on the projects that are happening and also provide information on what are seen as opportunities -
Current Projects - Victorian Market Refurbishment, former Arnott's Building to bring housing back to the heart of the City Centre and refurbish Union Street and bring activity and frontage back onto Baron Taylors Street. There is the new hotel on the former Service Point and the Inverness Castle.
Opportunities – established a number of buildings that need investigation and where appropriate will suggest what they could become. Four have been shown at today's meeting – 1) Eastgate with closure of Debenhams, removal of Argos and other units. Could an element of the Centre be repurposed to bring in new uses and diversify its offer to make it a more vibrant offer to the City Centre. 2) Flacon Square to make more people friendly environment that is not so heavily trafficked by vehicles. 3) Could more be done to Baron Taylors Street. Could it be improved right down to the river edge. 4) Mercure Hotel Site sits back from the river and doesn't address the river very well; hotel is showing its age and also blocks the route down to the river.

Members views:

- Cllr Boyd: need a strategy to pull it all together. Asked that 360 involve all local members. Climate change is a big issue and would like to know what 360 Architectures idea is for reducing traffic in the Centre. **ACTION:** Bill to Contact Allan Maguire to arrange to meet with 360 to go through the presentation.
- Cllr McAllister: Worried about housing in the City Centre for parking facilities for the people moving into these houses as there is a shortage of parking. Could something be done online to show the works of 360 or have someone in the Centre (Covid permitting) showing people around the streets to show what is happening within the City.
- Stuart Nicol: Delighted to see the College site within the boundary. This is a crucial site and is key particularly with the Justice Centre.

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- Cllr Caddick: why is Eden Court and the Cathedral not within the boundary as this will encourage people to the City Centre. There are lighting issues with Barron Taylors Street. Could white fairy lights be to up all along the street. Something needs to be done with the Bridge Street building. Need to stop the buses going around Academy Street to make it more user friendly and put park and rides in which needs to be made attractive to use.
- Cllr Macpherson: The road between the Rose Street Foundry and the Phoenix bar could be reopened to get traffic off Academy street when parking at Rose Street. Also, buses to go out on to Rose Street where the 2-story car park. In doing so this would reduce Academy Street traffic. There also needs to be places for people to securely/safely store their bikes when coming into the city centre as there are more and more electric bicycles which are of a higher value. Can we make it a policy to say only electric buses allowed in the City Centre to reduce noise as well as pollution?
- Cllr Davidson: Would be good if the Levelling Up Fund bid for the City and everything are linked up so not pulling against each other. Cannot forget the work that needs to be done out with the City Centre in the neighbourhoods where there are not enough small shops and food and drink. Need to bring people into the City Centre not just for shopping but for other reasons i.e. entertainment. Regarding Baron Taylors Street need to get the ambiance and recover factor going. Need to make the riverside come alive as living and being entertained outside is still a key factor at least for the next couple of years. It's not just the lighting on Baron Taylors Street, there needs to be a different mix of tenants some current tenants will need to be persuaded and make it easy for them to move.

David Haas: new enhanced LED lighting will be in place early July along with the new banners in the High Street. Already taking steps to ensure there is a plan in hand regarding lighting on Baron Taylors Street.

NOTED: Provost suggested that 360 Architectures meet up and link in with Fiona Hampton regarding the Castle project.

NOTED: 360 Architecture will firm up on the proposals and feedback received today. The proposal will then be sent to all Members to get further feedback before attending the next meeting. Alan Maguire will consider the boundary regarding the point on Eden Court needing to be included. In the process of producing a bid for the UK Levelling Up fund which will include the Castle phase 2 and Northern Meeting Park and potentially around Bught Park. Bridge Street is phase 3 of the Castle project. It is currently being let it on short term at the moment. A report will be provided to the City Area Committee in due course.

Craig Baxter's update:

- Need to get the people within the City moving around short distances in a more sustainable way.
- People coming from rural areas will still drive and park as close as possible.
- Need to strike a balance and facilitate both of those different people putting demands on our transport network. This will have to be done in a way that recognises the negative way traffic has on important destinations like

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		<p>Academy Street and other parts of the City Centre.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sensors have gone up around Inverness. They are giving real time data on all modes of traffic which means we will be much better equipped to understand how people are moving through the network. • Appointed Aruo Transport Panning consultants to look at the baseline for the transport strategy. They are doing an analysis of the current transport project and will identify the gaps, issues and any key opportunities which is targeted to be done by the end of this month. Hopefully by the next meeting of this group CB will be able to bring the strategy back to the meeting. • Put in a bid for the Bus Partnership fund which is all about park and ride and strategy. This is a bid to get funding to do the feasibility to understand where to do park and ride, who would use them, tackle the commuting am/pm peaks through the bus priority measures. Will hear in June if successful. • Now delivering the Rose Street Bus link from Farraline Park to get buses of Academy Street. • Network Rail have taken over the old Royal Mail building. 		
4.	Inverness City Area Branding update			
		<p>Kevin Murray (Kevin Murray Associates) gave an update on progress, sense of the perceptions of opportunities emerging, some of the feedback of workshop that was held at the turn of the month and the outputs that they are working on. This is a draft in terms of direction:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Been interviewing people looking at perceptions of those visiting but also people living and working in Inverness. Started with the tourism networks, hotels and cruse liners and then expanded to different types of employers and businesses. • Looked at trends, assets and weaknesses. • Spoken to a whole range of people mainly who have members and networks who represent hundreds sometimes thousands of people who visit or use the City. • Inverness has good connections to the rest of the Highlands and Scotland, good air service, an important role and connection to the Gaelic community within Scotland and beyond Scotland and also nature and heritage. • There is also a perception in the last 5-10 years that Inverness is a fast-growing City. There are pressures on a range of things, not only the City Centre but schools and GP practices around the City with some parts of the City not quite how people would like it to see it with loss of some of the tradition, hotels and shops, some areas are a bit shabbier in terms of lanes, streets and buildings. For visitors there are good restaurants and cafes but there is a lack of evening entertainment. All of these points are from discussion. • There has been a positive shift in the way Inverness has been views in the last 5-10 years with a sense it is going somewhere, it's maturing, a better quality of offer, new developments and also extension of the tourist season (pre covid). However, there are worries in the changes with retail patterns. 		

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many people not only from Inverness but more so from outside see Inverness as an opportunity to invest, visit, live and relocate to. • Growing confidence in Inverness in terms of the role as a Highland Capital and a gateway to the wider north of Scotland. • There was an idea to grow the City and its functions, not only in tourism but for the residents and people who may locate here for work and to make it strongly family orientated. The heritage focus was really important with the emerging significant role of the Castle and its area of the Market and Cathedral and the suggestion that there is a wider cultural lung or spine that connects over the river across to Eden Court, the park and the rugby pitches. • Try and make the area even more accessible from the hinterland and not just by driving but by walking and cycling. The idea of a cyclable/walkable City seemed to be very important for people who came here to work. • Linking to and making more of our natural assets in terms of wildlife tourism, eco-tourism, Genealogy Centre and functions. The importance of storytelling and connecting to wider roles and functions across the Highland like Campervan parking. • Next Steps: Final soundings from key players, Update strategy, themes and actions, run positioning strategy 'delivery workshop' in later May/early June and Amend and submit strategy. 		
5.	Key Strategic Projects			
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nothing to add. 		
6.	Notes of Previous Meeting			
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It was AGREED the notes of the previous meeting were an accurate record. 		
7.	Matters Arising from Previous Notes			
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NOTED DH advised the campervans facilities arrangements with the Harbour and Shore Street and also the plans for Torvean are underway. DH will report back on this. 		
8.	Date of Next Meeting			
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It was AGREED the next meeting is to be confirmed. 		

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