

where a  
wealth of  
history  
meets  
a bright  
sustainable  
future



## Foreword by Elaine Murray, Leader of Dumfries and Galloway Council

It gives me great pleasure to introduce “Dynamically Different Dumfries” the vision and action plan for Dumfries Town Centre over the next 10 years.

The development of this plan has been led by the community and builds upon the solid record of accomplishment of successful community-led initiatives in Dumfries town centre. Our Council was happy to commission consultants to work with Dumfries Partnership Action Group, to undertake the research and the extensive community engagement, which has shaped this plan.

“Place” is at the heart of Dynamically Different Dumfries, which sets out our community’s ambition for the social and economic recovery of Dumfries town centre. The plan identifies 5 place themes which see the town centre as a place to; live and belong, visit and experience, work, learn and do business, access, be active and green, and grow and play. Each of these themes identifies a series of drivers that have emerged through the engagement process, that provide a focus and direction for moving forward.

Our challenge now is for all of us, individuals, community groups, businesses, the public sector and Third Sector to work together to deliver our ambition for the town centre over the next 10 years. In doing so the plan recognises the need to consider; inclusion and diversity, tackling climate change, and opportunities for innovation and creativity in everything we do, so we are creating a sustainable future where no-one is left behind.



## Foreword by Leah Halliday Chair of DPAG

The Dynamically Different Dumfries Action Plan process has been both challenging and inspiring. The Dumfries Partnership Action Group (DPAG) came together as an informal group of volunteers from a range of sectors with the support of Dumfries and Galloway Council. Our aim, as people already actively involved in the town, was to do more and help bring forward an informed view of what our community would like our town centre to be like in 10 years.

We thought the project would take just over a year to complete if we were to fulfil our goal of producing a plan that truly reflected the needs of our community, businesses and the growing number of visitors to the town. While we understood the mission was daunting, there was a sense that something special was happening in Dumfries. There was a confidence that the town was a step ahead of the game with an amazing range of community and business initiatives that were already gaining recognition at national and international level.

Those of us who had been around long enough to see earlier town centre initiatives recognised that something different was happening this time. The view was that the community, in all its diversity and creativity must lead the process, with the Council role being to support DPAG through in-depth community engagement, rather than simply consulting on a document.



If the plan was to work, the town must feel it owned the document and that it was truly inclusive.

A national conversation around what our town centres were for was unfolding, largely due to changes in shopping, work and leisure habits. Then came the pandemic and as our consultation moved on, we saw that people were imagining their town in quite different ways.

There was a real enthusiasm when our stalled engagement process restarted in early 2021 following the easing of Covid restrictions. Huge numbers fed into the engagement events and some quite radical ideas were brought forward for the town. One DPAG member felt that “while many of the problems we face are global, most of the solutions are in fact local”: this seemed to capture the mood throughout the process.

DPAG has been determined, with full support from the Council, to reflect these diverse views of the town and this is what you will see in the following pages.

A huge thank you to all of those who contributed and a particular mention for the town’s school pupils, students and young people whose enthusiasm was a particular motivator for all of us in DPAG. Yours will be a Dynamically Different Dumfries.



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# Our Vision

Our vision is of a Dynamically Different Dumfries, where a wealth of history meets a bright sustainable future. A welcoming place with a vibrant, and connected low carbon town centre, which celebrates its rich heritage, arts, culture, and diversity.





## Our Town

Dumfries, the regional capital for Dumfries and Galloway and known locally as “the Queen of the South” is an ancient market town located beside the River Nith. With a population of 38,400, it is the largest town in the South of Scotland.

Our town played a significant role in the history of Scotland and is inextricably linked to Robert the Bruce and his campaign to unite the Scottish Crown.

Over the centuries Dumfries became a focus for trade and enterprise, initially as a bustling trading port, and then as the key centre for Scottish textile manufacturing, particularly tweed. As our town centre grew in affluence, it flourished as a cultural centre with strong links to Robert Burns and J M Barrie.

Dumfries is a Learning Town, delivering an innovative whole town approach to education making use of all resources to deliver the best and most effective learning opportunities to improve life chances for all young people. The sustainability and growth of both our Crichton Campus, with its link to higher and further education partners, over 100 businesses and growing number of innovation partners, and the town centre, is inextricably linked.



Recently the town centre has been impacted by changing shopping habits as people migrate to shopping online, resulting in the loss of national retail chains and the need to reimagine our town centre for the future. Despite the challenges, people of Dumfries have always valued the culture and heritage of their town centre and celebrated innovation. Community

and Third Sector organisations have committed and highly able community activists who are leading the way. Today the town is attracting a national reputation with ground-breaking projects such as the Midsteeple Quarter and a momentum that is driving a “Dynamically Different” view of the town’s potential.







## Our Approach

Dynamically Different Dumfries is led by the Dumfries Partnership Action Group (DPAG); a unique collaboration of Dumfries based businesses, community organisations and social enterprises who want to make things happen in Dumfries and to challenge the status quo. They have worked closely with Planning Aid Scotland (PAS) to ensure this plan is shaped by our community. Dumfries and Galloway Council who commissioned PAS to work on Dynamically Different Dumfries have taken an active role through DPAG.

This shared approach to developing Dynamically Different Dumfries builds upon the solid record of accomplishment of successful community-led initiatives in the town centre.



## Who shaped our plan?

Our Vision and Action Plan for the town centre is shaped by our community through a detailed programme of engagement. Our community knows Dumfries Town Centre, understands what needs to be done and what they would like to see happen. Our children and young people have been instrumental in creating the Dynamically Different Dumfries name and logo for this plan.

- 48 Individual Conversations
- 2 Digital Webinars (170+ attendees)
- 200+ children and young people engagement reach
- 50,000+ social media reach
- Loreburn Community Council Place Standard event: 46 attendees
- Elected member online seminar presentation 16 + attendees
- 12 focus group sessions
- Elected members Place standard event: 13 participants
- 7 themed digital workshops: 103 attendees
- Community Survey – 140 completed surveys
- Dumfries Market Place event: 100 + attendees
- 4 face to face Saturday engagement/ feedback sessions May 2020





## Strategic Context

Our plan has been developed within the framework of national and regional policies and initiatives, which we appreciate will continually change and evolve throughout the life of our plan. We recognise Dumfries has a key role to play as a regional hub serving communities, businesses and visitors. Our plan particularly takes account of the following policy areas:



### Place

Our 'Place', and the focus of our plan, is Dumfries Town Centre. This is key to identifying and tackling the needs of our community, who want to work in partnership with others to build upon their ambition to realise the full potential of our town centre.

The Scottish Government defines "Place" as "where people, location and resources combine to create a sense of identity and purpose and is at the heart of addressing the needs and realising the full potential of communities."

The Town Centre First Principle asks that "government, local authorities, the wider public sector, businesses and communities put the health of town centres at the heart of decision making. ... adopting an approach to decisions that considers the vibrancy of town centres as a starting point." Our Council supports this through policies in its Local Development Plan. Our focus is to attract new businesses and investment to our town centre, in preference to out of town locations.

The emerging National Planning Framework 4 from the Scottish Government aims to create "Sustainable places, where we reduce emissions and restore and better connect biodiversity; liveable places, where we can live better, healthier lives; productive places, where we can have a greener, fairer and more inclusive wellbeing economy; and distinctive places, where we recognise and work with our assets"

These high-level principles are reflected in the approach and ambitions that have emerged through the development of Dynamically Different Dumfries. Changes made to the Scottish planning system now enable local communities to play a proactive role in shaping the places where they live. We would look to this document becoming a "Local Place Plan" for Dumfries Town Centre and being considered as part of the Local Development Planning process.





### **Community Led**

The vision and actions you will see in this document accurately reflect what our community values and says it needs to fulfil aspirations for the future.

Community-led includes a wide range of practices and initiatives. Common to all of these is the principle that communities have knowledge, skills and assets and are best placed to bring about lasting change.

Working with DPAG, Dumfries and Galloway Council is actively supporting and encouraging community decision-making, empowering and enabling the people of Dumfries to participate in delivering local actions for local people around a shared vision. This plan is as much about the people of Dumfries as it is about reimagining our town centre.

### **Reducing Poverty and Inequality**

Our community recognises it is important that in investing and regenerating our town centre, that we also work together to improve life chances and help to secure healthier lifestyles for those living in our town centre facing inequality, poverty and exclusion.

Our Council was one of the first in Scotland to agree and deliver its Anti-Poverty Strategy which was successfully completed between June 2015 – January 2021.

After the Evaluation of this first Strategy and the development of a New Way Forward in Tackling Poverty and Inequalities in Dumfries and Galloway Report, a new Dumfries and Galloway Poverty and Inequalities Partnership has been formed which includes all Community Planning Partnership plus other key third sector partners.

This new Dumfries and Galloway Poverty and Inequalities Partnership aims to deliver a new Vision of “a Dumfries and Galloway in which local action has driven poverty as low as possible and has mitigated as far as possible the impact of poverty when experienced’.

A dedicated Report on Poverty and Deprivation in Dumfries and Galloway which was commissioned and subsequently published in December 2020, highlighted that within the Dumfries Nith Ward (which will include the Dumfries Town Centre area), the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation identifies a Datazone which is one of the most deprived in Scotland.





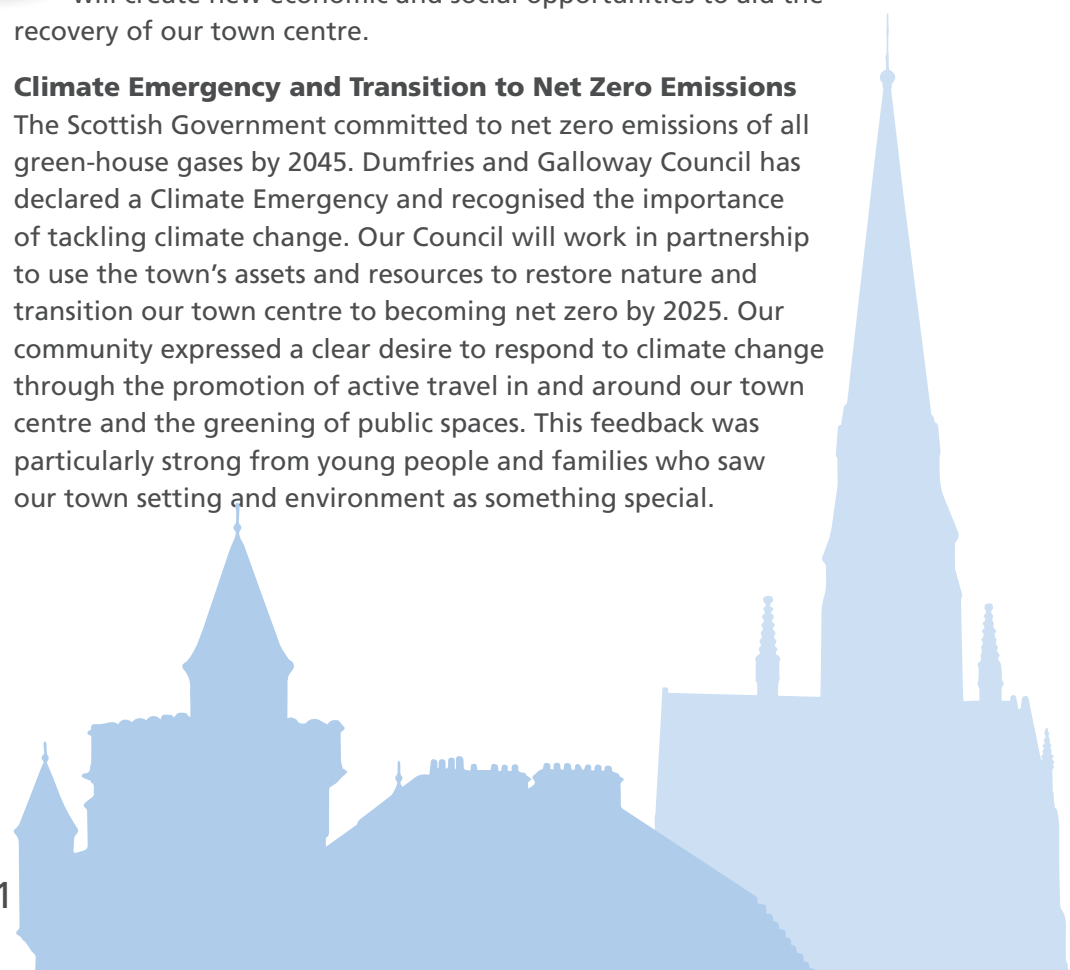


### **Social and Economic Recovery from Covid-19**

The South of Scotland Regional Economic Strategy provides a framework for our economic recovery from Covid-19 and a clear and positive direction for the future. Our town centre fits well with the 6 key themes of this strategy: skilled and ambitious people, innovative and enterprising, rewarding and fair work, cultural and creative excellence, green and sustainable economy and thriving and distinct communities. Building the economy is also one of Dumfries and Galloway Council's key priorities. We will use our experience of the pandemic to make significant changes in the way we work and interact and make investments which will create new economic and social opportunities to aid the recovery of our town centre.

### **Climate Emergency and Transition to Net Zero Emissions**

The Scottish Government committed to net zero emissions of all green-house gases by 2045. Dumfries and Galloway Council has declared a Climate Emergency and recognised the importance of tackling climate change. Our Council will work in partnership to use the town's assets and resources to restore nature and transition our town centre to becoming net zero by 2025. Our community expressed a clear desire to respond to climate change through the promotion of active travel in and around our town centre and the greening of public spaces. This feedback was particularly strong from young people and families who saw our town setting and environment as something special.





## Strengths and Opportunities

The following key strengths provide a powerful base for us to reinvigorate our town centre.

- **Queen of the South**

Our town plays a significant role as the regional capital and civic centre. We will make the most of our town centre's natural, cultural and historical assets to highlight Dumfries as the Queen of the South.



- **Invested, Involved and Proactive Community**

We have a positive track record of successful and nationally significant community-led projects, including:

- the renovation of the Theatre Royal, Scotland's oldest continuously working Theatre,
- the award-winning Stove which provides a hub for the Creative Arts and community involvement,
- the Usual Place, an award-winning community café which employs young people with additional support needs,
- the Catherine Street Inclusive Play Park and Community Garden,
- Moat Brae, the National Centre for Children's Literature,
- Upgrading and redevelopment of Dock Park,
- the multi award-winning Queen Street regeneration project,
- Midsteeples Quarter, actively bringing this quarter of the town back into community ownership, renovating and developing the buildings and finding new uses for them.







- **Heritage and Conservation**

The historic origins of our town as a medieval marketplace have left a legacy of generous public spaces on our High Street, and we have stunning architecture with many red sandstone buildings which lend the town a distinctive character. Encouraging investment in the fabric of buildings and the repurposing of those which are vacant and underused will contribute to a positive town centre experience.

- **The River Nith**

Our community and local businesses consistently and enthusiastically highlighted the River Nith as a major and under-utilised asset for the town centre. The river teams with wildlife and gives our town centre its picturesque setting, but it was seen that much more can be done to celebrate it. The river corridor also provides accessible connectivity between the town centre to Dock Park, Rosefield Mills, the Crichton Quarter, and other key riverside locations in the town.



- **Arts and Culture**

Dumfries is in an area rich and varied in its history with a bold and vibrant artistic heritage. One of the key strengths for our town centre is in its historic links to internationally recognised characters such as King Robert the Bruce, Robert Burns and JM Barrie. The trio are already the foundation for many of the attractions, festivals and events held throughout the region, and we want to build upon this to promote our town centre as a tourist destination.

Today's town retains a strong cultural heartbeat, with five different creative hubs nurturing the artistic potential of the community in the town centre and a calendar of festivals bringing this to our streets. Bands, choirs, and young people rehearse in a variety of different spaces while artists, crafters and poets sketch new ideas in pop-up studios and galleries. Our pubs and venues host a heady roster of nights out which give the town its distinctive character.



- **Events, Markets and Festivals**

Events and Markets create experiences that encourage footfall and people to stay longer in the town centre. Throughout the year the town centre hosts a range of different events, including the Big Burn's Supper, known as the biggest Burns Supper Celebration in the world, Guid Nychburris, a traditional festival which features the crowning of the Queen of the South and Youthbeatz, the UK's largest free Youth Festival.

Our town centre has three main markets, two which take place on the High Street: a regular Saturday Market; the Dumfries Market Festival on the second Saturday of the month; and a Farmers Market at the railway station, highlighting local food and drink products.





## Our Ambition

Our ambition sets out the town centre our community would like to have in 10 years.

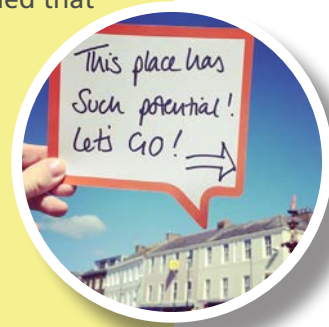
5 key place themes have been identified that see Dumfries as a place to:

- Live and Belong
- Visit and Experience
- Work, Learn & Do Business
- Access, be Active & Green
- Grow and Play

Each of these themes have high-level vision drivers that emerged through the extensive engagement process. Delivery of those drivers will help us achieve our overall vision and make Dumfries a place where people want to live and belong, visit and experience, work, learn, do business, access, be active, be green, and grow and play.

There are also 4 important cross cutting principles: Inclusion and Diversity, NetZero Transition, Innovation and Creativity.

These underpin the high-level drivers and will be embedded in the delivery of the action plan.





## Key Drivers

Our vision is of a Dynamically Different Dumfries, where a wealth of history meets a bright sustainable future. A welcoming place with a vibrant, and connected low carbon town centre, which celebrates its rich heritage, arts, culture, and diversity.

# Dumfries a place to



<b>Live and Belong</b>	Repurposed town centre buildings	Opportunities for town centre living.	A well-maintained and managed town centre.	Enhanced and protected historic buildings and townscape.
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<b>Visit and Experience</b>	A thriving leisure and entertainment economy with wonderful places to eat, drink and socialise.	A vibrant programme of festivals, activities, and events throughout the year.	Experiences and festivals that focus upon the town's rich heritage, arts and culture.	Enhanced river frontage and corridor.
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<b>Work, Learn and Do Business</b>	A dynamic independent businesses and retail sector.	State of the art digital connectivity and infrastructure.	Adaptable and flexible spaces to accommodate new ways of working.	A range of opportunities to learn, train, work and progress.
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<b>Access, Be Active and Green</b>	Inclusive streets and spaces that are accessible for all with a safe attractive pedestrianised environment.	Active travel infrastructure that encourages walking and cycling.	Flexible, efficient low carbon transport options.	Enhanced biodiversity and renewable energy opportunities.
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<b>Grow and Play</b>	Enhanced green and public spaces where a wide range of activities can be enjoyed by all.	Facilities and activities where everyone can interact and have fun.	Informal space and activities for young people to interact with friends in a fun and safe environment.	
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# A Place to Live and Belong

These drivers aim to improve the experience of the town centre by attracting new uses, improving the appearance, and creating a vibrant environment where people want to live, spend time and money.

Our community wants:

- **Repurposed town centre buildings.**

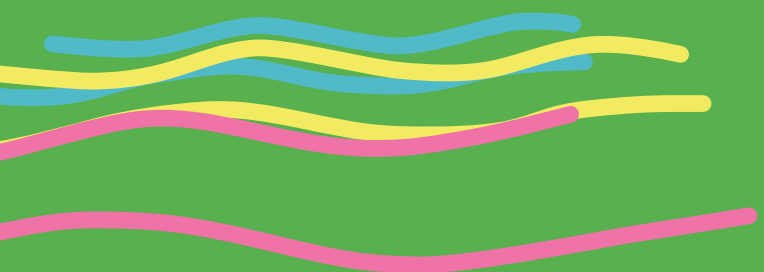
The way in which we shop and use our town centres has changed, so we now need to find new and exciting purposes for the vacant and underused properties that will encourage people to visit and spend time in our town centre.

**Next Step:** There are already exciting initiatives such as the Midsteple Quarter, the Dumfries Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme (CARS) and the Town Centre Living Fund which can help address some of these issues happening in the town centre. We will work together with partners to tackle empty or underused properties and bring vibrancy back to our town centre.

- **Opportunities for town centre living.**

You would like to see a diversity of housing stock and more people living in the town centre, as this helps create vibrancy and increased footfall. The vacant spaces above town centre units, along with other sites within walking distance, are currently underutilised. These spaces provide opportunities to create a range and choice of homes. It was suggested that a student living quarter could be developed in the town centre for students studying on The Crichton campus.

**Next Step:** To work together with our partners to identify potential sites and opportunities to develop a diverse range of residential accommodation in and around our town centre.







# our town centre is incredibly attractive



- **A well maintained and managed town centre**

How our town centre looks and feels impacts on whether it is a place people want to spend time. You told us that our town centre is incredibly attractive, especially around the Midsteeples Quarter, but better maintaining the streets and buildings would greatly improve the town centre experience.

**Next step:** To work together with partners to ensure a co-ordinated and effective approach to the management and maintenance of our town centre to deliver a high-quality experience for those using the area. You want a “go to” person such as a Town Centre Ambassador, as you had previously.



- **Enhanced and protected historic buildings and townscape.**

You value the distinctive character that the buildings, monuments, spaces, and the medieval street pattern contribute to the attractiveness of our town centre. The community are concerned about their current condition and want them to be restored, enhanced and protected for the future.

**Next Steps:** We need to work with private, public and community stakeholders to effectively address the condition of the buildings and spaces in our town centre. Dumfries Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme (CARS) will help to provide a focus to do this, alongside community led initiatives. such as the Midsteeples Quarter and Rosefield Mills. In addition the restoration of the “B” Listed Fountain on the High Street will help to provide an early indication of positive change.





# A Place to Visit & Experience

These drivers aim to create a reason and purpose for people to come in and visit Dumfries town centre by creating a range of attractions, activities and experiences.

Our community wants:

- **A thriving leisure and entertainment economy with a range of places to eat drink and socialise.**

The traditional role and function of our town centre has changed, so we need to create alternatives, such as leisure and entertainment, for people to want to come into the town centre. You told us you would like to see our town as a regional entertainment centre with facilities such as a modern cinema, a bowling alley, more restaurants and a café culture.

Next step: To work together to explore how we can proactively attract these types of businesses to our town centre, and develop a diverse hospitality, entertainment, and tourism offer.



- **A vibrant programme of festivals, activities and events throughout the year**

Festivals, activities and events create a vibrant town centre that people can enjoy. Whilst there are several festivals, activities and events that currently take place, including Big Burns Supper and Guid Nychburris there is room for this to grow, develop and be professionally programmed and packaged.

Next Step: To work together to develop an annual programme of events and activities throughout the year that the whole town can get behind.



# We should capitalise on our rich heritage



- **Experiences that focus upon the town's rich heritage, arts and culture**

Our town has a strong historical and cultural heritage together with a flourishing creative art, performing arts and literary scene. You told us we should capitalise on our rich heritage as a substantial undervalued asset that can contribute to the attractiveness of the town and attract tourists. Creating and developing experiences around the town's heritage, arts and culture will bring a vibrancy to the town centre, encouraging people to use it more.

Next Step: to work together to explore how we can boost our heritage, arts, and cultural assets to develop year round attractions which create experiences that encourage people to visit the town centre. We need to identify where the offer fits within the Regional Cultural Strategy.



- **Enhanced river frontage and corridor.**

The River Nith is considered by many of the community to be the greatest asset to the town centre. You see the Whitesands as a possible civic event space, important green space, and natural extension to the High Street. An enhanced river frontage and corridor would provide widespread leisure opportunities such as walking and cycling, and an important link to Dock Park, the Crichton Quarter, Rosefield Mills and other riverside locations within the Town.

Next Step: To work together to identify how more can be made of the Whitesands and the river frontage and the River Corridor, to help regenerate the town centre.





# A Place to Work, Learn and Do Business

These drivers aim to ensure our town centre is a competitive, inclusive and adaptable place in which to do business, attract investment and encourage rewarding fair work and training opportunities.

Our community wants:

- **Dynamic independent business and retail sector.**

The role of retail in town centres is changing due to shoppers purchasing more online and out of town. To attract shoppers and visitors back to our High Street we need to work closely with the remaining national chains, independent businesses, and retailers to create an experiential retail environment. Independent businesses, retailers and markets can provide a different offering and experience and are usually owned and run by local people who are more invested in the town. Whilst the nature of our High Street is changing and we need to attract new uses, we recognise there is still a need to support and work with our independent retailers and businesses and to include the secondary shopping streets as areas for improvement in addition to the High Street.



**Next Step:** To work together to create an experiential shopping environment that brings more people to our town centre, encourages them to stay longer and a reason for them to come back again. To support existing businesses and encourage new businesses to locate and start up in the town centre.

- **State of the art digital connectivity and infrastructure.**

Fast, reliable, high speed digital connectivity is essential if people are going to work, learn and do business in our town centre.

The Covid-19 Pandemic and technological developments are changing the way in which we are now working, learning and interacting. We recognise that our town centre needs to respond to these changes and a key part of that is the need to access high speed internet and state of the art digital infrastructure in our town centre.

**Next Step:** To work in partnership to explore how Dumfries can become a “Digital Town” with Wi-Fi, Apps, Guides, fast broadband and business infrastructure.



# deliver education on a whole town basis



- **Adaptable and flexible spaces to accommodate new ways of working.**

As the way in which we work changes, the need for work and meeting spaces that are easily adapted to suit new and changing demands is becoming more important. Some of the empty properties in the town centre could be reused to provide an adaptable, flexible work environment. There is a need for micro and incubator business start-ups and innovation hubs, which would benefit from being located within the town centre.

**Next Step:** To work together to build a town centre offer that provides a range of innovative and adaptable spaces for business and training that meet users' needs. Midsteple Quarter's Phase One proposal and No.111 High Street (which accommodates Flourish, D-Lux and Lolliography) are good examples of this type of mixed-use approach to reusing existing underused buildings.

- **A range of opportunities to learn, train, work and progress.**

Dumfries is already a Learning Town which is an innovative approach that brings all the schools across Dumfries together to deliver education on a whole town basis. The Bridge a new purpose- built learning facility is now in place acting as a "bridge" between the senior phase of Secondary School and the town's further and higher education offer on the Crichton Campus, as well as opportunities for employment and entrepreneurship for young people. The next phase of Dumfries Learning Town focuses upon Dumfries Academy, Dumfries High School and Loreburn Primary School and so directly relates to the town centre.

You see providing educational, creative, and digital opportunities and aspirational employment opportunities to attract and retain skilled and talented people to our town as important.

**Next Step:** We would like to work in partnership with key partners to ensure that opportunities and activities in Dumfries Town Centre can be closely linked to learning, training and aspirational employment opportunities. It is also vital that there are strong links between the developments within The Crichton Quarter and the regeneration of the town centre.







# A Place to Access, Be Active and Green

These drivers aim to encourage active travel in and around our town, to make sure that our town is accessible for everyone and easy to navigate, to encourage us to be active, to support the greening of our town centre and to maximise opportunities to support the transition of our town centre to net zero carbon.

Our community wants to see:

- **Inclusive streets and spaces that are accessible for all with a safe attractive pedestrianised environment**

To be an inclusive town centre we want to ensure our town centre is accessible to everyone and easy to navigate. There are currently a range of accessibility challenges faced by wheelchair users, the elderly, visually impaired and people with reduced mobilities.

**Next Step:** To work together with those that face accessibility challenges in our town centre to identify the issues you face and find ways to address them.



- **Active Travel Infrastructure that encourages walking and cycling**  
Many neighbourhoods within Dumfries are less than a 20 minute walk or 10 minute cycle from the town centre. Safe and better-connected walking and cycling routes to the town centre will help to encourage people to walk and cycle more. In addition you told us you would like to see dedicated cycle lanes, an active travel hub with more cycle storage areas, cycle racks and electric bike hire. More initiatives like “Beat the Street” which were fun and encouraged people to walk and be more active would also be welcome.

**Next Step:** To work together with local groups promoting cycling and walking to create an environment that better connects our town centre to its surroundings, encourages less car usage, and promotes walking and cycling routes that suits all abilities and helps to address the effects of climate change.



# flexible and reliable low carbon transport



- **Flexible, efficient low carbon transport options**

You want to see more flexible and reliable low carbon transport options across our town centre and Dumfries to better connect our local suburban and rural communities and to take action against climate change. To do this, we will need to look at how we can increase the frequency, timing, responsiveness, and affordability of public transport to encourage people to use public transport and reduce the number of cars on the roads. This will need to be closely linked to plans to create a safe town centre that is accessible to all.

**Next Step:** To work together to provide a range of reliable, cost-effective low carbon public and private transport options and ensure that the infrastructure is in place to support them.

- **Enhanced biodiversity and renewable energy opportunities**

Nature and wildlife will both help our town to be proactive in addressing climate change and in promoting the well-being of our community. We are lucky in that our town centre features a range of accessible, welcoming, beautiful and functional green and public spaces and you want to celebrate and build upon this. You told us you want greener public spaces in the town centre through planting of trees and flowering and edible plants. This will help to soften and bring more colour into the town and respond to the impacts of global warming. There is also a desire to enhance the experience and quality of the green spaces along the River Nith corridor and to harness the natural resources of green energy in the town centre such as the renewable energy generation from water sources and the potential opportunities of the geothermal aquifer.

**Next Step:** To work together to look at the ways we can green the public spaces in our town centre, maximise the potential of our river corridor and utilise its potential to create sources of renewable energy.







# A Place to Grow and Play

These drivers aim to ensure that the town centre is a fun place to be for all generations, with lots of things to do and enjoy. This will attract people to come into the town centre and linger longer.

Our community wants to see:

- **Enhanced green and public spaces where a wide range of activities can be enjoyed by all**

You told us you would like to see greener public spaces in the town centre, and more to be made of them. The spaces could be identified for clear purposes such as leisure, play, events, gardens, gathering, beauty and green credentials. We need to improve and redesign our public spaces including where appropriate sheltered seating, canopies and lighting.

**Next steps:** Work together with the community to identify which green and public spaces our community would like to develop and enhance.



- **Facilities and activities where everyone can interact and have fun.**

You said there is nothing to do in the town centre and that you would like events, festivals, activities, a café culture, better shops and things to do in the evening. There are however already a wide range of facilities in and around our town centre which offer programmes of fun and interesting activities that people can get involved in. These include Gracefield Art Gallery, various museums, The Crichton, the Ewart Library, Peter Pan Moat Brae, and the Theatre Royal to sports facilities at DG1 and the Ice Bowl, Dance, Gymnastics and Martial Arts Studios.

**Next Steps:** To work together to develop new activities and experiences and raise awareness of the facilities and activities that are already on offer in and around the town centre.



# a more appealing place for young people

- **Informal space and activities for young people to interact with friends in a fun and safe environment.**

Our young people feel there is nowhere in the town centre for them to safely meet and hang out with friends. To make the town centre a more appealing place for young people to visit and socialise, you suggested creating sheltered seating areas with free Wi-Fi and charging points. Other bright ideas you suggested were to build more activity and leisure centres like a cinema, an indoor or outdoor skate park, and bowling complex, an arcade and a trampoline park where you can be active and spend time with friends.

**Next steps:** We will work together with our young people to transform the town centre to meet the needs of the younger generation.





## Priority Areas

To focus investment and delivery, several priority activity areas have been identified. Further engagement is required with town centre stakeholders to develop short, medium and long-term actions that will lead to transformational change in each of these areas. This of course will not exclude strategic initiatives that may emerge in other parts of the town during the lifetime of the plan, but does help identify and establish a sense of prioritisation and early focus for action.



# Priority Areas



## A High Street

The High Street is the core of the town centre and is a main focus of transformational change. This can be achieved through the repurposing of existing vacant units for a range of new uses, the reimagining and greening of open spaces as social and events spaces, along with the restoration of the buildings, and monuments that give our High Street its distinctive character.

## B The river and Whitesands

Realising the full potential of the river and the role it can play in attracting people to the town centre, as a physical and visual link to the area's history and landscape, including The Crichton and Rosefield Mills is key to improving our town centre. The Whitesands has the potential to become a major focus for activity and could become a vibrant area to enjoy for leisure, culture, performance, play and relaxation.

## C Friars Vennel and Bank Street

Enhancing the experience of moving between the town's two key destinations; the High Street and the river, by creating a distinctive and coherent retail, leisure and cafe culture along these connecting streets. In doing so helping to establish Dumfries as a sophisticated daytime and nighttime destination.



# Priority Areas



## **D** Independent shopping streets

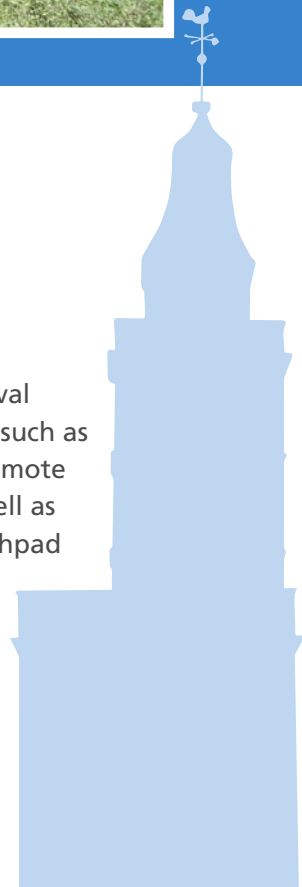
Future retailing in the town centre will lie in developing a unique independent shopping and café experience. There are a range of independent shops in the streets around the High Street and our community recognised we are unique in having Barbour's, one of the last family-owned department stores in Scotland.

## **E** Shakespeare Street/ Nith Place

This area was seen as having considerable potential for innovative change through creating a green, distinctive, colourful, and welcoming connection with the river, High Street, Burns House and Brooms Road car park. Seeking to establish a new liveable corridor that can offer attractive options for town centre living.




## **F** Arrival points and Improving Connections

Establishing enhanced arrival points to the town centre, such as the railway station can promote active forms of travel as well as becoming a dynamic launchpad for how the town is experienced and enjoyed.



## Dynamically Different Dumfries: Action Plan

This Action Plan is a live working document that will evolve and change as we go through the delivery process and prioritise actions with partners, key stakeholders and the community. The current stage of projects is shown as follows:

-  **Projects and Initiatives that have been completed or are currently underway**
-  **Projects and Initiatives that are in the planning and feasibility stages**
-  **Projects and Initiatives identified through the engagement process that are yet to be explored.**

The actions listed range from large capital projects requiring further development and investment, to smaller projects all of which will make a difference to the experience of the town centre. By having both together we can see the links and opportunities that can be made between projects. We are also aware that there are existing initiatives that are not listed here that are and will continue to make a difference to the town centre. The aim is that the approach outlined here will help us all to co-ordinate what is happening more effectively, so there are conversations to be had around joint working.

At this point we have deliberately not added the project leads and potential partners, as it is important that those individuals, groups and organisations in our community that are passionate about our town centre and have an interest in a particular area can become involved and where appropriate lead on the development and delivery of those projects.

## Cross Cutting Themes:

All the projects and initiatives below should be considering the following during their development and implementation.









- Inclusivity and diversity
- Net Zero Transition
- Innovation
- Creativity









### Supporting the Delivery of the Plan

Status	Activity	Description
	<b>Staffing and Resourcing of the new SCIO (see page 35).</b>	For the new SCIO to play an effective role leading the partnership process, it will need to secure funding for a development officer and other resources.
	<b>Apply to Investing in Communities Fund.</b>	DPAG to develop a bid to the Investing in Communities Fund, along with other organisations in the town looking to seek funding from this fund. It is anticipated that new funding opportunities for Covid recovery and local investment will come on stream in the coming months.
	<b>Work with equality and diversity groups to ensure inequalities are recognised and addressed equally within the programme.</b>	To ensure that the needs of equalities and diversity groups are considered throughout the programme, and associated activities.



## A Place to Live and Belong

Status	Activity	Description
	<b>Tackle empty and underused properties.</b>	Bring key partners together to explore further what needs to be done to address this issue. Some projects already underway.
	<b>Midsteeples Quarter Phase 1</b>	Redevelopment of 135-139 High Street, to two floors of enterprise/community space and 7 flats.
	<b>Midsteeples Quarter Phase 2</b>	Ongoing acquisition of properties in Midsteeples Quarter and meanwhile use.
	<b>Midsteeples Quarter Phase 3</b>	Redevelopment of Phase 2 properties.
	<b>Dumfries Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme (CARS).</b>	Due to formally launch in March 2022. This scheme will enable the repair and restoration of key historic buildings in the Town Centre in order to bring them back into full and productive reuse. This will be supported by a programme of training, engagement and educational activities and a public realm improvement scheme.
	<b>Encourage Town Centre Living</b>	Identify potential sites and opportunities to develop a diverse range of accommodation.  Explore the provision of student accommodation and facilities both on the Crichton Campus and in the town centre.
	<b>Improve shopfronts</b>	A Small Grants Scheme will be offered as part of the Dumfries CARS which will be open to owners of buildings in the CARS area. This scheme will prioritise the repair of traditional shopfronts and replacement of unsympathetic modern shopfronts with traditionally-styled units in keeping with the historic character of the Town Centre.
	<b>Create a town centre management group</b>	DPAG (new SCIO) facilitate a partnership group of those dealing with street cleaning, management of traffic within the town centre, signage, policing and community safety, access for all, community led town centre clean ups as through the community engagement process.

	<b>Encourage owners to improve, repair and maintain buildings</b>	A Priority Grants Scheme and Small Grants Scheme will be available to owners of buildings in the CARS area which will encourage owners of buildings to have them repaired in a sympathetic manner using correct traditional methods and materials. This will be supplemented with an education and training programme for both contractors and building owners so that the correct maintenance will be carried out going forward.
	<b>Provide more "changing places" publicly accessible toilets and disabled friendly cafes and meeting spaces.</b>	Establish the current provision of publicly accessible toilets and disability friendly cafes and meeting spaces in the town centre as the basis of exploring future provision.
	<b>Town Centre Ambassador</b>	A "go to" person for businesses and individuals regarding day to day issues in the town centre.
	<b>Restoration of the Fountain on the High Street</b>	Work on the restoration of the Fountain will take place during 2022.
	<b>Rosefield Mills</b>	Proposed restoration of the Rosefield Mills building and potential redevelopment of the wider site for mixed use and community benefit.
	<b>The Linen Bank</b>	Feasibility study & Business Plan for a Community Asset Transfer of the Linen Bank completed. To make a Community Asset Transfer 2 Application The Guild is in the process of becoming a SCIO, The Guild Foundation.
	<b>Vennel and Closes Enhancements</b>	A Public Realm Improvement Scheme, focussed on enhancement of the closes and vennels will be funded through Dumfries CARS. It is thought that this work will be carried out in partnership with The Stove.
	<b>City Status Bid</b>	A bid for Dumfries to gain city status has been submitted as part of the Queen's 2022 Platinum Jubilee Civic Honours competition.

## A Place to Visit and Experience

Status	Activity	Description
●	<b>Proactively attract hospitality and entertainment businesses to our town centre</b>	Development of our town centre as a regional entertainment centre core facilities such as a modern cinema, a bowling alley, more restaurants, and a European style café culture.
●	<b>Cinema Feasibility Study</b>	To carry out a feasibility study into the market and possible locations for a multi- screen cinema with related leisure uses in the town centre.
●	<b>High Street-reimagine the open spaces as social and events spaces.</b>	Develop a prioritised programme to reimagine and improve the open spaces on the High Street.
●	<b>Whitesands and river frontage</b>	Unlock the potential of the Whitesands to become a major focus for recreation and a vibrant area to enjoy for leisure, culture, performance, play and relaxation.
●	<b>Improve accessibility and recreation opportunities along river corridor.</b>	Improve accessibility for all users, improved signage and path infrastructure, particularly Burns Walk and Mavis Grove.
●	<b>Friars Vennel and Bank Street</b>	Some of the residents and businesses in Friars Vennel are already working together to make their Street more attractive and encourage greater footfall.

●	<b>Produce an annual programme of events, festivals and activities in the town centre and market what's on.</b>	There are a range of high quality events, festivals and activities in and around the town centre. What has been highlighted is the need for better programming, co-ordination and publicity around what is on, where and when.
●	<b>Make more of the bandstand in Dock Park</b>	Explore how more can be made of the bandstand in Dock Park, as part of the wider approach to events and activities in the town centre.
●	<b>Develop heritage, arts and cultural experiences and year-round attractions.</b>	Explore how to make more of the Bruce, Burns and Barrie offering, and the arts and cultural experiences in the town centre. Dumfries could play a role as a "feeder" promoting wider regional experiences.
●	<b>Regional Arts and Archive Centre</b>	Initial feasibility work has been undertaken to look at future provision in the town centre.
●	<b>Community &amp; Culture focussed Hub</b>	Explore the development of a community and culture focussed venue.
●	<b>Explore the provision of wayfinding</b>	Look into directional/destination signage (physical and digital) to active travel routes, themed trails for example Burns Trail, Prototype Norwegian Trail, key destinations, information boards, and whats on signage.



















## A Place to Work, Learn and Do Business

Status	Activity	Description
	<b>Work together to create an experiential retail environment.</b>	Initial ideas session has been held with retailers, for which feedback report is available. Follow up session needed.
	<b>Independent shopping streets</b>	Work together to improve the experience and promotion of independent shopping streets off the High Street.
	<b>Encourage more pop-up shops and markets to locate throughout the town centre.</b>	Pop up shops and market stalls can provide new businesses with the opportunity to test their markets and viability over a short period. This can be a good meanwhile use of vacant buildings, prior to a permanent reuse being found.
	<b>Explore support for retailers and businesses in the town centre.</b>	Work together to look at the needs of town centre businesses and what support could be made available.
	<b>Proactively attract inward investment to the town centre.</b>	Work together to identify the types of businesses which would contribute to increased footfall in our town centre.
	<b>High Street Challenge</b>	Introducing 3 new retail premises to the town centre.

	<b>Scotland Loves Local</b>	Work together to support the Scotland Loves Local Gift Card Scheme
	<b>Flourish</b>	Flourish community space and shop is now open at 111 High Street, Dumfries. It is managed and curated by the Guild Dumfries CIC in partnership with Midsteeples Quarter and it is planned this project will take place for a minimum of one year and up to 3 years
	<b>Work in partnership to explore how Dumfries can become a "digital town"</b>	Explore Wi-Fi, Apps, Guides, fast broadband and business infrastructure.
	<b>Learning Town 2</b>	Upgrading of Dumfries Academy and Dumfries High School and relocation of Loreburn Primary School.
	<b>Innovative and adaptable spaces for business and training that meet users' needs.</b>	MSQ phase 2 demonstrates popularity of pop-up use of empty High Street shop units and rear spaces for a variety of uses, including new enterprises, events and exhibitions. MSQ Phase 1 will include the employment of an Enterprise Manager to assist and advise new enterprise creation.
	<b>Build upon the strong links between the Town Centre and the Crichton Campus.</b>	The Crichton and Dumfries Town Centre are inextricably linked, It is important that we build close links between the new Strategic Planning Framework for the Crichton and Dynamically Different Dumfries.

## A Place to Access, Be Active and Green

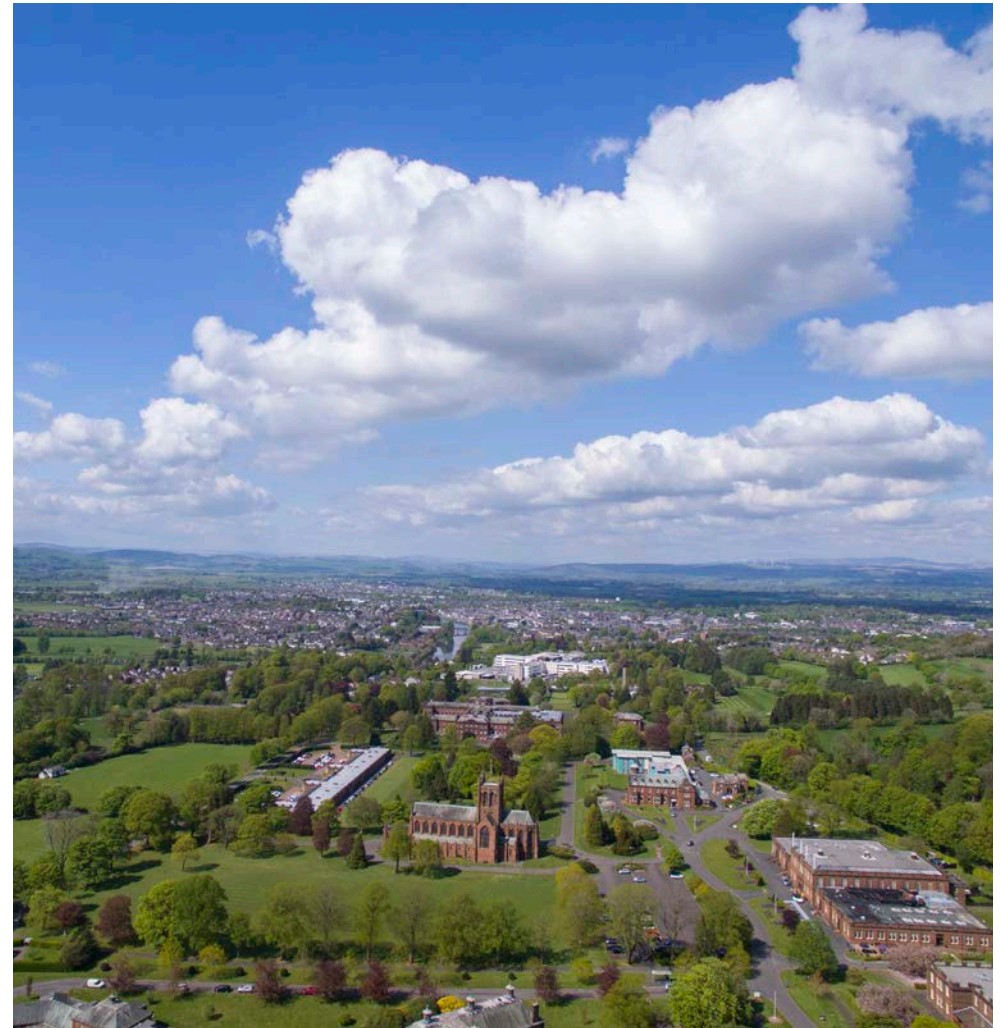
Status	Activity	Description
	<b>Inclusive streets and spaces that are accessible for all.</b>	Work with those groups that face accessibility challenges in our town centre to identify the issues they face and ways to address them.
	<b>A town-wide network of linked up active travel infrastructure.</b>	Work with local groups promoting cycling and walking to create an environment that better connects the town centre to its surroundings and other parts of the town.
	<b>Develop the provision of reliable, cost-effective low carbon public and private transport options and the infrastructure to support them.</b>	We will work with partners to further develop the provision of reliable, cost effective low carbon public and private transport options and infrastructure.
	<b>Provision of buses</b>	The first fully electric bus has been successfully introduced on a local service route in Dumfries and funding has been secured for a further 4 buses across the region to join the DG Fleet, one of which will be operating in Dumfries.
	<b>EV Bay Infrastructure</b>	Over 100 Electric Vehicle charging bays have been installed to date in and around Dumfries Town Centre all of which are available to for public, residential and workplace use.
	<b>Centralised transport hub for local buses.</b>	Work with SWestrans and other partners to explore options.
	<b>Improved public transport and public transport network</b>	Explore with SWestrans and commercial bus companies: bike friendly public transport, improved bus/train timetabling, demand responsive transport, tourist shuttle bus, formalise pick up and drop off points through digital information for coach drivers and companies.
	<b>Explore making the train station more of an entrance to the town for visitors.</b>	Explore with Network Rail and landowners.

	<b>Reduce traffic speeds</b>	Town Centre temporary 20mph speed limit scheme currently in place, this could be made permanent at the end of the 18 month period in September.
	<b>Review of the pedestrianised areas to make them more useable/safer/clearer for users/traffic and to better service businesses. Provide specific enhancements to make the High Street and streets leading to it more pedestrian friendly.</b>	This needs to be looked at in the context of other areas of the action plan such as the review of public spaces, active travel etc. We will therefore need to explore this further with delivery partners.
	<b>Regional Parking Strategy</b>	A Regional Parking Strategy is to be commissioned which will include public engagement. This will produce an action plan, from which a parking survey for Dumfries could follow.
	<b>Reduce the number of cars in the town centre.</b>	There are a variety of views on this issue that need to be explored further.
	<b>Explore renewable energy opportunities.</b>	Bring key stakeholders and partners together to explore the renewable energy opportunities that exist in the town centre. This will include the Kinetic Art Project.
	<b>Dumfries District Heating Network Feasibility</b>	Exploratory feasibility study
	<b>Explore opportunities for free energy production using the rivers power.</b>	This would be part of the wider conversation on exploring renewable energy opportunities.
	<b>Extend opportunities for community gardening</b>	Explore this further with current community gardening schemes such as Incredible Edibles.



## A Place to Grow and Play

Status	Activity	Description
●	Enhance our green and public spaces for leisure, play, events, gardens, gatherings, beauty, green credentials - and theming to create a hierarchy of purpose	First step is to identify and map all the existing green and public spaces in and around the town centre and theme our spaces to create a hierarchy of purpose.
●	Improve, green and redesign our public spaces.	Work together with our community to identify a prioritised programme for the improvement, redesign and greening of our open spaces, including opportunities for covered areas to promote all weather use.
●	Create welcoming informal spaces that meet the needs of young people.	Work with young people to transform the spaces in the town centre into spaces they feel welcomed and able to socialise i.e. shelters and seating.  Dedicated youth centres such as Oasis Youth Centre and the Youth Enquiry Service will continue to provide a range of universal and targeted support for 12-25 year olds within the town centre, in addition to detached youth work and sessions on the High Street using the mobile youth centre (My Pod)
○	Provide Creative Street Art	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High Street Multi universe project</li> <li>• Wild Goose Festival</li> <li>• Caerlaverock Castle Arts and Engagement Strategy</li> <li>• D-Lux Festival of Light</li> </ul>



## Delivery Strategy

Delivery of our vision and realising our collective ambitions requires collaborative action from the public, private and third sectors and the wider community. As already illustrated, our plan sets out 5 thematic areas which identify our broad priorities and the key drivers that we are working towards over the next 10 years. Dynamically Different Dumfries is a community led plan, and a new Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO) has recently been approved and, once formally launched, will provide a vehicle to drive the process forward. Responsibility for implementing the action plan will lie with a wide range of partners, stakeholders and support services working collaboratively through sub groups to make things happen.



The launch of the new SCIO (also called DPAG) will involve an open recruitment process to appoint new Trustees and a membership group to work alongside partners, businesses and community representatives, identify funding opportunities, and assist in the delivery and evaluation of the plan's impact. This presents an ideal opportunity for individuals and organisations passionate about Dumfries town centre who want to make a difference, to work in partnership with others to deliver change.

**If you are reading this wondering how you can take part or if you have missed the opportunity to get involved, then consider this your open invitation to participate in the future of our incredible place. Everyone is welcome.**





## Tracking our Progress

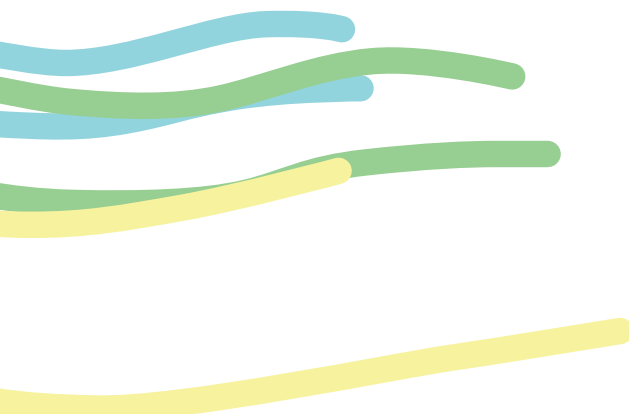
We will work with public, private, third sector and community partners to develop a clear baseline and monitoring framework for Dynamically Different Dumfries. This will have clear outcomes and performance indicators that can be used to measure the progress, impacts and success of our plan.





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 The Crichton Trust - 13, 34  
 Kirstin McEwan - 13,18  
 The Stove - 14,27  
 Big Burns Supper - 26,  
 A Storrie - 28  
 Galina Walls - 9,25,27  
 A Storrie - 28  
 D&G Council - 6,9,10,12,14,16,17,  
 19,20,21,22,23,24,25,26,27,28, 35







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