

Planning Advice Note: PAN 59

IMPROVING TOWN CENTRES: October 1999

INTRODUCTION

1. The revised version of NPPG 8: Town Centres and Retailing, issued in October 1998, indicates the Government's strong commitment to town centres. It emphasises the importance of protecting and enhancing existing centres and stresses that town centre sites should be the first choice for new retail and commercial leisure developments. This PAN, which should be read in the context of NPPG 8, underlines the importance of town centres and gives more detailed advice on how planning authorities can safeguard and improve them, drawing on specific examples of various approaches and actions undertaken in Scotland. 2. To improve their prospects, the aim should be to promote lively, vibrant and viable town centres that provide a quality urban environment where people can live, feel safe, businesses can prosper and opportunities exist for new stimulating activities. There is now considerable evidence that the most successful town centres have a mix of attractions that draw a range of different groups at different times, are accessible by a variety of efficient and effective modes of transport, have an amenity which is attractive, clean and safe, and are planned, managed and promoted in a positive way. Town centres need to be flexible and adaptable if they are to remain active and attractive; for example by finding new uses for old buildings and by providing new opportunities for housing. Planning can assist in the identification of opportunities and can, by providing an agreed framework for development, help promote opportunities for change in key locations.

TOWN CENTRE

In the NPPG, as well as this advice note, the term 'town centre' is used to cover city, town and district centres, irrespective of size, which provide a broad range of facilities and services and which function as a focus for both the community and public transport. It excludes retail parks, neighbourhood centres or small parades of shops of purely local significance.



THE NEED FOR NEW ADVICE: CHANGES SINCE 1989

Planning Policy

3. The Scottish Office first published a Planning Advice Note on Town Centre Improvement in 1989, which was prepared in the context of the 1986 National Planning Guideline on the

Location of Major Retail Developments. This recognised that, whilst there was a demand for new types of shopping development which could not be readily accommodated in existing centres, positive policies and measures for improving existing city and town centres were necessary in order to maintain and improve their vitality and viability.

4. A great deal has happened in the 10 years since 1989 and, as a result, policy has evolved. In particular, there has been greater recognition of the important role of town centres. NPPG 8, issued in 1996, highlighted the importance of enhancing existing centres, encouraging more high quality shopping developments to locate there, and discouraging inappropriate out-of-centre

developments. The 1998 revised version of NPPG 8 further emphasises the Government's commitment to town centres and extends this policy to commercial leisure developments.



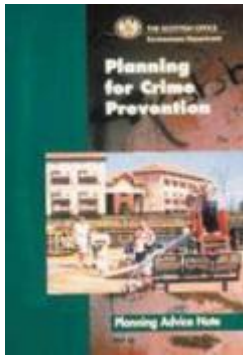
Urban Development

5. During the last decade major changes have taken place throughout urban Scotland. New forms of retailing and leisure developments on out-of-centre sites have provided a significant competitive challenge to town centres, and have resulted in the decentralisation of some of the core functions from existing centres. There has been a range of responses, in terms of policies, practices, and projects, which have attempted to address the problems facing town centres. This has resulted in a considerable amount of investment in terms of new development and environmental improvement to the public realm in existing centres as well as the more extensive re-use of land and buildings for a range of uses including housing, business and industry. In particular, the importance of encouraging residential development in and near to town centres has been more widely recognised. There are now a number of excellent examples of new housing and the recycling of existing buildings, developing once again a living core in our towns and cities.

Commercial Changes

6. Commercial changes directly affecting town centres have included extensions to shop daily opening hours and a move towards 7-day week shopping. There has also been a trend towards extended opening hours for leisure uses, a resurgence of the cinema, and a growth in eating out and the number of restaurants. A move by offices away from traditional buildings lacking modern services and a decline in the number of bank outlets has resulted in many, often prestigious, buildings falling vacant. This has created opportunities for new uses and services, for example conversion to pubs and clubs. In addition, larger centres have experienced moves towards 24-hour use.





Safety and Security

7. Increasing emphasis has been placed on public safety, including crime and the fear of crime. One response has been the widespread use of CCTV as a monitoring and surveillance mechanism in town centres. Recent research indicates that the benefits have generally been positive. The importance of designing in crime prevention measures has also been more widely recognised. (see PAN 46: Planning for Crime Prevention.)

Transport

8. Recent and significant changes in transport policy seek to reduce the use of the car and to give greater priority to public transport and greater space for pedestrians. The development of an integrated transport policy as set out in the White Paper Travel Choices for Scotland indicates the Government's commitment in this area. The crucial link with land use planning is recognised in NPPG 17 Transport and Planning issued in April 1999. This encourages new developments in town centres and other locations well served by public transport and networks for walking and cycling. It also supports planning which brings together related land uses and reduces the need for multiple journeys, and sets out how the co-ordination of land use planning and transport planning can help meet the Government's objectives for sustainable development and an integrated transport policy.



Town Centre Management

9. Town Centre Management has developed considerably since the late 1980s as a response not only to concerns about town centre decline, but also to a recognition that planned shopping centres had a management approach which appeared to be successful and, in many respects, could be adapted to town centres. There are now many larger towns in Scotland which are the subject of town centre management, and there are around 20 town centre managers - some of them dealing with a number of centres. All have achieved some success in bringing together diverse interests, and in promoting, managing and enhancing town centres using limited funding from a relatively small number of partners. The Association of Town Centre Management (ATCM) was founded in 1991 and has been successful in raising the profile of town centre management, exchanging experience and promoting best practice.



THE IMPORTANCE OF TOWN CENTRES

10. Town centres continue to play a very important role in our society. They must cater for a wide range of people and their needs: workers (for jobs, training and information), residents (for a choice of houses), business visitors (for access, information, communications and accommodation), shoppers (for access, comfort and choice), tourists (for attractions, information, access, hospitality and accommodation), and the leisure user (for facilities, comfort, service, information and access).

11. They are places of exchange for goods, services and ideas, providing the focus for a wide range of personal, community, and commercial activities that contribute to a sense of place and a whole town's sense of identity. Town centres clearly have an important economic, social and cultural role to perform. Investors, property owners, retailers and shoppers see them as places of investment, profit or consumption. They are also the hub of the public realm of meeting places and social spaces. They provide cultural identity as well as a physical focus and it is important that they continue to provide quality choice in an attractive and safe setting.

12. The centres which are most successful and popular are generally those which:

- include a range of facilities focused in a relatively small area (a critical mass of attractions) and make best use of the already considerable investment in the built environment. These attractions include a mix of shops (particularly specialised shops providing choice and variety) as well as a wide range of financial, professional and government services together with cultural, entertainment and leisure facilities. There are therefore considerable opportunities to combine shopping trips with other activities. The existence of a thriving local residential population can be a positive force for change and the maintenance of quality;
- are highly accessible by a range of types of transport (and in particular make best use of their traditional focus as nodes for public transport), have sufficient good quality short stay car parking close to shops, have good transport linkages within the centre, and have efficient arrangements for delivery of goods;
- have an attractive amenity in terms of the built environment and townscape, streets and public spaces are considered clean and safe, and have a sense of local identity and character; all of which greatly enhances the attraction of the centre in which the shopping or leisure experience takes place;
- and, in the future, will be those which have the vision and mechanisms in place to build on these assets, overcome problems, adapt to market and consumer needs, and secure appropriate and necessary improvements.



CHALLENGES

13. PAN 35, issued in 1989, set out the difficulties being faced by town centres in competing with out-of-centre developments and indicated many of the problems which town centres had to overcome. Considerable progress has been made over the last decade, for example in giving new life to obsolete buildings, renovating public spaces, marketing cleared land, and reducing pedestrian/vehicle conflict. However, problems remain and there is scope for further change and improvement, particularly in enabling town centres to evolve to meet changing needs. Out-of-centre developments are popular with some consumers because parking is generally plentiful and free; shoppers are separated from traffic and can move around in safety; protection is offered from the weather; and there is a high standard of cleanliness and a wide range of services available to the public. In contrast, the decentralisation of functions has fragmented some town centres and undermined the inter-dependency of the uses within them. There is a danger of the 'sameness' of out-of-centre shopping locations being replicated in the town centre.

14. Parts of too many town centres are still characterised by physical decline, inadequate accessibility, vehicle/pedestrian conflict and pollution, and poor management and maintenance of public areas. In addition, there are now increased concerns about the range and type of shops and other services, design quality, the effects of crime and disorderly behaviour, and land assembly and funding.

PHYSICAL DECLINE

15. Although the cores of many town centres are performing reasonably well (as reflected in rental/property values, retail activity and general attractiveness), they are often shrinking. Beyond the core, there is a more obvious decline in terms of empty premises, charity shops, and a low level of upper floor use. This reflects badly on the image of an area, making it unattractive to shoppers and at the same time discouraging retailers and developers from investing. The presence

of planned and managed shopping centres in the core of some town centres can also provide a sharp contrast to the physical environment of surrounding streets.



RANGE OF SHOPS AND SERVICES

16. Town centre activities are inter-related and mutually dependent. As a result of pressures and problems in town centres and the growth of out-of-centre retail developments, the range and type of shop and other facilities (particularly leisure) have been significantly reduced. The continued existence of a variety of shops, particularly a good range of comparison shops, is critical to the ongoing health of town centres. However, diversity is dependent on the existence of a critical mass of a whole range of uses and activities, including housing, businesses, services, entertainment, and social meeting places. The loss of individual components reduces the reasons to visit a town centre and affects its vitality and viability. In smaller town centres, the loss of even one function can seriously undermine the centre. Decentralisation of office functions, rationalisation of post offices and banks, and the increasing use of new technology with the implications for banks and shops are matters of current concern. Although challenging, these provide new opportunities for the innovative reuse of redundant buildings.

ACCESSIBILITY



17. During the last 10 years, travel and transportation problems have clearly had a major impact on the vitality and viability of some centres. Car use, congestion and pollution levels have continued to rise. Access can also be made difficult through an absence of directional signposting and information about public transport, road access and parking. The lack of available car parking in town centres can add to congestion and pollution particularly because of the amount of traffic movement made up of cars searching for parking spaces. It can also make competing locations more attractive for shoppers. There is a noticeable perceived contrast between the extensive, free and safe surface level parking available in out-of-centre locations compared to the expensive and scarce (and often unsafe and dingy multi-storey) town centre parking. Deregulation of public

transportation has added to confusion and congestion as well as general service reduction. In general, if accessibility is poor, a town centre will be unattractive to users and they will choose to shop in more accessible locations where similar facilities exist.

18. In particular, there are often unresolved problems with providing convenient access to town centres for special needs groups - including the disabled, the elderly and families with small children; and in catering for their needs when they have arrived.

19. The efficient servicing of shops and other town centre uses is an essential pre-requisite of a healthy town centre. However, many centres still lack effective rear or basement servicing, and the absence of loading/unloading bays, the increasing size of vehicles, and more frequent deliveries to shops can aggravate problems of congestion, conflict with other uses, and pedestrian safety. Some service roads are now proving inadequate for modern delivery vehicles. Where centres have been pedestrianised, traffic regulations may place considerable physical restrictions on service vehicles or reduce the time available for deliveries. This may cause particular difficulties when a number of neighbouring towns have adopted similar restrictions.



VEHICLE/PEDESTRIAN CONFLICT

20. The presence of large volumes of vehicles does not make for safe and pleasant town centres. Whilst many town centres have been, at least, partially pedestrianised, some high streets are still effectively main through roads, with all the conflicts this ensure. In particular, although they featured in the 1989 advice, there are now increased concerns about air quality and pollution from motor vehicles. Pedestrianisation has eased the problem in many centres (for example Paisley), but in smaller towns may not be a practical alternative. In any case, it must be carried out with care and sensitivity. There are a number of pedestrianised areas which lack aesthetic appeal, and whose stark windswept precincts are unlikely to be able to compete with modern air-conditioned malls just because they are traffic-free.

MANAGEMENT AND MAINTENANCE OF PUBLIC AREAS

21. Despite the recent rise in the extent of town centre management, there are still many public spaces in town centres that are shabby and neglected. This can significantly affect the image of the whole centre. Centres that are uncared for can appear dangerous or dirty, which will be a deterrent to visitors and can be a disincentive to private investment. The most obvious concerns are with litter collection, refuse disposal and street cleaning; graffiti; broken and cracked pavings; badly designed and vandalised street furniture; and the poor standard of repairs, particularly patching of street surfaces with different materials. Public areas often provide a marked contrast with the interiors of shops where there is regular investment to improve design, appearance and layout.



DESIGN QUALITY

22. The design quality of new buildings in town centres, as well as the public realm and the spaces between buildings, can also be of concern. Standardisation of design can result in all town centres looking the same, with little sense of place. On the other hand, piecemeal development - even when it is of a high design quality - can result in a range of conflicting styles, designs and finishes. The lack of a co-ordinated approach to design of buildings, spaces and their interconnectivity, has made some town centres less integrated and attractive. Reconciling design considerations with the commercial needs of retailers is a particular concern - the intensity of use and the changing demands of retailers in how they operate their businesses make existing town centre sites more difficult to operate economically.



CRIME AND DISORDERLY BEHAVIOUR

23. Crime and the fear of crime can have a devastating effect on the vitality and viability of town centres. It deters visitors, affects staff recruitment and retention, inflates insurance premiums, and reduces property values. It increases costs for retailers whilst reducing their profits, and in the longer term, can result in shop closures, contraction of the retail core area, and delay or abandonment of proposals for refurbishment or expansion. Outwith shop hours, some centres - particularly where pedestrianised - can also appear deserted and be perceived as less safe.

LAND ASSEMBLY

24. In most town centres there is a complex and fragmented pattern of land and building ownership. This makes concerted and agreed actions more difficult than for single ownership sites, particularly where land assembly is required for larger developments. Town centres may also have design constraint and other restrictions imposed on them, including design constraints. This contrasts with out-of-centre sites, which tend to be more easily assembled, have fewer restraints, and produce a faster return on investment. Some investors and retailers are concerned that sites put forward in town centres by local authorities are not large enough to meet the needs of retailers.



RESOURCES

25. A recent report on resources for town centre improvement (Town Centre Partnerships, DoE 1997) indicates that many schemes rely on funding cocktails, which draw money from a number of sources. This tends to favour larger towns and cities, which are also more likely to be able to negotiate partnerships or planning gain with private developers. The report suggests that the system for packaging funds can be wasteful - with too much time spent on abortive bids, problems occurring in the combining of different sources of funds, and a danger that strategies and bids are finalised without adequate research or consultation. Faced with pressures on public funds, there is an increasing reliance on voluntary donations from the private sector. However, only a few national companies have become involved to any significant extent.

26. There is also a clear disparity between the funding available for capital projects compared to that available for ongoing revenue expenditure - for essential maintenance and management. Whilst major capital works can result in considerable improvements in a town centre, unless there is adequate care and maintenance, quality will erode over time.



OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT

27. Much can be done to improve the vitality and viability of existing centres by taking steps to build on their assets and resolve problems. To achieve their full potential, town centres must, in particular, provide an environment that meets the requirements of investors and retailers as well as the needs of users. In general, action will need to be directed at:

- improving and building on the variety of attractions and the diversity of uses;
- making the centres more accessible for shoppers and visitors, as well as service vehicles, while at the same time minimising vehicle/pedestrian conflict;
- ensuring that they are attractive, safe and clean; and
- undertaking effective planning, management and promotion.

28. However any action should not be undertaken in isolation. It must be part of a strategic approach which considers the centre as a whole, which involves a realistic vision for the centre, and which draws on the support and commitment of a wide range of public and private sector

bodies, as well as the public. The aim should be to adopt an overall framework containing a targeted approach that secures the necessary involvement of key partners. This may well result in the achievement of added value and not just best value.

29. Achieving a better town centre will, therefore, depend on the formulation of practical and committed partnerships, a good understanding of how the centre is performing, and a widely accepted planning and strategic framework and effective town centre management. In turn, this will involve improving what is on offer, maximising accessibility, addressing appearance, crime and cleanliness issues, and taking action to encourage development opportunities in town centres and to put agreed and firm funding mechanisms in place.

PARTNERSHIPS

30. A strategy and vision for the town centre can only be of real value if it is developed in

association with, and accepted by, all those with a key involvement with the centre. This process should bring potential partners together to agree priorities and take joint ownership and responsibility. It will involve the public sector (local authority, local enterprise company, police etc), the private sector (developers, retailers, service providers etc) and the local community and include:

- generating a shared and commonly held vision of the future of the centre;
- preparing an agreed strategy and realistic action plan drawing on adequate funding; and
- setting up an active partnership body and management structure for implementing the action plan and maintaining and enhancing the centre.

31. In practice, many partnerships are likely to start out as informal or ad hoc arrangements. However, once initial contacts have been established and some achievements made, there may be considerable benefits in terms of continuity, commitment, and fund raising in developing more formal arrangements.

CASE STUDY 1.

DEVELOPING A PARTNERSHIP: ABERDEEN CITY CENTRE PARTNERSHIP



Aberdeen City Centre Partnership was launched in 1991 with the aim of developing, renewing and promoting the city centre of Aberdeen. A wide range of projects has been carried out since then including, housing redevelopments, floodlighting, environmental improvements, and promotional

work. The Partnership has also evolved to carry out its objectives more successfully and to meet new challenges, for example by working more closely with the private sector, by providing a 'one stop shop' for advice and assistance, and by introducing city centre management. The recent introduction of a City Centre Manager to work with the Partnership Coordinator and team members has strengthened the public/private sector links.

The Partnership was formally relaunched in 1997 and now comprises three public sector bodies (Aberdeen City Council, Grampian Enterprise Limited, and Scottish Homes) and two private sector bodies (Aberdeen City Centre Association and Aberdeen Chamber of Commerce). Clear objectives have been formulated and a comprehensive business plan prepared.

Since the Partnership's formation in 1991, almost 300 projects have been completed or implemented in an integrated initiative which has contributed to a greatly improved environment, a strengthened economy and an enhanced quality of life in the city centre. This activity has also helped create new potential and new opportunities, and the private sector has invested more than £150 million in the heart of Aberdeen, with many more projects at an advanced planning stage.



The main Partnership project areas are:

- Development - supporting economic and business development; assisting property development and regeneration (particularly two new retail developments - the Academy Centre and the Galleria, which opened in Autumn 1998 bringing significant derelict buildings back to life); promoting the sensitive development and renewal of housing (bringing 2,500 additional residents into the city centre); and encouraging high quality standards in urban design, architecture and materials used.
- Environment - a programme of environmental enhancement to improve Aberdeen's buildings, streets and public spaces to achieve a quality environment of European renown, including revival of the Green - the city's historic heart, the floodlighting of prominent buildings and statues, the provision of street furniture and hanging baskets, and period lighting and signage.
- Transportation - minimising the conflict between traffic and pedestrian movement; enhancing pedestrian facilities; and implementing key transport schemes to improve accessibility and to release development opportunities.
- Promotion - maintaining and improving the city centre as a competitive international, national and regional centre through a wide range of promotional activities including, publicising the city centre as a tourist destination, coordinating programmes of events, and encouraging the evening economy.
- Community - assisting in the resolution of social problems and encouraging access to opportunity

HEALTH CHECKS

32. NPPG 8 indicates the importance of assessing the performance of town centres through health checks which examine a wide range of indicators. Such health checks will provide a reliable basis for developing the town centre strategy and for subsequent positive action to improve its quality and competitiveness. The health check will usually involve what is called a SWOT analysis: building on the **strengths** of the centre, concentrating efforts on overcoming obvious **weaknesses**, making the most of **opportunities**, and taking account of **threats**. From this, priorities for action can be identified.

33. As part of this process, it will be particularly important that key performance indicators are developed and used as a means of benchmarking, assessing progress in achieving defined aims, and informing future policy. These should cover a range of economic, investment, safety and environmental issues. Some potential indicators are suggested in the figure opposite. Not all will be directly relevant in every town centre. Data on shopping centre yields for some 40 Scottish locations is now included in the Property Market Report published twice a year by the Valuation Office.

POTENTIAL PERFORMANCE INDICATORS	
<i>Factor</i>	<i>Indicators</i>
Viability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Private investment in property and business • Number of businesses/jobs • Rental levels • Commercial yield • Retailer representation/National multiples • Retail Sales • Vacancy levels
Vitality and diversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pedestrian flow (footfall) • Range of shops/services/ other uses
Environment and image	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amount of vehicular traffic • Amount of favourable publicity • Peoples' attitudes
Security and safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crime statistics • Traffic accidents • Perceived safety
Accessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of shoppers/visitors • Public transport use

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amount/use of short stay parking • Extent of provision for special needs groups
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CASE STUDY 2.

CARRYING OUT HEALTH CHECKS: HBAS/DONALDSONS



The Historic Burghs Association of Scotland

(HBAS) has recently published the results of research by Donaldsons into ways in which vitality and viability indicators could be used to measure the health of historic town centres.

The Health of Historic Towns in Scotland: the Seven Burghs Study (HBAS 1997) includes a comparative healthcheck for Ayr, Berwick on Tweed, Dunfermline, Hamilton, Inverness, Kilmarnock and Stirling, making use of published data for performance indicators, and local surveys and consultations.

A follow up report, The Vitality and Viability of Historic Towns in Scotland: the Small Towns Study (HBAS 1999) sets out the findings of a study of 17 smaller towns to establish performance indicators and benchmarks and to identify the unique challenges facing such towns.

DEVELOPMENT PLAN FRAMEWORK

34. There is a positive role for planning in removing uncertainty and in promoting opportunity. Planning authorities should ensure that the development plan sets out a land use framework for their town centres and, in particular, that the local plan gives a statutory basis to the agreed town centre strategy. The structure plan should set out the policy for supporting and enhancing town centres, including an assessment of how far the existing town centres might be able to meet the demands for new shopping floorspace and other uses, while contributing to consumer choice and access to new formats. As NPPG 8 states, local plans should:

- assess the performance of individual centres and, as part of the strategy for town centres, indicate their potential for change, improvement or stability;
- aim to safeguard and support existing town centres and other retail facilities, such as local centres and village shops, where they are serving the local community well;
- identify sites, including those suitable and available within a reasonable timescale, for new retail and commercial leisure developments within town centres, and, if appropriate, at the edge of centre;
- include criteria based policies to provide guidance to developers who may propose new developments outwith the framework of preferred sites in the development plan, and indicate how such developments will be assessed; and
- include related policies for transport, car parking and for improving the environmental quality of town centres, retail and commercial leisure developments, and specify design

criteria and standards against which proposals will be judged, including those in out-of-centre locations.

CASE STUDY 3.

PROVIDING A DEVELOPMENT PLAN FRAMEWORK: ABERDEEN



The Aberdeen City Local Plan, issued in draft form in 1998, aims "to keep Aberdeen competitive and attractive as a place to invest, to enhance the quality of life and to achieve this in an environmentally acceptable way". The plan recognises that the City Centre environment is of crucial importance both in its own terms and for the long-term success of the wider city and region. It includes a specific chapter on the City Centre, which approaches relevant issues and formulates policies in an integrated manner. Overall, it is intended that the local plan provides the statutory framework within which a co-ordinated approach towards City Centre enhancement can be progressed and through which private and public sector investment will be encouraged and channelled.

TOWN CENTRE STRATEGY

35. The development plan is an important starting point but it should be seen as contributing to a wider framework. NPPG 8 gives support to the idea of authorities preparing such a framework in the form of a town centre strategy. In part, this may address concerns that local authorities will not be able to respond positively and proactively to the new policy, but merely rely on negative, restrictive policies within the framework of the sequential approach.

36. A town centre strategy will deal with a wider and more complex range of issues than the local plan. Whilst being specifically linked to the local plan, it should:

- put forward the agreed vision for the centre;
- set out agreed objectives and programmes for action for the social, economic and physical development of the centre - including timescales, agencies involved etc;
- identify both general locations and sites where development opportunities and other investment will be encouraged; and in the case of underused property or vacant sites indicate how they will be linked to the town centre;
- indicate where development briefs for specific sites will be prepared; and
- provide a specific framework for site assembly.

37. Additionally, the strategy may include other non-planning matters such as improved access for public transport, cyclists and pedestrians; the role of car parking and links to main town centre uses; cleansing and maintenance of the public realm; and development of evening activities.

CASE STUDY 4.

DEVELOPING A TOWN CENTRE STRATEGY: PERTH

Perth Partnership is a partnership of the local business community, Scottish Enterprise Tayside, Perth and Kinross Council, Perthshire Chamber of Commerce, Perth College, Perthshire Tourist Board and Scottish Homes. Together they have developed a strategy: A Vision for Perth Towards 2010, which sets out aspirational targets for the City. All parties recognise that effective partnership between the public and private sectors, and the wider community, is essential to mobilise Perth stakeholders and realise the vision. The Partnership Strategy places the development of the city centre within the context of Perth's wider economic development. Its mission statement is to "work to make Perth one of Europe's most dynamic small cities by enhancing its competitiveness and improving the employment prospects, prosperity and quality of life of its citizens".

Eight programme groups, one of which is the Perth City Centre Management Initiative, have been identified to define and carry out projects.



TOWN CENTRE MANAGEMENT

38. Planning policy in NPPG 8 encourages a positive, partnership-based approach to town centre management as a means of maintaining and enhancing the vitality and viability of town centres, and co-ordinating public, private and voluntary services and interests. Town centre management is not just about employing a Town Centre Manager, nor is it simply a janitorial process. It involves managing the potential of a town centre as well as promoting its well being, bringing together many interests to ensure proper co-ordination and development of services. It is, therefore, important that sufficient status and funding is given to town centre management to enable it to carry out these important functions. Successful town centre management usually involves:

- some kind of public/private sector partnership;
- a focus on a particular area, involving specific funding; and
- co-ordinated management.

39. Town centre management has become well established over the last 10 years. The first town centre manager in the UK was appointed in 1987 (Ilford) and the first in Scotland in 1988 (Falkirk). There are now about 240 town centre management schemes in the UK and more than 20 in Scotland, some with responsibility for a number of town centres.

40. The structure of town centre management schemes and funding regimes vary, as do the employers and backgrounds of individual managers. The various structures in Scotland include:

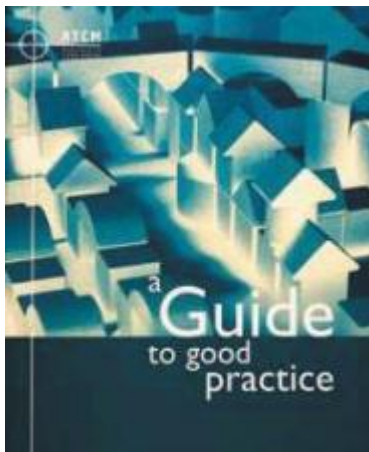
- a shared manager (eg towns in North Lanarkshire);
- a private/public sector steering group directing and supporting a manager (eg Falkirk);
- a manager employed by a Chamber of Commerce (eg Perth);

- a manager employed by a company limited by guarantee (eg Dumfries); as well as
- a manager employed by the local authority (eg West Lothian).

The proportion of funding from public and private sectors also varies significantly. In Ayr and Perth the private sector provides at least 50% of the core funding, whilst in most other areas the majority is provided by the public sector. See the Annex for a list of schemes in Scotland.

41. There is increasing evidence of the success of town centre management. A study by John Lockwood in 1996 (see Bibliography) indicates that stores in many managed town centres traded better than comparable stores in other towns and, even where stores in managed centres did not perform well, town centre management often stopped the situation getting worse. Follow up studies, published in 1997 and 1999, indicate that, despite difficult trading conditions, town centre management schemes are making a significant difference to the quality and competitiveness of the centres in which they are operating.

42. Scottish experience confirms that town centre management is successful in drawing in all the diverse interests, providing a sound and relevant policy focus, and as a practical means of implementing broadly based town centre strategies. The achievements of specific management schemes have ranged from direct projects often concerned with short-term maintenance and promotion issues (for example, promotion of events and direct employment of maintenance staff) to more indirect ones concerned with co-ordination and encouragement (for example, business training and ongoing liaison with town centre interests).



43. Therefore, local authorities should consider, with retailers and local community and business groups, whether it is appropriate to develop further sustainable town centre management schemes to:

- raise the profile of the centre and to focus and concentrate effort;
- develop partnership by improving the links between public and private sector initiatives and involving community interests. These must be genuine and effective partnerships, bringing together the committed support of the local authority, wider business interests, and the community; in order to produce a strategy and business plan which incorporates achievable programmes, and to establish appropriate management structures;
- improve the identification and use of resources and to devise and allocate specific funding mechanisms. It is important that this puts funding on a longer term, more secure basis, which is regarded as fair by all parties; and
- carry out a range of co-ordinated activities, which is likely to involve:
 - economic development; an overview of the economic function in the light of population and employment forecasts in the town and surrounding areas;

- property development; ensuring that land, property and infrastructure are brought into effective use; promotion and marketing; encouragement and promotion of activities which create viability and vitality in the centre; and
- operational management; ensuring the provision of deliverable services.

CASE STUDY 5.

SETTING UP TOWN CENTRE MANAGEMENT: AYR TOWN CENTRE MANAGEMENT INITIATIVE



Ayr is an established market town and tourist destination, which functions as a sub-regional shopping centre for the large and predominantly rural area to the south of Glasgow. In recent years, tourist trade has fallen like many other seaside resorts, and there has been increasing retail competition from out-of-town retailing, Glasgow and other nearby towns.

Ayr was one of the first towns in Scotland to appoint a town centre manager in 1990, who was initially employed as part of a local authority run scheme to develop Ayr as a shopping and visitor destination. A formal public/private sector partnership was set up in 1993 - in the form of a Company Limited by Guarantee in order to more effectively co-ordinate necessary improvements. The company, Ayr Town Centre Management Initiative, has a board of 13 directors - 9 of which are owners/ senior managers of businesses. Enterprise Ayrshire and South Ayrshire Council are also represented. The initiative is run from its own shop front and operates through the board and five sub-groups covering strategy, finance and funding, retail and security, marketing and tourism, and the environment.

The initiative has set itself the following five key objectives:

- promoting and marketing Ayr
- improving business performance
- better communication, liaison and co-ordination
- encouraging environmental improvements
- promoting better local services

Core funding of £70,000 is divided between the public sector (45%) and the private sector (55%), with the latter also providing 'in kind' donations including a rent free office, advertising and use of board members' expertise and contacts. The local enterprise company has provided start-up funding for a limited period. Additional private sector funding has been generated through a membership scheme (offered to all businesses in the town centre), a corporate golf day, an annual dinner and a town centre auction.

In relation to the key objectives of the Initiative, the following achievements have been made:

- marketing strategy/promotional campaigns to attract more visitors.
- raising standards of customer service and improving business performance - the initiative has been involved with welcome host courses aimed at training people in direct contact with visitors to Ayr (such as retailers, bus and train staff, car park attendants etc) and staging marketing and crime prevention seminars.
- involvement in a collective effort to achieve quality environmental improvements - including pedestrian priority streets, refurbishment of historic buildings, and integrated
- signage at key locations in the town centre.
- close links with the private sector enabled the initiative to raise funds for projects such as the CCTV system - which has lowered crime levels in the town centre by over 40% over 3 years.
- awareness of the work of the Initiative and the issues affecting the town centre has been broadened and heightened through the production of a widely distributed quarterly newsletter.
- The work of the Initiative indicates the importance of involving a wide range of interests based on a partnership approach, developing a shared vision of priorities and needs, and developing a clear strategy and associated detailed business plan which provides a sound policy focus relevant to all the diverse interests.

CASE STUDY 6.

MARKETING THE TOWN CENTRE: FALKIRK

A significant part of Falkirk town centre was refurbished/redeveloped during the late 1980s and early 1990s. The Howgate and Callendar Square shopping centres were built, many buildings underwent redevelopment, the High Street and some smaller streets were pedestrianised, a town centre relief road built, and a CCTV system was introduced.

The Town Centre Management Company has taken a leading role in promoting and marketing the upgraded town centre and its facilities to both local residents and visitors. Initiatives, developed in partnership with a wide range of other interests, have included:



- In depth Christmas Campaigns - the publication of an annual Christmas magazine circulated to over 120,000 homes, as well as multi-media advertising, event management and public relations. Relevant Council departments have provided effective support.
- Themed Promotional Events - including American Weeks, Scottish Festivals, A Norwegian Festival, and a science fiction event - the Xmas Files. These have created a more festive and vital atmosphere in the town centre. Business participation has been actively encouraged.
- Child Safe Link - an initiative aimed at helping to ensure that younger children, who become separated from their parents, are repatriated quickly and efficiently. This

partnership, between the town centre businesses, the police and the local Community Safety Panel, dovetails into the comprehensive Retail Radio Link system administered by the Town Centre Management Company.

- Tourism - although not a leading long stay tourism destination, the Falkirk area benefits from a significant number of day visitors. The three main attractions are historic Callendar House in Falkirk, the Bo'ness and Kinneil Railway in Bo'ness and Falkirk town centre itself. However, the re-opening of the Forth and Clyde and Union Canals and the construction of the Antonine Wheel for the Millennium Link will raise the significance of tourism in the area. A tourism marketing group consisting of representatives from the Area tourist Board, Falkirk Council, the Town Centre Management Company and the Bo'ness and Kinneil Railway was set up to promote the area to visitors. The group has jointly funded initiatives such as exhibiting Falkirk at the Travel Trade Fair in Glasgow, placed advertisements in a range of publications and printed a guide to attractions in the area. The Town Centre Management Company has also introduced and managed the annual Falkirk International Food festival and published an Eating and Drinking Guide to the area.
- Customer Care - to assist businesses in delivering higher standards of customer care, the Town Centre Management Company has published an 'interACTIVE' Guide to Customer Service' with all town centre businesses receiving as many free copies as they wish. Special courses have also been arranged, including Welcome Host. A guide to easy access for disabled and elderly visitors was also published and circulated widely.



ATTRACTIONS: IMPROVING WHAT IS ON OFFER

44. It is essential that local authorities recognise changing market forces and consumer expectations and, in partnership with other town centre interests, consider ways of ensuring that town centres provide a good range of shops and services and sufficient critical mass to give users a real choice.

Improving Economic Viability

45. Commercial prosperity will depend on maintaining a critical mass of services and attractions. This could involve:

- reassessing aspects of the town centre economy - for example, the possibility of more flexible and co-ordinated shop opening hours, developing leisure shopping opportunities, promoting the evening economy and cafe culture, and that the cores of some centres may have to shrink in order to thrive in the future;



- building on existing heritage and other attractions in the area; encouraging a diverse economy which has representation from a wide range of sectors, particularly small businesses; and

- developing ways of dealing with the short-term reuse of vacant property.



CASE STUDY 7.

IMPROVING ECONOMIC VIABILITY: EAST KILBRIDE VILLAGE

The East Kilbride Village Project demonstrates how public investment in the built environment can act as a catalyst to attract private investment to commercial areas. The Village, East Kilbride's original shopping centre, has become a location for many small traditional and speciality shops and services with a variety of restaurants and public houses all set in an historic conservation area.

However, the development and continuing expansion of the East Kilbride town centre since the 1960s has been accompanied by a decrease in the importance of The Village's shopping role.

The Village Project was launched in December 1990 to arrest and reverse the resulting commercial and physical deterioration. It aimed to maintain and enhance the unique physical character of the village and improve its economic prospects through co-ordinated environmental improvements. This involved producing a high quality streetscape that reinforces and enhances the distinct character of The Village through high standards of design, workmanship and finish based on traditional materials. The comprehensive streetscape improvements included traffic calming, hard and soft landscaping, building facelift, environmental art, and improvements to car parking.

The project is managed by a steering group of Council members and officers, representatives from other funding bodies, local traders and residents. Funding has been provided by South Lanarkshire Council, The Lanarkshire Development Agency and private contributions.

In addition to the immediate benefits of producing an enhanced and safer environment this investment has acted as a catalyst in attracting further development. A local property company assisted by the Council have completed a £0.75m development consisting of 8 shops (all let) with 2 floors of flatted houses above (12 flats - all occupied). The same company have recently completed the Jacobean House development (£1.8m) consisting of 5 shops on the ground floor with a Business Centre, targeting small and new start businesses, on the remaining 2 floors.



Increasing Variety

46. The retention, and possible extension, of a range or diversity of shops and other services will be essential to maintaining the attractiveness of a centre. This should be a dynamic approach, taking account of market aspirations, and could include:

- seeking to retain uses in town centres and improving the quality of what already exists through the application of retail policy;
- encouraging a mix of attractions and uses in the town centre;
- encouraging retail development which expands on what is already in place, for example, specialist traders and farmers' markets;
- promoting new uses for listed buildings;
- promoting arts and culture activities, for example by encouraging staged activities in the town centre, such as street theatre and music, community activities, and public art; and
- providing public amenities and improving the public realm





CASE STUDY 8.

INCREASING VARIETY: INVERNESS

The Inverness Town Centre Management Project, initiated in May 1997, is a public/private sector partnership involving the Highland Council, Inverness and Nairn Enterprise, the Chamber of Commerce, and a wide range of private interests. The project has set itself a number of objectives, including promoting the town centre as a retail and tourist centre, broadening its attractiveness in terms of retail mix and leisure activities, and improving its physical fabric. This will all be supported by further retail developments which are in the process of being built in the town centre.

The Project has already been involved in increasing variety through:

- upgrading of the historic Victorian Market,
- promotion of themed activity events and entertainments to widen the centre's attractiveness, including USA and Scottish weekends, food festivals, fashion shows, and hogmanay and musical events,
- promotion of evening and Sunday trading,
- production of information about shops and events, including a Christmas shopping guide, and
- the development of street banner and stall hire schemes, which have improved the standard of advertising in the town centre and raised awareness of local festivals and events.

A range of further projects is planned.



Encouraging Housing

47. Towns with people living in or near their centres generally feel livelier, safer and more pleasant places, although extra housing is unlikely to revive shopping centres that have lost their market. The promotion of housing in town and city centres can help to widen the diversity of uses and to sustain a broad mix of daytime and evening activities, bringing back life to town streets - particularly those which may otherwise be deserted at night. However, careful consideration should be given to the physical relationship with areas of late night activity. By increasing the level of public surveillance, additional housing may also help reduce both the incidence and perception of crime and vandalism.

Within many town and city centres this could involve encouraging the reuse of redundant commercial property and the use of upper floors of commercial premises, and promoting housing development in secondary and fringe areas. To date, the reuse of space over shops for housing has required both willing retailers and property owners, and also financial support from public agencies.

Developing Social Spaces

48. Town centres provide an important social, as well as visual, focus. They should incorporate quality public spaces which not only provide focal points and places to meet, but also links which allow easy movement between land uses and attractions. Public spaces are used in many different ways and, in particular, should provide quality locations for people to meet, rest or stop and talk, in addition to providing a focus for public ceremony. It is also important that they are not developed in a way that excludes any particular population group, for example, because of a lack of facilities for disadvantaged sectors or because of physical closure of space at certain times.

CASE STUDY 9.

ENCOURAGING HOUSING DEVELOPMENT: EDINBURGH OLD TOWN



Both the Central Edinburgh Local Plan and the Action Plan of the Old Town Renewal Trust recognise that renewal of Edinburgh Old Town depends not only on physical and economic change, but also on further residential development and attention to the social needs of the community. Therefore, it has been a priority to achieve an increase in the area's population and to pursue a range of housing tenure to broaden the population structure. As a result, Edinburgh Old Town has seen significant growth in its resident population in recent years; from 3,142 in 1981, to 5,357 in 1991, and about 8,000 in 1998.

The Action Plan identifies opportunities for further residential development, the inclusion of housing within mixed use developments, and the residential re-use of vacant space above shops. It is expected that the residential population will have risen to around 10,000 by the year 2000.

CASE STUDY 10.

PROVIDING QUALITY PUBLIC SPACES: GLASGOW PUBLIC REALM STRATEGY



A comprehensive design strategy, Glasgow City Centre Public Realm: Strategy and Guidelines, was published in 1995 for the treatment of streets and public spaces in central Glasgow. It is being implemented through a rolling programme of projects. The strategy embodies the aims and objectives of the draft City Centre Local Plan and exploits opportunities for environmental improvement resulting from traffic management measures in the City Centre Millennium Plan. The aim is to create a high quality, sustainable and vibrant environment comparable with other international cities and to encourage street activity. A guiding principle is to improve the provision, layout and comfort of spaces for pedestrian use, whilst retaining good accessibility for public transport and other essential vehicles. Detailed design guidelines covering the physical elements of the streetscape (paving, trees, street furniture, lighting and signs) together with management regimes lay down ground rules for skilled interpretation by designers. Boldness, simplicity of style and elegance are fundamental characteristics of the philosophy of the design guidelines. A maintenance handbook is prepared for each project.



Following the success of three demonstration projects, the City Council and Glasgow Development Agency have entered into a 5year Business Plan agreement to share the costs and jointly implement an ambitious programme of Public Realm projects in the city centre, including Buchanan Street, the city's prime retail street, which collectively have an estimated total value of some £35m.

To date the programme has been successful in securing both ERDF and private sector funding.

The Public Realm projects, together with the earlier Demonstration projects, will combine to produce a high quality public realm which people will enjoy and which is of a standard appropriate for a major European city. Whilst design details may vary from project to project, the palette of materials which has emerged Caithness flag stones, grey granite kerbs and trims, the use of setts serves as a unifying theme and gives a distinctive sense of identity to the city's public realm which is complemented by high quality street furniture including street lighting.

Complementary initiatives include shopfront improvements in Royal Exchange Square and part of Argyle Street, CCTV security, City Centre Representatives, and comprehensive tourist signage. Establishing a set of aspirations and objectives for a high quality public realm to which all those responsible for promotion, provision, and aftercare can subscribe is in itself a significant achievement.

The demonstrated commitment to quality in terms of materials and their durability, a clarity of design that will stand the test of time, and the emphasis on the pedestrian use and enjoyment of City Centre spaces should deliver a quality environment. Public sector investment in the public realm has helped to instil confidence in the private sector, complementing existing investment and increasing Glasgow's attraction as a business and commercial centre, and a visitor destination.

Safeguarding Village and Rural Shops

49. Village and rural shops have a vital role to play in providing facilities outwith traditional town centres. As NPPG 8 indicates, planning policies should be supportive of local facilities that provide a valuable service to the community. Planning authorities should consider the social and economic function of such shops when making planning decisions (see NPPG 15 Rural Development). In recognition of their importance in sustaining communities, the Government has also taken direct steps to assist small rural shops through the Rate Relief Scheme for Village Shops and Post Offices. This came into effect in April 1998.

CASE STUDY 11.

SUPPORTING RURAL SHOPS: ANGUS

Angus Council provides selective support to convenience shops and post offices in rural areas in recognition of the special role they play in the life of rural communities. In remoter areas they can be a vital element in retaining population, particularly for those with restricted or no access to a car.

The Council's Village Shop and Community Post Office Conversion Grant Scheme is intended to help existing shopkeepers carry out improvements and/or adopt good business practices to increase the viability of their businesses. It is restricted to food shops or general stores which, provide the sole source of a range of convenience goods in a rural community, operate for 12 months of the year, and are over one mile from the nearest alternative town providing an extensive range of shopping. The grant scheme is also aimed at encouraging people to run a Community Status Post Office from their homes, where the applicant has secured a contract from Post Office Counters Limited.



ACCESSIBILITY: MAXIMISING ACCESS

50. It is important to develop an effective access strategy, which sets out ways of improving the accessibility of town centres, as well as the internal links within them, for all users.

Encouraging Access by a Range of Transport Options

51. Generally this will mean giving priority to integrated public transport systems, cycling and pedestrian networks rather than private cars; implementing traffic calming measures; providing good public transport access, including the provision of park and ride facilities; providing access and secure facilities for cyclists; and giving the pedestrian priority over the car within the core

area. Measures to improve the pedestrian environment must take account of the need to deliver goods to shops and to maintain some activity in central areas outwith shopping hours.

Meeting Short Stay Parking Needs

52. For town centres to compete effectively with both other town centres and out-of-centre development, they must remain attractive to people who choose to use a car and therefore should provide an adequate level of good quality short stay parking. This helps to give confidence to investors and retailers and should be put in place through appropriate parking policies. Such policies should seek to ensure that parking serves the need of the town centre as a whole, rather than the exclusive use of a particular building, and to give priority to the needs of short stay parkers. This will also assist in limiting commuter traffic. In addition, car park facilities should be promoted through better use of signs and information on the availability of spaces, to help reduce traffic movements in search of a parking space. There should also be safe pedestrian links, and improved security, lighting and management.

CASE STUDY 12.

PROVIDING ADDITIONAL SHORT STAY PARKING: DUMFRIES

Dumfries is the administrative, service and manufacturing centre for Dumfries and Galloway and acts as the main shopping centre for the area. A substantial part of the town centre has been pedestrianised and the Council has encouraged accessibility for locals and visitors by adopting a non-charging policy for parking stock under its control - operated via a disc parking scheme. Parking charges, however, apply to two private covered car parks adjacent to the town centre.



The Dumfries Town Centre Study, undertaken in 1997, identified issues and opportunities affecting the centre and indicated a number of priority areas for action. This included the need to further review accessibility, traffic circulation and parking management.

A parking strategy, which took a fresh look at parking needs and opportunities, identified short/medium/long term proposals. This was developed through a special local Sub-Committee, consisting of local Members, the Town Centre Manager and representatives from Community Councils.

In the short/medium term this process enabled the identification of 118 additional parking spaces, both on-street and off-street, through signing/lining alone or by the implementation of minimal physical measures. The introduction of time restrictions to encourage short stay parking, at 76 of these additional spaces and 170 existing spaces, provided some 1800 extra parking opportunities during the working day - at a total cost of £29,000.

Further access issues are being addressed through the Dumfries Integrated Transport Strategy, which incorporates a package of public transport, cycling and walking initiatives. Partnership with a number of organisations has secured some £2.8m in funding.

53. In particular, much can be done to improve the ease of use, safety and image of multi-storey car parks, in particular, through the provision of easily identified and well lit entrances and exits, good levels of lighting, clearly laid out facilities which avoid dead-ends and dark recesses, and visible surveillance and security systems. Further confidence can be engendered if the car park has been given the Secured Car Parks Award (already awarded to a number of car parks in Scottish town centres). The scheme is administered by the Automobile Association on behalf of the Association of Chief Police Officers.

54. In some town centres there may be a need to control the total provision of car parking, in order to limit traffic congestion; and, most essentially, to allow for a high standard of access by public transport. This could be achieved through the application of car parking standards that limit the number of spaces in new developments. Local plans should therefore contain a clear strategy and policies for parking designed to reinforce the competitiveness of the town centre.

CASE STUDY 13.

PROVIDING QUALITY MULTI- STOREY PARKING: DUNDEE



Opened at the end of 1998, the Gellatly Street car park is well located in relation to the City's shopping centre and is in operation 24 hours a day. It has been designed with security and accessibility very much in mind. In addition, an attractive and sympathetic design has resulted in a quality building which enhances the streetscape.

Access and circulation has been eased by the provision of generous ramp and aisle widths, and well-planned bay locations and sizes. Reserved spaces for the disabled have been provided at ground floor level and some wider bays at different levels to aid people with mobility problems and parents with children. Two passenger lifts have also been provided. Pedestrian walkways are clearly delineated.

A high priority has been accorded to the safety of users and the secure parking of vehicles and Crime Prevention Officers of Tayside Police were consulted on the proposals from the initial design stages onwards. This is reflected in an exit and entry barrier system, the absence of intermediate columns to aid surveillance and remove obstacles for motorists, intervisibility between parking levels, open stairwells, glazed panels at the lift areas, brightly painted walls and floors, a well lit interior, and a helpline facility at each floor level. CCTV is in operation covering all pedestrian and vehicular accesses and parking levels. Monitoring takes place in the control room located within the Council's parking offices at ground level. The control room is also the base for security staff who regularly patrol the building. The Council have lodged an application for the Secured Car Parks Award.

The entrance and exits are linked to a vehicular counting system which is relayed to the City's variable message signs to advise motorists of parking availability.



Providing Complementary Edge-of-Centre Developments

55. Where edge-of-centre retail developments are taking place, they should be carefully located in order to reinforce the role of the town centre, to reduce traffic congestion and ensure ease of access to the town centre on foot. Siting, size, design and use of materials should also respect existing environmental quality.

CASE STUDY 14.

DEVELOPING AT EDGE-OF-CENTRE: STIRLING

Stirling Thistle Marches shopping centre, which opened in late 1997, is located at the edge of Stirling town centre. The 17,000 m² development includes 40 stores, a café, a 1000 space car park and a Shopmobility Centre. The development links into the existing Thistle Centre, connects directly to the new bus station and the railway station, and provides much needed additional short stay car parking for shoppers and visitors. Therefore, it very much reinforces the role of Stirling town centre. The development was the product of a joint venture company formed between Stirling Council and the private sector.



Providing for Special Needs Groups

56. People with disabilities, the elderly, and shoppers with prams or pushchairs need level access to shops, parking provision and covered areas close to shops and transport routes. In many cases, there will be a need to promote the use of services such as shopmobility, crèches, and shopper assistance services. Increased accessibility demands the provision of seating and other facilities, good pavement design and surfacing materials, the provision of dropped kerbs and other pedestrian priority measures. It is essential that special interest groups are involved in the consideration of what is required.



Using Clear Signposting and Information Provision

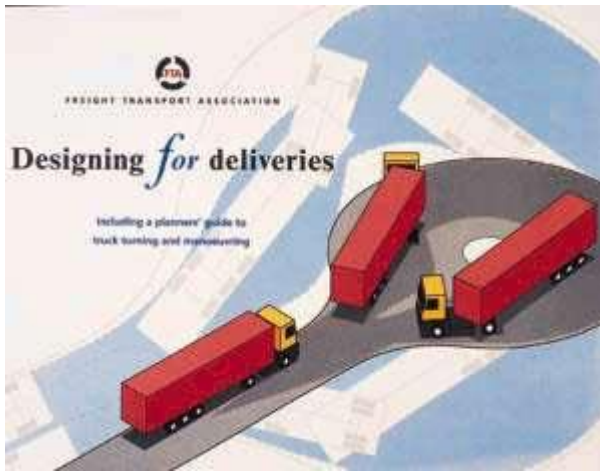
57. Besides physical issues of accessibility, there may often be perceptions about the difficulty of access, which can be handled by better signposting and information provision. This should include clear advanced signing about car parks and the location of specific facilities and attractions, and signing and information within the town centre for orientation purposes. It is particularly important that visitor information and facilities are provided at the main entry points to the town centre.



Providing for Servicing

58. Shops are dependent on regular deliveries of goods and it is essential that adequate physical provision is made for access by service vehicles (service roads, loading bays etc), particularly when changes are being made to the town centre. Providing for rear servicing should generally be the aim but, failing this, some form of controlled access (eg. involving hydraulic bollards as in Quarry Street, Hamilton) may be a viable alternative. Some multiple retailers have moved to a centralised system of fewer deliveries, albeit at the cost of larger delivery vehicles. Therefore authorities must also consider the implications for town centre activities of service access -

including hours of delivery. Timed access may be necessary, although similar delivery hours in many centres could compromise the ability of retailers and hauliers to service shops in town centres effectively



CASE STUDY 15.

IMPROVING SERVICING/ FREIGHT ACCESS: ABERDEEN

In 1996, a Freight Transport Association/local government partnership initiative was launched to encourage best practice and develop environmentally sensitive, economic and efficient delivery of goods in towns and cities. Four local partnership groups were set up - one being in Aberdeen. The Aberdeen group identified a number of measures to help lorries move and deliver goods more efficiently and to reduce their environmental impacts:

- provision of designated loading bays/areas in retail areas
- improved enforcement of parking restrictions to alleviate problems caused by illegal car parking
- measures to help lorry movements - especially in the harbour area adjacent to the town centre

'Delivering the Goods: Best Practice in Urban Distribution' Freight Transport Association 1997



AMENITY: IMPROVING APPEARANCE, MAINTENANCE AND SAFETY

59. Besides developing the range of attractions and increasing accessibility, it is also necessary to enhance the quality of town centers. They must be attractive, safe and clean, with an identifiable image and character, in order to make them pleasant places to use and visit.

Making Town Centres More Pedestrian Friendly

60. Town centres should be designed and managed on the basis that pedestrians are the prime users. This will involve:

- assessing requirements within the context of the town centre strategy, taking into account the needs of users, occupants and investors;



- considering the establishment of zones that are confined to pedestrians, cyclists and low or non-polluting vehicles. Careful thought must be given to the extent and design of pedestrianisation schemes. Compact and integrated areas are usually more welcome; large expanses of pedestrianised space can often be uninviting - particularly at quieter periods. Opening up such areas to traffic at night may help to provide more secure access to facilities and increase the levels of activity generally;
- providing links with access points and attractions;
- providing for delivery access;
- ensuring the application of appropriate design criteria and, for example, shelter for users which takes account of the Scottish climate; and
- providing readily available information for users.

CASE STUDY 16.

IMPROVING THE PEDESTRIAN ENVIRONMENT: PAISLEY



Paisley is Scotland's largest town and the commercial and administrative centre for Renfrewshire. With a wide variety of shops and services and a catchment of around 250,000 the town centre has a mix of land uses and a rich and varied character, complemented by a built form reflecting Paisley's historical development. This has produced an attractive and enduring townscape of landmark buildings in a medieval street pattern, and the greater part of the centre is designated as an Outstanding Conservation Area. However, increasing traffic has had an adverse impact on the pedestrian and physical environment. Combined with changing patterns of shopping, this has drawn investment away from many older properties, with poorly maintained building fabric and civic spaces in places undermining the town centre's attractiveness and long term viability.

The town centre's importance to the wider economy of Renfrewshire was recognised by all the main public and private agencies active in the area through the launch in 1994 of the multi - agency strategy 'Paisley Town Centre Looking Forward' by the project partners Renfrewshire Council, Renfrewshire Enterprise and Scottish Homes. This comprehensive regeneration strategy acknowledges that problems of excessive through traffic and congestion in the town centre have been making Paisley unattractive in shopping, business and residential terms.

A critical component of the strategy was therefore the removal of traffic from the main shopping streets and environmental upgrading of key civic spaces and streets. The benefits of traffic exclusion are being maximised by creating a high quality pedestrian friendly shopping and leisure environment. Following on from successful projects in Abbey Close and Forbes Place, streetscaping works in the High Street, Gilmour Street, Moss Street and County Square were completed in 1998. Surface treatment of these areas has involved natural materials, including Caithness granite setts and Scottish and Portuguese granite, complementary street furniture, lighting and landscaping.

CASE STUDY 17.

PROVIDING CITY CENTRE REPRESENTATIVES: GLASGOW



The Glasgow City Centre Representatives Initiative is part of the City Watch Project, which was started in 1993 with the aim of making the city centre a safer, more secure and more attractive place for all users. It is largely funded through Glasgow Works - a job creation and training project for the long-term unemployed.

The role of the Representatives is to provide a visible and recognisable presence in the city centre, to give help and advice to city centre users, and to note and report temporary eyesores such as graffiti, flyposting and dumped rubbish, and also other services and facilities that are in need of remedial action. A separate group provides a rapid response environmental clean - up service and a scheduled clean and tidy service, not covered by the statutory authorities.

Giving Greater Priority to Management and Maintenance

61. The state of repair and cleanliness of streets and public spaces is a very visible sign of the care and respect being devoted to a town or city centre. Therefore, it is crucial to aim for a high and consistent standard of cleansing and maintenance. This will involve implementation of appropriate street cleaning schedules, litter and refuse collections, and graffiti and flyposting controls. The use of dedicated teams to deal with all these issues may often be the most appropriate solution. The provision of public amenities (including toilets, recycling facilities, the provision of 'legal' flyposting boards, and adequate and well-located waste disposal points) in the town centre will also be important.



CASE STUDY 18.

DEVELOPING FLYPOSTING CONTROLS: DUNDEE



To resolve widespread problems caused by flyposting, it was decided to identify sites in Dundee city centre where fly posting could occur in a controlled way. Local musical promoters and licensees highlighted the need to promote local bands and events and a music promotions company from London agreed to initially back them by providing the money for timber and paint, in return for 50% coverage for advertising artists' albums. A representative of the local promoters agreed to erect and maintain the sites, to poster the sites weekly, and to replace damaged timber and paint out any graffiti.

The system has worked so well that the council has erected 5 of its own black cast iron, 2-sided information boards along pedestrian thoroughfares all of which can be used by local promoters. A second phase of boards is to be erected along main routes into the city centre. The main benefits of the scheme have been to dramatically improve the appearance of the city centre by removing posters from street furniture and vacant shops and reduce the spiralling costs of removing unauthorised posters.

62. Capital expenditure on improvements should be supported by adequate and continuing revenue expenditure and management commitment, if such improvements are to be sustained over a long period. In particular, where extensive and expensive environmental streetscape improvements have taken place, the use of maintenance agreements will be essential in ensuring maintenance to a high standard, whenever it is required. Such agreements should be finalised before development takes place.

CASE STUDY 19.

MANAGING AND MAINTAINING IMPROVEMENT SCHEMES: HAMILTON

The regeneration of Quarry Street - part of the Hamilton Ahead Initiative - has been underpinned by a commitment to innovative design, quality materials, good construction and maintenance.

The street furniture has been custom designed, with the dome shape of the Hamilton Mausoleum acting as a common theme. Lighting columns, seats and waste bins serve dual functions. Together with the bollards they define the vehicular path through the street delineating the pedestrian/vehicular area from the pedestrian only area. A working party was set up to produce a programme of community art taking account of the industrial heritage of the town. The whole programme was coordinated by the Council's Community Artist working closely with the design team. Artworks include: railings with a woven lace pattern, bobbins, bronze busts of Hamilton children, and musical artwork etched into the pedestrian walkway. In addition, the lighting columns have been designed to allow the display of banners celebrating seasonal events and local themes.

Extensive use has been made of natural materials, which are both durable and sustainable. Italian Porphyritic granite slabs were used on the footways with the same material used in cubes in a fan pattern in the carriageway area. Silver Grey Granite was used for the bollards and bench seats as a natural contrast with the Porphyritic granite.

Specialist contractors were used to ensure quality installation. The contract documentation gave specific instructions and included a 3-year performance bond on materials and workmanship, and a 5-year guarantee on surfacing materials. Utility services were given the opportunity to upgrade existing plant during the construction works in order to reduce the need for any future upgrade once the Porphyry surfacing had been laid.

To ensure that standards are maintained, the Council has developed a best practice maintenance charter with the utility and service companies. In support of this, a detailed maintenance manual has been produced which sets out responsibilities, method statements and obligations for all operations in the street, including street cleaning, maintenance of street furniture, and reinstatement of natural surfaces in the event of that they require to be altered.



Encouraging Higher Standards of Design

63. Design controls should avoid standardisation by protecting and enhancing the unique characteristics of the centre, respecting both heritage matters and a sense of place.

As paragraph 34 indicates, local plans should set out policy framework within which key design factors, such as scale, massing, height, form, materials and linkages, can be judged.

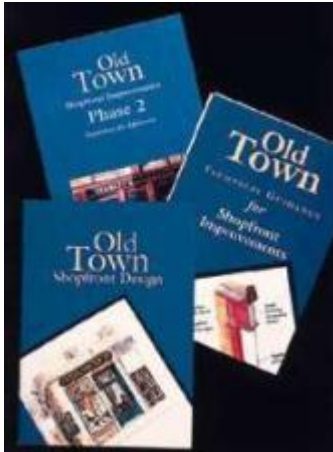
Further initiatives could involve:

- a design guide or streetscape manual, particularly desirable in larger centres, which sets out agreed policies and practices (on design, choice of materials, management etc) to be followed by those agencies with services affecting the appearance of the centre;
- the preparation of development briefs;
- improvements to building fascias, signs and shutters, and shop front and building refurbishments;
- provision of street furniture and public art, wherever possible designed to reflect local 'themes'; and
- making use of appropriate materials, which take account of use, durability, and local factors.



CASE STUDY 20.

ENCOURAGING SHOPFRONT IMPROVEMENTS: EDINBURGH



Edinburgh Old Town Renewal Trust and Lothian and Edinburgh Enterprise Limited launched an initiative in 1995 to offer financial assistance to encourage the repair or renewal of shopfronts. As a result, 29 shops have had original shopfronts reinstated or new higher quality and appropriate shopfronts built. In the process, this has created a more pleasant environment which attracts additional customers and increases sales. Due to the success of this initiative, a second phase was launched in 1998.

The Renewal Trust has also published a guide Old Town Shopfront Design, aimed at helping retailers improve the appearance and quality of frontages. Both traditional and modern styles are promoted, with the emphasis on high quality materials.

Dealing with Safety and Security

64. Much more can be done about taking positive action to deal with crime, safety and security issues and to address perceptions of these issues in town centres. Some aspects can be addressed directly via planning activities, others indirectly via partnership activities – particularly those involving town centre management. The Government through Community Safety Partnerships, which bring together local authorities, the police, and other public, private and voluntary groups, has advocated a partnership approach to safety.

CASE STUDY 21.

ADDRESSING BUSINESS CRIME: THE SAFER TRADING ENVIRONMENT INITIATIVE

The Safer Trading Environment Initiative has been developed by the Scottish Business Crime Centre as a practical method of addressing business crime. It is in line with the Government's Safer Communities through Partnership strategy. The initiative is directed at town/city centres, other shopping centres and industrial estates, and its aim is to create an environment for commercial and leisure activity, which is safe and pleasant for businesses, staff and the public. This is done through promoting a wide ranging partnership involving the police, local authorities, retailers and the community, developing a commitment and understanding of the issues, and providing a co-ordinated structure for dealing with crime, the fear of crime, and other aspects of anti-social behaviour.

The Initiative was piloted in Perth in 1999 - chosen because most of the elements necessary for success were already in place, including a strong sense of association within the business community and ongoing liaison involving the police, local authority and other agencies. Each town centre in Scotland is different and local needs and appropriate crime strategies will vary. However, what is developed in Perth will be a model that tackles most of the issues that will arise elsewhere.

65. Where a town centre health check has been carried out, this should have identified significant matters of concern. Resulting action is likely to be required in the following areas:

- Designing for security. There is a need to consider crime and safety issues when designing and approving buildings and open spaces and when dealing with specific matters such as the provision of physical barriers in front of vulnerable shops to eliminate ram raiding, and the placing of street furniture in visible and well-lit locations. The police Architectural Liaison Officer will be an important consultee. In general, public areas should be well lit and designed to allow natural public surveillance.
- Carrying out higher quality maintenance. Poorly maintained and vandalised public areas invite more crime.
- Providing safer car parking with well designed and maintained links to the town center. Secured car parks and good lighting are crucial.
- Developing safer public transport Besides the need to address issues of regularity and reliability of services, it is also important to recognise that there may be concerns about safety whilst waiting for transport to arrive. In these circumstances, it may be necessary to consider measures concerned with the location and lighting of bus stops/shelters and transport interchanges.
- Providing for enhanced surveillance. Depending on local circumstances, this could, for example, involve radio links, CCTV, or city centre representatives.
- Where begging, homelessness, and alcohol and drug misuse have a negative impact on a centre's image, it will be necessary to consider the issues as part of a wider town or city strategy. In some areas use has been made of local by-laws to control public alcohol consumption.



ACTION: ENCOURAGING DEVELOPMENT IN TOWN CENTRES

Promoting Development Opportunities

66. Within the land-use framework provided by up-to-date development plans, planning authorities should take a proactive role in improving town centres and identifying suitable sites for development. This should be undertaken in association with other interests and should take account of the need to encourage private sector investment. Depending on local circumstances it could involve:

- identifying available and effective sites in and adjacent to town centres, including them in the local plan, and, where there is extensive town centre development, considering the preparation of a master plan;
- taking an active role in resolving availability constraints through land assembly and the increased use of CPO powers, particularly when creating large sites;
- preparing development briefs;
- promoting innovative designs on sites where they can enhance the urban area without despoiling its existing character and quality;
- considering the acceptability of mixed use developments; and
- encouraging the use of brownfield land.

CASE STUDY 22.

PROMOTING DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES: HAMILTON AHEAD INITIATIVE

The Hamilton Ahead Initiative was launched in 1994. It represents a partnership commitment by South Lanarkshire Council, Lanarkshire Development Agency, Hamilton Enterprise Development Company and Scottish Homes to work with the people of Hamilton and private sector interests to rejuvenate and revitalise Hamilton town centre. A dedicated project team was employed by the local authority to manage the project and negotiate with prospective developers. Significantly, the local authority have re-invested capital received from the sale or lease of land, directly back into the initiative.

The Objectives of the Initiative are to:

- create employment opportunities - currently estimated at over 2500 full time equivalent jobs by the end of the Initiative
- improve the attractiveness and architectural character of the town centre
- improve accessibility to the town centre, particularly by public transport
- integrate new retail development with the existing town centre
- reduce leakage of retail expenditure
- improve quality of life for local residents
- maximise the leverage of resources external to the partnership, particularly from the private sector - currently estimated that out of a total cost of £210m, £145m will be private investment
- Projects being developed by the Initiative include the refurbishment and extension of an existing shopping centre; new retail development, a town square, leisure, sports, arts and library facilities, and a hotel and restaurant, on a site adjacent to the town centre; upgrading of the town's major multi-storey car park; extensive upgrading of Quarry Street (the retail core of the current town centre); improvements to the town's bus/rail interchange; and extension and enhancement of the public park running through the town centre

Encouraging Development at an Appropriate Scale

67. The sequential approach set out in NPPG 8, expects retailers to take a less rigid view of their space requirements in town centres. Both developers and retailers should be encouraged to adjust or sub-divide large proposals in order that they can be accommodated in the town centre and so that their scale and form matches what already exists. It may also be necessary to consider the scope for promoting the reuse of vacant or under-used land and premises, using development briefs.



ACTION: FUNDING

68. There are a variety of agencies and programmes of potential relevance to town centre regeneration but none are directly or solely focused on town centres. In most cases a wide range of relevant resources will need to be tapped in order to put together a funding package which

meets the needs of any particular initiative. It is important to remember that, besides hard cash, these could include 'in kind' funding, such as the provision of services and accommodation, the secondment and allocation of staff time, or even the availability of particular forms of expertise. Funding for town centre initiatives may be available from:

- Europe
- Central Government



- the Enterprise Network
- Local Government
- The private sector
- Other sources

Europe

69. EC grants have been used extensively for town centres in those parts of the country that are eligible. Projects which demonstrate economic and environmental benefits are supported. For example, work associated with both the Public Realm Strategy in Glasgow City Centre and the Paisley High Street pedestrianisation scheme received 50% funding from the European Regional Development Fund. (Structural Funds are currently being reformed and draft regulations are under negotiation by Member States. New programmes should be in place in January 2000, immediately after the current ones expire in December 1999.)

Central Government and the Enterprise Network

70. In Scotland, area regeneration and town centre related funding is primarily undertaken through the Enterprise Network. This includes Scottish Enterprise (SE), Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE) and the local enterprise companies (LECs) who together have a wide range of powers to support economic development. The emphasis is on encouraging and supporting the creation of broadly based partnerships (with local authorities, other government agencies and the private sector) to pursue comprehensive regeneration strategies, based on the concept that economic and social regeneration should be pursued alongside physical regeneration.

71. The network will provide or finance training, business development, and environmental improvement, including the removal of dereliction or contamination as well as amenity improvements. Although the enterprise network is supportive of the wider economic benefits of town centre regeneration, there are no specific town centre regeneration programmes and projects have to compete against other calls on resources. However, Scottish Enterprise is currently undertaking further evaluation of the network's role in relation to town centres. In particular, the network is playing a major role in the Welfare to Work and New Deal initiatives.

72. Challenge funding for CCTV schemes is also available directly from the Scottish Executive (the Crime Prevention Unit). Successful projects for the financial year 1999-2000 were announced in February 1999. Funding will be available for subsequent years but the competition will be widened to encompass a wider range of community safety projects.

Local Government

73. Local government can provide a wide range of relevant resources. The combining of funds from separate local authority departments may be a very significant element in pursuing town centre initiatives. It is also important to take advantage of the relaxation of controls on capital spending, which should enable local authorities to enter into partnerships and to reinvest funds from the disposal of assets. Other methods of resourcing town centre work may include the secondment of staff and the opportunities provided by Section 75 Agreements.

Private Sector

74. Private sector contributions, particularly by businesses and developers, to town centre funding should be encouraged by:

- actively involving such interests in partnership activities;
- highlighting the additional benefits to be gained by their involvement; and
- making information available about the town centre and its economic health.

Other Sources

75. Other potential sources of funding include government agencies (eg Scottish Homes, Historic Scotland), Lottery funding (Arts, Sports, Heritage and Charity), Charitable Trusts, and Landfill Tax Credits (Landfill operators can claim tax credits which can subsequently be used as a contribution towards environmental projects).

76. The Private Finance Initiative (PFI) may also be relevant. This aims to promote efficient cost-effective public sector procurement of services from the private sector. A Planning Advice Note The Private Finance Initiative and the Planning Process was issued in March 1999.

CONCLUSIONS

77. This Advice Note emphasises the importance of improving existing town centres. Whilst recognising the challenges that remain, it indicates that there are sufficient good examples of what has been achieved to suggest that further progress can be made. It sets out some ways in which local authorities, in partnership with others, can make town centres more attractive and accessible places and enhance their potential as locations for commercial and business development.

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summary



IMPROVING TOWN CENTRES

depends on:

- taking **ACTION** to
- develop Partnerships
- monitor Performance



- prepare a Strategic Framework
- undertake effective Town Centre Management
- encourage Development Opportunities in town centres
- put agreed and firm Funding mechanisms in place

with the aim of...



- developing **ATTRACTIONS**, eg by
- improving economic viability
- increasing the range and variety of shops and services
- encouraging housing provision
- developing quality open spaces



- safeguarding village (and rural) shops

increasing **ACCESSIBILITY** for all, eg by

- encouraging a range of transport options
- providing short stay parking
- allowing complementary edge-of-centre developments



- providing for special needs groups
- using clear signposting and information
- providing for the delivery of goods

improving **AMENITY**, eg by

- making town centres pedestrian friendly



- introducing high standards of management and maintenance
- encouraging good design
- making town centres safe and secure

ANNEX

Town Centre Management Schemes in Scotland

Name	Towns covered	How organised	Established	Partners/ Key supporters
Aberdeen City Centre Partnership	Aberdeen	<i>Partnership</i>	1991 (relaunched 1997)	Aberdeen Chamber of Commerce Aberdeen City Centre Association Aberdeen City Council Grampian Enterprise

				Scottish Homes
Alloa Town Centre Management Initiative	Alloa	<i>Currently being set up</i>		Alloa Traders Association Clackmannanshire Council
Ayr Town Centre Management Initiative	Ayr	<i>Company</i>	1993	Enterprise Ayrshire South Ayrshire Council Private sector interests
Dumfries Town Centre Management Company	Dumfries	<i>Company</i>	1993	Dumfries and Galloway Council D&G Chamber of Commerce D&G Enterprise D&G Tourist Board Dumfries Shopkeepers' Association Private sector interests
Dundee City Centre Action Group	Dundee	<i>Partnership</i>	1988	Dundee City Council Scottish Enterprise Tayside
Dunfermline and West Fife Town Centres	Dunfermline	<i>Company</i>	1999	Fife Council Private sector interests
East Dunbartonshire Town Centres Management Ltd	Bearsden, Bishopbriggs, Kirkintilloch, Milngavie	<i>Company</i>	1998	Dunbartonshire Enterprise East Dunbartonshire Council
Edinburgh City Centre Management Company	Edinburgh	<i>Currently being set up</i>		

Edinburgh Old Town Renewal Trust	Edinburgh (Old Town)	<i>Trust</i>	1991	City of Edinburgh Council LEEL
Falkirk and District Town Centre Management Ltd	Falkirk, Grangemouth, Bo'ness	<i>Company</i>	1988	Falkirk Council Private sector interests
Glasgow City Centre Partnership	Glasgow	<i>Company</i>	1999	City of Glasgow Council Glasgow Chamber of Commerce Glasgow City Centre Association Glasgow Development Agency
Greenock Town Centre Initiative	Greenock	<i>Partnership</i>	1998	Inverclyde Council Renfrewshire Enterprise Private sector interests
Hamilton Ahead Initiative	Hamilton	<i>Partnership</i>	1990	Hamilton Enterprise Development Company South Lanarkshire Council
Inverness Town Centre Management Project	Inverness	<i>Partnership</i>	1997	Highland Council Inverness & District Chamber of Commerce Inverness and Nairn Enterprise Private sector interests
Kilmarnock Town Centre Management Initiative Ltd	Kilmarnock	<i>Company</i>	1992	East Ayrshire Council Enterprise Ayrshire
Kirkcaldy Town Centre Management Ltd	Kirkcaldy	<i>Company</i>	1991 (relaunched 1999)	Fife Council Fife Enterprise Scottish Homes
Lerwick Town Centre Management Group	Lerwick	<i>Partnership</i>	1995	Lerwick Community Council Lerwick Port Authority Lerwick Town

				Centre Association Northern Constabulary Shetland Amenity Trust Shetland Enterprise Shetland Islands Council Shetland Tourist Board
North Lanarkshire Town Centre Initiatives Ltd	Airdrie, Belshill, Coatbridge, Cumbernauld, Kilsyth, Motherwell, Wishaw	<i>Company</i>	1996	Lanarkshire Development Agency North Lanarkshire Council
Paisley Town Centre Management Trust Ltd	Paisley	<i>Company</i>	1990	Renfrewshire Council Renfrewshire Enterprise Scottish Homes
Perth City Management Centre Initiative	Perth	<i>Partnership</i>	1994	Perth and Kinross Council Perthshire Chamber of Commerce Perth College Perthshire Tourist Board Scottish Enterprise Tayside Scottish Homes
Stirling Town Centre Management	Stirling	<i>Partnership</i>	1993	AILLST Tourist Board Central Scotland Chamber of Commerce Forth Valley Enterprise Stirling Business Forum Stirling Council Private sector interests
West Dumbartonshire Town Centres Initiative Ltd	Dumbarton, Alexandria, Clydebank	<i>Company</i>	1997	Dumbartonshire Enterprise West Dumbartonshire Council
West Lothian	Bathgate, Linlithgow, Livingston	<i>LA run</i>	1996	West Lothian Council

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