

A New Future for Scotland's Town Centres

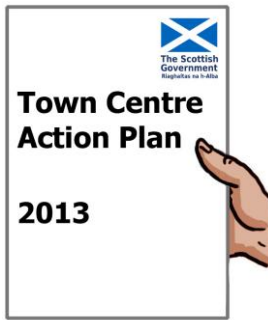
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A New Future for Scotland's Town Centres



The Scottish Government made a Town Centre Action Plan after the National Review of Town Centres in 2013.



This Plan was about how important town centres are and how we need to support them.



Lots of things have changed since the Plan was made. The Scottish Government focuses more on wellbeing, the environment, the voices of local people and things being easy to access.



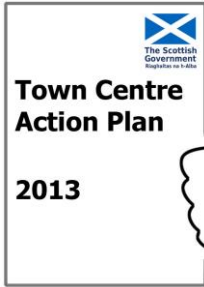
We changed some things for the better since 2013. However town centres still struggled. Covid-19 has changed everything. It has made it even harder to use town centres.



In 2020 the Scottish Government set up a Review Group to look at the Town Centre Action Plan. They looked at ways to update the Plan. This will make our town centres greener, healthier and easier to access.



The Review Group has gathered evidence on towns and town centres across the UK. It has talked about what the role of town centres should be across Scotland.

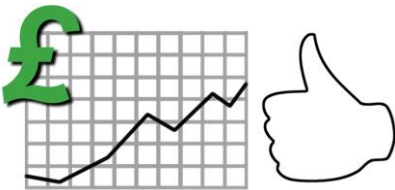


The Review Group found that the original Action Plan was still good. But more work needs to be done. It needs to happen quickly.

Our Vision



Towns and town centres are the heart of communities. They can give everyone equal access to products and services.



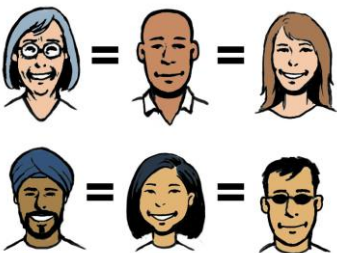
They can help to keep the economy healthy.



They can help our wellbeing by giving us a sense of history, community and environment.



The best and most successful towns have a healthy local economy and society. They have lots of different uses that bring in all members of society and meet their needs.



They are centres that make for more equality. They enable all members of society to take part.



Some town centres are not meeting these goals. They are not welcoming to locals or visitors.



Some town centres exclude some communities or groups. Some people or groups are worried about their safety. Some people think town centres are too expensive or not easy to access.



Some town centres do a good job, but we need to make things better everywhere. This is most important where the needs of locals are not being met.



There are lots of reasons for the way town centres are today. Many of the good things that used to be in town centres have moved to other parts of towns. There are not as many reasons to visit or stay there.



The costs of running businesses in town centres are higher than they are in other parts of towns, or on the internet.



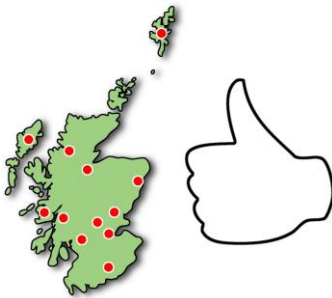
Too many shops in town centres are owned by big companies rather than smaller local businesses.



Town centres are often full of car traffic which makes it hard for people to move around on foot.



There are places where town centres have been made better by local councils, community groups or voluntary organisations. Some councils have worked with people who want to invest money to make town centres better.



This work between councils and communities is very important. The Government can make rules to help town centres all across the country, but a lot of the work has to be done at the local level.

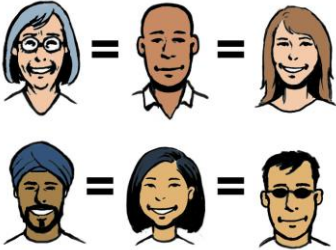


Every town centre is different and has its own communities to think about. Towns in the countryside and the islands are different from big cities. What works for one town might not work for another.

Our Recommendations



The Review Group has tried to build on the good parts of the Town Centre Action Plan. We have tried to update it based on the new national goals.



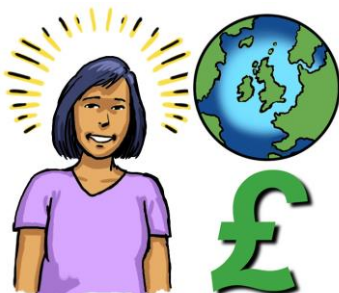
We are glad to see that the Scottish Government has made a lot of changes which help communities and town centres to be more inclusive and equal.

We have made three types of recommendations:



Recommendation 1

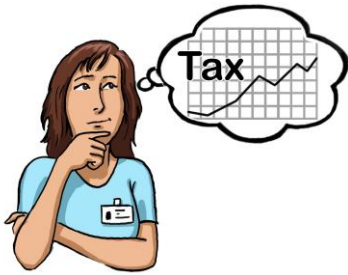
Towns and town centres need to be an important part of National Planning.



Town Centre Plans need to be made with the local community. The focus should be on the wellbeing of people, the planet and the economy.



Find better ways of gathering information about towns and town centres.



Recommendation 2

Tax and rates should be looked at to make it easier for shops and businesses to stay in town centres.



Cars from out of town should be charged extra for parking. This will help lower the amount of traffic in town centres. This will make town centres easier to access. It will help protect the environment by lowering pollution.

Recommendation 3



The Scottish Government has to make sure funding is available for town centre projects. We recommend that projects should focus on:



a) Town Centre growth with more housing in town centres



b) Give businesses and organisations digital skills

c) Encourage new local small business and community projects



d) Make town centre buildings and spaces easier to get around on foot. Make more green spaces and social settings to help stop climate change.



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