

## **Your Town Audit**

Measuring the economic diversity  
and wider social value of town centres

## **User Manual**

**March 2015**

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# 1. Introduction

The STP Your Town Audit was developed to provide a common framework to measure and monitor the performance of Scotland's towns and town centres using a series of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).

The audit is designed to complement the Understanding Scotland's Places toolkit, which can be accessed via <https://www.usp.scot/>. It provides a simple way of capturing data on performance and measuring change using KPIs grouped into seven themes:

- Locality Data KPIs
- Accessibility KPIs
- Local Service KPIs
- Activity and Event KPIs
- Development Capacity KPIs
- Tourism and Visitor Profile KPIs
- Place and Quality Impression KPIs

By having the tools to measure performance, strategic decision making is both encouraged and improved. By considering and comparing performance, forward strategies and action planning can be more focused and effective. By adopting a common pan-Scotland framework comparison can be made on the success of interventions in similar places.

This STP framework records the measurement of a complementary set of KPIs that capture an overview of the economic diversity and wider social value of town centres. The purpose is to maintain the focus on the importance of town centres whilst capturing indicators of their wider town context i.e. meeting the needs of local residents and attracting visitors. Such a broad understanding of the vitality and viability of towns and town centres helps in understanding how they can each build on their distinctive strengths and distinguish themselves from the competing commercial offer of larger centres, out-of-town retail and even on-line shopping.

The audit requires bespoke data collection, alongside the use of existing data, and as such adds to the scope of targeted bids for funding and the ways that the broader effectiveness of an initiative can be demonstrated. In time as more towns are measured in this way, it will be possible to analyse the data further to compare localities against all towns across Scotland.

## **Acknowledgement**

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## 2. Methodology

### 2.1 Boundaries

Measurement of data is undertaken at three spatial levels:

- **town centre** – typically the boundary used in the local development plan, but could also include the Business Improvement District (BID) boundary
- **out of centre** – to identify any major retail, leisure and cultural use located outwith the town centre boundary, typically on the edge of the town centre
- **settlement** – the whole town

The limit of the town centre is usually obvious and will become clear on the first survey walk round e.g. it is defined by a major road junction/a ring road junction/where the commercial offer stops and residential properties commence/a river bridge etc.

Out of centre is defined mainly in terms of walking distance from the town centre. The limit of the town edge is primarily defined as within a five minute walk. This equates to just over 300m at a moderate walking pace of 4km/hour. There is flexibility to adjust this limit as appropriate for each individual town by taking consideration of factors such as physical barriers, gradients, sight lines, presence of key attractors but the normal limit will fall within 2-400m of the edge of the town centre.

For the purposes of these guidelines, out-of-town is defined as anywhere within the town's administrative boundaries but beyond the limits of the town edge.

At the settlement level, data should be gathered as appropriate to inform the vitality-viability assessment. Key to this analysis should be population, employment, housing, transport connectivity, leisure and cultural assets, visitor attractions and accommodation.

As some data is accessed via public data sources (Census, SIMD, etc) where data is only available at pre-set spatial levels. For some indicators there is therefore a need to define the spatial area e.g. population data for the town centre will be based on datazones.

### 2.2 Data Gathering

In order to compare accurately across towns and over a number of years key performance indicators (KPIs) should be measured annually, at the same time of year.

The first audit will establish a database of assets within the town centre – including properties, street furniture, public art, transport facilities, greenspaces and digital

connectivity. This database will form the basis of future annual audits, significantly reducing the time input required to complete follow-up audits.

The data gathering requirements for each individual KPI is described under each of the thematic sections presented later in this guide.

## 2.3 Defining Town Centre Uses

There is no standard definition for the classification of town centre uses, with different organisations adopting different approaches. In developing our Your Town Audit framework STP has adopted a common sense approach that defines uses according to classifications that most people would understand:

- **Convenience Retail:** primarily low cost goods that are typically bought out of habit or on impulse i.e. food, drink (alcohol and non-alcohol), news, tobacco, etc
- **Comparison Retail:** all other retail purchases comprising goods bought at infrequent intervals where consumers will compare and contrast products and prices
- **Retail Services:** services that consumers would expect to find in a town centre including hairdresser, beauty salon, repair of goods, hire of specialist clothing, health clinics, post office, travel agent, etc
- **Leisure Services:** services that allow people to undertake recreational activities i.e. serviced food and drink (bars, cafés, coffee shops, restaurants, etc), cinema/ theatre/ concert halls, gaming, museum/art galleries and sports facilities
- **Financial Services:** relating to money including accountant/investment services, banks/ building societies/ credit unions, insurance, and payday loan/cheque cashing
- **Business and Property Services:** other services including building supplies, estate agents, legal services, mail boxes, printing/ copying, plumber, surveyor, etc
- **Other Non-Retail Uses:** incorporating a wide range of uses typically located in town centres that are neither retail or service activities including multi-occupancy business centres, residential care homes, non-retail community charities, council office, town hall, medical/dental, education, library, place of worship, transport hub and undertaker

The audit framework provides a detailed breakdown of the classification of over 100 individual uses. There are many instances where an individual use can be defined under two or more classifications – for example a convenience store with post office counter – in such cases the primary, or more obvious, use should be adopted.

Appendix 1 presents a table with the classification of town centre uses – it should be noted that this will be updated and amended as new activities emerge (e.g. pay day lenders).

## 2.4 Reporting

The audit framework encompasses an Excel workbook – this in itself will be of value to key stakeholders (Council, BID, local business groups, Community Council, etc).

Additional value can be generated through the preparation of a summary report of audit findings which can be disseminated to a wider audience, and used as a marketing tool to promote the town to potential investors and occupiers.

The report should provide statistical analysis of indicators, as appropriate for each individual town. By updating the audit annually trends and patterns can be identified, supporting the design and development of mitigating actions to sustain the town centre and/or new projects to take advantage of emerging market opportunities.

The absence of data would also be highly relevant for some indicators – for example no, or few, cultural assets, transport facilities or evening economy businesses within the town centre – potentially indicating the lack of non-retail footfall generating activities that would attract both local residents and visitors into the town centre.

## 2.5 Strategic Analysis

As Scotland's leading body representing and promoting the interests of Scotland's towns, STP will use the data gathered for individual towns to undertake future strategic analysis of town performance at the national level. The data will be used to inform best practice guidance, project development and approaches to future policy instruments.

As individual towns prepare annual updates we would be grateful if the revised audit framework was sent to STP. In compliance with data protection regulations, the completed audit for each individual town will be held in the ownership of the commissioning body – the audit will be held and used by STP for our strategic analysis of town centre performance and will not be issued to any external third party without the prior approval of the commissioning body.

### 3. Locality KPIs

The locality data assessment sets the context for the STP Town Audit and gathers data on the following KPIs:

- Population, businesses, employment, skills, SIMD and benefits
  - This data is typically gathered via existing data sources including Census, NOMIS and Scottish Statistics
  - The town centre is likely to be defined by datazone(s)
  - Town centre and settlement data should be gathered, but out of centre data is not likely to be appropriate for these indicators
- Housing profile – by number, type, tenure, size, council tax band, average price
  - Data from Scottish Statistics (statistics.gov.scot) and Census
  - Out of centre data is not likely to be appropriate
- Town type – Scottish Government 8 fold Urban-Rural Classification, geographical catchment
  - Data from Scottish Government
  - Settlement level is the only appropriate spatial area
- Listed buildings by category/occupancy/condition, conservation area status, Buildings at Risk Register
  - Data from Historic Scotland
  - Town centre and edge of centre data should be gathered, settlement data is unlikely to be informative given the likely number of properties but might be helpful for smaller towns
- Public art/statues – number, condition and date installed
  - Data from town audit walkabout
  - Town centre data should be gathered, but edge of centre and settlement data not essential due to large volume
- Parks, gardens, formal landscapes and play parks
  - Data from town audit walkabout and website search
  - Town centre and edge of centre data should be gathered; settlement data should be gathered appropriate to the scale of asset and size of settlement

## 4. Accessibility KPIs

Accessibility data assessment focuses on the physical and digital infrastructure available to residents, businesses, employees and visitors, and gathers data on:

- Public transport – modes, routes, main connections and frequency
  - Data from town audit walkabout and [www.travelinescotland.com](http://www.travelinescotland.com) journey planner
  - Service times/frequency should be gathered for train if available, otherwise bus
  - Town centre and edge of centre data should be gathered, but settlement level is not likely to be appropriate for these indicators
- Transport hubs – is town a hub or spoke?
  - Analysis is a value judgement based on the extent of public transport connectivity, as defined in the KPI above
  - Settlement data is the only appropriate spatial level
- Cycle routes and racks
  - Data from town audit walkabout and [www.sustrans.org.uk](http://www.sustrans.org.uk) national cycle routes
  - Data on cycle racks should be gathered for the town centre only
  - Data on cycle routes should be gathered at settlement level only
- Road connectivity – motorway/A road; distance/drive time to settlement of 10,000+ residents
  - Data from [www.aa.com](http://www.aa.com) route planner
  - Data should be gathered at settlement level only
- Parking – on/off street; public/private; free/paid; number of spaces; cost/hour, car count/usage
  - Data from town audit walkabout
  - Data on car count/usage from Local Authority, if available
  - Data should be gathered for all KPIs for the town centre; edge of centre for large off-street car parks; settlement data not appropriate due to likely volume
- Broadband – free accessible town centre wi-fi
  - Data from consultation with local stakeholder(s)
  - Data should be gathered at settlement level only
- Mobile phone coverage – 2G, 3G or 4G
  - Data from town audit walkabout and [www.opensignal.com](http://www.opensignal.com)
  - Data should be gathered for town centre only; coverage will likely vary considerably across the wider settlement

## 5. Local Service KPIs

This review considers the range of core services available within the town, gathering data on:

- Retailers – number of multiples/independents; by comparison/convenience/service
  - Data should be gathered from the town audit walkabout on the total number of retail operators (see Appendix for breakdown)
  - Town centre data only should be gathered
- Town opening – typical opening hours and days
  - Data should be gathered from the town audit walkabout and local consultation
  - Town centre data only should be gathered
- Personal and business services – finance/legal/property/business
  - Data should be gathered from the town audit walkabout – see Appendix
  - Town centre data only should be gathered
- Public services – Council office, police, health, court, library, town hall, education
  - Data should be gathered from the town audit walkabout
  - Town centre and edge of centre data should be gathered
- Leisure services – food & drink, gaming, sports & activities, accommodation
  - Data should be gathered from the town audit walkabout and web search
  - Town centre and edge of centre data should be gathered
- Cultural services – museum, gallery, cinema, theatre, historic property, music/dance
  - Data should be gathered from the town audit walkabout and web search
  - Data should be gathered at all spatial levels
- Evening economy – by type, independent/multiple operator, opening hours/days
  - Data should be gathered from the town audit walkabout
  - Town centre data only should be gathered
  - Data under this indicator will replicate some of the earlier KPI entries above, primarily ‘leisure services’ and ‘cultural services’ e.g. restaurant (leisure), theatre (cultural)

## 6. Activity and Event KPIs

This review considers the frequency, scale and range of local activities and events in the town, gathering data on:

- Community events (e.g. Gala Day, Highland Games) – theme, attendees, frequency, free/charged, promoter (public, private, community)
  - Data should be gathered from web searches and local consultation – it is unlikely that full data will be available for each event
  - Town centre and edge of centre data should be gathered; data on major events at the wider town level should be gathered where they are likely to generate impacts and benefits for town centre operators
  
- Farmers market/ craft fairs – frequency, customers, number of stalls, location
  - Data should be gathered from web searches and local consultation – it is unlikely that full data will be available for each event
  - Town centre and edge of centre data should be gathered
  
- Sporting activities/events – number, frequency, attendees, price
  - Data should be gathered from web searches and local consultation
  - Town centre and edge of centre data should be gathered; data on major events at the wider town level should be gathered where they are likely to generate impacts and benefits for town centre operators
  
- Open doors/historic building event – frequency, duration, attendees, number of properties
  - Data should be gathered from web searches and local consultation
  - Town centre and edge of centre data should be gathered; data on major events at the wider town level should be gathered where they are likely to generate impacts and benefits for town centre operators

## 7. Local Capacity KPIs

This review considers the available capacity, level of interest and available resource within the town, gathering data on:

- Vacant retail – number, floorspace and % of total stock, persistently vacant
  - Data should be gathered from the town audit walkabout
  - Data should be gathered for the town centre; any large edge of centre vacant retail units should be identified
  - Care is needed in assessment – only retail units should be included for total and vacant rates, non-retail vacant units are covered elsewhere
  
- Vacant land – number of sites, total hectares, land use allocation, date since last use
  - Data should be gathered from the town audit walkabout and local consultation
  - Town centre and edge of centre data should be gathered
  
- Vacant buildings (ex retail) – number, floorspace, former use and condition, date since last occupied
  - Data should be gathered from the town audit walkabout
  - Data should be gathered for the town centre; any large edge of centre vacant buildings should be identified
  
- Planning applications and completions (previous 12 months) – number, proposed use, £ investment
  - Data should be gathered from the Local Authority Planning Department
  - Data should be gathered for the town centre; and large edge of centre or settlement proposals should be identified
  
- Commercial transactions – number, use, floorspace, price and yield
  - Due to the number of individual property owners in a town centre, data is unlikely to be available for this KPI without instructing local property market research
  - Data may be available for multi-occupancy shopping centres/ malls but owners may not be willing to provide values – % year-on-year changes may be available
  
- Local groups and partnerships – number, membership, type
  - Data should be gathered from web searches and local consultations
  - Business/traders associations/BIDs are likely to focus on the town centre
  - Community Council and Community Groups will focus at the settlement level
  
- Current town centre action plan – date, themes, partners and £ committed
  - Data should be gathered from web searches and local consultations
  - Data should be gathered at the appropriate level for the specific strategy

## 8. Tourism KPIs

This review considers the capacity the town has to attract tourists and visitors, gathering data on:

- Accommodation – by type and grade, number of rooms, ownership
  - Data should be gathered from the town walkabout and web searches
  - Occupancy data is unlikely to be available without local market research – [www.visitscotland.org](http://www.visitscotland.org) 'Research and Statistics' provides average occupancy data at regional level
  - Data should be gathered for all spatial levels
  
- Attractions – by type and grade, number of visitors, facilities
  - Data should be gathered from the town walkabout and web searches
  - Data on visitor numbers is unlikely to be available without local market research
  - Data should be gathered for all spatial levels
  
- Marketing – town website(s), owner, currency of data, date created/last updated
  - Data should be gathered from local consultation and web searches
  - All spatial areas should be covered
  
- Social media – type used, number of followers, frequency of alerts
  - Data should be gathered from local consultation and web searches
  - All spatial areas should be covered

## 9. Place/Quality Impression KPIs

The place quality review uses data gathered from the town audit walkabout and requires subjective scoring by the assessor against key factors:

- Uniqueness – local/independent traders, butcher/fishmonger/deli/fruit & veg/baker
  - Data should be gathered from the town audit walkabout
  - Town centre data only should be gathered
  
- Major retailers – number of key national retailers (to be defined), % of total units
  - Data should be gathered from the town audit walkabout
  - Town centre and edge of centre data should be gathered
  
- Cleanliness – litter, fly-tipping, postering, weeds, etc
  - This is a subjective assessment based on the town audit walkabout – scoring from 0 (very dirty, lots of litter, etc) to 10 (very clean, no litter, etc)
  - Town centre data only should be gathered
  
- Pedestrian/cycle friendliness – traffic speed, appropriate crossings, ease of movement/ navigation
  - This is a subjective assessment based on the town audit walkabout – scoring from 0 (very fast traffic and limited/unsafe crossing) to 10 (very pedestrian/cycle friendly)
  - Town centre data only should be gathered
  
- Pavements and streets – clutter, signage, cracks, pot holes
  - This is a subjective assessment based on the town audit walkabout – scoring from 0 (lots of unnecessary clutter, no flowers, lack of signage, bad pavements) to 10 (very attractive environment and easy to navigate)
  - Town centre data only should be gathered
  
- Furniture – seats, bins – number, condition and age
  - Data on the total number of seats and resting places should be gathered from the town audit walkabout
  - The subjective assessment is based on the town audit walkabout – scoring from 0 (no resting places or bins) to 10 (plenty of good quality/attractive seats and bins)
  - Town centre data only should be gathered

- Safety and security – lighting (sodium/white), cctv, passive policing, taxi marshalls
  - Data on lighting should be gathered from the town audit walkabout
  - The subjective assessment of lighting and passive policing is based on the town audit walkabout – scoring from 0 (very poor quality lighting and very few people on the streets) to 10 (excellent lighting and lots of people)
  - Data on CCTV and taxi marshalling should be gathered from local consultation
  - Town centre data only should be gathered
  
- Buildings – shop fronts, window displays, hanging baskets
  - This is a subjective assessment based on the town audit walkabout – each individual property should be scored – quality of the building’s appearance (front) and quality of shop window display – scoring from 0 (very poor quality) to 10 (excellent quality)
  - Town centre data only should be gathered
  
- Business confidence – annual change in turnover (+ve/-ve and %), confidence in future
  - A sample of local businesses should be interviewed during the town audit walkabout – answers are non-attributable (no details should be gathered on the response from individual businesses)
  - The sample size should be appropriate to the size of the town – a minimum of 10 responses should be secured; but larger towns should aim for 25-30 to ensure confidence that responses are representative
  - The focus for interviews should be on independent businesses where the owner/manager is likely to be the person interviewed; larger chain stores will likely require permission from their head office to provide data
  - A pro-forma is attached at Appendix 2 with questions and response categories
  - Town centre data only should be gathered

# Appendix A: Use Classification

	Comparison	Convenience	Retail	Leisure	Financial	Business and	Other -
	Retail	Retail	Services	Services	Services	Property	non
						Services	retail
Accountant, investment and other financial services					√		
Antiques	√						
Art - equipment, paintings, etc	√						
Bags and accessories inc. travel/ luggage	√						
Baker and confectioner		√					
Bank, building society and credit union					√		
Bars, pubs and wine bars				√			
Beauty (nail bar, tanning, beauty salon, tattoo, piercings)			√				
Bike sales & accessories	√						
Blinds and curtains (inc textiles and soft furnishings)	√						
Book shop - new/second hand	√						
Building supplies and services						√	
Business centre - various occupiers							√
Business goods and services						√	
Business office - not elsewhere classified (inc newspaper, political office, etc)							√
Butcher		√					
Café and coffee shop				√			
Camping and outdoors	√						
Car and vehicle rental			√				
Car and vehicle repair and service			√				
Car parts	√						
Car showroom incl motorcycles	√						
Cards	√						
Care home - residential							√
Carpets and flooring	√						
Catalogue showroom (e.g. Argos)	√						
Charity shop	√						
Chemist / pharmacy	√						
Children and baby (inc clothes, prams, seats, etc)	√						
Cinema, theatre and concert hall				√			
Clothing repair/alteration			√				
Clothing sales general	√						
Clothing sales/hire specialist (wedding, kilt, dancewear, e	√						
Clubs, dancehall, disco, kids play and nightclubs				√			
Community-based charity							√
Computers and electronic goods - sales/repair	√						
Convenience store (food, drink, news)		√					
Council office							√
Crafts, gifts, china, glass and fancy goods	√						
Delicatessen and specialist grocer		√					
Dentist							√
Department and variety shops	√						
Discount stores and pound shops	√						
DIY and home improvement (paint, wallpaper, etc)	√						
Doctor and health centre							√
Education - nursery, school, college, university							√
Electrical and goods repair			√				
Electrical and goods sales (other than computer/camera, e							
Emergency Services - Police/Fire/Ambulance Stations							√
Employment agency and careers advice/recruitment							√
Estate agent - property sales/letting						√	
Fancy dress hire			√				
Fishmonger		√					
Florist	√						
Footwear - sales	√						
Frozen foods		√					

	Comparison Retail	Convenience Retail	Retail Services	Leisure Services	Financial Services	Business and Property Services	Other - non retail
Furniture and kitchens	√						
Gaming (betting office, arcade, bingo, casino, pool hall)				√			
Garden and equipment	√						
Greengrocer		√					
Haberdashery - wool, sewing, fabric	√						
Hair and jewellery products - discount	√						
Hairdresser			√				
Hardware and ironmonger	√						
Health clinic (chiropodist, chiropracter, physio, weight loss)			√				
Health foods and supplements		√					
Hotel and guest house				√			
Household goods	√						
Industrial and manufacturing - all uses							√
Insurance					√		
Jeweller	√						
Laundrette, dry cleaner and ironing			√				
Legal services - lawyer, solicitor						√	
Library							√
Locksmith			√				
Mail boxes						√	
Markets and small stalls	√						
Mobility aids and scooters	√						
Museum and art gallery				√			
Music shop - instruments CDs, records, sheet music	√						
Newsagent (CTN)		√					
Off license		√					
Opticians			√				
Pawn shop			√				
Pay day loan and cheque cashing					√		
Pet store, vet, accessories and grooming			√				
Petrol filling station			√				
Phone - mobile sales/repair/accessories	√						
Photo processing			√				
Photo studio			√				
Photography and optical sales (cameras, binoculars)	√						
Place of worship							√
Plumbing service and repair						√	
Post office			√				
Printing and photocopying						√	
Property services e.g. building surveyor						√	
Public sector other (non Council)							√
Restaurants				√			
Retail sales - not elsewhere classified	√						
Retail services - not elsewhere classified (e.g. internet café)			√				
Sandwich takeaway				√			
Second hand goods	√						
Shoe repair/cobbler			√				
Sport and leisure facilities (inc gyms, dance studios)				√			
Sportswear - clothes, equipment	√						
Stationer and office supplies - home/commercial	√						
Supermarket		√					
Sweet shop		√					
Takeaway - hot food				√			
Textiles and goods purchase (Cash 4 Clothes, etc)							√
Toiletries, cosmetics and beauty products	√						
Town hall							√
Toys, games and hobbies	√						
Transport - bus/rail station, ferry port							√
Travel agent			√				
Undertaker and funeral services							√
Upholstery			√				
Video store - rental			√				

# Appendix B: Business Questions

<b>Q1. Has your business turnover at these premises changed in the past five years?</b>			
<i>Increased</i>			
<i>More than 25%</i>	<i>16-25%</i>	<i>6-15%</i>	<i>0.1-5%</i>
<i>Stayed the same</i>			
<i>Decreased</i>			
<i>More than 25%</i>	<i>16-25%</i>	<i>6-15%</i>	<i>0.1-5%</i>

<b>Q2. Has employment at these premises changed in the past five years?</b>			
<i>Increased</i>			
<i>More than 25%</i>	<i>16-25%</i>	<i>6-15%</i>	<i>0.1-5%</i>
<i>Stayed the same</i>			
<i>Decreased</i>			
<i>More than 25%</i>	<i>16-25%</i>	<i>6-15%</i>	<i>0.1-5%</i>

<b>Q3. How confident are you about your future business performance in <b>xxx town</b> over the next five years?</b>				
<i>Very confident</i>	<i>Confident</i>	<i>Neither/nor</i>	<i>Unconfident</i>	<i>Not at all confident</i>