

# Housing, Regeneration and Planning



The Scottish  
Government

## Town Centre Regeneration: How Does it Work & What can be Achieved?



**TOWN CENTRE REGENERATION:  
HOW DOES IT WORK & WHAT CAN BE ACHIEVED?**

**Douglas Wheeler Associates Ltd  
Slims Consulting  
Ryden  
Avril Blamey & Associates**

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# 1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of the research was to develop a clearer understanding of the activities taking place as part of town centre regeneration and the outputs and outcomes that follow on from this, to understand how town centre regeneration works and what it can achieve.

## Research Aims and Objectives

- 1.2 The **first aim** of the research was to assess the scope and nature of the outputs and longer term outcomes that arise from town centre regeneration and to identify the relevant contextual factors, mechanisms and processes that contribute to achieving these outputs and outcomes. It was anticipated that a longitudinal approach, incorporating in-depth analysis of a limited number of case studies would be required. The **second aim** was to develop and populate a 'theory of change' for town centre regeneration, drawing on existing data and evidence, clearly identifying gaps in the evidence that should be explored in this research. While the impetus for the research is the Town Centre Regeneration Fund (TCRF) it also aimed to draw out and explore wider lessons for town centre regeneration.

## Research Methodology

- 1.3 A four stage methodology was developed to be undertaken over an 18 month period starting in October 2009 and is outlined in the Appendices report which is available as a separate document. This Final Report has been prepared at the end of Stage Four and is a synthesis of the conclusions from all four stages of the research. Good practice and important lessons are presented in text boxes.

## Research Findings

### *Complex Concept: Requires Integrated Town Centre Regeneration Strategies*

- 1.4 Town centre regeneration is complex. It deals with interrelated and multi-dimensional issues that are not easily analysed or solved and furthermore are driven by the wider economic and other factors associated with the town (and for some larger towns, the sub-region). An integrated/holistic approach is required across local authority functions, businesses and communities and beyond just physical (typically retail) projects. This kind of approach needs to focus on services, cultural, civic, community and visitor assets. Town centre strategies should sit within whole town strategies.

### *Town Centre Scale & Distinctiveness: In Changing Wider Context*

- 1.5 Twenty-first century drivers like the transition to a low carbon economy, higher quality urban design aspirations, the knowledge economy and the internet

present real challenges and opportunities to town centre regeneration. It is essential to identify the particular distinctive features of the town centre. Town centres have evolved and will continue to change to take account of structural economic change with implications for town centre regeneration.

### *Town Centre Regeneration Needs More Than Physical Investment*

1.6 Traditional approaches to town centre regeneration focus on physical interventions. The TCRF has followed this path. Physical investment is often justified in terms of it stimulating demand for further investment, protecting retail, attracting visitors and developing civic pride. There is a clear case for considering other types of intervention alongside physical investment, including measures to directly support businesses, stimulate business growth, attracting visitors or encourage pride in the town centre.

### *Shared Vision, Strategy & Action Plan*

1.7 In most cases, successful town centre regeneration requires a clear vision, strategy and action plan to provide a strategic fit for project interventions. These terms are often loosely defined and therefore more difficult to monitor and evaluate particularly in the absence of the use of Theories of Change.

### *Partnership is Not an Outcome: Effective & Coordinated Delivery is Essential*

1.8 Delivering projects in town centres requires coordination with partners and within local authorities. Partnerships are common place but there is a need for more clarity on roles and responsibilities. Resources are often committed over timescales that are too short for realistic change in town centres. Civic leaders/project champions are needed to prioritise town centres over a longer period and to initiate confidence in the vision, strategy and delivery of action plan.

### *Small/Medium Businesses & Potential of Community Ownership of Assets*

1.9 The case studies highlighted the limited knowledge and data that was available on the small/medium businesses that would be affected by particular town centre regeneration projects. In the case studies, only in very few examples were one to one discussions undertaken with local and often independent businesses.

1.10 Community-led initiatives to take ownership of iconic and often listed town centre buildings at below market value as community assets are starting to emerge and will need to be evaluated in due course.

### *Improving Town Centre Regeneration Project Planning: Using 'Results Chain'*

1.11 The research highlighted limitations in project planning within town centre regeneration/TCRF interventions. These include a lack of results chains which link activities and outputs (the things they deliver) directly to their anticipated outcomes (the changes to environments and ultimately people). Activities tend not to be described in detail nor specify whose behaviour they are targeted at

and outcomes often lack timescales or thresholds (the type and level of change that will be achieved).

- 1.12 A fresh and more thorough approach to planning of interventions is needed. This would also help address many of the limitations in monitoring and evaluation that have been identified in the research. Logic models should be employed to develop a prospective results chain (theory of change). This would provide more details of planned activities and targets as well as more clarity over intended outcomes and thresholds.

#### *Improving Town Centre Health Check Assessments & Monitoring*

- 1.13 The research has confirmed that there is a lack of consistency in approaches to monitor the health of town centres. There is often inconsistency across local authority areas and only rarely can meaningful comparisons be made between different town centres in different parts of the country. While monitoring town centre health is challenging, improving approaches and developing consistency is crucially important. Without it, it is difficult to make evidence based judgements on prioritising need, nor is it easy to make judgements on the success of projects.

#### *Evaluation of Town Centre Projects: Limitations*

- 1.14 The evaluation base around the effectiveness of town centre regeneration is poorly developed. There is a lack of critical longitudinal evidence on the difference that town centre regeneration can make. In addition, evaluation within the TCRF projects was not seen as a priority. This is partly related to the lack of time to fully develop projects/result chains but is also a result of a lack of evaluation skills in the sector. These are serious issues which will continue to undermine the town centre regeneration sector if not addressed.

#### *Addressing Limitations in Evaluation: Applying Theories of Change*

- 1.15 To demonstrate the impact of town centre regeneration programmes on outcomes (effectiveness), there is a need to be able to provide monitoring data on programme implementation (process) and to link this to both routine monitoring and evaluation data on outcomes. For most programmes, routine monitoring data alone will not be sufficient to show changes in either short or interim outcomes. It is likely that projects will require some primary data collection to address their key evaluation questions and to improve attribution.
- 1.16 **Theories of Change** is an approach to evaluation which aims to enhance project planning, to help build monitoring and evaluation frameworks and to improve attribution (confidence that the changes in outcomes found are a result of the programme activities). A Theories of Change approach has much to offer town centre regeneration. Several case studies perceived the approach as adding value to their monitoring and evaluation plans and for future project development.



## *TCRF as a Tool for Delivering Town Centre Regeneration*

1.17 The case studies have shown that TCRF was an important intervention in generating confidence and mobilising business groups in town centres. The tight bidding and delivery timescales meant that in most cases this was achieved by the funding accelerating the actual delivery of 'bottom drawer' schemes that were already worked up with stakeholder buy-in and the necessary 'in principle' approvals in place. On the other hand this meant that in some of the case studies, projects that had been 'just talk' did become real and tangible and implementation on the ground had a clear impact on business and resident confidence.

1.18 The weaknesses of the 2009/10 TCRF programme included the short timescale for bids/delivery; capital only eligibility criteria; competitive bidding arrangements that were sometimes inefficient; the lack of consistent baselines and the lack of detailed results chains at the early project planning stage.

## **Conclusions & Recommendations**

1.19 Table 7.1 summarises the research team's findings, highlights **ten concluding recommendations** and identifies the particular agencies that would be responsible for progressing the individual recommendations.

## 2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 The Research Team of Douglas Wheeler Associates Ltd with Slims Consulting, Ryden and Avril Blamey & Associates were commissioned by the Regeneration Division within the Housing and Regeneration Directorate of the Scottish Government to understand how town centre regeneration works and what it can achieve. The purpose of the research was to develop a clearer understanding of the activities taking place as part of town centre regeneration and to scope out the nature of the outputs and longer term outcomes that follow on.

### **Policy Context: Government Economic Strategy and Town Centre Regeneration Fund**

- 2.2 The Scottish Government has a single Purpose - to create a more successful country where all of Scotland can flourish through increasing sustainable economic growth. The [Government Economic Strategy](#) sets out the approach to delivering the Purpose to ensure that all of the Government's resources and policies are focused on its achievement. The National Performance Framework, *Scotland Performs*<sup>1</sup>, provides more details of how progress will be measured.
- 2.3 Scotland's town centres and local high streets are a significant contributor to the national economy and in supporting the achievement of this Purpose. They are a focus of services, employment, leisure and civic activity for their local populations, often acting as the heart of local communities.
- 2.4 The Town Centre Regeneration Fund (TCRF) was a £60million capital fund available to town centres and local high streets from April 2009 to March 2010. The fund demonstrates Scottish Government commitment to the regeneration and growth of Scotland's town centres and local high streets, supporting local economies through challenging economic times and helping towns reach their potential. The aim of the fund was to support community and business leaders to regenerate and grow town centres in order to meet the needs of local communities and businesses.
- 2.5 The fund was available to all areas that were recognised in local authority development plans as performing the function of a town centre. This included town centres and high streets within cities, although city centres were excluded. Scottish Planning Policy defines town centres as: *'city, town and district centres, irrespective of size, that provide a diverse and sustainable mix of activities and land uses which create an identity that signals their function and wider role.'* Projects funded by the TCRF in nine case study areas were used by the research team to draw general inferences about town centre regeneration and also about the projects themselves.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/About/scot>

## **Town Centre and Local High Street Learning Network**

- 2.6 The Town Centres and Local High Streets Learning Network is a cross-Government initiative that supports people and organisations to improve the way Scottish town centres and high streets are made more vital and vibrant. The network gives practical help to organisations and individuals involved in decision-making and provision of frontline services. It aims to better connect a range of people across Scotland, including: local-authority regeneration teams; planning and economic development managers; developers; retailers; town-centre managers; Business Improvement District staff; and community representatives.
- 2.7 The Network has identified whole town centre/whole town approaches and performance management as its two main priorities. The members, who come from a variety of sectors and disciplines, are interested in learning more about what works and what does not in terms of *interventions* in town centres and in different contexts and circumstances. They are also interested in identifying and understanding *what other process factors help or hinder* successful town centre regeneration.

## **Research Aims and Objectives**

The aims and objectives of the research were to:

- Develop a clearer understanding of the activities taking place as part of town centre regeneration and the outputs and outcomes that follow on from this;
- Assess the scope and nature of the outputs and longer term outcomes that arise from town centre regeneration;
- Identify the relevant contextual factors, mechanisms and processes that contribute to achieving these outputs and outcomes;
- Understand how town centre regeneration works and what it can achieve;
- Develop and populate a 'theory of change' (ToC) for town centre regeneration, drawing on existing data and evidence, clearly identifying gaps in the evidence that should be explored in this research.

## **Four Stage Methodology**

- 2.8 The Research Team, working closely with a Research Advisory Group, developed a four stage methodology that is illustrated in the Appendices report (available as a separate document) and was undertaken over an 18 month period starting in October 2009. This report has been prepared in Stage Four and is a synthesis of the conclusions from the first three stages of the research.
- 2.9 This report summarises published research and the results of consultations into what town centre regeneration is and how it works. The report then goes on to identify the key elements that are needed for town centre regeneration and outlines what it can achieve. The issues and fundamental challenges in planning interventions, monitoring and evaluating town centre regeneration are identified using nine TCRF Case Studies. The town centre case study areas were selected to cover varying types, scales and different settings, ranging

from: town centres within cities; town centres on the edge of cities; town centres in rural areas; town centres on islands; and larger free standing towns. The report then considers how this research has helped to improve the clarity and specificity of project plans and monitoring and evaluation. Finally, the report considers how learning on town centre regeneration can be maximised.

2.10 The report draws on evidence from a series of exercises that were carried out by the Research Team, including:

- A **review of literature** to identify and examine published research into how town centre regeneration works and what it can achieve. Regeneration is an extremely wide and multi-faceted topic and only literature which may shed light on these questions was assessed. Around 40 published documents were identified based on a comprehensive search. The review is included in the Appendices report which is available as a separate document;
- A series of face to face **consultations with a range of stakeholders, advisors and promoters** of Scottish town centre regeneration who were identified in conjunction with the Research Advisory Group. Two workshops were also held with one in Stage Two and one in Stage Four. The consultations and workshops were designed to augment the literature review and provide a current view on town centre regeneration in Scotland;
- An **online survey of local authorities**, which explored the availability of town centre regeneration performance data at town, town centre and district centre levels. The survey identified what data are collected, how often they are collected, for what areas and by whom to get a clear picture of activity across Scotland. A summary of the findings from this exercise and the survey itself are included in the Appendices report;
- A **review of successful TCRF applications to develop a typology** was undertaken to establish: the types of activities funded through TCRF; the nature of outputs and impacts anticipated from the supported projects; and the approaches expected to be taken to monitor and evaluate the projects. The typology is included in the Appendices report;
- The baseline as reviewed via fieldwork during April/early May 2010 and progress at January/February 2011 in the **nine TCRF case study areas** that have been selected. The TCRF Case Studies Report is available as a separate document.

2.11 These research exercises have identified a number of challenges particularly for monitoring and evaluating town centre regeneration which have implications for improving the effectiveness of town centre regeneration. This

final report goes on to demonstrate how a Theories of Change (TOC)<sup>2</sup> approach can help meet some of these challenges by describing and testing the anticipated process of change in town centre regeneration. This approach constructs a '**results chain**' to aid the development of an effective evaluation framework. TOC can respond to some of the information and process gaps that have been identified in the research and provide **theory and structure** to explore and understand the process of change in town centre regeneration.

## **Context for the Research: Market Overview**

- 2.12 This research was undertaken between October 2009 and April 2011 against a backdrop of the financial crisis and moves to economic recovery. The 2008 financial crisis affected the property markets in waves. Initially, commercial property investment values plummeted and housing market activity fell away, as purchasers of both were unable to access funding from banks.
- 2.13 Occupier demand for property did not collapse during the recession and markets have remained subdued but active. Some sectors such as affordable housing, hotels and student housing have taken advantage of the weak commercial and residential sectors to actually expand during the recession.
- 2.14 The TCRF was launched in 2009 during the recession and thus provided investment in town centres which would not otherwise have happened, during a period when the typical TCRF town was at a low point in terms of market activity and interest.
- 2.15 Scotland exited recession in 2010. The property market recovery is, however, extremely risk-averse and is focused upon large and deep markets with growth potential – essentially the main cities. Occupier demand is also increasingly hierarchical. Public sector funding seeks “leverage” in larger centres where there is active – but not quite viable – private sector interest.
- 2.16 These conditions mean that, in general, market prospects for small to medium towns remain comparatively weak. Accordingly, active management and targeted investment rather than major physical regeneration are likely to be the most productive focus of resources. Apart from large supermarket interest, new activity and growth are more likely to emerge from local, independent and civic/community sources than “inward investment” by major companies.
- 2.17 Good practice and important lessons are presented in text boxes. The remainder of this report is structured as follows:
- Chapter 3: What Is Town Centre Regeneration?;
  - Chapter 4: The Key Elements Needed For Successful Town Centre Regeneration;
  - Chapter 5: Challenges In Assessing The Success of TCRF;

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<sup>2</sup> Theories of Change is an approach to evaluation that is increasingly used in complex interventions to enhance planning, support the development of an evaluation framework and to aid attribution (being able to attribute changes found to the project activities).

- Chapter 6: Using a Theories of Change Approach;
- Chapter 7: Key Findings & Recommendations.

### 3 WHAT IS TOWN CENTRE REGENERATION?

#### Introduction

- 3.1 This chapter considers what successful town centre regeneration is, how it works, the activities that take place and the outputs and outcomes that result. The chapter draws on evidence primarily from the literature review and also draws upon the consultations. The research team's starting point was to **define town centre regeneration in its broadest as policies and projects directed at tackling social, economic, physical and environmental problems within town centres**. From the literature review and consultations, the common understanding was that town centre regeneration is a holistic process of reversing economic, social and physical decay where it has reached a stage in a particular town centre when market forces alone will not be sufficient to tackle the problems identified.
- 3.2 Moving on from this definition, it is clear that the evidence base for town centre regeneration is complex and incomplete; however, in the interests of presenting a structured argument, the following four themes have been drawn from the team's research and are discussed in this chapter:
- Taking an integrated and connected approach;
  - Strategies for town centre regeneration;
  - Regeneration outcomes;
  - Regeneration management.

#### Taking an Integrated & Connected Approach

- 3.3 Town centre regeneration in practice is a complex concept that deals with many interrelated and multidimensional issues and challenges that are not easily solved. The literature review and consultations agree that, historically, regeneration has tended to focus on **physical place - essentially buildings and public realm**. There is now a growing recognition among practitioners and in the literature that a more integrated and connected approach is needed. This means a more corporate approach in local authorities and the active involvement of town centre businesses and local communities.
- 3.4 This more integrated, connected and holistic approach means a much broader thematic focus rather than simply promoting physical (often retail related) projects. This approach takes account of the town centre's distinctive role as **'the heart of local communities' and an important location for service, cultural, community, leisure and employment functions**. However, this more holistic approach tends to increase complexity, in a field where there is already limited evidence of a clear theory and structure to explore the process of change. (See Sections 3.26 - 3.27)
- 3.5 Applying a more integrated approach within a town's centre involves capital building projects, public realm as well as business development, marketing and promotion. This can result in quantifiable change in business performance and

improved local perceptions. Active community involvement and the creation of social capital in the town were also highlighted in the literature as an essential part of successful town centre regeneration.

3.6 The **whole town** approach is an emerging concept which seeks a full range of physical, social, economic and environmental interventions across the wider town rather than just in the town centre. It is defined by Donaghy (2010) as encompassing three core parts:

- Thematic – comprising physical, economic, social and cultural elements;
- Spatial – the accessibility of the town to residents and visitors, together with the connections with its hinterland communities;
- Processes – the approach adopted, the project design and the delivery method.

3.7 This approach is valid, as towns clearly depend on wider economic issues and markets that are not necessarily within their control. However, to some extent each town creates some of the place and market conditions for its town centre's success (or failure). Town-wide housing, employment and access are intrinsically linked with town centre performance. Business development, community involvement, creation of social capital, marketing and promotion are required alongside physical investment. Business confidence and civic pride are important outcomes.

3.8 On the other hand, for town centres such a broad approach could lead to an even more diffuse spread of scarce resources. This broader approach inevitably increases the level of complexity and so will also require more rigorous project development that identifies clear results chains which link project activities and outputs directly to their anticipated outcomes. (See Sections 7.42 - 7.47)

### **Strategies for Town Centre Regeneration**

3.9 Town centres must also **respond** to new forms of competition and changing customer behaviour. While strategies are vital, DCLG (1999) also notes that improving the quality of retail and services provision rather than expanding the quantity can in some cases be the key to successful regeneration. Also, success may come from opportunism through backing initiatives from local entrepreneurs and community driven organisations (Singhal et al, 2009).

3.10 Therefore, town centre regeneration strategies are constantly evolving, dynamic processes and successful strategies often include more than one approach. They can, however, be grouped under the following headings (Singhal et al, 2009):

- Local economic development;
- Property-led;
- Retail-led;
- Event-based;
- Entertainment-led.



- 3.11 Activities and outcomes from these five types of regeneration strategies include: attracting investment and business; enhancing and creating employment; image building; improving quality of life; physical transformation; property investment performance; and infrastructure development. In addition to the regeneration strategies above, during the last ten years **culture and the creative industries** have begun to play an important role in regeneration in some towns and particularly in cities (Montgomery, 2007).
- 3.12 Of the strategies noted in Section 3.11 above, **retail-led regeneration** stands out as a common and recurring theme in the literature and consultations. This is partly due to the importance of retailing to town centres (BCC 1998). However, Findlay and Sparks (2009) find the literature on issues such as healthy town centres, high streets and retail-led regeneration to be limited and highly variable in terms of its evidence base and robustness. From their research they found that it is not routine to monitor the performance of town centres in a **regular and consistent way**. (See Section 3.15)
- 3.13 Generally, retail tends to be the largest, most central, highest value and most easily-measured element of the town centre mix. It is also subject to strong planning control and therefore extensive policy-making. Less high value elements and less tangible measures – business confidence and civic pride for example - are less likely to be assessed as real outcomes, yet are critical.
- 3.14 The consultation responses acknowledged that there has been a focus on **retail-led town centre regeneration** up to start of the 2008-09 economic recession. Consultees felt that this may be at the expense of the wider and more diverse role played by town centres and the location of other service, business, leisure and civic functions. It was pointed out that not every town will be a retail destination, so some towns need other success criteria.
- 3.15 Despite the extent of retail-led regeneration, there is a **marked lack of research into how this impacts** on jobs, rents and property investment performance (Dixon, 2005). In their literature review, Findlay and Sparks (2009) classify potential outcomes of retail-led regeneration and retail development projects as positive or negative changes in:
- Retail structure;
  - Business development and employment;
  - Community;
  - Achieving regeneration;
  - Wider regeneration.
- 3.16 **Intervention in commercial and residential property markets** remains an important strand in town centre regeneration initiatives in Britain and is still under-evaluated. To address this, Francis and Thomas (2006) traced vacancy chains as the supply of new commercial property stimulated turnover amongst users of buildings. This technique helped evaluate a contentious aspect of area based property-led initiatives, namely the extent to which they are stimulating new investment in a wider region, as opposed to simply moving existing demand and employment around it. **Investment returns** for urban

regeneration commercial property were found by Adair et al (2003) to outperform national and local benchmarks over the long term. The enhanced levels of investment return conflict with typically poor perceptions of regeneration locations. The poor perceptions frequently stem from a lack of information. Further research (Adair et al 2005) showed that rental growth in commercial property in urban regeneration locations was similar to the wider market and this stimulated investor interest.

3.17 Taking an overview, the DCLG (1999) states that the starting point for any **town centre vision or strategy** should be a realistic attempt to **profile the town and then audit its strengths and weaknesses**. In addition, DCLG notes that all kinds of town centre now have to respond to new forms of competition and changing customer behaviour.

DCLG have identified seven aspects of performance to demonstrate good practice in town centre regeneration, namely:

- A shared vision;
- A strategy for town centre revitalisation;
- A balance of projects and programmes;
- An appropriate partnership or champion;
- Enough resources to make an impact;
- Effective organisation and co-ordination;
- Monitoring results.

3.18 These aspects are considered in more detail in the next three chapters drawing on Scottish evidence from the consultations and the nine case studies. (See TCRF Case Studies Report: available as separate report).

### **Regeneration Outcomes**

3.19 A report by the London Assembly (2002) to investigate regeneration funding generally found that it was **difficult to obtain information** about regeneration work. Previous programmes had not been evaluated and existing information was unreliable. There was an emphasis on outputs over outcomes or quality. Tyler (2000) concurs that gaps in the evidence base are very apparent and are likely to severely constrain effective policy. Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) guidance (2003) advises setting out a broad framework within which the assessment of spatially targeted interventions should take place. The guidance recommends a pick-and-mix approach as there is no universally applicable set of indicators. As a result there is a potentially very useful role for Theories Of Change, particularly to explore causal links and changes over time to improve the assessment of policy cost effectiveness.

3.20 Based on the consultations, one important outcome of successful town centre regeneration is believed to be **improved business confidence and wider pride** in the town centre, both of which can only be quantified by using regular perception surveys. One respondent said: *‘town centre regeneration is successful when customers, businesses and residents are confident and*

*positive*'. Another said *'town centre regeneration is successful when a town centre only requires normal investment (repair and maintenance) rather than further major regeneration'*.

3.21 Other issues that were raised in the consultations relating to successful regeneration outcomes included:

- There is a need to clearly define “regeneration”: must a centre be ailing for it to be regenerated?;
- There is significant potential for rural town centres to become key development hubs for their wider hinterlands and ‘new drivers for wider SME development’. This is recognised in the Lowlands & Uplands Scotland European Structural Fund Programmes 2007 – 13;
- Successful town centres are vibrant, distinctive, diverse and high quality, offering a mix of retail, food and beverage, residential, leisure and business uses; shops alone are vulnerable;
- A successful town centre encourages pride and confidence which stimulates investment, entrepreneurial activity and care for the place;
- A sustainable and safe town centre offers choice and convenience across the age spectrum and the evening and night-time economy are key issues.

3.22 Some authors comment on the lack of **longitudinal research** into town centre regeneration. This is a half-truth; there is time series data on many town centres, but it can be incomplete, inconsistent and – critically for this study – lacking a narrative with theory and structure to explain the processes at work. Where longitudinal research has been conducted, this highlights the complexity of the topic and the need for clarity in terminology and robust definitions.

3.23 **Attribution** is particularly difficult in town centre regeneration due to **complexity** in the chain of impact of the intervention and the influence of the wider economic context. Most projects **deliver multiple outcomes** (economic, social and environmental). The linkage between the outcome and contributing activities is often unclear. Most research describes what has been done (inputs, activities and in some cases outputs), while intended project outcomes (and expected thresholds of change) are rarely specified at the planning stage and measured or tested.

## **Regeneration Management**

3.24 A number of management approaches have emerged to help promote town centres. The most widely recognised of these are **Town Centre Management (TCM)** and **Business Improvement Districts (BIDs)**. TCM is a co-ordinated, pro-active initiative designed to ensure that town and city centres are desirable and attractive places. BIDs are business-led initiatives to work and invest collectively in improvements to the local business environment.

3.25 Singhal et al (2009) argue that the private sector contributes substantially to regeneration by adopting various business strategies, which can involve partnership working with community groups as well as local authorities. Businesses play a significant role in creating a vibrant entrepreneurial economy

and contribute to social change. The consultations also highlighted the importance of the **active involvement of town centre businesses** and particularly independent retailers.

### **What Is Town Centre Regeneration?: Conclusions**

- 3.26 The main conclusions from this chapter are that town centre regeneration is complex and if it is to be successful **it needs more than just physical investment in buildings and public realm**. Retail investment is often seen as a key way to achieve town centre regeneration and much of the literature focuses on this approach and the elements of it that are easier to measure. In some circumstances there could be an overemphasis on retail investment at the expense of investment in the other civic and community roles that a town centre plays.
- 3.27 The research team also recognises that the whole town approach is relevant and indeed the case studies (see TCRF Case Studies report) include contextual reviews of each town as well analysis of its town centre. Here, the research team conclude that **town centre regeneration strategies should be nested within whole town strategies**. A whole town strategy will flow from the town planning, economic and community development policy for that urban area. Town centre regeneration aims should align with and respond to - and where relevant, influence and help shape – that wider strategy.
- 3.28 The literature review has also shown that the majority of evaluation evidence from town centre regeneration is narrow and **does not answer the study question of how regeneration works and what it can achieve**. There is a clear research gap around the **process** of how town centre regeneration works and leads to interim and long term outcomes. The complexity of the process highlights the need for **clarity in terminology and robust definitions**. Although there is economic theory available, town centre regeneration can be a 'black box' that fails to detail what activities occurred in reality and which of these were responsible for the outcomes achieved. Therefore, the measurement of regeneration effects is often simplistic and links projects and programmes to claimed outcomes and benefits without explaining how this happened or actually demonstrating attribution. These issues are considered in more detail in Chapters 5 & 6. The next chapter reviews the key elements that are needed for successful town centre regeneration.

## 4 KEY ELEMENTS NEEDED FOR SUCCESSFUL TOWN CENTRE REGENERATION

- 4.1 This chapter discusses what key elements are needed for successful town centre regeneration and draws on evidence from the literature review, consultations and particularly the case studies. The important elements that have emerged for successful town centre regeneration are: town centre scale; context and distinctiveness; need for more than physical investment; importance of a shared vision; partnership; role of small/medium business; integrating funding streams; and potential of community ownership of town centre assets.
- 4.2 In highlighting key elements for successful town centre regeneration it is important to acknowledge that the literature review, consultations and the case study research have all shown that town centre regeneration interventions are often conceived and planned based more on **deductive reasoning from a general principle** rather than observed facts. This was a common finding in the nine case studies where because of the very tight bidding programme, successful TCRF projects were typically already developed, and ready to be implemented without any significant reference to the actual aims and objectives of the TCRF. This is considered in more detail in Chapter 5.

### Town Centre Scale, Distinctiveness & Context

- 4.3 Policies and projects directed at tackling social, economic, physical and environmental problems within town centres have had to respond to very dramatic changes that have affected Scotland's town centres and high streets over the last thirty years. Covered shopping centres, out of town retail and outlet centres and the growth of powerful retail chains operating from large premises have had a significant impact. Traditional town centres face stiff competition from established out of town centres as they struggle to face the challenges posed by the current economic recovery and look to the future.
- 4.4 Now in the twenty-first century the transition to a low carbon economy, higher quality urban design aspirations, the knowledge economy, new consumer markets, transport connectivity, internet shopping and different demographic patterns are driving change. Regional and local niche markets are also becoming increasingly competitive for the tourism, heritage, culture, craft and food sectors. These **drivers present real challenges and opportunities** to town centre regeneration but this has often to be set within a '**polycentric network of centres**'. Most individual town centres and high streets do not function in isolation and need to be considered within a wider context in terms of their particular location and surrounding catchment area. Sections 2.12 - 2.16 also set a current market overview.
- 4.5 The nine case studies for example (see TCRF Case Studies report) considered town centres that served populations at two extremes of between 1,400 residents (Millport), in a location identified as 'remote rural' (SG Urban Rural Classification) and 66,000 residents (Govan), in a 'large urban cities' (SG

Urban Rural Classification). Clearly, town centre regeneration interventions need to **recognise the scale of the town centre**. In a small town like Stromness or Millport the town centre includes a significant part of the whole town.

- 4.6 It was also clear from the nine case studies that the spatial boundaries and, to some degree, the 'centre of gravity' of the town centres had all changed to a greater or lesser extent and were continuing to evolve. In some cases the consequence was increasing proportions of vacant property on the edge of the town centre and a trend of reducing the floorspace in retail use. Placemaking, planning and regeneration policies need to recognise this trend and therefore regularly review town centre vacancy levels and the extent of 'prime retail frontage'. In some cases the outcome could be to encourage **changes out of retail use** (Class 1) into business (Class 4) and residential (Class 9)<sup>3</sup>.
- 4.7 Town centre regeneration projects also need to be tailored to the role the town centre plays. For example, the TCRF public realm investment in Govan is helping to reinforce Govan Cross as a **transport interchange** and centre to respond to the service opportunities that arise from major investment in the immediate surrounding area including, Pacific Quay, Southern General Hospital and the ferry link to the new Transport Museum. In Millport the TCRF focus is on building on the success of the Garrison House refurbishment and **promoting small indigenous business growth and community development**.
- 4.8 There was a strong view in the consultations and the case studies that successful town centre regeneration needed to pay closer attention to the complex dynamics of an area and **focus on the distinctiveness of the town centre**. This included, for example, strengthening the identity of the place and improving the retail mix including the independent retail offer and facilities for visitors.

### **More than Physical Investment**

- 4.9 Chapter 3 and the literature review highlighted that traditional approaches to town centre regeneration have tended to focus on physical interventions. These can take many forms including public realm investment; acquisition and development of buildings and sites; and installing site services. The TCRF projects are also heavily biased towards physical interventions. (See Chapter 5).
- 4.10 Physical improvements and investments in town centres are often justified in terms of acting as a stimulus for further investment in the retail sector or creating the conditions for future commercial and residential investment. Often it is claimed that these types of projects will bring wider economic benefits including the retention of retail spend, the attraction of new visitors and spend into an area, or improving perceptions of the place, for visitors and for residents.

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<sup>3</sup> The Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) (Scotland) Order 1997.

4.11 The experience of the case study projects has highlighted a number of issues with this approach:

- **Physical investments are largely supply side interventions** – this is the case in a number of the case study projects, for example Kirkintilloch, where the removal of a building and the installation of site servicing was seen to *create the conditions* for future development activity. **There is no guarantee that this future activity will take place – and often there is a need for further interventions to ensure that it does;**
- **There is a critical lack of thinking about the relationship between the physical intervention and the economic and social benefits it expects to bring.** There is little consideration or differentiation between physical projects regarding the *timing* of benefits that will flow from physical investments. The research team explored the issues surrounding results chains in more detail below;
- **Given the wide ranging roles that town centres play and the range of challenges that they face there appears to be a strong case for considering a wider range of interventions as having the potential to contribute to improved performance in a town centre.** These could include interventions focused on business growth, business start up, place marketing and community development to support physical interventions. Projects also need to seek to ensure that potential economic benefits from physical investment are captured locally.

### **Shared Town Centre Vision, Strategy and Action Plan**

4.12 The requirement in successful town centre regeneration for a considered, forward project planning process that leads to a shared vision with a clear strategy and action plan of projects and programmes emerged strongly from consultations and case studies. These components, however, are often loosely defined and their effectiveness is difficult to prove.

4.13 Case studies like Barrhead, Govan, Elgin, Kirkintilloch and Kirkcaldy had a **strong strategic regeneration policy context that was often already** in place. This was in the form of, for example, ‘Better Barrhead’, Central Govan Action Plan, Moray Local Plan/Moray Town Partnership, Kirkintilloch Town centre Review and the draft Mid Fife Local Plan that includes the priority to regenerate Kirkcaldy town centre. In these case studies there was a clear **TCRF project fit with the regeneration policy context** and the specific town centre was identified as a **clear priority by political leaders**.

4.14 Evidence from the consultations and anecdotal evidence from the case studies also highlighted the need, in some cases, for the emerging town centre regeneration action plan in the short term to **focus on a smaller number of priority actions** in order to concentrate resources and investment rather than spreading efforts too thinly. The short, medium and long term actions would all have a good strategic fit in order to respond to the wide complexity of town

centre regeneration. Resolving the dilemma of prioritising actions will be dependent on the individual town centre.

## **Effective & Coordinated Delivery**

- 4.15 Consultees stressed the importance of meaningful **partnership** based on real involvement, active consultation and mutual trust between partners. The literature similarly highlight the importance of partnership, but proves to be more limited in terms of what works and how (Findlay and Sparks, 2009).
- 4.16 Overall, partnerships in town centre regeneration are commonplace and aim to share public, private and third sector expertise, actively involve businesses and residents and access additional financial resources. Partnerships loomed large in the case studies and some (e.g. Elgin, Airdrie, Kirkcaldy, Barrhead, and Govan) were clearer regarding roles and responsibilities than others. There is a need, however, to critically examine the effectiveness of the partnership over a longer period, regularly ask if it is still required and if the partnership needs to be refreshed.
- 4.17 Delivering projects in town centres requires coordination with a range of stakeholders and within local authorities. The complexity of interventions in town centres means that it is essential to ensure this **coordinated delivery** across various local authority departments and to work closely with town centre businesses, owners and residents. For example, 'Team Stromness' was established by Orkney Islands Council to assist in coordination and delivery of the town centre regeneration projects.
- 4.18 Evidence from the consultations and the case studies also highlighted the importance of being specific about what individual partnerships actually deliver and therefore there is a need for more clarity on roles and responsibilities. In some cases this might mean that a single agency contribution rather than joint delivery may be more effective at delivering a particular outcome but this must be clearly articulated. The key challenge here is for individual partners to **actually deliver their particular contribution well**.
- 4.19 A particularly positive project development and delivery finding from the case studies was the emergence of much **more active involvement of town centre businesses** as a result of delivering TCRF projects. The view was that actual tangible evidence of investment in the town centre rather than 'just talk' made a difference in improving business confidence. In some cases (e.g. Elgin and Kirkcaldy) the involvement accelerated the BID initiatives that were already in place. In others, such as Govan and Barrhead, the implementation of the TCRF projects has encouraged the partnerships and in particular local business groups to emerge and to consider establishing a BID.
- 4.20 What is essential for successful town centre regeneration is a **strong civic leader and a project champion** to prioritise the town centre over a longer period. Evidence from the consultations and some of the case studies is that the project champion can initiate and sustain confidence in the vision and maintain momentum on the delivery of action plan.



## Importance of Small/Medium Businesses

4.21 Increasingly in Scottish town centres (e.g. Aberdeenshire and Scottish Borders) more attention is being **focussed on the important role of small and medium size independent businesses**. The case studies highlighted the limited knowledge and data that was available on the businesses that would be affected by particular town centre regeneration projects. Only in very few of the case studies were one to one discussions undertaken with local and often independent businesses to identify how an individual's particular business plans may or may not be accelerated as a result of the particular TCRF project. At the same time, standard and available retail data (examples include GVA Grimley: Scottish Town centres & Local Data Company) tends not to cover small town centres and independent retail businesses, hence the need to undertake one to one discussions. The research also identified some good practice examples of new business development initiatives targeted at start up and small town centre businesses namely 'Retail Rocks' and Scottish Borders Council's new One-to-One Retail Business Support.

### **Retail Business Start Up Initiative Example**

'**Retail Rocks**' is a project delivered by a private company Retail Rocks Limited. The initiative is an innovative new public/private sector partnership model which has been developed with the support of the Scottish Government using TCRF. Retail Rocks is a competition-based programme which engages with the local community by giving start-up retail businesses the opportunity to open in vacant town centre units. Critical to the success of the new businesses is the provision of business mentoring and the model already has commitment from key high street retailers and specialists in retail to provide in-kind support.

Retail Rocks has also gained support from the private sector and the British and Scottish Retail Consortium. It is designed to revitalise town centre retailing and communities by encouraging, enabling and supporting sustainable retail entrepreneurship; breaking down existing socio-economic and demographic barriers; re-educating traditional, negative mind-sets; providing a catalyst for widespread regeneration; and creating the confidence for further investment. The initiative is already targeting vacant retail units in Torry/Aberdeen with the aim of transforming them into vibrant retail businesses providing amenity and specialist retailing to help develop a new customer base for the town centres.

### **Retail Business Development Support Example**

Scottish Borders Council's **One-to-One Retail Business Support** project aims to deliver targeted retail business development support to independent retailers. The package of support mainly comprises of the provision of one-to-one business development/mentoring support and coaching/training advice from a retail consultant to target 40-50 independent retailers, along with a smaller provision of 'one-to-many' events that are open to all.

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The one-to-one business audits are flexible, responding to the needs of the individual retail business, and take the form of onsite meetings with the retailer and consultant, to go through a business evaluation diagnostic and action plan (which will be provided back to the business within 48 hours by the consultant), with follow up contact/visits made as appropriate. Technical assistance on merchandising and marketing, staff training, identification of financial support programs, tackling trade waste and recycling and regulatory issues is also be available. Along similar lines, Skills Development Scotland and Aberdeenshire Council, through the National Skills Academy Retail, are offering free taster sessions of the **‘Mary Portas guide to successful retailing’**.

## **Townscape Heritage: Integrating Community Ownership**

4.22 Two of the case studies, Stromness and Govan, used TCRF to augment and accelerate Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) **Townscape Heritage Initiative** projects (THI). THI’s use HLF grants to help communities to regenerate Conservation Areas displaying particular social and economic need throughout the United Kingdom. THI encourages partnerships of local organisations to carry out repairs and other works to a number of historic buildings, structures or spaces within these defined areas that are often contained within town centres. THI schemes are expected to deliver the following outcomes:

- Preserving and enhancing the character and appearance of conservation areas affected by high levels of deprivation and in need of regeneration;
- Bringing historic buildings back into appropriate and sustainable use;
- Safeguarding the character of conservation areas through: increasing training opportunities in heritage skills; increasing community participation; and improving approaches to conservation management and maintenance.

4.23 Recently emerging from this focus on townscape and historic buildings have been **community-led initiatives to take ownership of iconic and often listed town centre buildings at below market value as community assets**. These aim to play a catalytic role in successful town centre regeneration by initiating third sector businesses, bringing new economic uses into redundant but important buildings in the local townscape and generating civic pride. These initiatives will need to be evaluated in due course. In the case studies, Garrison House in Millport, driven by the Cumbrae Community Development Company, and the Pearce Institute, a Grade A listed landmark community building in Govan, are good examples of this type of town centre regeneration project. Another example is the acquisition of the Port House complex by Jedburgh Community Trust as part of the Jedburgh project. This is the first part in a longer term initiative to create employment opportunities through the provision of new employment space and further funding will be needed to achieve this.

- 4.24 This trend of community ownership of some town centre buildings is likely to continue in the future with the public sector looking to divest of a variety of different types of property in a range of town centres. It is still early but community-led initiatives could in some cases produce positive town centre regeneration outcomes. These could include securing new uses for prominent buildings, accommodating third sector business and advice and community uses. Here, clear demand needs to be demonstrated and a robust business plan prepared by using Theories of Change to demonstrate how the emerging project can respond to gaps in provision, market failures and achieve particular outcomes. This is also in line with the integrated town centre approach highlighted in Chapter 2.
- 4.25 In the next few years **more could be done to assist communities to explore the feasibility of the community owning and operating these kinds of assets**. Local authorities and the public sector need to take a more strategic view in prioritising asset transfer in town centres and assisting communities where demand exists. Communities will need assistance from agencies like the Development Trusts Association to raise awareness, assess risks, quantify benefits, provide appropriate training and to disseminate emerging good practice examples.

### **Key Elements for Successful Town Centre Regeneration: Conclusions**

- 4.26 This study has found that town centre regeneration interventions are often conceived and planned based more on **deductive reasoning from a general principle** rather than observed facts. However, this chapter demonstrates that successful town centre regeneration needs to recognise that town centres and high streets do not function in isolation and need to be considered within a **wider context in terms of their particular location and surrounding catchment area and to focus on the distinctiveness of the town centre**. Successful town centre regeneration depends on designing and implementing a small number of connected 'place making' projects that also involve business development often targeted at independent businesses and wider marketing to the local community and visitors.
- 4.27 The requirement in successful town centre regeneration for a considered forward project planning process that leads to a **shared vision with a clear strategy and action plan of projects and programmes** emerged strongly from consultations and case studies. Partnerships also loomed large in the case studies and some were clearer regarding roles and responsibilities than others. There is a need, however, to critically **examine the effectiveness of the partnership over a longer period**, regularly ask if it is still required and if the partnership needs to be refreshed.
- 4.28 The case studies also highlighted the need for a **mechanism to enable a group of interested town centre stakeholders to meet as a group** to progress and agree a town centre vision. This is unlikely to happen without external 'cross agency' support to encourage the skills and energy in the town centre community and some resourcing to help deliver initiatives. The BID process has often acted as this kind of catalyst for the town centre business community.

- 4.29 In Scottish town centres more attention is being **focussed on the important role of small and medium size independent businesses**. The research also identified some good practice examples of new business development initiatives targeted at start up and small town centre businesses. Recently emerging from the focus on townscape and historic buildings have been **community-led initiatives to take ownership of iconic and often listed town centre buildings at below market value as community assets**.
- 4.30 Increasingly it seems that there is **no template for successful town centre regeneration**. A key challenge therefore is to identify what is distinctive about the particular town centre. It is also vital to acknowledge that town centre regeneration is a **long-term process** but this can be difficult given the emphasis on physical interventions and the traditionally short-term property perspectives.
- 4.31 Investing in business development, business start up and social capital may be as important as the physical investment. The complexity of integrated town centre regeneration and the lack of an explanation of links between activities and longer term anticipated outcomes, however, mean that these links are difficult to prove and often not understood. In other words, there is an absence of an evidence base or even anticipated **'results chain'** for most town centre regeneration.
- 4.32 Town centre regeneration is complex: the outcomes are often long term and causal links between projects and outcomes are often not clear. Typically, there is little robust **explanation of how and why outcomes have happened** (or are anticipated). A new, more rigorous approach is required, to provide a logical framework to underpin and map a clear **'results chain'**, using evidence and clearer definitions. Chapters 5, 6 and 7 respond to some of the issues that have been identified and draw out how effective planning, monitoring and evaluation are essential. Also discussed is how a Theories of Change approach can assist in enhancing planning, supporting the development of an evaluation framework and help to attribute actual changes found to the TCR project activities.

## 5 CHALLENGES IN ASSESSING THE SUCCESS OF TCRF

### Introduction

- 5.1 An initial aim of this research was to identify wider lessons from the case study projects which could then inform future approaches to town centre regeneration. This chapter explores some of the challenges identified by the research team in assessing TCRF interventions as a group, and the case studies in particular.
- 5.2 The information in this chapter is based on the consultations with the case study partners and the literature review into approaches to town centre performance assessment.
- 5.3 The chapter considers four sets of issues including:
- The nature of the Town Centre Regeneration Fund;
  - Limitations in planning and specifying outcomes and outputs;
  - Weaknesses in approaches to monitoring town centre performance;
  - Lack of robust monitoring and evaluation plans.

### The Nature of Town Centre Regeneration Fund

- 5.4 The aim of the TCRF was to support community and business leaders to regenerate and grow town centres in order to meet the needs of local communities and businesses. The fund was capital only and so could not support non-investment activity. The fund was available from 1 April 2009 to 31 March 2010, with deadlines for applications in June and August 2009. All funding had to be claimed by March 2010. The way in which the TCRF was established with capital only funding, tight deadlines and the criteria used to select projects present challenges in terms of developing effective evaluation plans with the case study projects.
- 5.5 The first issue relates to the **relatively short period of time for the development of applications**. Seven out of the nine case study partners noted that the timescale for the preparation of TCRF applications was short. Where local authority departments responsible for town centre regeneration had been directly made aware of the fund they then had around a six week period in which to develop initial applications. Where the applicant was not a local authority, as in the case of the Millport Community Development Company, there was a time lag in being made aware of the Fund. This meant that the Community Development Company only had a two week window in which to prepare the application. (See TCRF Case Studies report).
- 5.6 This short period for project development and planning had two important implications: **it influenced the nature of the projects that were submitted to the fund**; and **it restricted the time available to develop robust implementation and monitoring and evaluation plans**. The latter issue is

discussed in more detail later in the chapter, however the first point, in terms of the nature of the projects submitted to the fund is discussed briefly below.

- 5.7 As a result of the short time for the development of applications, many of the projects that were submitted to the fund were project ideas that had been developed some time ago and were ‘taken off the shelf’ for submission to the fund.** These projects were often physical in nature and had been difficult to implement due to the previous lack of funding availability.
- 5.8 This initial potential bias towards physical interventions was compounded by the eligibility criteria used to assess projects.** In particular, the availability of relatively substantial funding and crucially, the original requirement to spend the monies before the end of March 2010, meant that physical projects stood more chance of success. Indeed, analysis of the TCRF projects shows that the successful bids were heavily biased towards physical interventions (See Table 5.1)
- 5.9** Across all of the projects, the most common primary activities were public realm, accessibility and townscape improvements, as shown in Table 5.1. The table shows that this was the primary activity of 27 of the 65 projects, equating to 42%. The next most popular primary activities were housing, leisure & recreation, or community facilities (28%), and business, commercial or retail space (22%). Between them, these three categories account for some 92% of all primary activities. Relatively few projects implemented new transport infrastructure or safety, security & crime reduction measures as their primary activities.

**Table 5.1: Summary of Primary TCRF Funded Activities**

<b>Activity</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>%</b>
Public realm, accessibility and townscape	27	42%
Business, commercial or retail space	14	22%
Housing, leisure & recreation, or community facilities	18	28%
Transport Infrastructure	4	6%
Safety, Security & Crime Reduction	1	2%
Other	1	2%
Total	65	100%

**5.10** The earlier chapters argued that town centre regeneration has increasingly come to be seen as a wide ranging activity that can include activity targeted at businesses, people, community and civic interventions. The TCRF’s overwhelming focus on physical interventions therefore means that care needs to be taken about extrapolating lessons from the case studies, and the TCRF as whole, for town centre regeneration more widely.

**Limitations in Planning and Quantifying Outcomes**

**5.11** Learning from the TCRF projects and case studies is made difficult by a number of weaknesses at the project planning stage in the case studies projects, some around implementation and others around the clarity and logical linkage of the potential outputs and outcomes from TCRF activity. There were a number of aspects to this.

5.12 The first relates to the planning of project implementation. The majority of the case studies experienced slippage of some sort or another, however, this was largely due to factors out with the control of the project. Of more concern, at least in terms of approaches to evaluation, is that the implementation of activities was often poorly specified. An example of this would be the investment in ducting for improved broadband capability in one of the case studies, where the target groups that would make use of that improved capacity were not clearly identified. Added to this, there was no explanation of the scale of the expected improvement against the current position. These are important issues to address if there is an aspiration to carry out effective evaluation of project interventions. These issues are explored further in Chapter 6.

5.13 The second relates to the use of inconsistent terminology and definitions with regards to activities, outputs and outcomes. No specific Scottish Government guidance on this was provided in the TCRF application process. Whilst the TCRF funded projects had provided information on their activities and anticipated outcomes, this information lacked consistency in the way these terms were defined. Figure 5.2 illustrates one of the change paths as expressed in the initial TCRF bids.

**Figure 5.2: Change Path as Detailed in Inverclyde TCRF Application**

Activities	Economic Outcomes	Social Outcomes	Environmental Outcomes
Upgrade entrance portals/signage and landscaping	Raise image quality and appeal of town	Convey perceptions of modern, vibrant culturally inspired town centre	Appealing and distinctive welcoming image
Provide 4 training places for young apprentices	Benefits to businesses Support SMEs, maximise tourist potential	Create more appealing safer cleaner centre	Create better connected and functional town centre
Employ local companies to undertake specialist elements of work	Support retail areas around key arrival points	Reduce perceived and actual crime and antisocial behaviour	Improve links to ferry /bus/rail interchanges
Create Wi-Fi access	Enhance commercial appeal and business start ups	Provide a strong distinctive centre	Reconnect communities to town heritage
Remove graffiti/fly posting	Higher footfall on core retail streets	Build capacity and confidence	Better accessibility across modes of transport
New pavement design	Extend economic opportunities to secure local jobs, local facilities and support	Make centre the default place for meeting, civic activity, social interaction	Reduce car mileage
Recycle materials wherever possible	Attract visitors to retail core	Improve civic pride	
Use low carbon structure in design	Increased demand for goods and services Encourage more active use of centre		

- 5.14 In many instances, as above, the TCRF plans expressed outcomes as activities (e.g. support SMEs, encourage more active use of centre) or outputs as outcomes (e.g. benefits to businesses). Activities were rarely described in a manner that identified their intended target group. Plans often did not link specific activities and outputs to specific outcomes and did not time order the outcomes into short, interim and longer term. The draft Theories of Change developed by the research team (see chapter 6) illustrates how logic models can be used to better differentiate between activities and outputs or outcomes and to illustrate links between, and order of, these elements.
- 5.15 The third aspect relates to the nature of the outputs and outcomes that were claimed by successful bids. The research team attempted to undertake a detailed review of all types of these outputs and outcomes but this proved to be impossible to quantify given their very wide range and the different ways in which the indicators for these were described.
- 5.16 A significant proportion of projects made claims around potential employment outcomes or other economic outcomes. There were also a number of common outcomes and outputs claimed including retail floorspace created, business units created, the retention of retail spend, the attraction of new visitors or improving perceptions of the place, for visitors and for residents. **While some outputs and outcomes were claimed routinely for many projects, there was often little attempt to quantify them.** This is highlighted by the analysis of the quality of employment outcomes that were claimed across the 65 projects in Table 5.3 below.

**Table 5.3: TCRF Projects Claiming Job Creation / Safeguarding**

Projects Claiming to Increase / Safeguard Jobs	
Yes	54
No	11
Total	65
Number of projects quantifying this	33

- 5.17 A further significant issue in relation to employment outcomes is that **no universal standards/guidelines** were applied as to how projects were to report potential job creation/safeguards figures. This is reflected in the way in which job creation figures are presented in the TCRF application forms. For instance, some projects are able to tightly define expected job creation (e.g. the number of jobs created through construction phase; or the number of jobs expected once the new scheme/facility is completed). In other cases, projects are much more vague and some simply state that the project will support jobs within the wider area.
- 5.18 **In other cases, even where outputs and outcomes were quantified, they were measured in different ways.** For example, some projects claimed outputs of business or retail space improved in terms of sqm; others claimed potential outputs in terms of units improved. Both of these issues would have made the comparative assessment of the potential benefits of projects by the



Scottish Government very difficult, and also made it impossible within the study parameters for the research team to assess the potential contribution of TCRF as a whole.

- 5.19 There was also a lack of consideration of the **timing of outputs and outcomes**. This is particularly important given the largely physical nature of the projects supported through TCRF. Our review of the rationale and justification of some case study projects revealed that physical investment was often justified in terms of acting as a stimulus for further investment. This was a recurrent theme in the Airdrie, Kirkintilloch, Barrhead and Govan projects. In these cases, however, the potential employment outcomes from later investments was often claimed in whole by the original TCRF intervention.
- 5.20 **Overall, the research team's review of the TCRF projects as a whole and the case studies suggests that in some cases, there was a lack of critical thinking at the planning stage. Often, the logical relationship between the initial intervention and the economic and social outcomes and outputs it expected to bring was not considered.** The most powerful example of this was the Kirkintilloch case study, where it was claimed that the removal of the Town Hall Annex would create footfall by opening up a new footpath between the town's historic core and retail core. This is in spite of the fact that the Council recognised there was a future need for a significant public realm improvement to bring the path into use and remove an eight foot wall that lay across the proposed footpath.
- 5.21 On the other hand, in Barrhead, more consideration had been given to the public realm improvements at Cross Arthurlie Street and Main Street, including short and medium term outcomes, such as the inclusion of signage, improvements to walking/cycling links and active business engagement. This has resulted in the local businesses now actively considering the possibility of a BID.
- 5.22 As part of the Jedburgh case study the purchase of the Porthouse Project was the first stage of a long term strategy. The property has now been successfully acquired and has been made wind and water-tight. In the short-term the ground floor unit is available for let. An options appraisal has been undertaken to advise on the most appropriate future use and an application is currently being progressed to secure lottery funding to undertake a full business case for the project.
- 5.23 The development of a destination play park as part of the Jedburgh project was also a well considered approach. It was felt that Jedburgh could capitalise better on its location on the A68 and needed further attractions to encourage people to visit the town. The development of a destination play park along with adequate parking and enhanced signage aimed to provide a reason to stop in the town, make it easy to park and provide good direction to other town centre services.

## Limitations in the Availability and Use of Routine Data and Town Centre Health Checks

5.24 Effective planning (e.g. quantifying and detailing timescales for the potential benefits from an intervention or project) is only one element that is necessary to carrying out meaningful evaluation. Any serious evaluation also needs to consider the effect of the intervention against baseline conditions. In the case of the TCRF this would mean assessing the change in the performance of the town centre over time before, during and after a project implementation.

5.25 The research confirmed that the **approaches to monitoring the health of town centres vary considerably across the case study towns**. In some of the smaller centres such as Millport, there had been no plans in place to monitor the health of the wider town centre. At the other end of the scale, in Barrhead health checks are undertaken every two to three years, and in North Lanarkshire the Council is now aiming to undertake annual health checks across seven town centres. In Elgin, an annual town centre health check will be undertaken which will contribute to the monitoring of the project.

5.26 However, this is not an issue that is confined solely to the TCRF case study towns. The experience of the Scottish Government Town Centre and High Street Learning Network confirms that there is huge variation across town centres, both in terms of the range of issues that are monitored as part of routine health check assessment and the types of measures that are adopted.

5.27 Scottish Planning Policy advises that health checks are an appropriate monitoring tool to measure the strengths and weaknesses of a town centre and to analyse the factors which contribute to its vitality and viability. When used consistently over a period of time, they can demonstrate changes in performance that can inform future decision making. A range of key performance indicators can be used to provide an effective insight into the performance of a centre and so offer a framework for assessing vitality and viability to assist decision makers in identifying new opportunities for improvement. A list of widely-accepted indicators from Scottish Planning Policy<sup>4</sup> includes:

- Pedestrian flow (footfall);
- Prime rental values;
- Retailer representation and intentions;
- Commercial yield;
- Vacancy rates;
- Physical structure of the centre;
- Periodic surveys of consumers;
- Crime rates.

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<sup>4</sup> As part of the ongoing changes in the planning system in Scotland, Scottish Ministers decided to consolidate previous policy (contained in either Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) or National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG)) into one document: Scottish Planning Policy (February 2010).

5.28 The research team carried out an online survey with Local Authorities across Scotland to explore the availability of town centre regeneration performance data at town, town centre and district centre levels. The survey identified what data is collected, how often it is collected, for what areas and by whom to get a clear picture of activity across Scotland.

5.29 The survey highlighted that monitoring of town centre performance involves a 'patchwork' of local authority departments and community partnership partners:

- Apart from crime and safety, the majority of data is collated by Local Authority (LA) planning or economic development departments;
- Data is also collated by LA research departments and other unspecified departments/organisations;
- Economic activity, tourism and partnership activity/delivery data is most often collated by LA economic development departments;
- Retail performance, other non-retail uses, accessibility and use and population data is most commonly collated by LA planning departments;
- Some respondents were not sure which organisation or department collates specific data.

5.30 **There is little consistency across LAs in terms of how often and for where data is collected.** Data is most frequently collated **on an annual basis**, but also often on a two or three yearly cycle depending on resources. In terms of geographical areas data is collated most frequently for defined town/district centre boundaries, but often it is for towns as a whole.

5.31 **The collation of town centre performance data is not consistent across all towns that make up a Local Authority.** Only 28% of LAs are collating performance information for all their town/district centres and 35% collate data only for the town/district centres in which projects are being delivered. Across the broad categories of data specified in the survey some LAs did not collate any information for town/district centres or towns.

5.32 Of the 11 most frequently collated indicators at a town/district level (used by 50% or more LAs) five were retail indicators, four related to economic activity and two were population indicators. These are:

- Number of businesses;
- Retail vacancy levels;
- Land use by type;
- Number of retail businesses;
- Total retail property stock;
- Number of people resident;
- New residential units developed;
- Jobs growth;
- Number of jobs;
- Type of retail businesses, and Retail rental levels.

5.33 Just under half (44%) of Local Authorities intended to monitor between 10 and 14 outcome areas in the future, yet 13% intend to monitor four or fewer outcome areas. The most frequently cited indicators that Local Authorities

intended to monitor in the future were public realm improvements (88%), followed by retail development (78%).

5.34 In summary there are number of reasons why this inconsistency exists and why monitoring the health of town centres can be difficult:

- **There is no one agreed way of carrying out town centre health checks:** The monitoring landscape is crowded both as a result of different policy guidance and a wide range of commercial organisations developing alternative approaches to health check assessment;
- **Town centres vary in size and role:** Therefore the issues that may be important to one town centre may not be applicable to another;
- **Town centre boundaries are dynamic and can shift over time:** This can present difficulties in developing meaningful comparisons over time; (See Section 4.6)
- **Data availability for routine monitoring is often limited:** Much of the public data that could be used to track town centre performance (e.g. employment or population data) is not available and/or not robust for small areas nor available at appropriate time intervals; (See Section 4.2)
- **The availability of commercial data usually has cost implications, and is also limited for smaller town centres.**

5.35 All of the above means that monitoring of town centre health and performance can often rely on primary research including the use of surveys. This also raises issues around gathering only essential data, particularly in an 'era of austerity' and in generating a consistent approach to town centre health check assessments. Primary research and survey evidence is expensive and has staff resource and skills implications.

### **Conclusions: Weaknesses in Evaluation Approaches**

5.36 The analysis set out above provides a large part of the explanation as to why approaches to monitoring and evaluation of Town Centre Regeneration and the TCRF projects in particular were weak:

- The timescale for the TCRF application process and the eligibility criteria for the fund both mitigated against sufficient time being available for careful planning and for the development of robust monitoring and evaluation frameworks;
- Project activities in some cases were poorly described and often did not specify elements such as the location within, or the target group with whom, the activity was taking place;
- While there were some good individual examples of planning project delivery, the TCRF projects demonstrated some weaknesses in planning

for evaluation, particularly around specifying and quantifying outcomes, the relationships between activities and outcomes and the timescale over which outputs and outcomes were expected to materialise;

- These three factors of lack of consistency in approach to monitoring the health of town centres, the lack of specificity around activities, loosely defined outputs and outcomes and weak result chains are all key factors that undermine the potential for effective evaluation of projects;
- At the same time the different scales of town centres, the varying roles they play, the impact of wider social and economic forces and the relationship they have with their economic context makes the development of a single “one size fits all” approach problematic;
- It is important to note that these issues are not an issue solely with the TCRF projects. The wider literature review suggests this is an issue across town centre regeneration as a whole.

5.37 Finally it is also important to note some other wider issues that contribute to difficulties in effective monitoring and evaluation:

- **Resources for evaluation are often not a high priority in town centre regeneration.** The TCRF focussed – in many respects quite rightly - on the delivery of projects that had the potential to make a change to the performance of town centres at a challenging time. (See Sections 2.12 - 2.16) However, without increased resources to support project planning, approaches to monitoring performance and evaluating process and impact it will be difficult to draw robust judgements of the effectiveness of town centre regeneration;
- **The consultations and the review of the TCRF projects highlighted skills issues amongst regeneration professionals in respect of project appraisal, development, monitoring and evaluation.** These skills are increasingly specialist and require time and experience to develop. The consultations suggested that Town Centre Regeneration practitioners came from a range of backgrounds and drew on generalist skills from a number of areas including planning, retail and economic development;
- **Arguably there is gap in terms of demand for these skills.** Commissioners and funders of town centre regeneration activity have not applied the exacting standards in terms of approaches to evaluation that might be expected in other policy areas such as health or education.

## 6 USING A THEORIES OF CHANGE APPROACH

### Introduction

6.1 The purpose of this research was to develop a clearer understanding of the activities taking place as part of town centre regeneration and assess the scope and nature of the outputs and outcomes that follow on from this. A main aim was also to develop and populate a theory of change for town centre regeneration (TCR) drawing on existing data and evidence clearly identifying the gaps in the evidence that should be explored. This chapter summarises the limitations in town centre regeneration project planning, monitoring and evaluation highlighted previously. It illustrates how the Theories of Change approach might offer solutions to these limitations using the TCRF case studies in the short-term and in future for town centre regeneration more generally. It addresses:

- What is Theories of Change and why use it;
- How Theories of Change helps in overcoming limitations in planning;
- Using Theories of Change to further specify TCRF plans;
- Using Theories of Change to address limitations in monitoring and to identify the need for project specific questions and measures;
- Using Theories of Change to enhance monitoring and evaluation plans; and;
- The potential of Theories of Change to enhance wider town centre regeneration.

6.2 Chapter 5 illustrated that many of the problems highlighted in the literature review with regard to TCR in general were also evident within the TCRF projects. The research has identified limitations in planning, the use of routine/town centre health check data for monitoring and in the robustness of monitoring and evaluation plans.

6.3 The limitations in planning identified included: a too narrow focus on physical place and its anticipated impact on retail as a means of regenerating town centres of varied sizes and types; poorly detailed activities and intended target groups; limited specificity with regard to the levels, types and timelines of expected changes (outcomes); and, a lack of results chains that highlight the anticipated casual links (the how and why) between activities and short, interim and longer-term outcomes.

6.4 The limitations in routine/health check data included: a lack of consistent approaches which prevent within and across area comparisons of need or progress; no agreed methods for conducting health checks; lack of robust routine data available frequently and at small area levels; and, limited resources to commission primary data collection to fill these gaps.

6.5 The final set of limitations relate to there being a lack of robust monitoring *and* evaluation plans. Two key reasons for this are the earlier limitations in planning and routine monitoring of town centre outcomes. Impact evaluation relies on

projects having: a clear anticipated results chain; well specified outcomes; robust monitoring data on both outcomes (e.g. routine sources such as health checks) and project implementation (activities and outputs delivered); and, integrating process and outcome data to enhance attribution (confidence that changes in outcomes result from the project activities and not other interventions). In addition, there is a lack of people skilled in evaluation methodology within TCR that can identify and fill gaps via primary research and integrate both implementation and outcome data to provide lessons for future programmes.

6.6 These limitations were, to some extent, already known to commissioners and informed the aims of this research which included:

- To develop a clearer understanding of the activities taking place as part of town centre regeneration and assess the scope and nature of the outputs and outcomes that follow on from this; and,
- To develop and populate a theory of change for town centre regeneration drawing on existing data and evidence clearly identifying the gaps in the evidence that should be explored.

6.7 As a means of further highlighting and beginning to tackle these issues the research team adopted aspects of the Theories of Change evaluation approach as requested in the second aim. The rest of this chapter discusses what this approach involved and the extent to which it offered solutions to these problems within the TCRF, as well as its potential contribution for wider TCR.

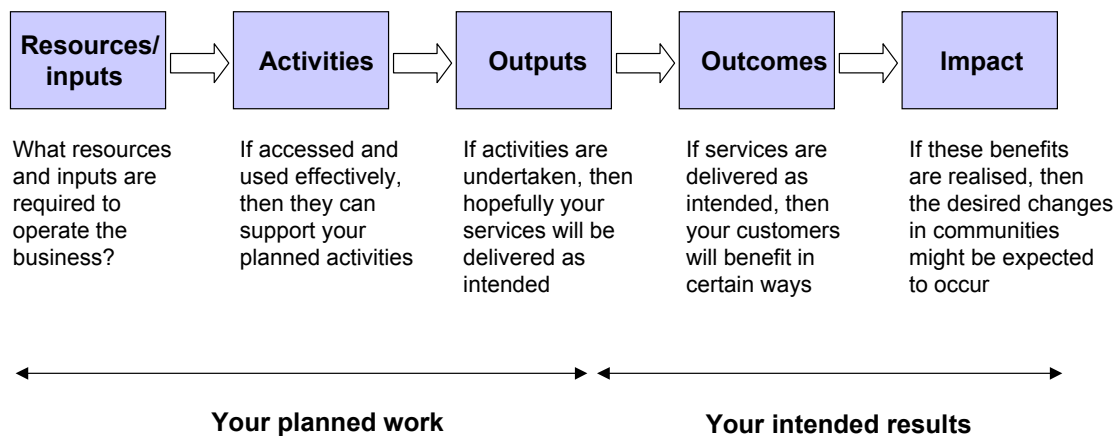
### **What is Theories of Change and Why Use It?**

6.8 Theories of Change <sup>5</sup> is an evaluation approach that is increasingly used in complex interventions to enhance planning, support the development of an evaluation framework and to aid attribution (being able to attribute changes found to the project activities). The approach involves encouraging project stakeholders to prospectively describe and link their long-term, interim and short-term outcomes back to the activities and outputs they intend to deliver. It also promotes consideration of why such changes might occur as a result of these activities. This process therefore uncovers a project's results chain (theory of change) and some of the underlying theories that underpin it. The resultant theory is often presented as a logic model (See Figure 6.1).

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<sup>5</sup> Fulbright-Anderson, K., Kubisch, A.C., and Connell, J.P. (eds) (1998) *New approaches to evaluating community initiatives. Volume two: theory, measurement and analysis*. Round Table on Comprehensive Community Initiatives for Children and Families, Washington D.C: The Aspen Institute.

**Figure 6.1: Generic Modelling Approach**



6.9 This approach when used prospectively therefore seeks to encourage the development of plans which provide greater specificity in relation to the activities and the outcomes and the linkages between these. This means providing information about who the activities are targeted to, which outcomes the activities hope to change, in what way and by how much and why they might do so. Logic models are tools used in order to develop theories of change as they provide a framework to align activities, outputs and outcomes. Ideally, a Theories of Change approach is used at the start of programme or project design so that the plans are developed as described above. Often, however, it is applied retrospectively as part of an evaluation. Its role is then to unpick and understand what is/was actually delivered and then use the learning that results to inform the evaluation design, methods and tools. In the TCRF case studies the approach was in a sense ‘tagged on’ to an already developed project and evaluation design. In the case studies the Research Team were presented with finalised projects and existing monitoring and evaluation arrangements rather than using Theories of Change as part of the early project development process.

6.10 For this study, the research team were asked to develop and populate a theory of change/logic model for town centre regeneration based on the literature and evidence-base. The literature review was conducted long after TCRF project plans had been funded (in fact projects were in the process of implementation). Given this there were limitations in the extent to which the approach/models could influence ongoing TCRF plans/implementation. Despite these difficulties it was thought that drafting hypothetical theories of change may have utility for future programmes and policy development.

6.11 The literature review highlighted that there was a lack of specificity generally in town centre regeneration plans and a lack of evidence about the postulated or actual links between activities and their anticipated outcomes. (See Sections 3.23 & 4.32.) Given this the draft models were based on the original TCRF submissions and the typologies.

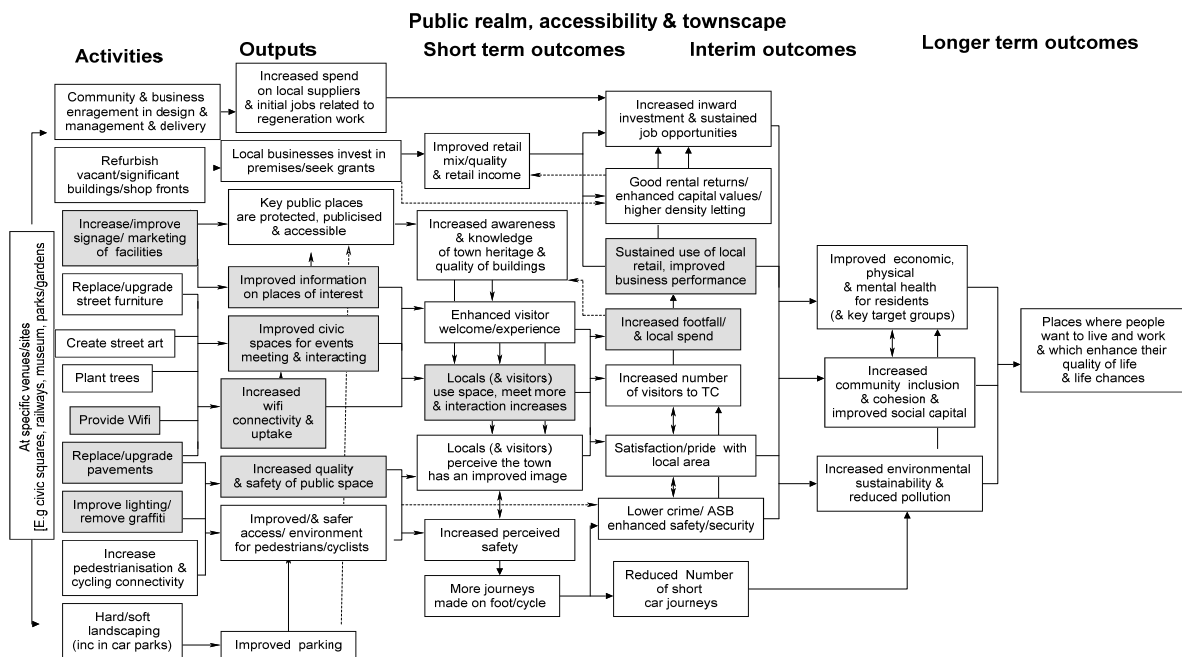


- 6.12 The research team developed three draft theory of change models that illustrated the key activities that many of the TCRF projects were intending to deliver for 1) **public realm and streetscape**; 2) **retail and business**; and 3) **housing and leisure**. It was also an attempt to map, or where such information was not specified by the TCRF plans, hypothesise the steps and mechanisms by which these activities would feasibly lead onto their associated expected project outcomes. Finally, it was hoped that there might still be time available to use the models to encourage greater specificity in the types and thresholds of anticipated outcomes amongst the case studies. This in turn would make future monitoring and evaluation more feasible.
- 6.13 A fourth model was also developed that attempted to integrate the initial three models into an overall **strategic model for town centre regeneration** generally. The sub model for public realm is detailed in Section 6.16 and all the models are included in the Appendices report which is available as a separate document.

### **How the Draft ToC Models Help in Overcoming Project Planning Limitations**

- 6.14 The previous chapter illustrated that there were limitations in the way the TCRF plans were presented. There were inconsistencies in the descriptions of activities and outcomes, outcomes were not ordered in terms of expected timescales of delivery and were not clearly linked back to particular activities. In other words, the plans did not provide a results chain.
- 6.15 Figure 6.2 below illustrates a draft theory of change/logic model. This model focuses on the intended activities and outcomes in projects focusing on public realm interventions in particular. It attempts to place the types of activities and outcomes described in the TCRF plans in the order they will be delivered /achieved and illustrate some of the interim steps (short or interim outcomes) along the way. Many of these steps were missing from the TCRF plans.

**Figure 6.2: Draft Theory of Change/Logic Model**



6.16 Representing plans as a theory of change/logic model clarifies activities, outputs and outcomes, the timelines for delivery of outcomes and the earlier steps that are necessary to achieve longer-term outcomes. For example, the logic model makes it more explicit (see shaded boxes) that improved business performance (particularly for retail businesses) is likely to be dependent on increased footfall and spend from locals and visitors which in turn are likely to be dependent on achieving enhanced public spaces, with improved facilities.

6.17 Representing the plans in this way also highlights where key activities may have been overlooked. For example, is a 'shop local' marketing campaign necessary to inform locals and visitors about the independent retail offer and new/upgraded facilities?

6.18 The development of the four logic models/theories of change illustrated that there are substantial evidence gaps within town centre regeneration. For example, if regeneration specialists are claiming that by enhancing public realm (e.g. via paving, street furniture, enhancing shop fronts and Wi-Fi) they will improve the economy and community, then the routes leading to these changes need to be better articulated and tested over time via monitoring and evaluation.

### Using the Draft Theory of Change Models to Further Specify Existing TCRF Plans

6.19 By the time the early phases of the research were conducted (literature review, survey and typologies) many TCRF projects had moved into a delivery phase. This meant that there were limitations in the extent to which there was scope to change plans. The draft theories of change were, however, shared with the TCRF case study area contacts in the first stage of the field work. They were

received positively and were used as part of the case study discussions to encourage further specificity in terms of both plans and establishing a more robust monitoring and evaluation framework where this was feasible. This resulted in some case study contacts completing tables with the evaluators which defined outcomes as short, interim and longer term and tied the emerging results chains more specifically to activities. (See TCRF Case Studies report). As an example, Figure 6.3 shows the table completed for the Stromness Case Study Project: Outcomes Table.

**Figure 6.3: Stromness Case Study Project: Outcomes Table**

Activities	Outputs	Short Term Outcomes: 2011	Interim Outcomes: 2013	Longer Term Outcomes: 2015+	Measure In Place
Community & business engagement in design	Number of people attending consultation events	Changed decision; went for local sourcing resulted in 2/3 local jobs	Increased membership of Stromness Business Group (SBG)  Local quarry continues in operation	Strong resilient SBG  Quarry business established & sustainable	Membership of SBG pre-2010 & post TCRF project completion  Monitor quarry business
Improved setting for refurbished vacant/ significant buildings e.g. Commercial Hotel	Remove blight	Hotel converted for small business space targeted at companies in the 'renewables sector'	More Attractive Environment Improved Sense of Place  Local residents & visitors acknowledge improved town centre environment  Improved Sense of Pride	<b>Stronger Economy</b> More footfall (residents & visitors)  More investment  Increase business relocations/start ups/business growth  Increase jobs	Perception surveys to be repeated  Repeat number of business/jobs/vacancies survey
Improved setting for the Pierhead Regeneration Project	Area improved	More OIC jobs based in Stromness  Local residents will make fewer trips to Kirkwall  Improved sense of pride in perception surveys		<b>Reduced Carbon Footprint</b>	Perception surveys to be repeated  Repeat number of business/jobs/vacancies survey
Improved events space at Pierhead	Area improved  Increased number of events organised &	More visitors, staying longer, spending more	Increase number of events & attendance  Establish spin off impacts for local shops/services	<b>Stronger Economy</b>	Number/type of events  Footfall survey: residents & visitors

Activities	Outputs	Short Term Outcomes: 2011	Interim Outcomes: 2013	Longer Term Outcomes: 2015+	Measure In Place
	promoted				
Improved walking & cycling connectivity	Increased use of public /routes	Improved health (increase take-up of healthy lifestyles within the community)		<b>Reduced Carbon Footprint</b>	Footfall & cycle use survey
Installation of a fibre optic ducting network	Length of fibre optic improved: number of properties served by improved broadband	<b>Improved IT Infrastructure</b>  Identified speed & capacity improvements  Increase in business start up & business growth in town centre to take advantage of improved broadband	<b>Inward Investment: new businesses</b>  <b>OIC decentralisation of services &amp; staff</b>	<b>Stronger Economy:</b>	Need details on existing and proposed speed/ capacity/ constraints  Take up by OIC & business  Regular business surveys: take up of improved broadband, start up, growth, jobs, confidence  Monitor number of OIC jobs relocated to Stromness
Renew underground services	Length of pipes/wires renewed			Ensure services are fit for purpose in future	
Install improved signs	Number of improved signs	More visitors, staying longer, spending more		<b>Stronger Economy</b>	Footfall survey: residents & visitors

**Notes**

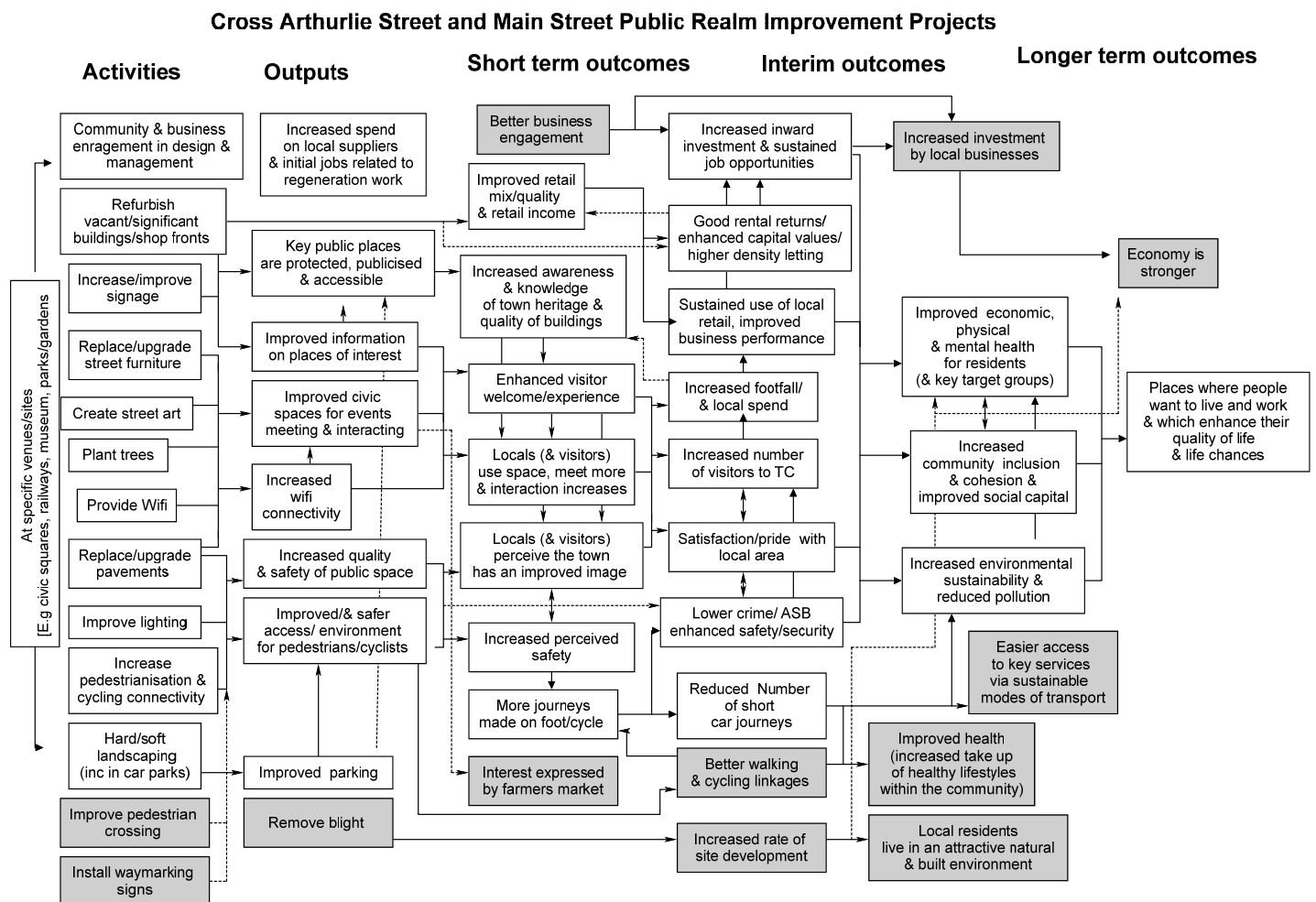
OIC identified outcomes in bold

6.20 Although all four models were made available, the public realm and streetscape model was the one used most frequently and added to by the case study contacts. This reinforces the predominance of public realm and place making in the TCRF. This might also be due to the funding levels and process encouraging ready to go projects as explained in Chapter 5. Few of the case studies used the retail and business model or housing and leisure models.

6.21 Anecdotal feedback from the case studies contacts was that the models were useful in encouraging them to further specify their activities and improve alignment of activities with particular outcomes.

6.22 One of the case study areas used the model with their project team to articulate more detailed interim steps linking key activities to particular outcomes. Figure 6.4 below shows how the Barrhead case study team used the public realm template model and identified missing activities and inserted additional outputs and outcomes. The additions made by the Barrhead contact are shaded.

**Figure 6.4: Barrhead Public Realm Model**



**How the Models Help to Explain Limitations In Monitoring and Need for Project Specific Questions and Measures**

6.23 The draft models were useful in highlighting limitations in the monitoring and evaluation plans. The research team then used the emerging outcome/theory of change tables (see Paragraph 6.19 above) to plot the existing baseline measures (routinely available and project specific /primary data) being used by projects. It became evident that many of these measures addressed longer or

interim project outcomes leaving a gap in relation to the short term (in the main project specific measures).

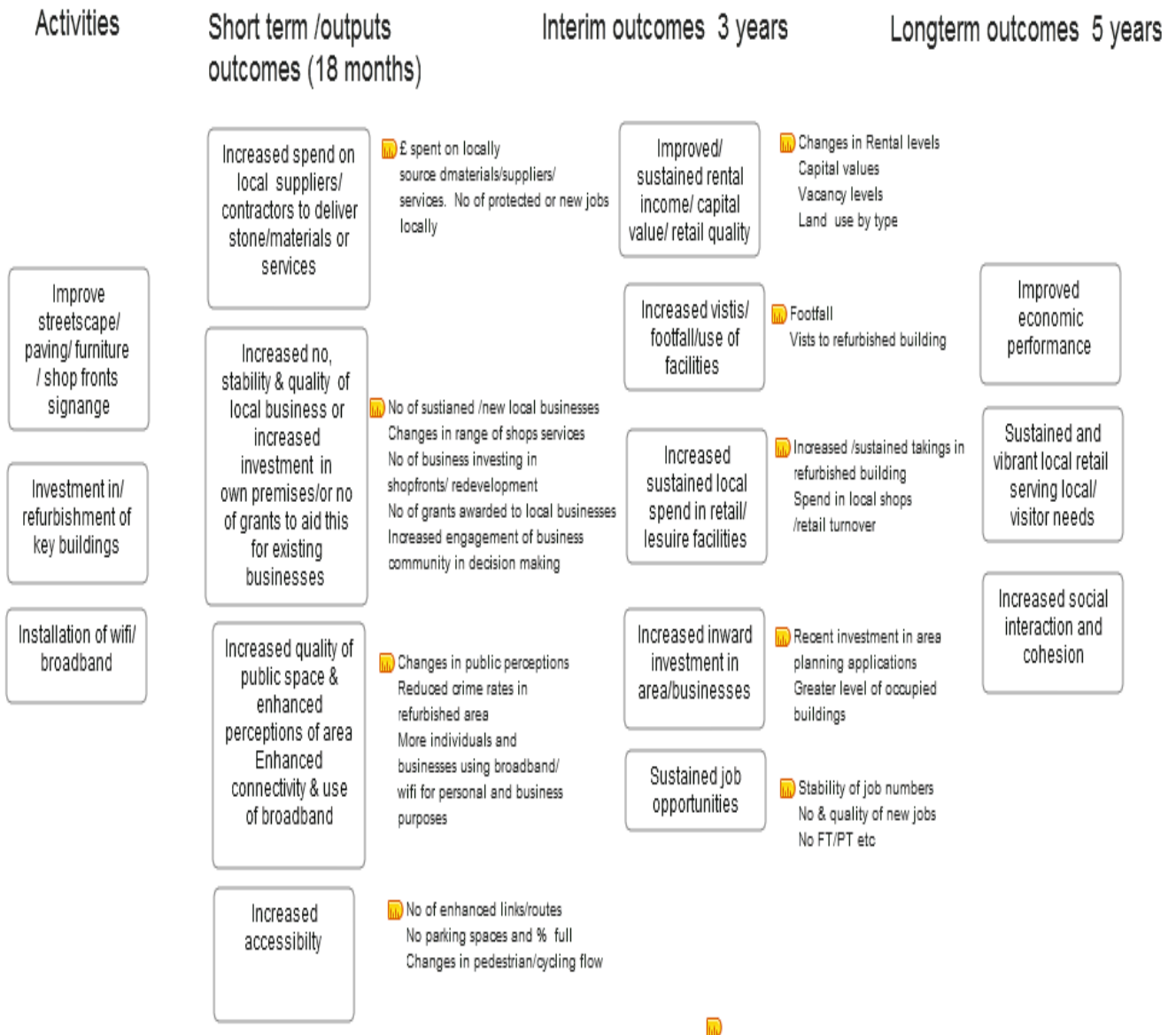
- 6.24 The TCRF funding was intended for spending in one financial year (2009/2010) and many of the projects have been delayed in terms of their implementation. Given this, the absence of short or interim measures means that there may be limited evidence available to assure Scottish Government and other funders that projects are 'on route' to achieving their interim or longer term outcomes.
- 6.25 This reinforces the learning point from above and Chapter 5 that routine data alone may be too late to show changes within funding periods. Project specific measures, if developed for baselines and then followed up, would show change within, rather than beyond, the three year timescale of the project funding. Specific project measures (of process and outcomes) may also be vital in attributing any long term change that is measured to the contribution made by the TCRF projects.
- 6.26 The process described above helped both the research team and TCRF contacts to identify gaps in existing baseline measures and establish whether these could be filled. It also highlighted where follow-up measures were available and if they were sensitive or timely enough to measure the likely levels of change anticipated in outcomes within or beyond the TCRF funding period.

#### **Example**

In Stromness gaps in project specific baseline and follow-up measures were identified in relation to the improved events space, the number and type of events that could be held, the absence of a regular footfall or business surveys. These gaps should be addressed by commissioning short sharp surveys. In addition, the installation of ducting will enable the future provision of a fibre optic network but the details of delivering the actual network have still to be established.

- 6.27 Figure 6.5 uses a refined version of the draft public realm theory of change to further illustrate how such models can highlight the limitations in routine monitoring data and the need for project specific/primary data. It illustrates that the more routinely collected data (such as rental levels, capital values, vacancy levels, footfall, employment rates), even when available at the appropriate town centre level, tend to relate to interim or longer term change.
- 6.28 Considering the available measures directly against the outcomes and anticipated timelines in a logic model highlights the importance of more timely and sensitive measures for projects outputs and short term outcomes. Without such measures, judging project impact (effectiveness) and attributing this to TCR in contexts where many other activities are being simultaneously delivered will be almost impossible.

**Figure 6.5: Public Realm Theory of Change: Routinely Collected Data**



## Using Theories of Change/Logic Models to Inform Monitoring and Evaluation Frameworks

6.29 Section 6.19 above highlighted that the Theories of Change approach can aid the development of monitoring and evaluation plans. This is partly because it can be used as described in 6.23 - 6.25 above to illustrate where there are limitations in monitoring data and missing measures (routine or primary). When Theories of Change is applied earlier in programme and project development and evaluation it can be used in a more influential fashion.

6.30 Theories of Change should ideally be used to support the development of logic models (also called results chains). These should be developed collaboratively between evaluators and implementers and other stakeholders. Again, evaluators should work with stakeholders to critique and strengthen these

models. This is done by asking questions about the following criteria in relation to the models: is the model plausible (e.g. is it based on evidence and logic); do-able (e.g. can it be delivered with the available resources and timescales); and testable (e.g. is it expressed in a way that allows measurement)?

6.31 Learning from the above process is used to strengthen the plan and adapt it according to the available evidence-base or improve the clarity and specificity on activities and outcomes. Tools such as the Re-aim Framework (Re-Aim.org) look to encourage programme and project planners, evaluators, funders, and policy-makers to pay more attention to essential programme and project elements, including external validity, so as to improve the implementation and effectiveness of evidence-based interventions. The Re-aim Framework can be used alongside the models and criteria above to assess the likely impact by considering:

- Who the activities **reach**;
- Whether the planned interventions are known to be **effective**;
- What organisations or settings might **adopt** the activities;
- Whether the activities have been **implemented** as planned; and
- How long the programme will be **maintained** for.

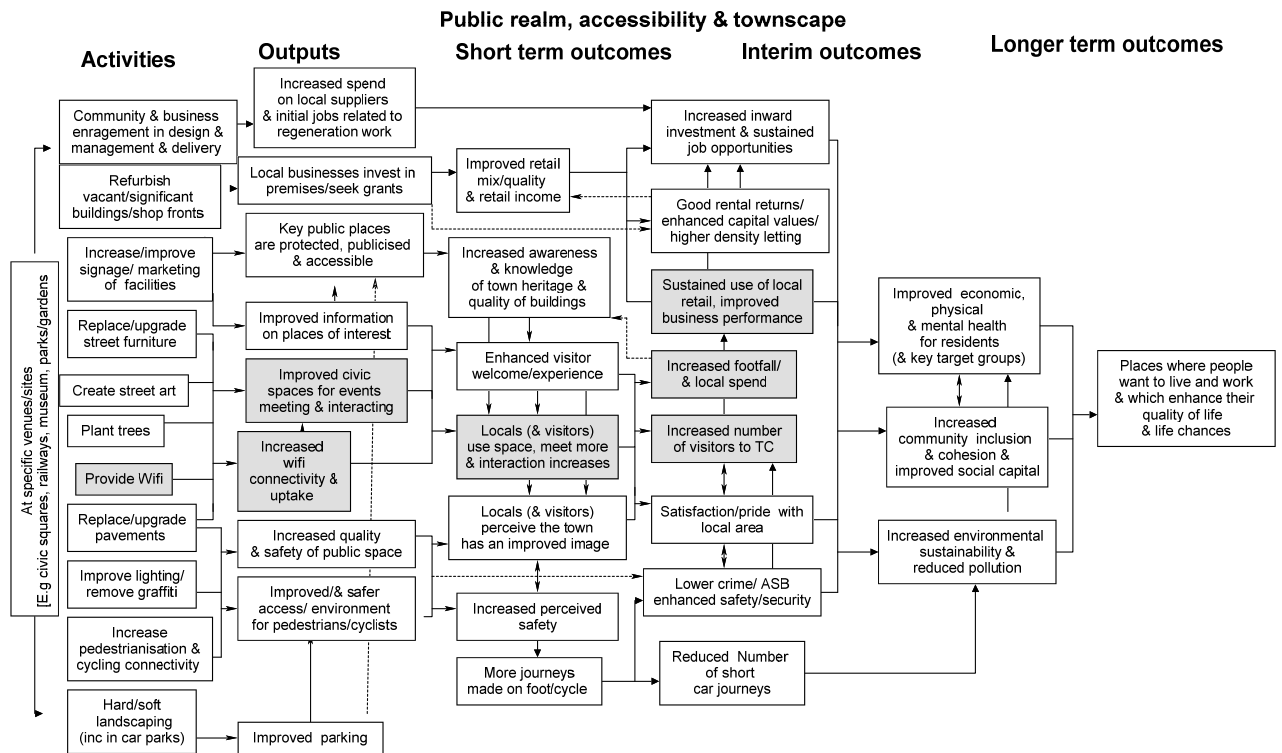
6.32 These questions help to highlight potential weaknesses in plans and also begin to identify other important potential evaluation questions.

6.33 The numerous issues that flow out of this critique of the logic models become potential evaluation questions and need to be prioritised in terms of the importance of their learning for project improvement or in judging efficacy. Similarly, the models are used to agree the most important outcomes that should and can be measured. The prioritised questions and outcomes then inform the evaluation design and influence the selection of methods and tools. Consideration needs to be given to whether existing data sources or new primary data needs to be collected to address these key questions and establish achievement of the prioritised outcomes. The next step is to develop an evaluation framework/data collection plan.

6.34 Figure 6.6 below highlights how this might happen focusing on one strand of the draft public realm model. It focuses on the provision of Wi-Fi and its associated outcomes which are shaded in Figure 6.6.



**Figure 6.6: Provision of Town Centre Wi-Fi & Associated Outcomes**



**Examples of Issues Raised as a Result of the Critique of the Model**

*Reach* – who is the improved Wi-Fi targeted at? Is it local business, visitor or young people using cafes?

*Efficacy* - Has provision of Wi-Fi in other areas been linked to uptake in these groups and been shown to have been a reason for increased visits/use of refurbish business venues?

*Adoption* – How many local cafes will offer Wi-Fi access/businesses will update their IT infrastructure or practices?

*Implementation* – will Wi-Fi installation be to highest speeds, reach key localities, be timely for new start up businesses, done to appropriate quality?

*Maintenance* – Will funding be available to maintain and upgrade? Will cafe businesses sustain their provision/access?

**How a Prioritised Issue/Outcome can be Developed into an Evaluation Question and so Inform Evaluation Design**

6.35 In this case, if the critique process confirmed that Wi-Fi was intended to encourage increased use of enabled offices and local business centres for work or meetings then the following questions might be prioritised.

**Figure 6.7: Prioritise Questions to Inform Evaluation Design: Example**

<b>Outcome of interest</b>		
Increased number of existing business locating or new businesses starting in the town centre  Locals and visitors meet more in the town centre and use space		
<b>Logic</b>		
Existing business or new businesses will be encouraged into the town centre to use Wi-Fi in enabled offices and business centres and cafes.		
<b>Question (s)</b>		
<b>Has there been an increased use/occupation of local business space and meeting venues as a result of Wi-Fi</b>		
	<b>Indicators</b>	<b>Measure/method</b>
	<b>Usage of offices/business centre pre and post Wi-Fi installation</b>  <b>Reason for increased usage of business centre</b>	Pre/post survey of local business centre use  Survey of users to see extent to which Wi-Fi access influences use?
<b>Have new businesses been influenced in their decision to locate in Town Centre due to enhanced Wi-Fi</b>		
	<b>Indicators</b>	<b>Measure /methods</b>
	No. of new businesses located in pre and post Wi-Fi  No. citing improved Wi-Fi as influential in decision	Routine data on new business start ups/relocations  Survey of above re reasons for decisions

6.36 Clearly, Figure 6.7 can be further developed to identify which partners will conduct the research and when it will be completed, so establishing the basics of a monitoring and evaluation plan.

## **Conclusions: Potential of Theories of Change to Enhance Town Centre Regeneration**

- 6.37 There is scope to encourage further use or training in how to apply these tools or this approach within wider town centre regeneration programmes and among practitioners. This would build evaluative thinking into programmes at the planning stage which should enhance programme planning, delivery and monitoring and evaluation.
- 6.38 Significant change in the quality of planning and monitoring and will only occur if funders demand that plans and monitoring and evaluation frameworks are informed by results chains. Funders will also need to support the development of skills and capabilities amongst practitioners to respond to these demands.
- 6.39 A final way in which Theories of Change could be used to improve future TCR programmes is for funders to further consider what theories of change they are trying to test as part of future programme and project commissioning. Funders could consider the specific contexts, likely mechanisms and intended outcomes that they most want to test and commission programmes and projects that specifically develop and test these via robust monitoring and evaluation. For example, if funders think that in rural towns the mechanism of change that leads to regeneration is most likely to be via increased tourists/passing trade they may commission projects that establish specific visitor attractions and thoroughly evaluate that postulated results chain. In large programmes where multiple projects are funded, as in TCRF, projects and evaluations could be grouped and used to test out several promising theories.
- 6.40 In conclusion, this chapter has illustrated how a Theories of Change approach was applied in this research to enhance existing plans and to strengthen previously developed monitoring and evaluation plans. It also suggests ways in which it might be used to increase learning in future town centre regeneration programmes by enhancing planning, supporting the developing of robust monitoring and evaluating plans and subsequently refining promising town centre regeneration theories of change.

## 7 KEY FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 This chapter summarises the important learning points from the study and highlights the research team's recommendations. The draft findings were discussed at a workshop in late April 2011.
- 7.2 In total there are ten learning points from the study. They are set out as follows:
- 1 Town centre regeneration is particularly complex and there is a need for whole town strategies;
  - 2 Town centre scale, distinctiveness and context matter;
  - 3 Town centre regeneration needs more than just physical investment;
  - 4 Town centre regeneration requires a shared clear vision, strategy and action plan;
  - 5 Effective and coordinated delivery is essential;
  - 6 Acknowledge the role of small/medium sized town centre businesses and the emerging potential of community ownership of assets in town centres;
  - 7 Improve town centre regeneration project planning: developing results chains and applying Theories of Change;
  - 8 Improve town centre health check assessments and ensure more effective monitoring;
  - 9 Identify and address the limitations of the effective evaluation of town centre regeneration;
  - 10 Address limitations in evaluation by developing and applying Theories of Change early in the project planning process and
- 7.3 Emerging conclusions on TCRF as a tool for delivering town centre regeneration are outlined in the conclusions.

### 1) Complex Concept & Whole Town Strategies

- 7.4 Town centre regeneration is a complex concept that deals with many interrelated and multidimensional issues and challenges that are not easily solved. The literature review and consultations acknowledged that historically there has been a focus on retail-led town centre regeneration. Consultees felt that this may be at the expense of the wider and more diverse role played by town centres.
- 7.5 There is also a growing recognition that a more integrated, connected and holistic approach to town centre regeneration is needed. This approach takes account of the town centre's distinctive role sometimes as **'the heart of local communities' and an important location for service, cultural, community, leisure and employment functions**. This requires a more corporate approach by local authorities, the active involvement of town centre businesses and local communities.
- 7.6 The whole town approach is an emerging concept which seeks a full range of physical, social, economic and environmental interventions across the wider

town rather than just in the town centre. This is valid, as each town creates the place and market conditions for its town centre's success (or failure). On the other hand, for town centres such a broad approach could lead to an even more diffuse spread of scarce resources. This broader approach inevitably increases the level of complexity and so will also require more rigorous project development that identifies clear results chains which link project activities and outputs directly to their anticipated outcomes. (See Sections 7.42-7.45)

- 7.7 The research team also recognises that the whole town approach is relevant and indeed the case study research (See TCRF Case Studies report) includes contextual reviews of each town as well analysis of its town centre. Here, the research team conclude that **integrated town centre regeneration strategies should be nested within whole town strategies.**

## 2) Town Centre Scale, Distinctiveness & Context

- 7.8 Clearly, very dramatic changes have affected Scotland's town centres and high streets over the last thirty years. Covered shopping centres, out of town retail and outlet centres and the growth of powerful retail chains operating from large premises have had a significant impact. Traditional town centres face stiff competition from established out of town centres as they struggle to face the challenges posed by the current economic recovery and look to the future.
- 7.9 Now in the twenty-first century the transition to a low carbon economy, higher quality urban design aspirations, the knowledge economy, new consumer markets, transport connectivity, internet shopping and different demographic patterns are driving change. These **drivers present real challenges and opportunities** to town centre regeneration, but this has often to be set within a '**polycentric network of centres**': individual town centres and high streets do not function in isolation. There was a strong view in the consultations that successful town centre regeneration needed **to focus on the distinctiveness of the town centre.** This included, for example, strengthening the identity of the place and improving the independent retail and visitor offer. Clearly, town centre regeneration interventions need to **recognise the scale of the town centre.**
- 7.10 It was also clear from the nine case studies that the spatial boundaries and to some degree the 'centre of gravity' of the town centres had all changed to a greater or lesser extent and were continuing to evolve. In some cases the consequence was increasing proportions of vacant property on the edge of the town centre and a trend of reducing the floorspace in retail use. Placemaking, planning and regeneration policies need to recognise this trend and in some cases encourage **changes out of retail use** (Class 1) into business (Class 4) and residential (Class 9) <sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> The Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) (Scotland) Order 1997

### 3) More than Physical Investment

7.11 The literature review highlighted that traditional approaches to town centre regeneration have tended to focus on physical interventions. These can take many forms including public realm investment; acquisition and development of buildings and sites; and installing site services. The TCRF projects are also heavily biased towards physical interventions.

7.12 These physical investments are often justified in terms of acting as a stimulus for further investment in the retail sector or creating the conditions for future commercial and residential investment. Often it is claimed that these types of projects will bring wider economic benefits including the retention of retail spend, the attraction of new visitors and spend into an area or improving perceptions of the place, for visitors and for residents.

7.13 The experience of the case study projects has highlighted a number of issues with this approach:

- Physical investments are largely supply side interventions – **this is the case in a number of the case study projects**. There is no guarantee that this future activity will take place – and often there is a need for further interventions to ensure that it does;
- There is a lack of critical thinking about the relationship between the physical intervention and the economic and social benefits it expects to bring. **There is little consideration or differentiation between physical projects regarding the *timing* of benefits that will flow from physical investments;**
- Given the wide ranging roles that town centres play and the range of challenges that they face there appears to be a strong case for considering a wider range of interventions as having the potential to contribute to improved performance in a town centre. **These could include interventions focused on business growth, business start up, place marketing and community development to support physical interventions. The projects also need to seek to ensure that potential economic benefits from physical investment are captured locally.**

### 4) Need for a Shared Town Centre Vision, Strategy and Action Plan

7.14 The requirement in successful town centre regeneration for a considered forward project planning process that leads to a shared vision with a clear strategy and action plan of projects and programmes emerged strongly from consultations and case studies. These components, however, are often loosely defined and their effectiveness is difficult to prove. Case studies like Barrhead, Govan, Elgin, Kirkintilloch and Jedburgh had a **strong strategic regeneration policy context** that was often already in place. (See TCRF Case Studies report).

7.15 In these case studies there was a clear **TCRF project fit with the regeneration policy context** and the specific town centre was identified as a **clear priority by political leaders**.

7.16 The case studies highlighted the need for a **mechanism for interested town centre stakeholders to meet as a group** to progress and agree a town centre vision. The stakeholders include a range of interested public, private and third sector organisations. This process is unlikely to happen without external 'cross agency' support to encourage the skills and energy and build capacity in the town centre community and some resourcing to help deliver initiatives.

7.17 Evidence highlighted the need, in some cases, for the emerging town centre regeneration action plan in the short term to **focus on a smaller number of priority actions** in order to concentrate resources and investment rather than spreading efforts too thinly.

## 5) Effective & Coordinated Delivery

7.18 Partnerships loomed large in the case studies and some (e.g. Elgin, Kirkcaldy, Barrhead and Govan) were clearer regarding roles and responsibilities than others. There is a need, however, to critically examine the effectiveness of the partnership over a longer period, regularly ask if it is still required and if the partnership needs to be refreshed.

7.19 The complexity of interventions in town centres means that it is essential to ensure this **coordinated delivery** across various local authority departments and to work closely with town centre businesses, owners and residents: for example, 'Team Stromness' was established by Orkney Islands Council to assist in coordination and delivery of the town centre regeneration projects.

7.20 Evidence from the consultations and the case studies also highlighted the importance of being specific about what individual partnerships actually deliver and therefore there is a need for more clarity on roles and responsibilities. In some cases this might mean that a single agency contribution rather than joint delivery may be more effective at delivering a particular outcome but this must be clearly articulated. The key challenge here is for individual partners to **actually deliver their particular contribution well**.

7.21 What is essential for successful town centre regeneration is a **strong civic leader and a project champion** to prioritise the town centre over a longer period (e.g. 4+ years). Evidence from the consultations and some of the case studies is that the project champion can initiate and sustain confidence in the vision and maintain momentum on the delivery of action plan.

## 6) Importance of Small/Medium Businesses & Potential of Community Ownership of Assets

7.22 In Scottish town centres more attention needs to be **focussed on small and medium size independent businesses**. The case studies highlighted the limited knowledge and data that was available on the businesses that would be affected by particular town centre regeneration projects. Standard retail data

does not cover small town centres and independent businesses. The research also identified some good practice examples of new business development initiatives targeted at start up and small town centre businesses, namely 'Retail Rocks' and Scottish Borders Council's new One-to-One Retail Business Support.

- 7.23 Community-led initiatives to take ownership of iconic and often listed town centre buildings at below market value as community assets are also starting to emerge and will need to be evaluated in due course. These aim to play a catalytic role in successful town centre regeneration by initiating third sector businesses, bringing new economic uses into redundant but important buildings in the local townscape and generating civic pride. This trend of community ownership of some town centre buildings is likely to continue in the future with the public sector looking to divest of a variety of different types of property in a range of town centres. It is still early, but community-led initiatives could in some cases produce positive town centre regeneration outcomes. This is in line with the integrated town centre approach highlighted above. (See Sections 7.4 -7.7)
- 7.24 In the next few years more could be done to assist communities to explore the feasibility of the community owning and operating these kinds of assets. Local authorities and the public sector need to take a more strategic view in prioritising asset transfer in town centres and assisting communities where demand exists. Communities will need assistance from agencies like the Development Trusts Association to raise awareness, assess risks, quantify benefits, provide appropriate training and to disseminate emerging good practice examples.
- 7.25 Overall it is also vital to acknowledge that town centre regeneration is a **long term process** and patience is needed. This is increasingly difficult given the emphasis on physical interventions and the traditionally short term property perspectives. Investing in business development, business start up and social capital may be as important as the physical investment. The complexity of integrated town centre regeneration and the **lack of an explanation of links between activities and longer term anticipated outcomes**, however, mean that this is difficult to prove and often not understood.

## 7) Improving TCR Project Planning: Developing Results Chains and Applying Theories of Change

- 7.26 The literature review highlighted limitations in the planning of town centre regeneration projects generally. The survey, typology development and the case studies confirmed that these limitations also existed within the TCRF projects. The main limitations are that TCR programmes rarely use results chains which link their activities and outputs (the things they deliver) directly to their anticipated outcomes (the changes in the wider social and economic groups or local environments that they seek to achieve).
- 7.27 Added to this, activities tend not to be described in detail nor specify whose behaviour they are targeted at changing. The outcomes that are listed often lack clarity in terms of when they are expected to be delivered or the type and



level of change that will be achieved (e.g. increased tourists or residents and percentage change in visits or spend).

**7.28 There is a need for a fresh and more thorough approach to planning of town centre interventions.** This will involve applying critical appraisal tools at the project development stage and subjecting these draft plans to critical examination.

7.29 The Scottish Government and other funders of town centre regeneration have a role to play in achieving this change. There should be a clear requirement to demonstrate the use of tools such as logic models and planning frameworks like Re-Aim (See Chapter 6) as part of funding applications. These tools should then be used to critique submitted proposals where feasible and provide constructive guidance to the most promising projects to encourage the development of well specified results chains prior to funding.

7.30 Future TCR programmes should as a consequence have outcome focused plans that have clear prospective results chains that link activities and outputs via short and interim outcomes to long term outcomes. These results chains would provide more details of planned activities and who they are targeted at as well as more clarity over the intended outcomes (and timelines and thresholds for these).

## **8) Improving Approaches to Town Centre Health Check Assessment & Monitoring**

7.31 The research has confirmed that the **approaches to monitoring the health of town centres vary considerably across the case study towns.** The experience of the Scottish Government Town Centre and High Street Learning Network and the research team's survey of local authorities confirms that this is an issue that is shared beyond the TCRF projects and case study towns.

7.32 The study has confirmed some of the reasons why this inconsistency exists and why monitoring the health of town centres can be difficult:

- **There is no one agreed way of carrying out town centre health checks.** This is partly a function of the varying roles that different town centres play – no one-size fits all – but also the result of different public and commercial organisations developing and selling different approaches to health check assessment.
- **Data availability for routine monitoring is often limited.** Much of the public data that could be used to track performance in a town centre over time (e.g. employment or population data) is not available and/or not robust for small areas. The availability of commercial data usually has cost implications and is also limited for smaller town centres.
- **This means that monitoring of town centre health and performance often relies on primary research including the use of surveys** and raises issues around gathering only essential data particularly in an 'era of austerity' as well as the need for a consistent approach to town centre

health check assessments. Primary research and survey evidence is expensive and has staff resource and skills implications.

7.33 The research team would recommend that agreement is reached in conjunction with town centre interest groups on a 'must-have minimum set' of routinely collected data that should be monitored to assess town centre health and performance. This assessment should include measures that move beyond a narrow retail focus to also include employment and other town centre uses and should be based as far as possible on readily available data.

7.34 **Some investment and support will need to be put in place to ensure that these data sets are available for the smallest centres.** This could take the form of working with data providers to improve availability and robustness, or establishing consistent protocols for local data collection. Examples of indicators include employment levels, vacancy rates, occupancy by type of business, resident/visitor/business perception and footfall at key locations within town centres.

7.35 It is important that the development of a simplified, but comprehensive set of data indicators for town centre health assessment is not seen as 'dumbing-down'. The research team recognise that some town centres will want to go further than the core indicators. Where this is the case they could be supplemented by a set of discretionary indicators that could be used in larger centres, or where additional evidence is needed.

7.36 **Improving the consistency of town centre health check assessment between town centres and over time** would bring a number of benefits for more effective evaluation of town centre regeneration activity.

- It would allow individual towns to develop useful baselines which would contribute to assessing the effect of town centre regeneration projects over time;
- It would allow comparison of the performance of different town centres within local authority areas and assist in the identification of priorities;
- It could assist future TCRF case study work and longitudinal research by providing a basis for developing meaningful comparisons between similar types of towns in different parts of the country.

## 9) Effective Evaluation of Town Centre Regeneration: Limitations

7.37 The literature review, consultations and case studies highlighted some significant weaknesses in approaches to the evaluation (rather than simply monitoring) of town centre regeneration projects. Some of the factors that contribute to this have been highlighted above, **including the lack of consistent baselines and monitoring of routinely available data against which to judge project progress, and a lack of critical thinking at the project development and appraisal stages.**

- 7.38 The lack of detailed results chains and in particular the poor specification of outcomes (in terms of timelines and thresholds) makes evaluation of TCR projects problematic. Routine data such as health checks tends to provide learning about interim or longer term change. Often, this learning is only available beyond the policy or funding period. When it is available within appropriate time frames it may still be difficult to illustrate that any changes that have occurred are as a direct result of the TCR activities that have been delivered (e.g. attribution of the changes in outcomes to the programme).
- 7.39 In order to improve the ability to measure the impact of TCR programmes on outcomes (effectiveness) there is a need to be able to provide **monitoring data on programme implementation (process data on numbers and quality of activities and outputs and uptake of services) and to link this to both routine monitoring and evaluation data on outcomes**. Given this, **projects will require some primary data collection to address their key evaluation questions**.
- 7.40 Impact evaluations (that judge effectiveness) link process data to outcome data to show that the changes found can be attributed in some degree to the programme activities. Impact evaluations must also take cognisance of other possible explanations for the changes in outcomes that have occurred in considering the likely contribution of the project. Integrating this data helps to address questions about how and why changes in outcomes have occurred as well as whether they have. Where feasible and appropriately resourced, comparison areas, sites or projects might feature as part of the evaluation design.
- 7.41 A key message from the initial consultations with case study projects was that the short timescale for the development of TCRF applications and the short period for the delivery of projects mitigated against the development of comprehensive monitoring and evaluation plans. (See TCRF Case Studies report). It would appear though that with some notable exceptions (e.g. Barrhead: see Chapter 6) the passage of 18 months since the awarding of funding has not led to significant improvements in approaches to evaluation.
- 7.42 An additional explanation for the weaknesses in evaluation may lie in the limited skills base in terms of evaluation in the town centre regeneration sector. This, in some respects, should not be surprising: the multi-disciplinary nature of town centre regeneration means that it draws on a range of generalist skills.

## **10) Addressing These Limitations in Evaluation: Applying Theory of Change**

- 7.43 Theories of Change is an approach to evaluation which aims to enhance project planning, to help build monitoring and evaluation frameworks and to improve attribution (confidence that the changes in outcomes found are a result of the programme activities). It uses tools such as logic models to support planning (or where evaluators are not involved at the planning stage to understand the programme that is/has been delivered). The logic models are seen as a representation of the programmes' theories or results chains. These results chains are critiqued by evaluators to check whether they are plausible (based on evidence or logic), doable (programmes have sufficient resources

time and skilled staff to deliver it) and expressed in a way that makes them evaluable (outcomes have timescales, thresholds and indicators that can be evaluated). This learning is used to identify key evaluation questions and to develop appropriate designs, methods and measurement tools. An example of how this is done is illustrated in Chapter 6.

- 7.44 Theories of Change has much to offer TCR and this has been reinforced by the work with the case studies. Applying the approach or even some of its tools and thinking can help address many of the planning and evaluation problems highlighted above.
- 7.45 Elements of this approach were applied in this research to develop draft template theories of change for TCR programmes. These templates (and in particular the public realm model) were used by some of the case study areas to improve the detail of their activities and to map out short and interim outcomes which were absent from their initial plans. These models were also used by some case studies to support them in identifying project specific evaluation questions and measures. These improvements to the models should help to strengthen the earlier monitoring and evaluation plans to some extent in these case study areas.
- 7.46 There is scope to encourage further use through advocacy and/or training in how to apply these tools or this approach with practitioners within wider TCR programmes and also local elected members. This would build evaluative thinking into programmes at the planning stage which should enhance both programme delivery and future monitoring and evaluation. This approach is likely to take some time and would require to be accommodated in an extended programme for 'challenge fund' type bids. More significant use of the tools, however, is likely to require funders to make greater demands for plans and monitoring and evaluation frameworks informed by results chains. In addition, the skills and capabilities of practitioners will need to be developed so they can respond to these demands.

### **TCRF as a Tool for Delivering Effective Town Centre Regeneration**

- 7.47 The consultations and the case studies have demonstrated that **the 2009/10 TCRF programme has generated more confidence in specific town centres and mobilised local business groups**. The tight bidding and delivery timescales meant that in most cases this was achieved by the funding accelerating the actual delivery of schemes that were already worked up with stakeholder buy in and the necessary 'in principle' approvals in place. On the other hand, this meant that in some of the case studies, projects that had been 'just talk' did become real and tangible. As a result, implementation on the ground had a clear impact on business and resident confidence as demonstrated by perception surveys in, for example, Govan and Barrhead. In Barrhead and Govan this had given partners the confidence to start to consider exploring BID status as a way of maintaining momentum. In Elgin the case study consultation suggested that the successful execution of the Elgin TCRF project has enhanced the reputation of the newly formed Elgin BID and it is now acknowledged that the BID can have a positive impact on the town centre.

- 7.48 The weaknesses of the 2009/10 TCRF programme included the short timescale for bids/delivery; capital only eligibility criteria; competitive bidding arrangements that were sometimes inefficient; the lack of consistent baselines and the lack of detailed results chains at the early project planning stage, in particular, the poor specification of outcomes that makes evaluation problematic. (See Sections 7.36 -7.41 above)
- 7.49 Looking forward, were a programme like TCRF to be repeated then this research (the case studies in particular) have highlighted the need **for town centre regeneration practitioners to learn to use Theories of Change** as part of the project planning process and to follow through on monitoring and evaluation. Scottish Government and funders need to **commission programmes and projects that include Theories of Change that they would like tested. It will also be essential to ensure that project planning, monitoring and evaluation are emphasised more strongly in future programmes.**

**TABLE 7.1: LEARNING POINTS:  
KEY FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS: SUMMARY**

Issue: Learning Point	Finding	Final Report Reference	Recommendation: Responsibility
<p><b>1. Complex Concept &amp; Town Centre Regeneration Strategies Should Be Integrated and Sit Within Whole Town Strategies</b></p>	<p>Town centre regeneration is complex. It deals with interrelated and multi-dimensional issues that are not easily analysed or solved, and furthermore are driven by the wider economic and other factors associated with the town (and for some larger towns the sub-region). An integrated/holistic approach is required across local authority functions, businesses and communities and beyond just physical (typically retail) projects. Need to focus on services, cultural, civic, community and visitor assets. Town centre strategies should sit within whole town strategies.</p>	<p><b>Chapter 3 and Case Studies</b></p>	<p><b>Ensure town centre regeneration strategies sit within whole town strategies. Continue to disseminate good practice on successful integrated/holistic approaches.</b></p> <p><i>Scottish Government Local Authorities A+DS</i></p>
<p><b>2. Recognise Scale &amp; Distinctiveness of Town Centre: In A Changing Wider Context</b></p>	<p>Twenty-first century drivers like the transition to a low carbon economy, higher quality urban design aspirations, the knowledge economy and the internet present real challenges and opportunities to town centre regeneration. It is essential to identify the particular distinctive features of the town centre. Town centres have evolved and will continue to change to take account of structural economic change and there are clear implications for town centre regeneration.</p>	<p><b>Chapter 4 and Case Studies</b></p>	<p><b>Continue to disseminate good practice In the medium term look to identify ‘model types’ of town centre</b></p> <p><i>Local Authorities Scottish Government</i></p>
<p><b>3. Town Centre Regeneration Needs More Than Physical Investment</b></p>	<p>Traditional approaches to town centre regeneration focus on physical interventions. The TCRF has followed this path. Physical investment is often justified in terms of it stimulating demand for further investment, protecting retail, attracting visitors and developing civic pride.  There is a clear case for considering other types of</p>	<p><b>Chapter 3/4 and Case Studies</b></p>	<p><b>Develop more detailed appraisal criteria to articulate links between physical investment and other town centre regeneration activity. Critically appraise emerging town centre projects against these criteria.</b></p> <p><i>Scottish Government</i></p>

Issue: Learning Point	Finding	Final Report Reference	Recommendation: Responsibility
	intervention alongside physical investment, including measures to <i>directly</i> support businesses, stimulate business growth, attracting visitors or encourage pride in the town centre.		<i>A+DS Funders like Heritage Lottery Fund &amp; Business Improvement Districts Scotland RICS/RTPI</i>
<b>4. Need A Clear Shared Vision, Strategy &amp; Action Plan</b>	In most cases successful town centre regeneration requires a clear vision, strategy & action plan to provide a strategic fit for project interventions.  These terms are often loosely defined and therefore more difficult to monitor and evaluate particularly in the absence of the use of Theories of Change.	<b>Chapter 4 and case studies</b>	<b>Continue to disseminate good practice</b>  <i>Scottish Government Funders like Heritage Lottery Fund &amp; Business Improvement Districts Scotland</i>
<b>5. Partnership Is Not An Outcome: Effective &amp; Coordinated Delivery Is Essential</b>	Delivering projects in town centres requires coordination with partners and within local authorities. Partnerships are common place but need more clarity on roles and responsibilities. Resources are often committed over timescales that are too short for realistic change in town centres.  Need civic leaders/project champions to prioritise town centres over a longer period to initiate confidence in vision, strategy and delivery of action plan.	<b>Chapter 4 and case studies</b>	<b>Continue to disseminate good practice</b>  <i>Scottish Government Local Authorities Improvement Service</i>
<b>6. Importance of Small/Medium Businesses &amp; Potential Of Community Ownership of Assets</b>	The case studies highlighted the limited knowledge and data that was available on the small/medium businesses that would be affected by particular town centre regeneration projects. Only in very few examples were one on one discussions undertaken with local and often independent businesses.  Community-led initiatives to take ownership of iconic and often listed town centre buildings at below market value as community assets are starting to emerge and will need to be evaluated in due course.	<b>Chapter 4 and case studies</b>	<b>Disseminate good practice Evaluate new and emerging interventions to test hypotheses.</b>  <i>Scottish Government Business Improvement Districts Scotland Development Trusts Association Scotland Local Authorities</i>

Issue: Learning Point	Finding	Final Report Reference	Recommendation: Responsibility
<p><b>7. Improving TCR Project Planning: In Most Cases No Clear 'Results Chain' Has Been Identified</b></p>	<p>The research highlighted limitations in project planning within town centre regeneration/TCRF interventions. These include a lack of results chains which link activities and outputs (the things they deliver) directly to their anticipated outcomes (the changes environments and ultimately people). Activities tend not to be described in detail nor specify whose behaviour they are targeted at and outcomes often lack timescales or thresholds (the type and level of change that will be achieved).</p> <p>A fresh and more thorough approach to planning of interventions is needed. This would also help address many of the limitations in monitoring &amp; evaluation detailed in learning points 8, 9 &amp; 10 below.</p> <p>Logic models should be employed to develop a prospective results chain (theory of change). This would provide more details of planned activities and targets as well as more clarity over intended outcomes and thresholds.</p>	<p><b>Chapter 5/6 and Case Studies</b></p>	<p><b>Needs application of appraisal skills at the projects development stage, prior to the funding stage.</b></p> <p><b>Commissioners should encourage the use of tools such as Logic Models to develop detailed results chains in funding submissions.</b></p> <p><b>These tools enhance planning, support the development of monitoring and evaluation frameworks and aid attribution.</b></p> <p><b>The commissioning process where feasible should critique early plans and provide feedback to promising projects on how to strengthen their results chains and improve monitoring and evaluation plans.</b></p> <p><i>Scottish Government Funders like Heritage Lottery Fund &amp; Business Improvement Districts Scotland</i></p>
<p><b>8. Improving Approaches to Town Centre Health Check Assessment and Monitoring</b></p>	<p>The research has confirmed that there is a lack of consistency in approaches to monitor the health of town centres. There is often inconsistency across local authority areas and only rarely can meaningful comparisons be made between different town centres in different parts of the country.</p> <p>While monitoring town centre health is challenging, improving approaches and developing consistency is crucially important. Without it, it is difficult to make evidence based judgements on prioritising need, nor is it easy to make judgements on the success of projects.</p>	<p><b>Chapter 5 and Case Studies</b></p>	<p><b>Provide guidance to town centres on the key indicators that should be monitored 'as a minimum' to assess town centre performance</b></p> <p><b>Examine how Government collected routine data relevant to town centres can be made more available, timely and robust at small area levels</b></p> <p><b>Provide training and support to town centre managers on delivering effective health checks.</b></p>



Issue: Learning Point	Finding	Final Report Reference	Recommendation: Responsibility
			<p><i>Scottish Government Improvement Service Business Improvement Districts Scotland Local Authorities</i></p>
<p><b>9. Effective Evaluation Of Town Centre Projects: Limitations</b></p>	<p>The evaluation base around the effectiveness of town centre regeneration is poorly developed. There is a lack of critical longitudinal evidence on the difference that town centre regeneration can make.</p> <p>In addition, evaluation within the TCRF projects was not seen as a priority. This is partly related to the lack of time to fully develop projects/result chains, but is also a result of a lack of evaluation skills in the sector.</p> <p>These are serious issues which will continue to undermine the town centre regeneration sector if not addressed.</p>	<p><b>Chapters 5/6 and Case Studies</b></p>	<p><b>There is a need to develop critical evaluation and appraisal skills within the regeneration sector.</b></p> <p><b>This could be done by accessing corporate resource within <i>local authorities</i>, or by developing sectoral expertise through e.g. the <i>Improvement Service</i> and <i>evaluation specialists</i></b></p> <p><i>Local Authorities Improvement Service Evaluation Specialists</i></p>
<p><b>10. Addressing Limitations In Evaluation: Applying Theories of Change</b></p>	<p>To demonstrate the impact of town centre regeneration programmes on outcomes (effectiveness) there is a need to be able to provide monitoring data on programme implementation (process) and to link this to both routine monitoring and evaluation data on outcomes. For most programmes, routine monitoring data alone will not be sufficient to show changes in either short or interim outcomes; especially those which are unique or particular to certain types of programmes. It is likely that projects will require some primary data collection to address their key evaluation questions and to improve attribution.</p> <p>Theories of Change is an approach to evaluation which aims to enhance project planning, to help build monitoring and evaluation frameworks and to improve attribution (confidence that the changes in outcomes</p>	<p><b>Chapter 6 and Case Studies</b></p>	<p><b>Applying the Theories of Change approach or even some of its tools and thinking can help address many of the planning and evaluation problems highlighted above. These approaches should potentially be included in the training and support programmes referred to above.</b></p> <p><i>Scottish Government Improvement Service Business Improvement Districts Scotland Local Authorities</i></p>

Issue: Learning Point	Finding	Final Report Reference	Recommendation: Responsibility
	<p>found are a result of the programme activities). A Theories of Change approach has much to offer town centre regeneration. Several case studies perceived the approach as adding value to their monitoring and evaluation plans and for future project development.</p>		
<p><b>TCRF As A Tool For Delivering Town Centre Regeneration</b></p>	<p>TCRF was an important intervention in generating confidence and mobilising business groups in town centres. The tight bidding and delivery timescales meant that in most cases this was achieved by the funding accelerating the actual delivery of schemes that were already worked up with stakeholder buy in and the necessary 'in principle' approvals in place.</p> <p>On the other hand, this meant that in some of the case studies, projects that had been 'just talk' did become real and tangible and implementation on the ground had a clear impact on business and resident confidence.</p> <p>The weaknesses of the 2009/10 TCRF programme included the short timescale for bids/delivery; capital only eligibility criteria; competitive bidding arrangements that were sometimes inefficient; the lack of consistent baselines and the lack of detailed results chains at the early project planning stage.</p>	<p><b>Chapters 6/7 and case studies</b></p>	<p><b>If a programme like TCRF is to be repeated then there is need for town centre regeneration practitioners to learn to use Theories of Change as part of the project planning process and to follow through on monitoring and evaluation.</b></p> <p><b>Scottish Government and funders need to commission projects with the Theories of Change that they wish tested in mind.</b></p> <p><i>Scottish Government Funders like Heritage Lottery Fund &amp; Business Improvement Districts Scotland</i></p>

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A longer list of references is included with the Literature Review which is Appendix 2 in the Final Report Appendices.

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