

**Email from Tom Arthur MSP, Minister for Public Finance, Planning and  
Community Wealth, to the Convener and Deputy Convener –  
12 April 2022**

Dear Claire and Colin,

Please find attached an embargoed version of our joint response with COSLA to last year's Town Centre Action Plan Review - ['A New future for Scotland's Town Centres'](#). The response will be published early in the morning of Wednesday 13 April and be accessible via the SG website. The independent report was commissioned by Scottish Government to build on our internationally recognised town centre first approach, consider our progress and develop a refreshed vision for our towns and the means to achieve it.

Our response has been developed in partnership with local government and recognises the altered context that town centres face with the declaration of a climate emergency and the changes exacerbated by the pandemic. The report and our response also recognise how important town centres and towns are to Scotland's economic, social and environmental wellbeing. They provide an important contribution to a wide range of national ambitions at the local level.

We agree with the vision adopted by the review group that "Towns are for everyone and everyone has a role to play we all have a role to play in making their own town and town centres successful". The Call for Action in our response sets out some of the ways in which we can all seek to do our part, locally and nationally, to deliver the healthier, fairer, greener and successful towns which our communities deserve.

I hope this collaborative response is useful to the Committee as they undertake their Inquiry into town centres and retail. I look forward to discussing further with you at an appropriate time.

Kind Regards,

**Tom Arthur MSP, Minister for Public Finance, Planning and Community  
Wealth.**

# Town Centre Action Plan Review – Joint response from Scottish Government and COSLA



April 2022



Scottish Government  
Riaghaltas na h-Alba  
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## **Foreword – Tom Arthur MSP – Minister for Public Finance, Planning and Community Wealth**

I was born in Paisley and brought up in Barrhead so I am well aware of the challenges industrial, social and economic change can bring. These two towns also show what can be done when people, communities, local and national governments and other organisations, public and private, work together to build on existing local assets, tell the story of a place and capture and harness the imagination and pride that people have in relation to their town centres. It is this collaboration that has been at the heart of our internationally recognised approach.

We commissioned the Review of the first Town Centre Action Plan in July 2020. We asked the Review Group to consider our progress, provide a vision for town centres and make recommendations for how we could do better, including in our living with Covid response around town centres. The report “A New Future for Scotland’s Town Centres”<sup>1</sup> was published in February 2021 and set out a clear vision for the future of our towns and town centres and recommendations for action. Some of these recommendations are challenging but as whole they set a clear direction and were welcomed by the Scottish Government.

However, the Scottish Government can only do so much itself. We can set the direction, provide encouragement, frameworks and some funding. Yet towns are essentially local and our role at that detailed level is necessarily limited. This Town Centre Action Plan 2 is a national Call to Action, ‘owned’ by all and sets the freedom and confidence to deliver locally. It has come together from a large conversation across Scotland, developing the detail and the ways of implementing “A New Future for Scotland’s Town Centres”, listening to and working with voices of individuals, groups, communities, organisations, businesses and councils.

Towns and their town centres are vital for Scotland’s collective wellbeing: our economy, society and environment. We start from a very good position given our internationally lauded approach developed in the first Town Centre Action Plan and

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<sup>1</sup> [A New Future for Scotland's Town Centres - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/publications/a-new-future-for-scotland-s-town-centres/pages/1-introduction.aspx)

our consequent actions and policies; but together our towns can achieve so much more.

We support the vision adopted by the Review Group and re-affirm our commitment to the principles which underpin our approach. What remains crucial to the future success of our towns and town centres is collaborative partnership working which delivers upon a shared vision to improve outcomes for people, communities and town centres and resists doing that which may cause harm. We all have a role to play.



Tom Arthur MSP, Minister for Public Finance, Planning and Community Wealth.

## **Foreword – Steven Heddle, Environment and Economy spokesperson, COSLA**

Local authorities are the vital bridge and interface between the local, community and the national levels. We design, plan and deliver services and places with our local communities. Local authorities, through COSLA, worked previously with the Scottish Government to design and implement the Town Centre First and Place Principle.

We very much welcomed the publication of ‘A New Future for Scotland’s Town Centres’ and now this new action plan which provides local authorities, their partners, and communities with a clear framework to meet their ambition to improve our towns. Towns are vital to the fabric of all local authorities as individual places, coming in all shapes and sizes and with their own stories and assets. This Plan provides a Call for Action at the national and the local level to ensure towns meet the needs and aspirations of their local communities.

It is encouraging to see Scottish Government removing barriers and silos and aligning policies and strategies across portfolios to build this place based focus. Local authorities are doing the same, ensuring that local and national government focus on outcomes for their places and their communities. The pandemic response demonstrated the vital role that local authorities play in, and with, communities in social, economic and cultural ways, and provides a strong base on which to develop further for the benefit of communities and towns. We are firmly behind a focus on people, planet and the economy, building towns that benefit our communities, delivering sustainability and fairly for all.



Councillor Steven Heddle, COSLA Environment and Economy spokesperson

## **1 – Executive summary - context**

The independent report ‘A New Future for Scotland’s Town Centres’ was delivered by the Town Centre Action Plan Review Group and published in February 2021. We welcomed the report developed by the Review Group, support its overarching aim to work collaboratively with our communities and other partners, and support the vision developed by the Independent Review Group that:

*“Towns and town centres are for the wellbeing of people, planet and the economy. Towns are for everyone and everyone has a role to play in making their own town and town centres successful.”*

The revised Town Centre Action Plan 2 sets out our response to the broad range of recommendations proposed in the Review. It sets out government’s response both national and local as enablers of positive change whilst recognising the limits of what can be achieved if government were to act in isolation.

Scotland’s town centres are much more than simply buildings and spaces, they are the beating heart of our communities and country. Towns are full of emotional and personal connections that go way beyond the physical environment. They form part of our personal, community and national identity and deliver outcomes at the social, environmental as well as the economic level.

The independent report was commissioned to build upon the internationally recognised town centre first approach developed and adopted in Scotland. It provided an opportunity to rethink and reenergise our efforts to develop towns and town centres that meet the diverse social, environmental and economic needs and aspirations of our communities. ‘A New Future for Scotland’s Town Centres’ reflected on the very positive moves that Scotland has taken since the National Review of Town Centres 2013. The development of Town Centre First, the Town Centre Action Plan, the Place Principle and the Place Based Investment Programme have been important steps in placing town centres at the heart of policy and investment.

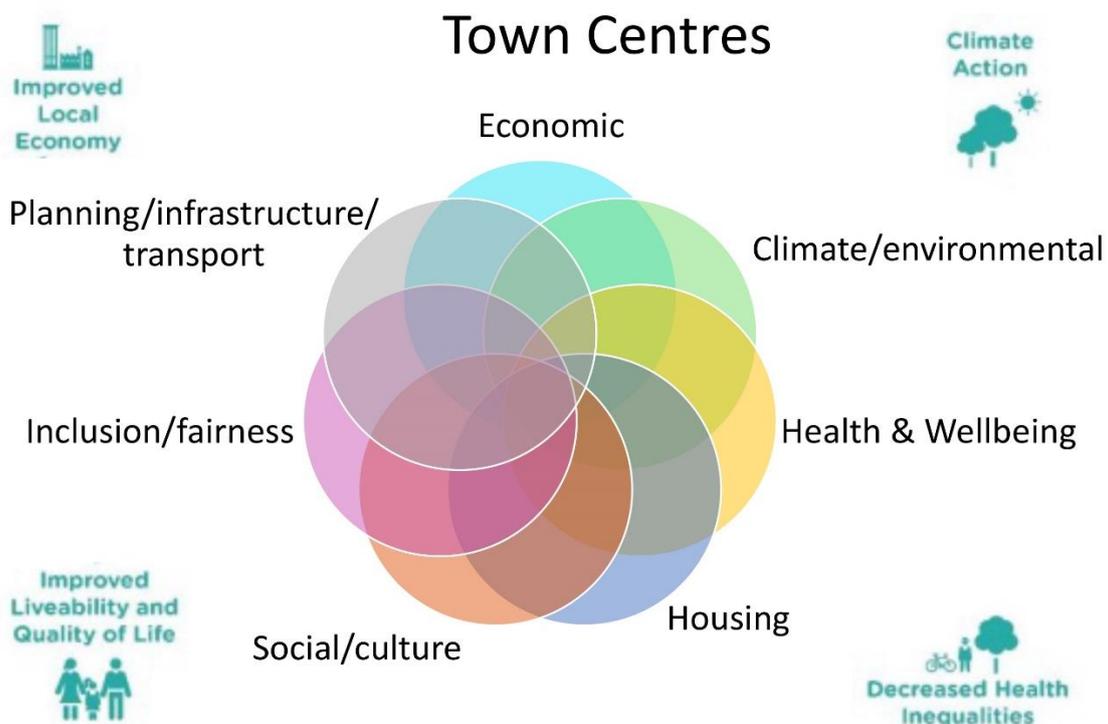
The recent review also recognised that the wider policy landscape has altered in Scotland and beyond. The declaration of a climate emergency, the focus on health and wellbeing of the population and the inequalities across society and economy have all come to the fore, altering the context for towns and emphasising their role as solutions to these challenges. Towns are integral to the delivery of the UN Sustainable Development Goals and our National Performance Framework. Covid-19 and our response to it as a nation has reinforced the direction and urgency of responding to the challenges faced by our town centres, dramatically altering our living and working patterns and emphasising the necessity of strong local communities, organisations and towns.

Towns are individual and unique and have their own histories and assets. They need a coherent and consistent framework to allow local confidence in a focus on the local town and its situation. This cannot be a Government top-down policy, though the Government can be a key enabler, but rather a National Call to Action for all those engaged in our towns. It starts with communities and people building on their needs, wants and aspirations, using assets and building local confidence and action. This requires a place based approach, where the local context is at the heart of collaborative and participative action. Local authorities are vital to this, using their scale and services to deliver and bringing together communities, social enterprises, businesses, charities and other key local organisations to work together. National level organisations, including public bodies and agencies can build on this and contribute knowledge and funds to deliver at the local town level.

Words on a page, or bullet points in a plan set the scene; they do not deliver the outcomes we need on the ground. This is not one person's, one public body or one organisation's responsibility; it is a shared endeavour and requires individuals in whatever role they have to take positive action. It also requires all of us to reflect on and avoid actions and decisions which continue to damage and harm our town centres. This Call for Action sets out some of the ways in which we can all seek to do our part, locally and nationally, in re-building, re-energising and re-imagining our towns to meet our place and country ambitions.

## 2 – Response

Towns and town centres can deliver many of the ambitions for Scotland and its people. They can only do this if they focus around the specific circumstances of their local communities and ensure all community voices are engaged in the design, development and delivery of local improvements. Town centres are places which provide social, economic, cultural, creative, environmental, entrepreneurial and other opportunities locally. They can provide an important contribution to a wide range of national ambitions at the local level. This includes shared ambitions and Programme for Government priorities including those relating to climate change, Just Transition, our National Strategy for Economic Transformation, Community Wealth Building, National Planning Framework 4, Housing 2040, tackling child poverty, health and wellbeing equalities, Covid recovery and more.



We accept and will adopt the vision developed by the Review group:

*“Towns and town centres are for the wellbeing of people, planet and the economy. Towns are for everyone and everyone has a role to play in making their own town and town centres successful.”*

Whilst the Town Centre vision articulates a role for all to play, the distinct role of national and local government includes that of an enabler, empowering all to play their part and developing the conditions for local solutions to take root.

So what are we and all those with an interest in the future of our towns doing to make that happen?

We have identified 4 broad categories that comprise the Call to Action –

- A. Putting the right policy framework in place,
- B. Ensuring the right kind of support,
- C. Providing a framework for investment, and
- D. Working closely with partners.

Actions within these categories have also been linked to deliver outcomes identified within the report - planning, town centre first, taxation and fiscal levers, town centre living, digital towns, enterprising communities and vibrant local economies, climate action, measuring and evaluating progress, demonstrator towns.

## **2022 Town Centre Action Plan - Actions**

### **A: Putting the right policy framework in place**

#### Planning policy

#### We will

1. Direct development to the most sustainable locations and take account of ‘a New Future for Scotland’s Town Centres’<sup>2</sup>, and the views of consultees in the finalised version of the National Planning Framework 4<sup>3</sup>(NPF4) to be laid in Parliament.
2. Seek views in forthcoming public consultation on whether new permitted development rights and/or changes to the use classes order could support the recovery of Scotland’s town centres, taking account of the ‘New Future for Scotland’s Town Centres’.
3. Develop and implement town centre strategies with communities, where no suitable strategies exist and they are identified as being required. Make it clear in local place plan guidance that people and communities including those less heard, are enabled via local development plans<sup>4</sup> to shape and influence the development of their neighbourhoods and the town centres.
4. Reform and modernise the compulsory purchase system in Scotland making it fairer, clearer and faster for all parties to support the delivery of much-needed infrastructure, development and regeneration projects in the public interest.
5. Conclude the Local Governance Review<sup>5</sup> and introduce a Local Democracy Bill to shift the balance of power and provide people with more control over decisions that affect the future of their communities and places they know best.

#### Town Centre First Principle

6. As part of our call to action re-engage, refocus and re-emphasise the Town Centre First Principle<sup>6</sup> and the Place Principle<sup>7</sup>, supporting our partners to do so, including by:
  - I. sharing and promoting best practice;
  - II. strengthening guidance in the Scottish Public Finance Manual to better reflect the importance of local needs and opportunities, and the value and impact of local consequences when assessing investment options.
7. Place towns and town centres at the core of NPF4, limiting new out of town development and encouraging a town centre first approach.

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<sup>2</sup> [A New Future for Scotland's Town Centres - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](http://www.gov.scot)

<sup>3</sup> [Scotland 2045 - fourth National Planning Framework - draft: consultation - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](http://www.gov.scot)

<sup>4</sup> [Local development planning - regulations and guidance consultation: part C - local development planning - draft guidance - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](http://www.gov.scot)

<sup>5</sup> [Improving public services: Local Governance Review - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](http://www.gov.scot)

<sup>6</sup> [Regeneration: Town centre regeneration - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](http://www.gov.scot)

<sup>7</sup> [Place Principle: introduction - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](http://www.gov.scot)

## Taxation

8. Ensure that Scotland's Non-Domestic Rates support the transition<sup>8</sup> to a net zero economy, in line with the Town Centre First Principle, helping to tackle the climate crisis, and consistent with the Scottish Approach to Taxation (as set out in Scotland's Framework for Tax<sup>9</sup>, published on 16 December 2021.)
9. Explore the taxation of digital sales in Scotland, ensuring online businesses contribute to tax revenues alongside our bricks and mortar businesses. This includes considering the UK Government's consultation exploring the pros and cons of an online sales tax published on 25 February 2022.
10. Work with the UK Government on developing the Fiscal Framework that sets out the rules for how Scotland's tax and social security powers will be managed and implemented, including through the forthcoming review of the framework in 2022.
11. Engage UK Government to review VAT treatment for refurbishment of existing buildings and how this reserved tax lever can help contribute towards net zero targets and town centre recovery.

## Town Centre Living

12. Ensure NPF4 supports local living through its strategy based on spatial principles, including compact growth, local living and just transition. This will be supported by a more directive approach to where new development should take place, with new policies to proactively support and encourage opportunities for town centre living. Planning policies will focus on brownfield development, reusing vacant and derelict land and repurposing existing properties, locating homes closer to services and facilities and supporting 20 minute neighbourhoods.
13. Deliver more town centre living via Housing 2040<sup>10</sup> by: investing in a rolling programme of demonstrator locations, providing expertise, resources and matched funding to help illustrate what future Town Centre Living and 20 minute neighbourhood models can look like.

## Digital towns

14. Introduce proposals to require developers to deploy and optimise digital connectivity in all new housing developments through building regulations.

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<sup>8</sup> (e.g. via renewable energy generation, Hydro and District Heating reliefs until 2032, 90% relief for new district heating networks that are powered by renewables until 2024, expand the Business Growth Accelerator relief on 1 April 2022 by making increases in rateable value due to the installation of solar panels a qualifying improvement eligible for relief

<sup>9</sup> [Framework for Tax 2021 - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/framework-for-tax-2021)

<sup>10</sup> [Housing to 2040 - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/housing-to-2040)

## Enterprising communities and vibrant local economies

15. Deliver the Social Enterprise Action Plan 2021-24<sup>11</sup> to create the conditions where place-based social enterprise activity and communities can flourish. And bring forward a Community Wealth Building Bill in this Parliament.
16. Deliver our Retail Strategy<sup>12</sup> which sets out the valuable role that retail plays in our communities and towns and how retailers can build on the vital contribution they make to the economic and social success of their locale and surrounding businesses.
17. Deliver our National Strategy for Economic Transformation (NSET)<sup>13</sup>, which takes steps towards our vision for a wellbeing economy in 2032, with bold and ambitious actions to deliver economic prosperity, and further incentivise entrepreneurship, for all Scotland's people and places, including our towns. Publish a Wellbeing Economy Framework: a toolkit to support local councils and regions in designing local strategies that deliver wellbeing outcomes for their areas.
18. Consult on a Circular Economy Bill in May 2022, to support and encourage reduction of consumption, reuse, repair and recycling so as to reduce waste.

## Climate action

19. Ensure town centre actions support our emissions reduction targets via the Climate Change Plan update (CCPu)<sup>14</sup> over the period to 2032, including a 75% reduction by 2030. The CCPu relates to each of the proposed climate change responses suggested for development, including in town centres such as:
  - I. decarbonising building construction; refurbishment; including heating, lighting, services, digital.
  - II. reducing car kilometres by 20% by 2030, (working together to deliver the jointly-developed route map published in draft for consultation in January 2022). Taking account of the implications for transport and road users, including pedestrians and disabled people, cyclists and public transport operators when making spatial planning and land use decisions in town centres, will support this transformation. Continue to ensure that local transport strategies consider the needs of climate change, such as road space reallocation, green space, active travel, good public transport, parking measures and electric vehicle charge points where appropriate.

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<sup>11</sup> [Social enterprise: action plan - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](http://www.gov.scot)

<sup>12</sup> [Supporting documents - Getting the Right Change – retail strategy for Scotland - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](http://www.gov.scot)

<sup>13</sup> [Scotland's National Strategy for Economic Transformation - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](http://www.gov.scot)

<sup>14</sup> [Securing a green recovery on a path to net zero: climate change plan 2018–2032 - update - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](http://www.gov.scot)

20. Through the draft NPF4:

- I. make clear that local development plans should strengthen community resilience to the current and future impacts of climate change, including through natural flood risk management and blue and green infrastructure;
- II. support proposals for temporary or permanent open space, green space or play space on unused or underused land;
- III. provide effective management and maintenance plans of blue and green infrastructure wherever necessary.

21. Improve how the impact of Scottish Budget and spending decisions on Greenhouse Gas emissions are assessed. And work closely with Parliamentary colleagues to improve budget information on climate change as per the Joint Review of the Budget established during autumn 2020.

22. Establish a new Industry Leadership Group to deliver a number of the Retail Strategy actions, including through developing a Just Transition plan as the sector has a significant role in helping Scotland achieve its net zero ambitions.

## **B: Ensuring the right kind of support**

23. Continue to support Scotland's Towns Partnership<sup>15</sup> to act as a hub for promoting towns, providing practical support and advice and sharing of good practice, knowledge and learning.

### Planning

24. Promote the use of the National Standards for Community Engagement<sup>16</sup> and other tools to guide planning and practice for effectively engaging with and involving communities.

25. Promote the use of the key policy and guidance documents to aid understanding and inform the implementation of the Town Centre First Principle and the Place Principle for the development of holistic town centre plans – e.g. Town Centre Toolkit<sup>17</sup>, Place 'How to' guide<sup>18</sup> and relevant impact assessments such as Health Inequalities Impact Assessments<sup>19</sup>.

26. Harness the momentum that has been building around 20 Minute Neighbourhoods to support the town centre vision. Learning from the actions and interventions of early adopters, we will research and address the challenges and concerns around delivery across settlement patterns and show how policy and investment levers and initiatives can be brought together to support delivery using the Place Principle and place based approaches.

### Town Centre First Principle

27. Promote and advocate the investment hierarchy in the Infrastructure Investment Plan (IIP)<sup>20</sup> to increase redevelopment, repurposing and maintenance of existing assets in town centres.

### Town Centre Living

28. Encourage our stakeholders to adopt housing approaches across all tenures that facilitate greener, healthier and more connected communities, including housing in town centres. Support projects that demonstrate this.

29. Work with local authorities to link the Place Based Investment Programme and capital investments in local infrastructure to Local Development Plans, to maximise the benefits of investment.

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<sup>15</sup> [Scotland's Towns Partnership \(scotlandstowns.org\)](https://scotlandstowns.org)

<sup>16</sup> [National Standards for Community Engagement | SCDC - We believe communities matter](#)

<sup>17</sup> [Town Toolkit | Home](#)

<sup>18</sup> [Layout 1 \(scottishfuturestrust.org.uk\)](https://scottishfuturestrust.org.uk) – place how to guide

<sup>19</sup> [What is an HIIA - Health Inequalities Impact Assessment \(HIIA\) - Tools and resources - Public Health Scotland](#)

<sup>20</sup> [A National Mission with Local Impact: Infrastructure Investment Plan for Scotland 2021-22 to 2025-26 - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot)

## Digital towns

30. Take action to close the digital divide through the provision of digital skills, devices and data, via our Connecting Scotland programme<sup>21</sup>, supporting up to 300,000 households get online by 2026. Support businesses to benefit from enhanced digital skills and technologies via DigitalBoost<sup>22</sup>.
31. Support community anchor organisations to develop the digital skills of people in their communities, their capability and capacity, including via the Investing in Communities Fund.
32. Support the roll out and development of towns based service solutions such as towns' digital platforms and local gift cards, for example Scotland Loves Local.

## Enterprising communities and vibrant local economies

33. Deliver the Empowering Communities<sup>23</sup> and Scotland Loves Local Programmes<sup>24</sup> supporting the development of community anchor organisations. Support the Community Ownership Support Service<sup>25</sup> helping community organisations, community ownership and asset transfer.
34. Provide via Zero Waste Scotland (ZWS) support and advice for community enterprises and the business community to take advantage of the economic benefits and commercial opportunities relevant to building circular economies within town centres. ZWS will deliver the £5m Social Enterprise Net Zero Transition Fund<sup>26</sup> in partnership with Social Investment Scotland, its Circular Cities and Regions programme<sup>27</sup> and a business support programme<sup>28</sup>.

## Climate action

35. Develop a network of demonstrator climate action towns, targeting those with little historical engagement in climate action to develop their own collective vision. Stimulate collaborative climate action on a town scale using learning from the programme.

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<sup>21</sup> [Connecting Scotland - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](http://www.gov.scot)

<sup>22</sup> [DigitalBoost | Business Gateway \(bgateway.com\)](http://bgateway.com)

<sup>23</sup> [Community empowerment: Empowering Communities Programme - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](http://www.gov.scot)

<sup>24</sup> [Scotland's Town Centre Recovery Campaign – Home of the Scotland Loves Local campaign. – Co-ordinated by Scotland's Towns Partnership and a range of other partners, including the Scottish Government. \(lovelocal.scot\)](http://lovelocal.scot)

<sup>25</sup> [DTAS Community Ownership Support Service |](#)

<sup>26</sup> [Social Enterprise Net Zero Transition Fund | Zero Waste Scotland](#)

<sup>27</sup> [Circular economy in cities and regions | Zero Waste Scotland](#)

<sup>28</sup> [Circular Economy Business Support Service | Zero Waste Scotland](#)

## Measuring and evaluating progress for improvement

36. Commission and support the Understanding Scottish Places<sup>29</sup> (USP) consortium to review evaluation and data needs. Link the work led by the USP consortium with the Digital Transformation programme and our work on digital planning.
37. Review the effectiveness of the existing town centre audit platform. Develop an evaluation framework for funding which supports the town centre vision, commencing with work alongside the Improvement Service to evaluate the impact of local Place Based Investment Programme funding.

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<sup>29</sup> [Understanding Scottish Places \(usp.scot\)](http://usp.scot)

## **C: Providing a framework for investment**

### **Demonstrator towns and funding**

38. Deliver aligned multi-year funding via the Place Based Investment Programme (PBIP) and Framework<sup>30</sup>, Empowering Communities and Scotland Loves Local Programmes to enable development of longer term plans, and deliver local projects.
39. Improve alignment of funding in support of National Transport Strategy (NTS<sup>31</sup>) outcomes, including at least £320 million or 10% of the total transport budget going on active travel by 2024-25. More broadly, the second Strategic Transport Projects Review (STPR<sup>32</sup>) draft recommendations published for consultation on 20 January 2022 will inform transport investment in Scotland for the next 20 years (2022-2042). STPR2 is underpinned by the sustainable investment hierarchy. The draft recommendations included a number that were relevant to town centres, including for sustainable transport.

### **Town Centre Living**

40. Establish a new fund for local authorities to bring empty homes and potential empty homes back into residential use and to convert suitable empty properties in neighbourhoods and town centres.
41. Continue to support partners through our Affordable Housing Supply Programme to deliver affordable housing in town centres where this has been identified as a strategic priority.

### **Digital Towns**

42. Extend rates relief on newly lit fibre by a further 5 years to 15 years (until March 2034).
43. Invest £100 million to help businesses improve their digital skills, capacity and capability. Support and develop a Strong Digital Economy where all businesses are able to take advantage of digital technologies and public services are accessible and simple to use as key to our Digital Strategy<sup>33</sup>.
44. Support improved broadband capacity and mobile connectivity in our towns and town centres to improve local digital platforms. This includes investments through our Reaching 100% broadband programme and our Scottish 4G Infill mobile programme.

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<sup>30</sup> [The Place Based Framework | Our Place](#)

<sup>31</sup> [National Transport Strategy 2 | Transport Scotland](#)

<sup>32</sup> [Strategic Transport Projects Review 2 | Transport Scotland](#)

<sup>33</sup> [A changing nation: how Scotland will thrive in a digital world - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#)

### Enterprising communities and vibrant local economies

45. Deliver the Place Based Investment Programme, including the Regeneration Capital Grant Fund which can act as a catalyst to leverage other funds to enable the acquisition of properties and land/assets.
46. Deliver the multi-year £50 million low carbon Vacant and Derelict Land Investment Programme to support innovative local approaches to tackling persistent vacant and derelict land and delivery of new green infrastructure, including in town centres.
47. Maintain the Small Business Bonus Scheme for the lifetime of the Parliament – supporting the small businesses vital to the recovery of our town centres, and ensuring that 100,000 business properties pay no rates.

### Climate action

48. Increase investment in low carbon transport and net zero programmes, including leveraging public investment to mobilise private finance towards the net zero transition.
49. Provide funding for pocket parks and green space in town centres via the Nature Restoration Fund.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> [Scottish Government Nature Restoration Fund | NatureScot](#)

## **D: Working closely with partners**

### Planning

50. To amplify learning and encourage adoption of best practice showcase best practice nationally in relation to town centres and the success of communities in transforming their localities.

### Town centre first principle

51. Ask that government, local authorities, the wider public sector, businesses and communities re-establish putting the health of town centres at the heart of decision making.

52. Work with Scottish Futures Trust (SFT) to develop support mechanisms, provide practical guidance on place based programme delivery and build capacity to encourage commercial investment models for town centres.

### Demonstrator towns

53. Work together with partners across sectors and communities to identify and learn from place based demonstrator places and projects.

### Town Centre Living

54. Work with SFT and others to support the expansion of town centre living and analyse barriers and opportunities. Use this understanding to explore the development of a pipeline of propositions<sup>35</sup> through collaboration and partnership working.

### Enterprising communities and vibrant local economies

55. Deliver the Community Wealth Building (CWB) Action Plans in 5 pilot localities<sup>36</sup> and promote the relevant learning. These Action Plans set out a broad suite of recommendations, for example, community ownership, asset transfer, support of inclusive ownership and economy. Explore opportunities with the localities to implement and illustrate CWB at a towns level. As set out in our Covid Recovery Strategy, we will work with all 32 local authorities, to develop their own Community Wealth Building Action Plans including objectives to protect and create good quality local employment opportunities as part of wider recovery plans.

56. Support and encourage organisations to collaborate working with and for businesses and communities such as Enterprise agencies.

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<sup>35</sup> Opportunities might include net zero, affordable housing, housing infrastructure, investment in town centres and modernising construction.

<sup>36</sup> Clackmannanshire, Western Isles, South of Scotland, Glasgow City, and Tay Cities

57. Continue to support local business partnerships through Business Improvement Districts to create platforms for local economic growth and deliver locally agreed improvements.
58. Deliver the Scotland Loves Local programme, supporting local businesses and communities, building wealth in local communities, revitalising town centres increasing footfall and activity safely in local places

#### Climate action

59. Work with partners to maximise the opportunities for town and neighbourhood centres arising from a shift to home and near to home working as a result of the pandemic. This includes making use of existing vacant space and buildings on, or close to, town centres to create safe accessible local work space and increase diversity and footfall in towns.

## **Scenario**

What are these actions designed to achieve?

Towns that develop in a sustainable way, that enable communities to influence that development, and build on the empowerment approaches across Scotland. Communities of identity and interest, particularly those experiencing inequalities, empowered to identify their own needs and opportunities, and supported to participate in planning their own futures.

Place based approaches to town centres embedded across policy areas so that support, funding and decision making is better co-ordinated and aligned to deliver the collaboratively agreed vision unique to that town centre. With demonstrators testing and showcasing what is possible to inspire other town centres to adapt the learning to their local context and setting.

More opportunities for living well locally in our town centres, where the design, development and management of our towns support people to meet most of their daily needs locally within a 20-minute neighbourhood helping us address climate change, meet our net zero ambitions, encourage healthier active travel options and reduce the need to travel unsustainably.

The development of local wellbeing economies with town centres at their heart, which put people, place and planet first and foremost; enabling and empowering communities to tackle poverty and inequality on their own terms. Where more town centre assets are owned, managed and used locally, creating opportunities for local entrepreneurs, capacity and skills building - with equity of access to digital. Where local decision making is based on a deep understanding of local assets, resources and challenges to enable local partners to focus on the issues that matter to them in the places they live, work, play and spend time in.

## **Next steps**

We will support and enable these outcomes to be delivered via this action plan. We will work with others to monitor and evaluate progress and support engagement to collaborate, explore best practice and learn from each other.

There are a number of sites which share good practice, case studies and tools which support work in towns and town centres, these include but are not restricted to, those found via the [Our Place](#) website which includes links to the [Place Standard Tool](#), [Scotland's Towns Partnership](#) and [Improvement Service](#) websites.

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