

Town Centre Action Plan – Two Years On – Joint Foreword



THIS IS THE second snapshot report on progress being made by the Scottish Government and partners, delivering against the themes in the Town Centre Action Plan.

Since our last update, there have been key developments in Scotland's policy landscape. Significantly, the publication of Scotland's Economic Strategy and the passing of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act. Both are solid milestones towards realising the full potential of local knowledge and resources, strengthening the sustainability of our communities and their ability to adapt to local circumstances. Both acknowledge a clear role for towns in bringing equal growth and opportunity across the country.

I'm pleased to be signing off this report jointly with COSLA. Together with local government and the wider public sector, we remain committed to embedding the Town Centre First Principle across policy and practice. Enthusiasm for involvement from the private and community sectors continues to grow.

As a direct result of this action plan and our collective efforts, town centre discussions are held across a wider range of parties, different ways of working are being tested and new opportunities are steadily opening up.

Alex Neil,
Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Communities and Pensioners' Rights



UNDOUBTEDLY TOWN CENTRE regeneration remains a priority for local authorities, along with partners in the wider public sector, businesses and communities themselves.

Town centres have a vital role to play in terms of inclusive growth. Placing powers and responsibilities at the most appropriate level can help local authorities and communities encourage inclusive growth in their local areas and tackle social and economic disadvantage.

To help reinvigorate Scotland's town centres a collective approach which understands the long term vision for each town centre is required, which will make our town centres fit and viable places to interact, do business, and access facilities and services.

Given the importance of town centres to local communities across Scotland, we hope that the Town Centre First Principle is the first step in helping to ensure the viability of Scotland's town centres going forward.

I'm heartened by the progress made so far in terms of the action plan and look forward to continuing to work with Scottish Government, and other partners to continue to progress this agenda.

Councillor Stephen Hagan,
COSLA Spokesperson for Development, Economy and Sustainability

Town Centre Action Plan – Two Years On

This report is a second snapshot of the progress made by the Scottish Government and its partners following publication of the Town Centre Action Plan in November 2013. It follows the themed structure in the plan and it does not reflect all town centre regeneration activity and engagement happening in Scotland. Rather, it focusses on those activities which the SG is responsible for, to put in place the conditions necessary to support local town centre action and delivery.

Theme	Action	What We've Achieved
<p style="text-align: center;">Town Centre First Principle</p>	<p>We recognise that a shared understanding and interpretation of a town centre first principle across the public sector will be key to its success. We will work with COSLA to determine how a town centre first principle will work in practice taking account of other government policy and duties on local government.</p>	<p>Implemented. To recap - the Scottish Government Cabinet and COSLA Leaders agreed the Town Centre First Principle in July 2014. The wording of the Principle is included below:</p> <p>“Town Centre First Principle</p> <p>Town centres are a key element of the economic, social and environmental fabric of Scotland’s towns; often at the core of community and economic life, offering spaces in which to live, meet and interact, do business, and access facilities and services. We must take collective responsibility to help town centres thrive sustainably, reinvent their function, and meet the needs of residents, businesses, and visitors for the 21st century.</p> <p>The principle requests that: Government, local authorities, the wider public sector, businesses and communities put the health of town centres at the heart of proportionate and best value decision making, seeking to deliver the best local outcomes regarding investment and de-investment decisions, alignment of policies, targeting of available resources to priority town centre sites, and encouraging vibrancy, equality and diversity.</p> <p>We commit to: A collaborative approach which understands and underpins the long term plan for each town centre.”</p> <p>http://www.scotland.gov.uk/town-centres/TheTownCentreFirstPrinciple</p> <p>In line with updates to the SPFM and NHS Property Transactions Handbook, we are engaging with all public authorities across Scotland to ensure the principle is considered as part of their wider investment decisions. A number of Local Authorities continue to embed the principle, adapting it to meet local priorities and circumstances. We support the practical application of the principle in local communities and will continue to draw on the learning from this and share lessons more widely.</p>

Town Centre Living	<p>We will commit £2m towards a Town Centre Housing Fund that will act as a demonstration project to help bring empty town centre properties back into use for affordable housing.</p>	<p>Implemented. We will deliver 75 affordable homes in town centre locations through this fund.</p> <p>http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Built-Environment/regeneration/town-centres/housing-fund</p> <p>We continue to consider the future of town centre living in relation to existing housing programmes.</p> <p>The Joint Housing Delivery Plan for Scotland was published in June 2015. It recognises town centre living as a priority for housing sector in Scotland – Actions 18 and 19 commit SG and partners to deliver town centre demo projects and publish guidance on density and diversity.</p> <p>http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Built-Environment/Housing/reform/jhpdg</p> <p>October 2015 - we collaborated with Architecture and Design Scotland to deliver the '<i>Place Challenge: Town Centre Living</i>' event in Arbroath. Key outcomes from the event include: sharing knowledge of current policy, knowledge and innovative practice around town centre living; promotion of best practice approaches to briefing and problem solving for positive economic, social, health and environmental outcomes in Scotland's town centres; equipping participants with the capacity and contacts to take action in their own places; and generating practical resources to reinforce the tools, methods and contacts to support implementation of the learning.</p> <p>A summary report from the <i>Place Challenge: Town Centre Living</i> event can be viewed at . http://www.ads.org.uk/place-challenge-2015-summary-report</p>
	<p>We will identify best practice and models of engagement to encourage owners of empty properties to bring these back into use as affordable housing.</p>	<p>On-going. The Scottish Empty Homes Partnership has now helped to support over 1200 homes back into use to date. Empty Homes Officers are now active across 17 of Scotland's local authorities. The Partnership has published numerous guides to support the re-use of empty homes and continues to support local authorities and others through information sharing, best practice and active support to bring homes into use.</p> <p>The Empty Homes Loan Fund continues to support the reinstatement of long term empty properties across Scotland and has been utilised in 49 homes to date. Shared service approaches are being agreed with Glasgow City Council and further permanent and pilot Empty Homes Officer roles are being supported across Scotland.</p> <p>In 2015/16, a specific Town Centre Empty Homes Fund committed £4m of funding, as grant and loan. It is expected to deliver 87 affordable homes by reinstating long term empty properties.</p> <p>http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Built-Environment/Housing/supply-demand/emptyhomes</p>
	<p>We will work with</p>	<p>On-going. LHS Guidance published in August 2014 seeks to encourage local authorities to fully consider the role</p>

<p>COSLA to strengthen Local Housing Strategy (LHS) guidance to support local authorities to consider prioritising housing for town centres and to identify potential for mixed use living in town centres.</p>	<p>that town centres can play as residential communities.</p> <p>http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2014/08/3070</p> <p>We undertake peer reviews of each proposed LHS, involving Scottish Government policy, local authority volunteers and housing area teams in this. The LHS review process which has now begun, will last into early 2019, as submissions from each local authority are staggered due to links with Local Development Plans. The review group will support local authorities with appropriate feedback in line with guidance.</p> <p>Of the LHS reviewed to-date, each has included information and actions relating directly to town centres.</p>
<p>We will facilitate and support affordable housing development in town centres through our Affordable Supply Programme (AHSP)</p>	<p>On-going. On 25 January 2016, we announced all social housing benchmarks are further increased by £14,000 and flexibility remains to award grant subsidies above the increased benchmarks, to enable expensive town centre projects to be brought forward and considered for grant funding.</p> <p>http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Built-Environment/Housing/investment/ahsp/2015-subsidy-working-group</p> <p>AHSP guidance is now being reviewed to further strengthen the flexibility afforded in order to support improvement projects of strategic importance to local authorities. Update expected by summer 2016.</p> <p>http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Built-Environment/Housing/AHSP Guidance</p>
<p>We will share learning from our National Community Planning Support Framework Project and the Assets Focused Approaches Project to ensure our towns centres are safer places.</p>	<p>We have held a number of Building Safer Community Learning Network events to share learning including place networking, participatory budgeting and reassuring the public.</p> <p>http://www.bsc.scot/learning-network.html</p> <p>Inspiring Scotland are currently reviewing their Link Up evaluation framework and will publish a final report in 2017. We will continue to work closely with the Building Safer Communities areas to share learning. To support this process we plan to run events in each BSC area beginning with Possilpark in Spring 2016 and the Gorbals later this year.</p> <p>http://www.inspiringscotland.org.uk/our-funds/link-up</p>

Vibrant Local Economies	<p>We will support the collection and collation of town centre data at a local level, which will aid understanding of their health and performance.</p>	<p>We launched <i>Understanding Scottish Places</i> (USP) – an online data platform in April 2015. The purpose of this free, easy-to-use tool is three-fold; it sets out a new typology of Scottish towns, provides an assessment of towns’ interrelationships with their neighbours and provides local authorities and various town centre communities with an USP Audit Manual, a simple way to capture locally available data to begin to compare results year on year.</p> <p>Together with the Town Centre Toolkit, USP will be promoted through Scotland’s Towns Partnership as part of a broader package of resources which make it easier for groups to begin to develop and share details of successful approaches to town centre revitalisation.</p> <p>http://www.usp.scot/</p> <p>http://www.usp.scot/UspAudit</p>
	<p>We will continue to monitor the effectiveness of BRIS (Business Rates Incentivisation Scheme).</p>	<p>The new BRIS is operational with councils about to be notified of the amounts they can retain for 2014-15.</p> <p>Revised 2015-16 and Provisional 2016-17 targets to be issued in due course.</p> <p>http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Government/local-government/17999/11203/localgovernment17999</p>
	<p>We will create powers for local authorities to establish a Town Centre Investment Zone, using discretionary rates relief to encourage local business. We will consider a pilot scheme for this initiative.</p>	<p>The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Bill was passed by the Scottish Parliament on 17 June 2015 and received Royal Assent, becoming an Act, on 24 July 2015.</p> <p>A Commencement Order was duly laid on 31 October 2015 and from this date all councils have the power to reduce or remit business rates in their areas. We will monitor take-up through Non-Domestic Rates Income returns.</p> <p>We remain keen to discuss options for supporting a pilot Town Centre Investment Zone scheme with interested local authorities.</p>
	<p>We will maintain Small Business Bonus Scheme</p>	<p>Implemented. Many thousands of small businesses in towns pay zero or reduced business rates through the <i>Small Business Bonus Scheme (SBBS)</i>. Scottish Ministers have confirmed to maintain the Scheme for the duration of the next Parliament, if re-elected.</p>

<p>for the life of the current Parliament, removing or substantially reducing the rates burden for many thousands of town centre properties.</p>	<p>www.mygov.scot/business/business-premises-and-rates/business-rates/ http://news.scotland.gov.uk/News/Non-Domestic-Rates-Relief-Statistics-for-Small-Businesses-in-Scotland-2015-1ec7.aspx</p>
<p>We will take appropriate measures to create incentives to bring long term vacant premises back into use, including the expansion of Fresh Start rates relief to apply to pubs, hotels and restaurants from 1 April 2014.</p>	<p>Implemented. We expanded Fresh Start rates relief to apply to pubs, hotels and restaurants on 1 April 2014. Further reforms to Empty Property Relief have been proposed in the Draft Budget 2016/17. A review of the Non-Domestic Rates system is on-going and decisions are yet to be made on whether these reliefs are effective and will continue.</p>
<p>We will complete the actions identified as part of our review of the entire rating system to ensure the system better supports Scottish businesses, including town centre businesses</p>	<p>On-going. We announced in the Draft Budget 2016/17 that we will undertake a review of the Non-Domestic Rate system to ensure it supports investment and growth. Details on timing and scope will be confirmed in due course. http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2013/09/2234</p>
<p>We will test thinking with a range of</p>	<p>On-going. There are now 34 operational BIDs in Scotland. BIDs are encouraged to consider and demonstrate how they link in with the local community and where relevant, how their activity complements broader town centre plans.</p>

	<p>stakeholders to identify support priorities for Business Improvement District (BID) projects and opportunities to expand what BIDS can deliver in alignment with the wider community focus recommended in the review report.</p>	<p>There are examples of innovation in approach. Eg. of the 20 BIDs currently in development, 4 are situated at various points along Scotland's canal network – encompassing nearby settlements and helping to generate growth in local town centres. And the world's first Food and Drink BID is being developed in East Lothian, anticipating this will bring significant benefit to the economy across the region.</p> <p>The forthcoming annual BIDS Gathering on 30 March will examine the future development opportunities for BIDS.</p> <p>In 2016, a survey will be carried out which will enable BIDs to evaluate the service they have received under the current contract, helping to refine our approach.</p> <p>http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Built-Environment/regeneration/BIDS</p>
	<p>We will encourage entrepreneurship in our town centres through our forthcoming Entrepreneurship and Innovation Framework and through our funding available to third sector organisations.</p>	<p>The first CAN DO Places Hub facility was opened on 27 August 2015. Further CAN DO hubs are anticipated, subject to appropriate national and local support being received.</p> <p>We will continue to support CAN DO Places to build on what has been achieved.</p> <p>http://www.candoplaces.org/</p> <p>In addition, RCGF has supported the development of business hubs with office space for start-ups, entrepreneurs and third sector organisations in town centres, including recent awards to projects in Kilmarnock and Port Glasgow.</p> <p>http://www.gov.scot/rcgf</p>
	<p>We will work with COSLA and our enterprise agencies to ensure that town centre businesses understand the business support available from</p>	<p>On-going. We continue to work with our business support delivery partners - Business Gateway (BG) National Unit hosted by COSLA and the Enterprise Agencies - to raise awareness of the support that is available and to promote services locally.</p> <p>BG engages with a diverse range of town centre businesses to help them in their growth journey. There are recent examples of enterprises benefitting from such business support in Stonehaven, Alva and Stirling. In addition, our Enterprise Agencies provide support for transformational projects with both a local and national economic impact, including a range of activity and projects in Scotland's towns. For example, Highlands and Islands Enterprise were one of the investors and supporters of Rothesay Pavilion and Dunoon Burgh Hall projects. Scottish Enterprise has</p>

	<p>Business Gateway, local government and through the enterprise agencies.</p>	<p>supported development of mixed size business units in Annan to help revitalise the town centre.</p> <p>We will encourage local authorities in their delivery of BG and our Enterprise Agencies to compile case studies which demonstrate the range of activities that could be undertaken to support town centre businesses and to continue to promote these through relevant websites.</p> <p>http://www.bgateway.com/local-offices/aberdeenshire/case-studies/stonehaven</p>
<p>Enterprising Communities</p>	<p>We will carry out a town centre asset audit demonstration project, specifically working with public sector bodies to model ways in which communities can take occupation of public buildings when they are no longer required by the public body.</p>	<p>On-going discussion with partners on the feasibility of asset audit and research into existing or similar activity. The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 provides a new statutory mechanism for asset transfer. This will provide community bodies with a right to request to purchase, lease, manage or use land and buildings belonging to local authorities, Scottish public bodies or Scottish Ministers.</p> <p>We shall consult shortly on draft regulations on asset transfer. We expect that the provisions relating to asset transfer will come into force late summer 2016.</p> <p>http://www.gov.scot/CommunityEmpowerment(Scotland)Act 2015</p> <p>We are working with bodies such as Development Trust Association of Scotland (DTAS) and SURF to develop and support community-led, town centre asset projects.</p> <p>We are supporting the Community Ownership Support Service to provide advice to community groups and public sector bodies looking to take on, or transfer assets.</p> <p>http://www.dtascommunityownership.org.uk/</p>
	<p>We will work with Creative Scotland, Historic Scotland and Architecture and Design Scotland to identify where specific policies can be aligned strategically to provide further</p>	<p>Creative Scotland, Architecture and Design Scotland and Historic Environment Scotland continue to align their activities and strategic approach around empowering communities and town centre priorities.</p> <p>Historic Environment Scotland took form as the new lead public body for Scotland's historic environment from October 2015. Charged with leading delivery of <i>Our Place in Time</i>, they have appointed a Project Development Manager with a specific remit to assist community groups to achieve heritage based projects. A recent town centre example reflecting this approach is the restoration of the Campbeltown Picture House, supported through the Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme and the HLF Townscape Heritage.</p> <p>http://www.gov.scot/Historic Environment Strategy for Scotland http://www.historic-scotland.gov.uk/conservation-area-regeneration-scheme.htm</p>

	<p>support and opportunities to our town centres.</p>	<p>Creative Scotland's Place, Partnerships and Communities team operates at strategic level with national and local partners from local authorities to artist-led network, supporting the SURF Creative Regeneration Award category. There are now 12 Place Partnership areas across Scotland, with a further 3 in development. The Creative Place Awards celebrate creative programmes taking place in towns, villages and communities across Scotland.</p> <p>http://www.creativescotland.com/Unlocking Potential, Embracing Ambition 2014-2024</p> <p>http://www.creativescotland.com/creative-place-awards</p>
	<p>We will continue to work with Creative Scotland, Cultural Enterprise Office, Business Gateway, WASPS and other relevant partner agencies and organisations to facilitate support for local enterprise in mixed-use existing town centre facilities</p>	<p>In Scotland, the creative industries comprise 14,000 businesses working across 16 sub-sectors from games design to architecture. Many are smaller businesses, including local sole traders and start-ups in town centres turning a creative talent into a business that can provide an income and contribute to local economies.</p> <p>The Scottish Creative Industries Partnership (SCIP) continues to have an important role supporting this work. SCIP is developing a clear and shared view of the range of public sector interventions being delivered across partner organisations in support of the creative industries in Scotland and the connections between these.</p> <p>Creative Scotland will publish its Creative Industries Strategy in late February / early March 2016.</p> <p>http://www.creativescotland.com/creative-industries-draft strategy-2015-17</p>
	<p>We will strengthen existing guidance to respond to the need to provide support for commercial premises that will require to comply with EPC ratings at point of sale and new lease in</p>	<p>INFORM guidance was updated in September 2014 and since then, Historic Scotland continues to review and update guidance, short guides and case studies to reflect on-going knowledge development in managing energy efficiency in traditional buildings.</p>

	<p>January 2014 to ensure historic properties are not considered too difficult to deal with and therefore left vacant.</p>	
	<p>We will support community-led activity that supports our town centres by strengthening communities to implement initiatives that benefit town centre regeneration.</p>	<p>Scottish Government and COSLA have awarded a total of £13.325m to 11 town centre projects from two rounds of Regeneration and Capital Grant Funding (RCGF) over 2014-2016. Each project has taken a community-led approach to their regeneration initiatives. An announcement on a further list of projects being recommended for support for 2016/17 is anticipated at the end of February 2016. http://www.gov.scot/rcgf</p> <p>For 2015/16, the Scottish Government also introduced the Town Centre Communities Capital Fund (TCCCF), awarding £1.7m to 20 successful community organisations across Scotland http://www.gov.scot/TCCCFSuccessfulProjects</p> <p>The Scottish Government supports Participatory Budgeting (PB) as a tool for community engagement. PB allows communities to identify their priority areas for investment. In January 2016, we provided £530k to 14 local authorities to help them build on and maintain their PB activity. We will continue to support the growth of PB across Scotland with public bodies and other interested stakeholders. www.PBScotland.scot</p> <p>Following its launch in December 2015, Scottish Government and partners including NHS Health Scotland, support the implementation of the Place Standard. This assessment method uses a 'total place' approach to consider social and community aspects as well as the natural and built environment that all make a place, including a town centre. The tool is very accessible and, by encouraging participation between groups, should help enable a stronger, better informed voice for local people. http://www.placestandard.scot</p>
<p>Accessible Public Services</p>	<p>We will endeavour to amplify guidance in the Scottish Public Finance Manual to ensure that bodies acquiring and disposing of public sector</p>	<p>Implemented. The revised sections of the Scottish Public Finance Manual were published on 20 October 2014. Alongside other changes, the consideration of the Town Centre First Principle was highlighted for decisions on property transactions.</p> <p>http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Government/Finance/spfm/PropertyManagement/Aquisitionofproperty</p>

	assets and property consider the degree of priority attached to town centres.	
	We will discuss inclusion of the Town Centre First Principle in the NHS Property Transaction Handbook.	Implemented. The NHS Scotland Property Transaction Handbook published in 2015 signposts the Town Centre First Principle and any updates, for practitioners to take into consideration when acquiring or disposing of properties.
	We will encourage Community Planning Partnerships to consider how they bring the town centre first principle to the fore when delivering on their current Single Outcome Agreements and when developing further. We will produce information and advice to help CPPs link the 'place' agenda with spatial planning and quality placemaking	<p>The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 strengthens community planning by giving it a specific purpose of requiring public sector bodies to work together and with local communities to improve outcomes and tackle inequalities on themes they identify as local priorities. CPPs and communities can use community planning to revitalise town centres, where they identify this as a priority for collective action.</p> <p>We shall consult shortly on draft statutory guidance on community planning which will add further detail. We expect that it and statutory provisions on community planning in the Community Empowerment Act will come into force late summer 2016.</p> <p>We have funded RTPi Scotland to conduct research into improving inter-connections between spatial planning and community planning, which can be relevant in a town centre context and they published an initial report in March 2015. RTPi Scotland will shortly publish a follow-up, practical route-map for better connecting spatial and community planning. http://www.rtpi.org.uk/Linking People and Places: Spatial and Community Planning</p> <p>We supported PAS together with North Lanarkshire Council and the local CPP to look at ways to align spatial and community planning mechanisms around Motherwell town centre – work ongoing.</p> <p>We published the Place Standard alongside NHS Health Scotland in December 2015. A Scottish Government / Health Scotland group is able to support implementation as it is used, for example, to identify community needs through workshops. Results from application over time should assist CPPs in tackling inequalities and addressing town centre and wider regeneration agendas. http://www.healthscotland.com/cpps/placstandard</p>

principles.	
We will work with Architecture + Design Scotland and Scottish Futures Trust to investigate ways of expanding the role of place-based reviews .	On-going. We are working to identify opportunities to collaborate on town centre pilots which investigate and expand the role of place-based reviews, to develop practical learning and replicate good practice.
We will recognise as part of National Planning Framework 3(NPF3) the role that town centres play as integrated transport hubs .	<p>Implemented. NPF3 sets out that Scottish Government wants to see the role of these towns strengthened and diversified.</p> <p>In July 2015, it was announced that work on NPF3 and Scottish Planning Policy had been successful in the 2015 RTPI Awards for Planning Excellence.</p> <p>The online action programme has been regularly updated since NPF3 was published. We will publish a monitoring report for NPF3 in 2016, and we will look to retain / strengthen linkages with TCFP in any future revisions of NPF and SPP. http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Built-Environment/planning/National-Planning-Framework</p> <p>In addition, Scotrail became the first private company to sign up to the Town Centre First Principle in November 2015 http://www.scotrail.co.uk/towns-pledge</p> <p>And the refreshed National Transport Strategy published in January 2016 also recognises the Town Centre First Principle http://www.transport.gov.scot/National-Transport-Strategy-2016</p>
We will support local authorities and others with projects to improve bus services through the Bus Investment Fund.	<p>Round two funded an additional 17 projects to be taken forward over 14/16. A review of the Bus Investment Fund will be undertaken to gauge its success going forward.</p> <p>http://www.transportscotland.gov.uk/public-transport/bus/bus-investment-fund</p>
We will work with local authorities and other relevant	The 20mph guidance was published in 2015, in conjunction with SCOTS. We continue to encourage LAs to implement these schemes.

	<p>partners to develop and maintain walking and cycling routes, public realm improvements and cycle parking facilities in town centre areas where high levels of cycling can be achieved.</p>	<p>In 2015/16, investment of £21m for Sustrans' <i>Community Links</i> projects generated matched funding of £26m, enabling 254 projects to be delivered. Sustrans worked with 50 partners during the year. Three high quality segregated cycleways were delivered in Edinburgh, East Dunbartonshire and Glasgow. Announcement in November 2015 of <i>Community Links PLUS</i> competition for one or two high quality segregated cycling/ walking facilities to be delivered over 2-3 years from 2016-17.</p> <p>The successful 2015-16 <i>Smarter Choices, Smarter Places</i> projects are available to view on the Paths for All website. There is provision in the draft budget for a follow up programme in 2016-17.</p> <p>http://www.transport.gov.scot/guide/good-practice-guide-20mph-speed-restrictions</p> <p>http://www.sustrans.org.uk/scotland/what-we-do/communities/grants-community-infrastructure</p> <p>http://www.pathsforall.org.uk/scsp2015</p>
Digital Towns	<p>Through a combined public and private sector investment of around £410 million Scotland's towns will be provided with access to a future proofed fibre infrastructure through our Step Change Next Generation Broadband programme. This infrastructure will enable support for 21st Century learning opportunities, digital healthcare</p>	<p>Digital Scotland Superfast Broadband (DSSB) programme is making significant progress against our targets (85% of premises with access to fibre-based broadband by March 2016 and 95% by end of 2017). In December 2015, Ofcom statistics confirmed DSSB had achieved 85% coverage of premises.</p> <p>DSSB will continue to rollout until 2017 with a target of providing fibre-based broadband to 95% of premises across Scotland.</p> <p>In addition, higher than anticipated levels of take-up has generated a Gainshare (ClawBack) mechanism within the DSSB contract with BT. This allows £18m of funding to be re-invested. We are working with BT to determine what impact this could have on coverage. A second phase of investment to push coverage further is in planning and further details will be announced later in 2016.</p> <p>http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Economy/digital</p> <p>http://www.scotlandsuperfast.com/</p> <p>COSLA and Scottish Government has welcomed the UK Government's plans to introduce a new broadband Universal Service Obligation (USO) of at least 10Mbps by 2020. This should ensure that no-one, or area, will be excluded from digital roll-out, whether in rural or urban areas. There will be local challenges in delivering the USO in Scotland and it will be important that the USO is designed in a way that complements and builds on existing activity, such as DSSB and Community Broadband Scotland. We have therefore requested local autonomy over the solutions to be used for the hardest to reach areas. We have also requested that the USO is dynamic, and does not</p>

	<p>and the growth and development of a vibrant digital economy.</p>	<p>remain fixed at 10Mbps; and that funding of the USO maximises the financial contribution of the range of companies that benefit from the UK's broadband infrastructure.</p> <p>The UK regulator Ofcom will publish the findings of its Strategic Review of Digital Communications shortly. The outcome of the Review is particularly important for Scotland as it will play a crucial role in our ability to deliver world class digital connectivity across Scotland, including in or towns. In our response to Ofcom's discussion document last year, we urged for greater focus on localised remedies where competition has not delivered a good outcome for consumers and put forward proposals on how Ofcom could stimulate greater investment from regulated players.</p>
	<p>We will continue to develop a world-class digital infrastructure that enables our people to connect anytime, anywhere, using any device</p>	<p>Scottish Futures Trust (SFT) and SG are progressing series of pilot projects to trial innovative technologies and alternative business models to provide world class connectivity. Learning from these projects will highlight what approaches can be effectively scaled up.</p> <p>We are also rapidly developing a Public Wireless Programme (PWP) which is working with public sector bodies to draft guidance on providing sustainable free wireless connectivity in public places (eg libraries, community centres, council offices) and outdoor public spaces such as town centres. A second phase will use 6 demonstrator programmes to trial and test free wireless connectivity in outdoor public spaces (eg town centres).</p> <p>PWP will continue to develop guidance and the supporting Digital Scotland Public Wireless Practitioners network through delivery of the Scottish Government's 2015/16 commitment of £1.5M through public Wi-Fi and wireless deployment by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Focusing local partnership for free public Wi-Fi expansion in areas of greatest need. - Applying the design process and contract development method across 6 prototype projects for social, economic and environmental benefits in order to establish a comprehensive best practice foundation. <p>SFT will continue to develop its pilot projects various locations across Scotland.</p> <p>http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Economy/digital/Public Wireless Programme</p>
	<p>We will work with our enterprise and skills agencies to help small businesses to better utilise digital technology and stimulate the growth of new</p>	<p>New initiatives to develop digital awareness and capability across Scotland's business base include a national programme of online advice, workshops and 1-2-1 support promoted through Business Gateway. Amongst the recent measures introduced and aimed at closing the digital skills gap are a multi-channel marketing campaign (Digital World) and the opening of a digital skills academy (CodeClan) in Edinburgh.</p> <p>We've published the results of our 2014 Digital Economy Business Survey, and used these to develop a Digital Economy Maturity Index; the latter can be used to monitor the progress Scotland's businesses make towards greater digital capability and productivity.</p>

	and innovative digital / ICT business	Work to meet the goals of the Digital Skills Investment Plan continues with a stakeholder workshop planned for early 2016 to consider priorities and next steps.
	We will explore potential projects focused on town centre connectivity under the developing Demonstrating Digital programme and actively look for further opportunities to link digital and town centre strategies.	<p>SFT and SG are discussing with Scotland's Town's Partnership, opportunity to develop guidance on digital connectivity for town centre managers, to ensure local projects are planned sustainably and with specific objectives the align with wider policy aims on digital.</p> <p>We are looking to broaden engagement with public sector organisations across Scotland and are working to integrate wireless connectivity into policy development relating to the use of public sector buildings and land by telecoms providers. In urban locations, public sector buildings could be a valuable means of providing free wireless connectivity.</p>
Proactive Planning	We will ensure that an updated town centre first planning policy and associated 'sequential test' is included in the final SPP , due for publication Summer 2014.	<p>Implemented. To recap - the revised SPP was published on 23 June. It broadens the town centre first approach to set out how the planning system should apply a town centre first policy when planning for uses which attract significant numbers of people, including retail and commercial leisure, offices, community and cultural facilities and where appropriate other public buildings such as libraries and education and healthcare facilities. It sets out the sequential approach, and indicates there is scope for it to be applied in a flexible and realistic way to ensure that different uses are developed in the most appropriate locations.</p> <p>http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Built-Environment/planning/Policy</p> <p>In addition we consider all Development Plans submitted via the Development Plans Gateway and comment where required to ensure that emerging strategic and local development plans reflect the town centres policies set out in SPP.</p> <p>We are also drafting a supporting guidance note around giving due weight to Net Economic Benefit in the Planning Process. This is intended to help developers and planning authorities capture the potential impacts of proposed development for the economy. It is expected to highlight the relevance of policy objectives such as promoting successful town centres and to address issues around potential displacement.</p> <p>We will publish this guidance note in late February/ March 2016.</p>

<p>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.</p>	<p>9 planning authorities together with the Heads of Planning Scotland are involved in the Town Centre Planning Pilots. 14 pilot projects were identified looking at a range of innovative ideas and 7 are now completed.</p> <p>An overview of all pilots, case studies and ‘<i>How to</i>’ guides were launched during Towns Week (Nov 2015). These are available to view via Scotland’s Towns Partnership’s website. A second set of case studies and ‘How to’ guides will be published in April / May 2016. http://www.scotlandstowns.org/town_centre_planning_pilots</p> <p>One of these pilots has been the establishment and trialling of Scotland’s first Simplified Planning Zone for a town centre and this innovative approach features in Scotland’s Economic Strategy 2015.</p> <p>http://www.renfrewshire.gov.uk/Renfrew SPZ August 2015</p>
<p>We will continue to encourage local authorities and other stakeholders to use compulsory purchase powers to promote sustainable economic growth.</p>	<p>Ongoing. We tested an approach with Perth & Kinross Council on proactive land acquisition to support town centre regeneration, centred on the £1m Mill Street scheme which will lead to the creation of a ‘cultural corridor’ for Perth.</p> <p>On completion, the local authority will prepare a ‘How to Guide’ based on this project which will be uploaded to the Town Centre Planning pilots page on the STP website. Expected spring 2016.</p>
<p>We will develop a Master-Planning Toolkit, specific to town centres, that includes guidance on specific transport and design details, focusing on the development of quality, accessible</p>	<p>The Town Centre Toolkit was published on 15 April 2015.</p> <p>http://www.scotlandstowns.org/town_centre_toolkit</p>

	public realm and the use of town assets.	
	We will develop a fund open to local authorities and community and third sector organisations to help deliver community design charrettes focussed on town centres.	On-going. The 2015-16 programme has no distinction between town centre or development planning charrettes, however many of the applications submitted have a focus on town centres. 17 charrettes have been selected for funding in 2015-16; and 8 of these are being directly led by a community organisation.
	Working with Architecture + Design Scotland, we will support a stalled spaces demonstration project identifying temporary uses for sites within town centres.	<p>Architecture and Design Scotland (A&DS) is working with 7 local authorities across the country to deliver Stalled Spaces Scotland, supporting a total of 30 community groups to help bring derelict and vacant land in town centres back in to use.</p> <p>A&DS support for this programme has also included the development of a Stalled Spaces Toolkit and skills training for funded groups.</p> <p>Full details are available on the A&DS website: http://www.ads.org.uk/stalled-spaces-scotland/</p>
	We will publish a consultation on planning and telecoms provisions . The consultation will focus on removing unnecessary barriers to telecoms infrastructure provision .	<p>Implemented.</p> <p>The electronic communications industry have since sought further changes to these permitted development rights (PD Rights).</p> <p>We have commissioned research on PD Rights for Electronic Communications Infrastructure, to consider the scope for further PD Rights and to make recommendations.</p> <p>The research is due to report in 2016. Ministers will act in light of the research recommendations.</p>

Town Centre Action Plan – Two Years On - Demonstration Projects Update

We have in addition supported the following projects to test out ideas put forward under the key themes in the Town Centre Action Plan, over 2014 to 2016. We will publish a fuller report on the key learning drawn together from across all TCAP demonstration projects, in the summer of 2016.

Project	Details	Progress
Town Centre First Principle	Potential pilots to be scoped to determine the Town Centre First Principle and ways of working in practice.	<p>We agreed to support a partnership led by Ayr Renaissance LLP and involving South Ayrshire Council and Scotland's Towns Partnership to pilot taking a town centre first approach to decision making, centring on Ayr town centre in 15/16.</p> <p>This will inform practical learning for the principle's application and we will share the outputs from the exercise more widely.</p>
Town Centre Data	Understanding Scottish Places (USP) Data Platform.	<p>We supported Carnegie UK, leading a consortium of partners including CLES, Stirling University and Scotland's Towns Partnership to develop, trial and successfully launch <i>Understanding Scottish Places</i> (USP) an online data tool in April 2015. Further ideas for the USP continued to be gathered during a series of summer roadshow discussions in 2015.</p> <p>We see there is real potential for this tool to grow eg. with the inclusion of more economic indicators. We will continue to discuss the potential for further development of STP with key partners.</p> <p>http://www.usp.scot</p>
Town Centre Investment Zones	Pilot projects with interested Local Authorities to test town centre investment zones.	<p>The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Bill was passed by the Scottish Parliament on 17 June 2015 and received Royal Assent, becoming an Act, on 24 July 2015.</p> <p>We remain keen to discuss options for supporting a pilot scheme with any interested local authorities.</p>

<p>Simplifying the Planning Process</p>	<p>Pilots with interested planning authorities to test approaches to help simplify planning processes in town centres.</p>	<p>An overview of all 14 pilots, completed case studies and 'How to' guides were launched during Towns Week (Nov 2015). These are available to view via Scotland's Towns Partnership's website.</p> <p>A second set of case studies and 'How to' guides will be published in April / May 2016.</p> <p>http://www.scotlandstowns.org/town_centre_planning_pilots</p>
<p>Town Centre Digital Demonstration Project</p>	<p>Investigating overlaps with current SG Demonstrating Digital pilots with a view to supporting digital towns</p>	<p>Public Wireless Programme (PWP) is in close collaboration with local authorities across Scotland on the implementation of free wireless connectivity in public places and public spaces.</p> <p>Draft guidance was published in November 2015 for comment by public sector partners. Following positive commentary, we will seek to refresh content shortly. PWP sought bids from local authorities to support the extension (or introduction) of free Wi-Fi in public buildings (libraries, community centres etc). We are working with successful applicants to finalise costs and initiate delivery of projects.</p> <p>A 2nd phase of this work will seek to trial outdoor wireless connectivity in 6 locations across Scotland. Potential projects are currently being scoped and we will work with STP to use their analytics.</p> <p>Alongside the delivery of public building and space Wi-Fi projects, a strategic framework is also being developed that aims to: build greater capacity and capability across the public sector in designing and delivering public wireless projects; and that is adaptable to the needs and opportunities present locally and nationally across</p> <p>PWP is closely engaged with Scotland's Towns Partnership as they develop guidance on digital connectivity for town centre managers, which will draw on our approach.</p> <p>http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Economy/digital/Public_Wireless_Programme</p>
<p>Town Centre Asset Audits</p>	<p>Development of asset register for towns e.g. public buildings, premises</p>	<p>We have supported two projects brought forward by Development Trust Association of Scotland (DTAS). Both of these concentrate on the ability of local development trust-led projects to benefit town centre regeneration.</p> <p>i) We have worked with DTAS and Renfrew Development Trust to support a community-led model and approach to town centre regeneration, identifying and tackling issues with empty properties in their town centre.</p> <p>ii) We supported 'Asset Mapping Pots' – grants awarded to 11 DTAS members to undertake local asset mapping work, allowing them to identify and understand the town centre assets available to them and develop plans around how better to utilise these with their wider work.</p>

Town Centre Charrettes	Max. £20k grants available to match-fund support town centre focussed charrettes.	<p>Town centre charrettes have been supported since 2013. 5 town centre charrettes took place in 2013-15. 8 town centre charrettes took place in 2014-15.</p> <p>The 2015-16 programme has no distinction between town centre and development planning charrettes, however many of the applications submitted have a focus on town centres. 17 charrettes have been selected for funding in 2015-16; 8 of these are directly led by a community organisation.</p> <p>We will undertake an internal evaluation of SG supported charrettes in April 2016. This will inform the future direction for the programme.</p>
Business Hubs and Connectors	Adaption and development of BCS Business Hubs to support TCAP	We have supported Business in the Community Scotland to establish Business Connectors identified from BCS member companies in the South Lanarkshire, Scottish Borders and Falkirk Council local authority areas. A connector for a fourth area is still under consideration. Links made to the BTC Healthy High Streets programme in 2015. The role of the business connector is to support groups towards sustainable outcomes.
Town Centre CharrettePlus	Aligning spatial planning and community planning together around the town centre agenda. Provision of guidance on 'place' agenda and quality 'placemaking' principles for CPPS, around the Town Centre First Principle	<p>Planning Aid for Scotland were supported to deliver a 'Charrette Plus 'event (June 2015) in Motherwell in collaboration with the local authority and CPP to look to align spatial and community planning.</p> <p>A report and guidance to be developed further by PAS and forwarded to SG for consideration and potential publication – expected early 2016.</p> <p>December 2015 - Place Standard launched in conjunction with NHS Health Scotland. 2016 - Place Standard implementation including focus on regeneration/ town centre issues with CPPs, local authorities and development industry.</p>
Town Centre Placemaking - Greenspace	Pilot project with Greenspace Scotland and Youth Scotland to develop 'Community Placemakers – Young People' programme with a focus on town centre and greening.	<p>December 2015 - Dunfermline selected as location for pilot. Discussions held with community council and local councillors. Young people trained to act as facilitators including introduction to Town Centre Toolkit.</p> <p>2016 - Initial work with youth groups successfully completed.</p> <p>Feb 2016 – Dunfermline Town Centre Evaluation Event.</p> <p>March 2016 – Reporting and preparation of action plan.</p>

<p>Scotland's Towns Partnership</p>	<p>Support STP to establish themselves as 'go to' body for town centre communities and support delivery of TCAP 14/15 - 15/16 – 16-17.</p>	<p>Key achievements include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re-launched web Portal acting as a key resource for town activity in Scotland; • Working with SG and other partners to promote the Town Toolkit, Place Standard, Funding Finder, Library and update Bulletins that are hosted on STP web Portal; and host and promote the learning and outcomes from the TCAP Demonstration Phase projects. • Facilitating discussion to deliver local town centre regeneration and to capture learning and challenges from local activity to share more widely. <p>STP also promote Scotland's towns through delivery of key learning events throughout the year including :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Towns Week; Annual Conference; Scotland's Most Improved Town with SURF. <p>http://www.scotlandstowns.org/</p>
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