



Vision

To strengthen Forres Town Centre's unique sense of place that incorporates a Heritage Quarter and is attractive, green, inclusive and easy to get around on foot and cycle.

Aims

- Explore opportunities to bring vacant and derelict buildings and sites back into use for residential and/or community uses by working collaboratively with landowners and other relevant parties;
- Support the refurbishment and redevelopment of Forres Town Hall and creation of a Heritage Quarter within Forres;
- Encourage people to walk and cycle (active travel) by improving paths and roads to make them easier and safer to use for people of all abilities;
- Improve the attractiveness of the streets and public spaces through enhancements to paving, street furniture, planting, etc. (the 'public realm'), in particular Museum Square and the lanes to the High Street from surrounding car parks;
- Improve signage and develop an Interpretation Trail;
- Light up important and prominent buildings such as the Town Hall;
- Develop a shopfront improvement scheme to retain traditional facades and enhance the attractiveness of the High Street;
- Explore the opportunity to make the town centre more accessible, inclusive and pedestrian friendly through consultation with relevant groups and a review of parking provision and disabled parking;
- Explore further opportunities for electric vehicle (EV) and bike charging points, cycle parking and storage; and,
- Support the refurbishment of public toilets that have been the subject of a Community Asset Transfer (CAT).

TC1 BRING VACANT BUILDINGS AND SITES BACK INTO USE



Proposed Outcomes

- Redevelop and/or refurbish vacant and derelict buildings and sites for residential and/or community uses; and,
- Support the refurbishment and redevelopment of Forres Town Hall into a performance/event space by Forres Area Community Trust (FACT).

The Council will work collaboratively with landowners and other relevant parties including Registered Social Landlords (RSL's) and constituted community bodies to explore opportunities to bring vacant and derelict buildings and sites that are in or in close proximity to the town centre back into use. Key buildings and sites include the former Clydesdale Bank, Tytler Street and Caroline Street. The Council will explore opportunities to transform other vacant premises such as those above ground floor level within or in close proximity to the town centre by seeking to engage with property owners. This will help to encourage people to live in the town centre, support local businesses, access community facilities and reduce the need to make local journeys for daily needs by car.

Forres Town Hall

The Forres Area Community Trust (FACT) have acquired the Town Hall through a Community Asset Transfer (CAT). The Trust are currently progressing plans to transform this iconic building within the town centre and establish a heritage quarter within the town. The proposal is to create a modern multi-purpose performance/event space and co-working spaces with improved access to the upper floors. The proposal has recently been the subject of a Regeneration Capital Grant Fund (RCGF) application for funding which has reached Stage 2 in the process. The Council will continue to work with and support the Trust in identifying funding sources for this proposal given the benefits for the town centre and the wider community.



TC2 SUPPORT WALKING AND CYCLING (ACTIVE TRAVEL)



Proposed Outcomes

- Develop the Active Travel Network and an Active Travel Masterplan for Forres in consultation with the community; and,
- Provide new and improved cycle parking at key destinations within the town centre.

Active Travel

The Council's Active Travel Strategy 2022-27 sets out a number of actions to encourage people to walk and cycle. These include further developing the Active Travel Network and developing Active Travel Masterplans for key settlements across Moray, including Forres. This could include widening pavements within the High Street to support a wider range of users and a review of car parking arrangements within the High Street to create more disabled parking and promote park and stride from nearby car parks. The Council will continue to work with the community to deliver the strategy and secure external funding sources to implement.

Cycle Parking and Storage

Provision will be made to upgrade and add cycle storage and parking facilities in key locations in Forres identified in consultation with the community. Further facilities for storing and charging electric bikes will be investigated subject to finding an operator.

TC3 ENHANCING STREETS AND PUBLIC SPACES



Proposed Outcomes

- Make the town centre more attractive, accessible and inclusive by upgrading and providing a cohesive approach to paving and street furniture, in particular Museum Square/Tolbooth Street as this is a focal point within the town centre and the lanes to the High Street from surrounding car parks as these are key approaches; and,
- 'Greening' streets and public spaces through additional landscaping and planting.

The public realm includes streets, squares, green/open spaces, etc. The public realm is an important element that 'knits' together the town and is fundamental in creating an attractive place where people want to visit and spend time, which in turn increases footfall for businesses and facilities. The Council will explore opportunities to enhance the public realm and potential funding opportunities to implement proposals.

Museum Square/Tolbooth Street

Museum Square on Tolbooth Street is a focal point within the town centre, however, it currently has a tired appearance. Funding has been secured through the Town Centre Capital Fund (TCCF) for public realm improvements to the Square and there is an opportunity to build on this to create a larger civic space that could host events/markets and provide opportunities for outdoor eating and entertainment. This would involve upgrading paving, seating and signage as well as making the area more usable for people of all abilities. This would complement the work being undertaken by FACT to establish a heritage quarter and refurbishment of the Town Hall, and the adjacent A-listed Tolbooth which is a visitor attraction.

Lanes

The lanes to the High Street are currently unappealing and improvements through new paving and lighting would encourage use and creating a welcoming and positive impression of the town centre. Key lanes include the Co-op which would benefit from repairs to paving, drainage, lighting and possibly interpretation panels on walls as well as the lane down the side of the Town Hall which is currently dominated by wheelie bins and would benefit from discreet storage and landscaping.

'Greening'

Soft landscaping such as shrubs, hedges and trees can enhance the attractiveness of the town centre as well as enhance biodiversity and contribute to carbon reduction. For example incorporating additional landscaping along the High Street to create a green network linking Grant Park (included within the Town Centre boundary) with Castlehill will improve the attractiveness of the street and help to mitigate the visual impact of parked cars in the town centre as well as provide seasonal colours and enhance biodiversity by attracting pollinators. Food growing opportunities could be incorporated into landscaping proposals. Local community groups already maintain existing planters and proposals will seek to ensure that landscaping is complementary to what is already in place.



TC4 IMPROVE SIGNAGE, DEVELOP INTERPRETATION TRAIL AND LIGHT UP BUILDINGS



Proposed Outcomes

- Work collaboratively with Visit Moray Speyside to review and rationalise street signage, and consider opportunities for digital (i.e. QR codes) signage;
- Develop an interpretation trail based on local knowledge and Discover Moray's Great Places; and,
- Light up important and/or prominent buildings/spaces to showcase Forres' heritage.

Signage

Signage is an important element within a town centre as it helps visitors find their way around. It is important for promoting tourism and directing visitors to local attractions. However, too much is confusing, leads to clutter and detracts from the appearance of the town. The Council will work collaboratively with Visit Moray Speyside to review signage and explore opportunities to rationalise and incorporate digital wayfinding. Integrating ground level waymarking that ties in with a heritage or other trails will be investigated to help reduce the clutter of multiple signs. The review will focus on providing clearer directions to all of Forres attractions and amenities.



Interpretation Trails

Forres has a unique heritage and former famous residents which an interpretation trail along with other public realm improvements (see TC3 above) would help to showcase, and attract visitors to the town. A significant amount of work was undertaken through the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NHLF) funded Discover Moray's Great Places project which identified 6 characters and associated interpretive themes. This material provides scope to develop a heritage trail across Moray to provide a coordinated and consistent approach to interpretation. If the HES H&PP application is successful, there is potential to create a heritage trail in Forres with input from various local heritage groups and the community. The route could travel from Nelson's Tower, Sueno's Stone, Witches Stones through the High Street incorporating the Tolbooth, Falconer Museum (the Museum is currently closed until an alternative operation model is established) and link to Castlehill with themes around MacBeth. Depending on the shape and form that this trail takes, there may also be opportunities for the community to develop complementary bespoke local heritage trails. This work would complement the establishment of a Heritage Quarter within Forres.

Lighting Up Buildings and Spaces

Lighting up buildings and important spaces can help showcase Forres' heritage and make places feel safer. For example this could include the Falconer Museum, Mercat Cross and Tolbooth (it is noted that some of these may already be lit). Lighting proposals will be considered in conjunction with any Heritage and Place Programme projects to ensure a holistic approach and to maximise the cumulative impacts of the projects. The Council will work in consultation with landowners and relevant parties on lighting proposals.

TC5 DEVELOP A SHOPFRONT IMPROVEMENT SCHEME



Proposed Outcome

- Develop a Design Guide and a Shopfront Improvement Scheme for premises on the High Street to enhance the visual appearance of Forres' traditional shopfront.

Shopfronts play an important role in the appearance of the town centre and coupled with improvements to the public realm will create an attractive place in which people want to spend time. This helps to support local businesses by making Forres town centre an even more appealing visitor destination and boosting business confidence. A shopfront improvement grant scheme consisting of the conservation, repair and reinstatement of traditional shop fronts is currently the subject of a wider application to Historic Environment Scotland (HES) Heritage and Place Programme. If successful this will be a 5 year programme of works starting in 2024 and run similarly to the Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme (CARS) developed for Elgin and Keith. Prior to the implementation of any shopfront improvement scheme a design guide for shopfronts will be prepared.

TC6 ELECTRIC VEHICLE (EV) & BIKE CHARGING POINTS



Proposed Outcome

- Explore opportunities to provide additional EV charging points to promote environmentally conscious travel and encourage healthier lifestyles.

The proposal aims to build on the carbon conscious and active travel provision within the town centre. The proposal will investigate the potential to increase the network of EV chargers within the town centre for use by residents and visitors in keeping with the Scottish Government's new funding requirements and the Council's future EV strategy. The facilities would be located in key destinations such as public car parks surrounding the town centre.

TC7 PUBLIC TOILETS



Proposed Outcome

- Support the refurbishment of public toilets that have been the subject of a CAT.

The Council will work with Visit Moray Speyside to support the refurbishment of public toilets that have been the subject of a CAT.