

# **MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CROSS PARTY GROUP ON TOWNS AND TOWN CENTRES**

**HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 13<sup>th</sup> May 2015, 6.00 PM**

**COMMITTEE ROOM 4, SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT**

## **AGENDA ITEMS**

### **1. Welcome and Opening Remarks**

Margaret McCulloch (MMcC) welcomed the group and thanked FSB (Scotland) for providing refreshments.

### **2. Minutes of Previous Meeting and Matters Arising**

The minutes were proposed by Phil Prentice (PP) and seconded by Tom Sneddon (TS).

Presentations, Papers and future dates can be found on the Scotland's Towns Partnership website, [www.scotlandstowns.org](http://www.scotlandstowns.org)

### **3. Footfall and Spend in Town Centres**

Alliance Boots, Public Policy Manager, Andy Godfrey and Diarmaid Lawlor, Head of Urbanism, Architecture and Design Scotland provided presentations looking at footfall and spend in town centres.

3.1 Andy Godfrey (AG) introduced himself and commented that the turnout to the Cross Party Group for Towns and Town Centres was excellent.

Boots have been involved with town centre regeneration since the late 1980's, now employing 3 million people UK wide, 6500 in Scotland. Towns and cities provide much higher value to Boots than e-commerce.

There is a tendency to say look "beyond retail" but retail is an important factor. Retail property leases have reduced from 25 years to around 5 years and between 1970 and 2005 retail space continued to expand. We are now seeing a rebalance of retail demand and space. Localism is pushing responsibility to communities.

We are shopping more often which is something that would not necessarily have been thought 10 or 20 years ago. However, where consumers choose to shop has a real impact. Bricks and mortar are still a big part of retail with shopping trends becoming more complex. 14% of the population use online shopping only.

We need to look at new ways of attracting investment in our town centres and have a bigger focus on how we manage change. Currently, it is still more attractive to operate in different ways, how can we make town centre investment more attractive?

Partnership working is key, retailers do understand this and pressure on localism does influence large organisations. BIDs are a huge opportunity for business engagement and their transparency must be recognised. Boots has a BID Engagement Programme to help them with this.

There is the will now for businesses to engage with the community but why do we engage better in some areas? Is there finance and communication in place?

We must understand the value of partnerships. Bricks and mortar businesses and e-commerce are complementing each other providing choice and convenience to changing habits. Town centres matter for retail, leisure and community, there are good signs of progress but there is still a long way to go.

MMcC: surprised that superstores are contracting and asks AG about Click and Collect and Boots' thoughts on this.

AG, over 50% of Boots customers use Click and Collect. It is encouraging because customers come into the shop and may look to purchase additional items.

Roy Proven (RP), our town centres are still in decline, how do you see the rebalance happening?

AG, there is some contraction of retail space and we must manage this. Town centres have always changed but it is at a quicker pace now than ever. From the top ten retailers in 1990 there are three left. The mix in town centres has become broader with new uses for space.

Phil Prentice (PP) congratulated Boots on their success, we need to view retail as positive. It is critical to understand the role of town centres in the supply chain and employment to help us understand the scaling on retail. How can we stimulate retail and what is its role now?

AG sees town centres as infrastructure just as much as the fabric and roads etc. We need to look at similar investment. The market used to drive change, now it is our responsibility.

Barry McCulloch (BMcC), given the vantage point that Boots has, has AG seen anything that works well?

AG, what will make the most difference is the ownership of our town centres, from Ministerial level down to grass roots; tonight's meeting is a great example. Boots want to understand how they can be actively engaged. There is a generational gap of entrepreneurs setting up in to town centres.

Sunil Varu (SV), ATCM's next meeting will look at business rates. What could a review of business rates look like?

AG, Tax will continue to increase. We need to put a stake in the ground, business rates can't be expected to pick up tax losses. We all recognise that we need to find new ways of improving the system. We need to look at developing SME rates.

David Lonsdale (DL), there has been a contraction of retail but will we see revenues continue, will council tax increase?

Craig McLaren (CMcL) Consumers are changing habits whilst businesses are changing too. With all the complexity and change, how can we ensure we are getting a good measure?

AG, would open this up to others but agree we can't make measures based just on retail.

Malcolm Fraser (MF), we recognise that Boots is a trusted brand with a positive attitude. We would appreciate as would the Scottish Government, an endorsement from Boots on this.

AG, opportunities coming out of Wales and Scotland are excellent and are driving diversity. Westminster must recognise that Wales and Scotland are providing learning for England and the UK Government. The idea of getting enterprise back into towns is good.

MF urges Boots supportive voice with the Scottish Government.

BMcC, High footfall and spend but could have high unemployment. We need to capture economic and social contributions too.

AG, Canada looking at value of town centre in this way. Scotland should be looking to them for best practice.

3.2 Diarmaid Lawlor (DL) £3.5million invested into Saltcoats, for sheltered accommodation of all kinds facilitating an intergenerational community and choice.

How do we frame investment? Is there a single purpose or single thing?

The Montague Evans report illustrates high level of demand and high level of space. We need to take a holistic view to investment and means of leveraging investment. How do we measure economic impact? How can we articulate the benefits of the decision?

Collaboration and partnership are talked about a lot but they are very hard to achieve and maintain. We talk about economic benefits for people in towns but it seems to be about how fast we can build it.

There is a parallel economic argument for each site but what difference will it make? We need to create demand, create a purpose. There is no single way to regenerate but collaboration, strategic thinking and purpose are key. The town centre first principle is the best platform to make argument.

Use existing structure, look at economic impact and how it can be used to support social enterprise.

How do we make the benefit argument and support social enterprise and innovation? Town centres understand, it is about creating a connection, purpose and meaning for users.

What in this resource-restrained world we can make a difference on? In Lambeth, a cooperative council, worked with community to form OpenWorks. A shop on high street to discuss problems and share information. This saw thousands of people take part and volumes of data collected to form a better understanding of the retail mix. We need real people, in the town, offering young people entrepreneurial support.

How can public sector investment help? There must be a focus on where it will make the most impact and where there are the most people. There must be a platform that is not just about local authorities giving money to enterprise programmes. Make investment where people are.

How collectively can we do it? Let's build a plausible alternative around enterprise where town centres are at the heart.

MMcC, thanked Andy and Diarmaid; commenting on tonight's speakers having been absolutely fantastic.

Derek Halden (DH), over the years there has been lots of partnership building, but when the money runs out we struggle to maintain them.

DL, working with Stirling on Start Up Street there were successes and failures. There were plenty of failures but it did require people to talk to each other. A year of chat and it was the first project to be started in five years. It would be detrimental if we were to stop seeking partnerships but if we had enough resource we could sustain and reflect. There is not enough consensus on the right thing to do.

Daniel McKendry (DMcK), public and private sector to take risk on innovation work. Who do you suggest we push to lead on 'messy' spaces?

DL, the police force in transforming to a single force is a good example of building a different narrative. We need people to create space and partnerships but the space we have is not always the right fit. Narrative is important.

Tony L'Anson (TL), often now we see digital businesses having physical space. What do you think of digital portals in towns?

DL, do it! Future City Glasgow getting people together, more important than finance. Connect a variety of information offline and online.

TL, there is now a real opportunity for Stirling to get its own Monopoly board.

BMcC, to implement total place vision, work with Community Planning Partnerships.

DL: do what it takes. Look at strategy and pathways through everything. Framework is there and we need ambassadors like you. Let's just do it!

#### **4. Town Centre Action Plan Update**

PP it has been a great day for towns, there is a real energy around towns and for this group. Many thanks to Margaret McCulloch and Joe Fagan.

PP provided an update of the TCAP under each theme. Please see Appendix 1.

#### **5. Any Other Competent Business**

MMcC encouraged members to share any town news with Scotland's Towns Partnership, [rebecca@scotlandstowns.org](mailto:rebecca@scotlandstowns.org). The 'MSPs in towns campaign' is taking place over parliamentary recess - notifications will be sent out by STP, and more information can be found on the community page of STP web.

The next meeting will take the form of a 'Celebration of Small and Rural Towns' reception and showcase of the best of what small and rural towns offer. It will take place on 2<sup>nd</sup> September, in the Garden Lobby. Towns interested in taking part should contact [Rebecca@scotlandstowns.org](mailto:Rebecca@scotlandstowns.org). Further information and invitations will be circulated to members in due course.

MMcC closed the meeting by thanking Alastair Mitchell for his contribution to towns and wished him well for his retirement.

The TCAP is the cross government response to the national review of towns, it has an emphasis on people, enterprise and place and provides us with clear recommendations and a raft of potential approaches to ensure our towns are vibrant place.

It is clear that many of the solutions outlined in the Review and Action Plan were not intended for the Sottish Government to undertake directly but rather that this would stimulate an enabling framework to encourage actions from the wider public, private and community sectors.

STP was established to become the national “GO TO” body for towns and to build such partnerships and collaborations and I’m pleased to announce that the new national towns portal has been launched and this has given everyone with an interest in towns a central website resource which hosts toolkits, policy, research and practical advice as well as showcasing all the good news and best practice. The web, Town Toolkit and Understanding Scottish Places digital toolkit are now all up and running and the site is helping build new connections and projects.

Encouragingly our membership and partnerships continue to grow steadily, we are now also supporting the small towns group covering towns that are more rural or peripheral, we are working on approaches for towns in City Regions, our learning events continue to be well attended, and based on your feedback we have shaped a forward calendar of fantastic events to support and showcase towns.

Theme	Activity and Progress
Town Centre First Principle/ Proactive Planning	<p>The Scottish Government Cabinet and COSLA Leaders agreed the Town Centre First Principle in July 2014 and we have seen some great examples such as Falkirk, East Renfrewshire, East Ayrshire and West Dunbartonshire.</p> <p>STP in collaboration with RTPI, SURF and HOPS have agreed to run a national <b>Scotland’s Most Improved Town (S,M,L)</b> competition to underpin the importance of the principle and the <b>TCAP</b> and to celebrate and to showcase and learn from the towns that embrace it. Sunday Herald has agreed to be our media partner to start a regular feature on towns and will launch 31<sup>st</sup> May followed by a series of 8 page monthly features on towns across Scotland.</p> <p>Discussions are also underway between STP and SG to see if a couple of demonstration towns can be identified where the TCFP can be the main plank or driver of a wider town economic regeneration plan for the town. Early discussions are underway with South Ayrshire Council as to how the application of the principle can be taken forward and demonstrated in practice.</p> <p>Scottish Towns Toolkit was successfully launched on the STP Portal in April</p>

**Town Centre Living**

Mrs Burgess announced the £4m **Town Centre Empty Homes Fund** in February. It is anticipated that the fund will be open for bids at the end of May.

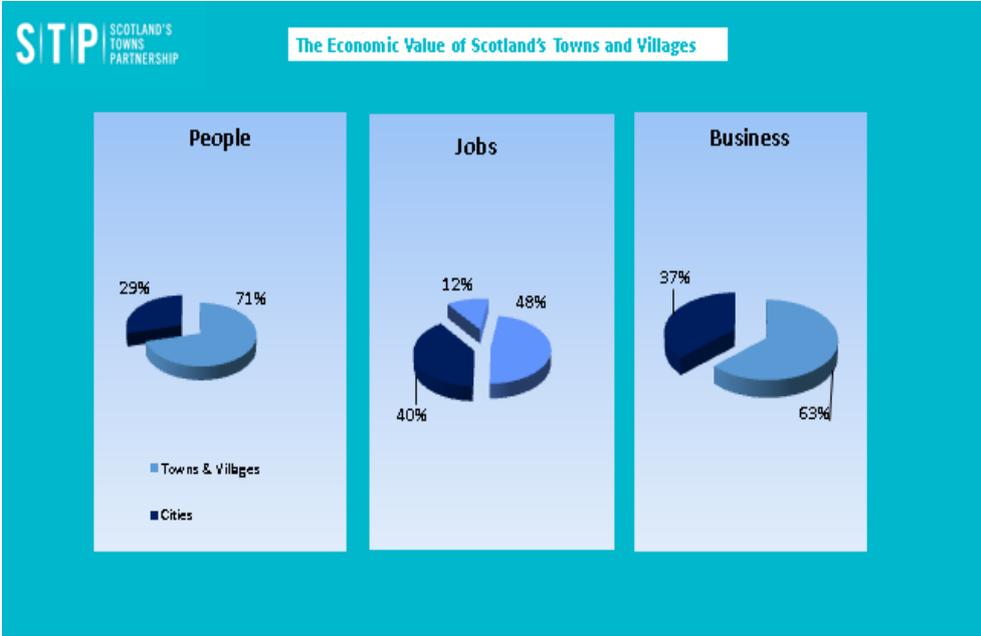
Actions to encourage more housing in town centres included in the soon to be published **Joint Housing Delivery Plan for Scotland**. The Scottish Government are working with Architecture and Design Scotland on their annual Design and Skills Symposium, with a focus this year on town centre living.

**Vibrant Local Economies**

The **Understanding Scottish Places** toolkit was launched on the new STP Web Portal in April..providing towns with much more relevant economic performance data as well as dependency and typology information.

STP,BIDs, SG, Can Do, FSB, DTAS, Scottish Chambers, Business Gateway are currently scoping out an Enterprise Towns Summit to look at the various issues which impact on business and enterprise in towns – rates, business support, more entrepreneurial planning approaches etc. In addition we are working with SG Enterprise, Business Gateway, FSB and AMEX to promote – Independents Day on 4<sup>th</sup> July, Towns Week and the Annual Towns Conference in November and Small Business Saturday in December.

The Joint working between Scottish Government, the enterprise agencies and Business Gateway to strengthen the message on available town centre business support is ongoing . As promised at last CPG we are going to establish the Economic Value of Towns. The pictograph below shows some initial headlines and this work will now be developed as part of the USP project.



When the **Community Empowerment Bill** receives Assent it will provide the power for local discretionary rates schemes such as Town Centre Investment Zones. CSPP is currently doing some work to raise awareness around the Bill

**Small Business Bonus Scheme** is maintained and the effectiveness of BRIS is continuing to be monitored / terms negotiated. Eg highlands have secured £1m

from BRIS scheme which will be reinvested in smaller sub regional towns and communities

**Fresh Start**(50% relief for 12 months) extended from unoccupied shops and offices to include pubs, hotels and restaurants but uptake remain slow so we are looking at ways to promote wider recognition of the scheme through SLAED, FSB, Business Gateway and Scottish Chambers etc

**Can Do Towns Innovation Challenge** - The Can Do Towns Innovation Challenge is a unique programme. It embraces  
-town centre regeneration, community empowerment and the third sector  
-place based entrepreneurship, keeping money in the local economy  
globalisation and its impact on local economies

This programme is about towns reinventing themselves and helping the people who live and work there translate their dreams into reality ( after a really thorough exploration of what that involves!) Run by the Scottish Business Resilience Centre and designed by Iain Scott of 1001 Enterprising Scots the [www.candotownsprogramme.org](http://www.candotownsprogramme.org) has worked with twelve, volunteer or not for profit, groups in towns across Scotland. The programme gives the groups a mental breathing space and an opportunity to learn new skills , negotiate their resources and build a can do attitude.They have access to a marvellous range of technical specialists and learn from others that have been through similar experiences. The majority of participants are volunteers.

Can Do Towns help the participants unlock the enterprise potential of their area by breathing new life into much loved places and spaces. That new life has involved opening up places and spaces for people to make work together,start and grow businesses of all kind. This groundbreaking initiative means that not only can the trust or group can start generating an income to become more sustainable it also ensures that money circulates and stays in the local economy .

Can Do Towns is in its infancy but so far projects been worked up by the group range from £1.2 million to £5 million.

The website has a series of postcards detailing what is happening on [www.candotowns.org](http://www.candotowns.org).

There is an opportunity to hear directly from two participants at a set of Enterprise Talk Oots. May 27th is sold out but a repeat performance takes place on June 3rd in Glasgow

**Business Improvement Districts (BIDs)** now have 30 live projects and 20 in development with a target of 150 bids across Scotland by 2020. Now starting to develop tourism and theme bids – eg food and drink and pan local authority

STP now actively supporting SLAED in it work around people, business and place and will chair the **SLAED Place Group**

<p>Enterprising Communities</p>	<p>DTAS is delighted to announce that the Scottish Government has funded 2 new pilot projects under the <b>Enterprising Communities</b> strand of the Town Centre Action Plan:</p> <p>The first pilot will provide grants of up to £10k to support development trusts playing a greater role in town centre regeneration. The grants will enable trusts to commission visioning and action planning exercises which will focus, among other things on addressing vacant assets and identifying enterprising opportunities. The emphasis is very much on producing action plans which enable the community, in conjunction with relevant partners and stakeholders, to take forward specific projects.</p> <p>Despite the relatively short timescale, 19 development trusts submitted Expressions of Interest demonstrating the level of interest which many communities have in playing a greater role in the regeneration of their town centre. The quality of applications was high, but in the end the Grant Panel awarded a total of £102,000 to 12 organisations. (See STP web-site for full list of awards)</p> <p>The second pilot involves grant funding being provided to Renfrew Development Trust to support them take on a specific role within the regeneration of their town centre. RDT will utilise the Scottish Government grant as a catalyst for attracting additional funding, including financial support from Renfrewshire Council, to run a 2 / 3 year project which will involve them exploring alternative uses for a number of key, vacant town centre buildings. The issue of the vacant buildings (public and private) was flagged up as a priority for local people during a recent consultation, and RDT hope to utilise a combination of local creativity and enterprise to explore options, and identify and progress sustainable alternative uses.</p> <p><b>Scottish Business in the Community:</b> Recruitment campaigns live with corporate business for Business Connector secondments:- Scottish Borders, East Ayrshire, South Lanarkshire and Angus. Additional support being leveraged via SBC members e.g John Lewis recent visual merchandising support to Galashiels small traders and RBS real estate support to Energise Galashiels. Linking with town based community groups and local authorities to confirm priorities and build support via local virtual business hubs .</p> <p>Sustainable Towns, Historic/Heritage and Cultural Toolkits being developed across wide partnerships and STP has been engaging closely with Big Lottery, DTAS, Firstport, Resilient Scotland and Inspiring Scotland re support for communities in towns</p>

	<p>Albeit smaller than towns - <b>VillageSOS</b> was recently launched in Scotland. It provides peer-to-peer support for rural communities delivering projects for the benefit of their community through mentoring from another experienced community. Village SOS is a UK wide programme with Rocket Science UK leading the delivery in Scotland. If you are from a community who has been through a successful community development project and you would like to help others to do the same, then we would love you to become one of our VillageSOS mentors. If your community has a project, or is thinking about a project and would like some help, then we would love to hear from you as VillageSOS may be able to help with support and funding.</p>
<p>Accessible Public Services</p>	<p>Community Empowerment Bill re CPP service provision</p> <p>The Public sector Finance Manual was revised late 2014 to include considerations around the town centre first planning principle</p> <p>NHS Scottish Property Transaction Handbook A revision to the overview section of the handbook will be published in early 2015. This links to the update already published in the Scottish Public Finance Manual.</p> <p>NPF3 underlines significance of towns and STP is leading partnership work with small and rural towns network to bring them under STP umbrella and to secure resource for some pilot projects..initially in D&amp;G and borders through SOSA and then up north and west</p>
<p>Digital Towns</p>	<p>STP recently hosted two digital workshops – Dundee and Edinburgh Pilots being developed for Kirkcaldy, Auchterarder, Milngavie and Cowdenbeath Collaboration with Future City team at Glasgow re USP phase 2</p> <p>Discussions on the Scottish Government’s Public Wireless Programme and its fit with town centres are on-going.</p>

Philip Prentice  
Chief Officer, Scotland’s Towns Partnership  
13<sup>th</sup> May 2015

Appendix 2:

**CROSS PARTY GROUP ON TOWNS AND TOWN CENTRES  
WEDNESDAY, 13th May 2015 AT 18:00  
COMMITTEE ROOM 4, SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT**

**APOLOGIES AND LIST OF ATTENDEES**

**APOLOGIES**

Jackie Baillie MSP  
Angus MacDonald MSP

Hew Edgar, RICS  
Stephen Leckie, Crieff Hydro  
Ojay McDonald, ATCM  
Nairn Pearson, West Lothian Council  
Dennis Rodwell

**ATTENDEES**

Margaret McCulloch MSP (Convener)  
Chic Brodie MSP (Deputy Convener)  
Margaret McDougall MSP

Jane Atterton, SRUC  
Jamie Baker, East Lothian Council  
Elaine Bone, Scotland's Towns Partnership/EDAS  
Leigh Brown, Perth and Kinross Council  
Georgina Bowyer, Carnegie Trust  
Callum Chomczuk, Pagoda PR  
Vivien Collie, St Andrews BID  
Ian Davison Porter, BIDs Scotland  
Mhairi Donaghy, EKOS  
Joseph Fagan, Scottish Parliament  
Ian Fowell, Scottish Small Towns Group  
Malcolm Fraser, Malcolm Fraser Architects  
Andy Godfrey, Alliance Boots  
Sandra Goldie, Land Engineering  
Elaine Gorman, Scottish Business in the Community  
Frank Gunning, Lanark Development Trust  
Graeme Hadden, Land Engineering  
Derek Halden, Loop Connections  
Derek Harper, Brechin Community Council  
Tom Johnston, Colliers International  
Justyna Krupinska, East Renfrewshire BIDs  
Diarmaid Lawlor, ADS  
Euan Leitch, BEFS  
David Lonsdale, Scottish Retail Consortium

Peter MacLean, Inverness Civic Trust  
Rebecca Mather, Scotland's Towns Partnership  
Geoff McCartney, Miconex  
Pamela McCreddie, East Dunbartonshire Council  
Barry McCulloch, FSB Scotland  
Laura McKelvie, FSB Scotland  
Daniel McKendry, Daniel McKendry Consulting  
Julie McLachlan, SCDI  
Craig McLaren, RTPi Scotland  
Ian McLelland, East Kilbride Shopping Centre  
Audrey Michie, Aberdeenshire Council  
Nikola Miller, RTPi Scotland  
Alastair Mitchell, Falkirk Delivers BID  
Alistair Morrison, GVA  
Michael Morgan, Perth and Kinross Council  
Daisy Narayanan, Sustrans Scotland  
Phil Prentice, Scotland's Towns Partnership  
Peter Quinn, Keep Scotland Beautiful  
Douglas Scott, Scottish Borders Council  
Tom Sneddon, Development Trusts Association Scotland  
Leigh Sparks, University of Stirling  
Sunil Varu, Paisley First BID