

Town Centre Planning Pilots Programme



Walkinverness

Wayfinding

'How To' Guide

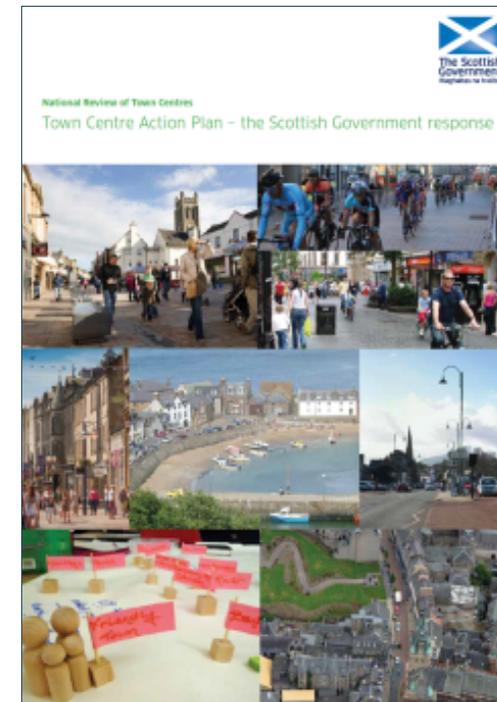


Town Centres Planning Pilots Programme

Town centres are at the heart of their communities and can be hubs for a range of activities. It is important that planning supports the role of town centres to thrive and meet the needs of their residents, businesses and visitors for the 21st century.

The **Town Centre Action Plan** (November 2014) sets out various actions to bring a focus on town centres.

One of its key themes is **Proactive Planning**, the Scottish Government fully embraces the Town Centres Review recommendation for a simple, encouraging and pro-active planning policy in support of town centres.



Town Centre Action Plan

We committed in the Action Plan that:

We will identify pilots with interested planning authorities who wish to consider collaboration and test approaches which could help simplify planning processes in town centres.

The Town Centres Planning Pilots Programme is working with **10** planning authorities and Heads of Planning Scotland (HOPS) supporting **15** pilots based around **7** key areas, as shown on the map.

- ➔ This “How To” guide shows how The Highland Council developed a wayfinding initiative for Inverness city centre based on a “Legible City” approach. Wayfinding is the term used for signs, maps and other devices that convey information about location and directions to visitors and residents. A Legible City provides enhanced information to:
- aid pedestrian navigation, and
 - link this to city-wide information systems.



Project Details: The story behind it all...

The Highland Council developed a wayfinding initiative for the centre of Inverness in response to keen public interest in improving the pedestrian environment.

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In 2014 The Highland Council's Development and Infrastructure Service invited public feedback on how best to increase footfall in the centre of Inverness. This highlighted keen public interest in improving access and connections to create easy, convenient walking links to key destinations and attractions.

Inverness is an important tourist destination receiving over 860,000 visitors per year. The city centre has a small footprint, ensuring that the bus and rail stations, riverside, and significant leisure and cultural attractions are all within easy walking distance of each other. The Council is committed to making Inverness a Dementia Friendly city, ensuring facilities and services are accessible to everyone living there.

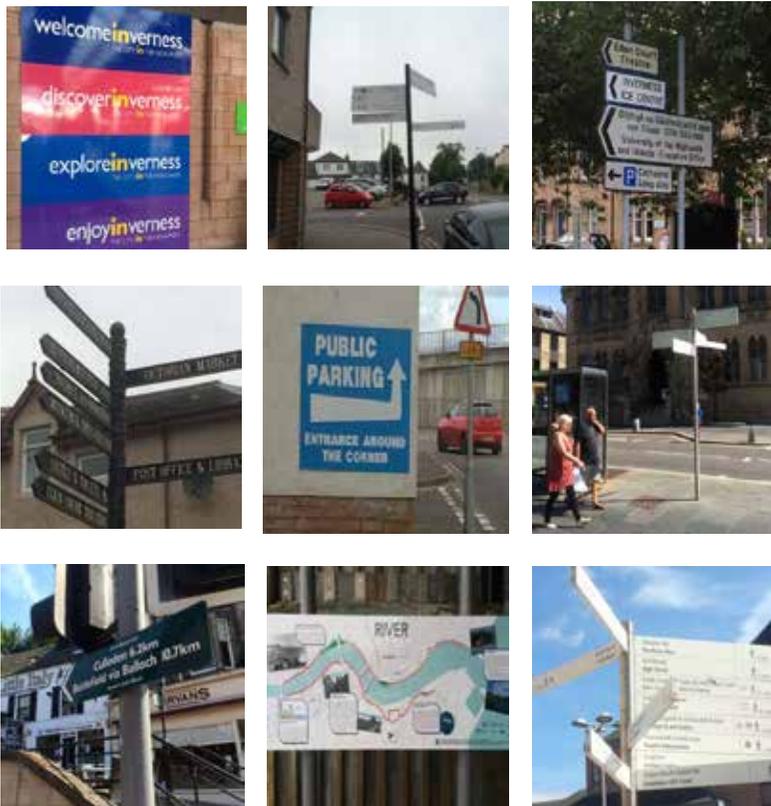


Baseline/Before

In 2014 the Council commissioned a review of wayfinding in the centre of Inverness that analysed the current provision of pedestrian information, assessed its effectiveness and identified opportunities for improvement.

This study concluded that it was difficult for visitors and many residents to plan journeys in advance and to fully appreciate, when navigating the streetscape, all that Inverness has to offer. Shortcomings in the range and quality of wayfinding information included:

- signage that is often difficult to read due to inappropriate text sizes, unsuitable typographic formats and information overload;
- an unhelpful profusion of sign types and sizes, contributing to a strong sense of visual clutter;
- no evidence of an easily-recognisable city-wide signage style/presentation and little evidence of city branding;
- lack of alignment between pre-visit planning information (e.g. printed maps and on-line guidance) and wayfinding information on the ground;
- absence of a free-to-use mapping system (such as a mapping app) that could assist visitors when navigating through the cityscape; and
- a lack of independent overview and consistency of style in maps available for purchase, whose information content was often obscured by advertising and sponsorship.

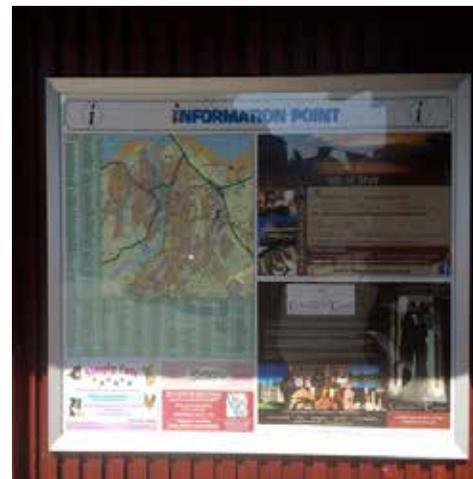


Drivers for change

There was a strong case for taking action to upgrade wayfinding information in Inverness in anticipation of proposed improvements to Inverness Rail Station, the launch of the city's first Townscape Heritage Scheme, and potential to create a major cultural attraction at Inverness Castle.

Wayfinding improvements would also complement a public art project to map and signpost the River Ness physically and digitally.

It was likely these developments could contribute to or enable the Council to access grant funding towards the cost of improving wayfinding and orientation for visitors and residents.



Taking inspiration from the Town Centre Toolkit



Extracts from the Toolkit

● Informing and guiding pedestrians

Wayfinding initiatives can support and encourage journeys on foot especially in areas popular with tourists through:

- creating easy-to-follow walking routes, with good sightlines and forward visibility to contribute to personal security and wayfinding;
- providing well-designed surfacing, signage and public art, which can help orientate people so that they can navigate easily and, at the same time, give clear indications of the route to popular destinations at key decision points;
- including, where practicable, distance and journey times on signage;
- designing signage to be appropriate to the town's character, with the style and quantity carefully measured against the size and scale of the town and the number of route decision points; and
- helping to assess and reduce visual clutter in a town centre and reinforce its identity through the wayfinding strategy.



● De-cluttering streets and public spaces

The public spaces of town centres are often compromised by visual clutter such as highway signage, multiple poles for lighting and traffic lights, bins, and pedestrian barriers. This is damaging to the attractiveness of town centres, whereas an approach which rationalises and reduces signage and clutter is not only better but can be more cost effective.

● Creating an effective pedestrian network

When deciding whether to walk, people are influenced by the perceived and actual distance to a destination and the difficulty of getting there, as well as the quality of the experience. Making it easy for pedestrians and giving them priority encourages walking.

distances is desirable where practicable to reduce journey times and, in particular, to help those with mobility impairments.

- Accessibility is maximised by making routes between origins and destinations as direct as possible. The shortening of walking

- There are thus benefits in reviewing the town centre pedestrian network and giving consideration to the routes between key origins (like car parks, stations and bus stops) and destinations (such as public spaces, shopping areas and offices).

Walkinverness addresses two key themes in the Town Centre Toolkit - making town centres accessible and attractive. It shows how a wayfinding initiative supports and encourages journeys on foot, and to areas and attractions popular with visitors. It also reduces visual clutter by removing an unhelpful profusion of sign types and sizes.

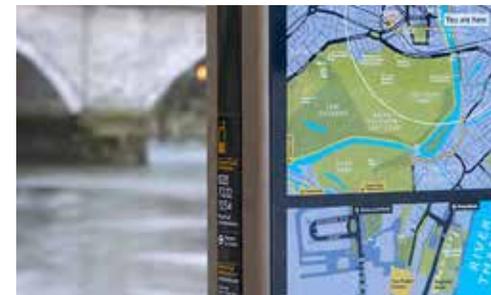
What was done...

In 2015 the Council's Development and Infrastructure Service embarked on a series of steps to improve the wayfinding experience in Inverness city centre based on a "Legible City" approach.

A Legible City connects people, movement and places effectively by co-ordinating all relevant information - online, wayfinding, mapping, signage and municipal - to work seamlessly together. Often this includes the development of a network of directional signs, street information panels with maps, printed maps, and plaques. Usually these physical systems are combined with digital mapping to facilitate use of smart technology.

Adopting a Legible City approach involves two important initial steps:

- 1. Harness support** from the wide range of individuals and organisations with an interest in wayfinding and signage issues in the centre.
- 2. Develop a prototype map**, using current "Legible City" best practice, for a sample area of the city centre. A prototype map establishes style rules and information content for signage systems, maps and other devices conveying information about location and directions to visitors and residents.



More information on each of these steps is on the following pages

What was done...

Step 1: Stakeholder Workshop and Consultation

In February 2016, the Development and Infrastructure Service staged a small collaborative workshop for key stakeholders led by a wayfinding consultant.

28 participants representing

18 organisations attended the workshop, including representatives from community councils, disabled people's organisations, businesses, Inverness BID, Inverness Access Panel, active travel groups, transport companies and public sector agencies.

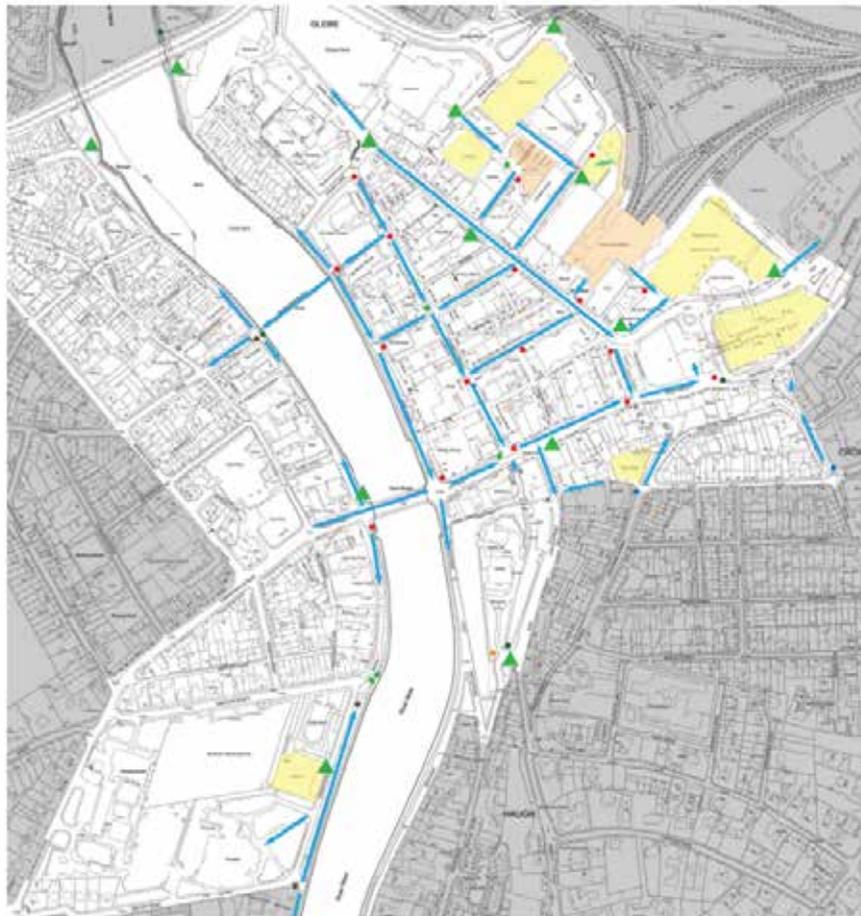


The event sought to illustrate potential benefits of improved mapping and signage in the city centre and secure feedback on relevant priorities.

Participants were asked to:

- 1. assess how easy or difficult is it for first-time pedestrian visitors to find their way around Inverness;**
- 2. rate the current wayfinding information in the city centre; and**
- 3. identify what information should be included in the proposed new prototype map.**

What was done...



Mapping was used as part of a review and analysis exercise of the existing wayfinding provision in the centre of Inverness, and to show where there were gaps provision of wayfinding information.



Sight-lines along key routes



Gaps in current wayfinding provision

Extract from Tristram Woolston report 'Review and analysis of existing wayfinding in Inverness City Centre'

What was done...

Step 2: Walkinverness Draft Prototype Map

Taking account of feedback from the stakeholder event, the Council's wayfinding consultant developed a draft prototype map that was circulated to workshop attendees in May 2016.

A short online survey invited feedback on:

- the level of detail shown on the map, which consisted of: travel hubs, landmark buildings, post offices, hotels, restaurants, bus stops, taxi ranks, carparks, public toilets, retail, pedestrian crossings, steps, and greenspace;
- the map style - in particular the colour scheme, use of symbols, 3-D landmarks, street names etc; and
- whether the proposed walking circle should be 4 or 5 minutes.

This feedback will be used to develop rules on content and style that will apply to all future wayfinding material.



The prototype represents a local section of a larger base map that will be drawn, in due course, to the same level of detail. When displayed on a wayfinding monolith, each map section will change according to the location and orientation of that monolith.

How it works

Walkinverness Prototype Map

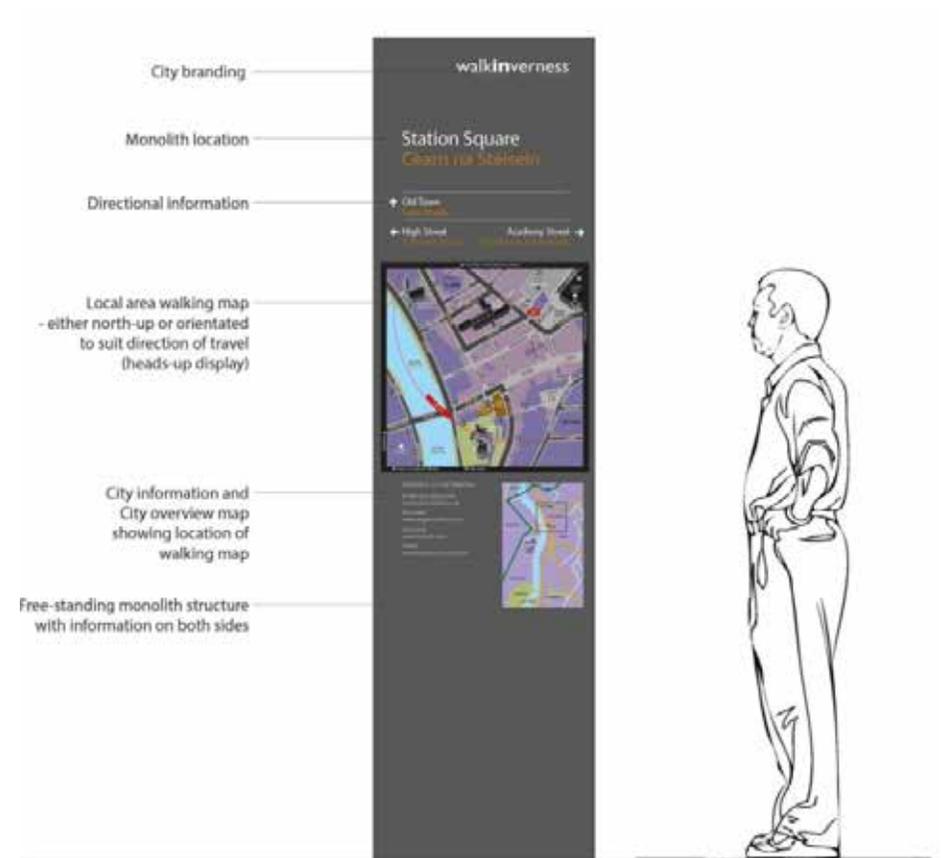
When finalised the prototype map will become the template for all new signage systems, maps and other devices conveying information about location and directions to visitors and residents in Inverness city centre.

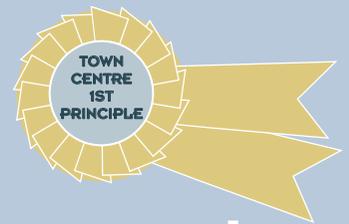
Its first application is likely to be a new monolith located in the grounds of Inverness Castle.

The prototype will also inform the preparation of a new information strategy for the centre of Inverness that maps suitable locations for up to 8 monoliths and associated finger signs, including the removal/reuse of existing signage as appropriate.

The Council will pursue opportunities to secure grant funding and developer contributions to support the delivery of this information strategy, including manufacture and installation of new wayfinding infrastructure.

In the longer term it is hoped that the prototype could be used to create a “free-to-use” mapping app for hand-held devices that co-ordinates with wayfinding information on the ground.





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- ★ Analysis of the current provision of pedestrian information to assess its effectiveness and identify opportunities for improvement.
- ★ Stakeholder engagement to illustrate potential benefits of improved mapping and signage in the city centre and secure feedback on relevant priorities.
- ★ Development of a prototype map, based on stakeholder feedback, as a template for all new signage systems, maps and other devices conveying information about location and directions to visitors and residents.
- ★ Collaborative working between public sector, businesses and community representatives to encourage vibrancy, equality and diversity in Inverness city centre, in accordance with the Town Centre First Principle.
- ★ Pro-active planning focussed on people-centred public space.



“On behalf of our members, Inverness Business Improvement District welcomes the development of a modern, user-friendly information system that links our many visitors and residents to city centre businesses and attractions. This will also help start to declutter our street furniture making the pedestrian experience a lot more attractive.”

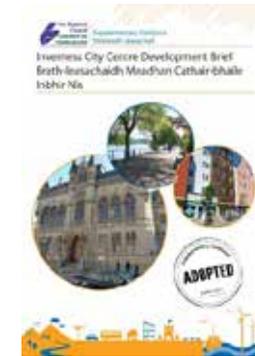
Mike Smith, Inverness BID Manager

“Environments both indoor and outdoor have the potential to enable or disable so it is important for organisations to work together and in partnership with people affected to build dementia-friendly communities based on their needs. Dementia is everybody’s business. What suits dementia suits all.”

Geraldine Ditta, Alzheimer Scotland - Action on Dementia

Policy links

Walkinverness



By making all parts of Inverness city centre visible to residents and visitors, Walkinverness promotes a welcoming environment that is easy and safe to move around. This characterises many key qualities of a successful place as set out in **Scottish Planning Policy**.

Effective wayfinding spreads footfall and improves walking links to businesses and attractions by helping pedestrians to interpret and navigate the city centre environment. This supports the delivery of **Inner Moray Firth Local Development Plan (2015)** Policy 1: Promoting and Protecting City and Town Centres.

Using wayfinding to boost the legibility of the centre if Inverness supports delivery of key objectives of the **Inverness City Centre Development Brief (2013)** to: enhance user experience for tourists and visitors; reconnect the centre with the river frontage; and increase connectivity and active travel to, from, and within the city centre.

Key learning points



Resources

People involved: The wayfinding work described in this case study was led by officers from The Highland Council's *Transport Planning and Development Plans* teams. Consultancy services were provided by Tristram Woolston.

Costs to date: Approx £10,000

Funders: The Highland Council and Inverness Common Good Fund, Scottish Government.

Timescale: The initial wayfinding review and analysis took place over an 8 week period in 2014. Prototype map development, including stakeholder consultation, took place over four months in 2016.

Challenges

Funding pressures in the current economic climate prevented the Council from developing and delivering a comprehensive Legible City Strategy. Instead wayfinding proposals and improvements will continue to be delivered in stages, as and when funding opportunities arise. This risks loss of momentum arising from inevitable uncertainties.

Considerably more work and funding will be needed to develop and make best use of a digital "free-to-use" mapping system for use with hand-held devices.

Would you do anything differently next time

If consulting again, we would present a clearer explanation of the role and content of the prototype map. Consultation feedback highlighted that some people were unaware it was produced to develop rules on map content and style.

It would have been useful to secure wider public feedback by displaying a mock-up the prototype map on a temporary monolith. This would have also presented an opportunity to monitor before/after behaviour towards wayfinding information on the part of visitors and residents.

For further information contact:

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