

# Your Town Audit: Stornoway

May 2016



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Report produced by:



Audit Date: 7/03/2016

Draft report: 11/05/2016

For: Comhairle nan Eilean Siar

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## 1. Introduction

This report presents a summary of the [Your Town Audit \(YTA\)](#) for Stornoway, conducted by Scotland's Towns Partnership and EKOS. The detailed YTA Framework and Data Workbook are provided under separate cover.

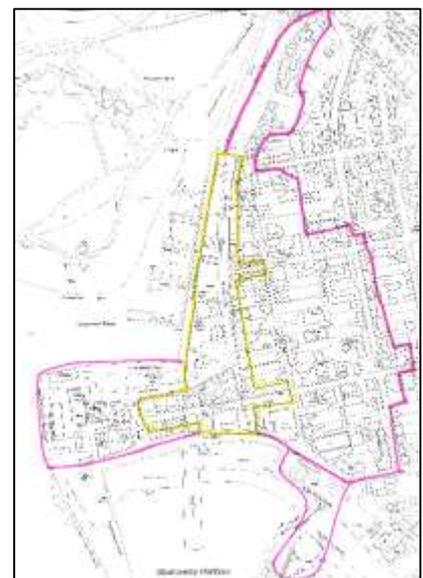
The YTA was developed to provide a framework to measure and monitor the performance of Scotland's towns and town centres using a series of Key Performance Indicators. It provides a comprehensive audit of Stornoway with data on up to 180 KPIs across seven themes – Locality, Accessibility, Local Services, Activities + Events, Development Capacity, Tourism, and Place + Quality Impressions.

Located on the east coast of the island of Lewis in the Outer Hebrides, Stornoway is the largest town in the Comhairle nan Eilean Siar (CnES) local authority area. With a settlement population of around 6,200 people (SNS, 2013) it is the main administrative and service centre for the whole of the Outer Hebrides.

As defined in the current Local Development Plan, the town centre is a relatively tight commercial area based around the waterfront and harbour. Our review identified a significant amount of retail and other service activity located on the edge of the defined town centre, and other leisure/ commercial/ industrial activity on the edge of the town centre.

The analysis has been undertaken at different spatial levels, as appropriate for the topic being discussed:

- at the smallest level analysis is presented at the town centre boundary, as defined in the Local Development Plan – bounded in yellow;
- a wider town centre area covering most of the retail and service activity – bounded in pink;
- the Stornoway Development Area – a wider area that includes Lews Castle grounds and Newton – the focus of past and ongoing regeneration efforts in the town; and
- Stornoway settlement – as defined by Scottish Neighbourhood Statistics – mainly used to present socio-economic data and statistics.



Working with local partners since 2004 (public, private and community bodies), CnES, chairs the [Stornoway Regeneration Group](#) which aims to:

*“Enhance the vitality, viability and vibrancy of Stornoway by regenerating the environment of the town and its surrounding area, focusing physical change on the needs of people, our built heritage and business development.”*

The groups' agreed remit is to:

- co-ordinate a partnership bid for a Townscape Heritage Initiative;
- integrate current initiatives aiming to regenerate Stornoway;
- assist the implementation of existing Local Plan policy/proposals where possible and input into future Western Isles Local Plan Policy;
- make recommendations to relevant Working Groups, Committees, forums and organisations; and
- develop an ongoing process of monitoring policy and projects.

A number of projects have been completed in recent years – these have contributed to the regeneration of the town and include the new pier and link span, An Lanntair Arts Centre, new leisure craft moorings, UHI Millennium Institute campus and a new sports centre. The major ongoing regeneration project is the redevelopment of Lews Castle and Grounds, and development of a new Museum and Archive.

[Creating Communities of the Future](#) is a Strategy for Action for the Outer Hebrides – it identifies the regeneration of Stornoway:

- as driving activity throughout the Outer Hebrides;
- as developing the concept of 'attractiveness of place'; and
- that in 2020, Stornoway has grown significantly and developed as a world-class entry point to the Outer Hebrides.

In September 2015, the [Newton Stornoway Strategy](#)<sup>1</sup> was launched – this area is located on the south eastern edge of the town centre within the defined Stornoway Development Area. It is the main industrial zone and comprises a mix of industrial, retail, office, leisure and residential uses.

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<sup>1</sup> Newton Stornoway Strategy, September 2015, Threesixty Architecture for Highlands & Islands Enterprise

Finally, Stornoway Port Authority is currently in the process of preparing a [Port Masterplan](#) to guide future development within the harbour area. The plan, which will take account of its mixed commercial and leisure activity – ferries, fishing, fish processing, yachts, cruise ships, cargo, oil & gas, and renewable energy manufacturing – is scheduled for completion by summer 2016.



## 2. Understanding Scottish Places Summary

The [Understanding Scottish Places](#) (USP) data platform provides a summary analysis for Stornoway and identifies 13 comparator towns that have similar characteristics, with the most similar being Auchterarder, Buckie, Cupar and Keith<sup>2</sup>. The USP platform – [www.usp.scot](http://www.usp.scot) – describes Stornoway in the following general terms:

**Stornoway’s Interrelationships:** Stornoway is an *‘independent to interdependent town’*, which means it has a good number of assets in relation to its population. This type of town has a good diversity of jobs; and residents on the whole travel shorter distances to travel to work and study. These towns attract people from neighbouring towns to access some of their assets and jobs.

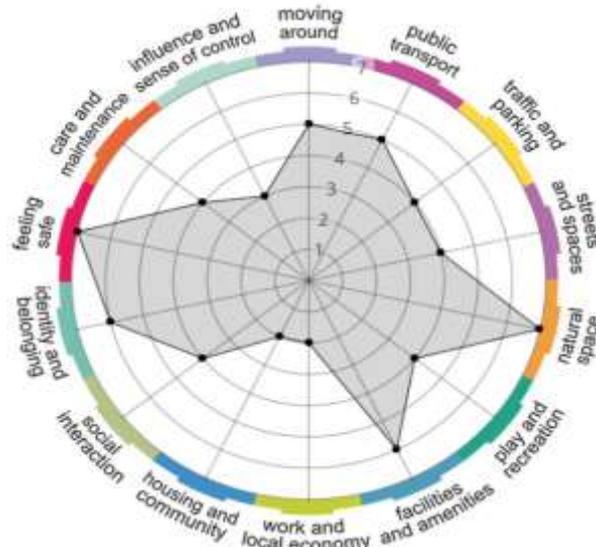
**Stornoway’s Typology:** This type of town is extremely mixed in terms of demographics. There is a particularly wide range of people, housing and activities. The number of older couples with no children is higher than average. There is a mix of professional and non-professional jobs, and part-time and self-employment are both important for a significant proportion of residents. Socioeconomic status is higher than in other kinds of town and there is a mix of professionals and non-professionals, those with higher and lower educational attainment.

Comparing Stornoway to the 13 towns with similar USP typology and interrelationships shows it has similarities in terms of the number of charities, GP surgeries, hospitals and shops. It differs in terms of the diversity of jobs, and the distance travelled to work. Stornoway differs most from its group in the number of children in primary schools, and public sector jobs.

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<sup>2</sup> Other towns are: Blairgowrie, Callander, Castle Douglas, Crieff, Dunbar, Forres, Haddington, Oban and Selkirk.

A separate USP and Place Standard report has been prepared by STP and EKOS and issued under separate cover<sup>3</sup>. This report finds that the “*clearest strength is the*



*people and community within the town and the surrounding natural asset base. There is a depth and resilience amongst the communities and a very positive and collaborative approach from all the key stakeholders. However there are clear downward trends and risks emerging – population pressure, and pressure on the service, retail and housing sectors.”*

The report makes recommendations against six strategic actions:

1. Discuss a ‘City Deal’ style island growth package with Scottish Government;
2. Consider an Investment and Simplified Planning Zone approach;
3. Develop more housing in the town centre;
4. Support private sector leadership and capacity in town centre businesses;
5. Develop a suite of bespoke shovel-ready projects to allow a quick response to new funding opportunities; and
6. Consider a clusters-based approach to town centre markets and activities.

Building on the USP and Place Standard, the Your Town Audit presented in this report gives the results of our detailed analysis of Stornoway. The findings are based around the Scottish Government’s [Town Centre Toolkit](#) – an online resource available via the USP website which provides advice, guidance and case studies across three thematic areas: Accessible, Active and Attractive.

<sup>3</sup> Stornoway Town Centre Executive Summary, STP / EKOS, 10th March 2016.

### 3. Accessible Town Centre

Located on the east coast of Lewis, Stornoway is within 20 miles distance of all settlements across Lewis and northern parts of Harris.

It is the capital of the Outer Hebrides and provides a wide range of retail, leisure, business and other commercial services for residents, businesses and visitors.



Figure 1: 20 mile radius of Stornoway

The town's port and bus terminals are both located to the immediate south of the town centre – less than five minutes' walk – and Stornoway Airport is located around ten minutes' drive to the east of the town.



Stornoway bus station is a hub terminal with services operating across Lewis and Harris with services running from 07.15 till 21.35.

The ferry terminal is a relatively modern building serving the CalMac Stornoway to Ullapool route. It is located immediately to the south of the bus station and main taxi rank, and provides 40 short-stay car parking spaces (max 2 hours, no charge).

The MV Loch Seaforth (new modern vessel launched in 2014) serves two daily return crossings Monday to Saturday (07.00 and 14.00 / 15.30) and one Sunday service in winter (14.30) with an additional Sunday sailing in summer (departing 08.00). The vessel has capacity for up to 700 passengers and 143 cars (or 20 commercial vehicles) and in 2015 carried 232k passengers, 72k cars, 358 coaches, and 11.2k commercial vehicles.

Stornoway Airport, which attracts around 130,000 passengers annually, provides regular scheduled connections to Aberdeen (one daily flight Mon to Fri), Benbecula (twice daily Tues/Wed/Thurs), Edinburgh (one or two flights every day), Glasgow (up to four direct flights daily, plus two via Benbecula T/W/T) and Inverness (up to four flights daily). The Aberdeen service is operated by Eastern Airways, with the other four routes operated by FlyBe.

In addition to scheduled routes, private aircraft can also land at the airport by giving a minimum of three hours' notice for flights arriving from within the UK and 48 hours from flights outwith the UK. The airport is also the base of a Maritime Coastguard Agency Search and Rescue helicopter.

Stornoway has a considerable amount of [car parking](#) within the town centre and with the majority of on- and off-street spaces free, parking is well-used. There are four off-street car parks within the town centre, three of which are free (South Beach c.



150 spaces and 100 spaces; North Beach c. 30 spaces; and Kenneth Street c. 15 spaces) with Cromwell Street as pay & display (50p per hour, max 3 hours).

There is also on-street parking available throughout the town centre – most spaces are free but restricted to a maximum stay of one hour. We understand that there is

a current review of parking within the town centre and would suggest that some rationalisation would be of benefit, particularly introducing short-term and/or paid parking that ensures enough spaces are available for customers and visitors.

There appears to be limited cycling infrastructure within the town centre with no cycle parking racks identified, and no dedicated cycling lanes or routes. The islands of the Outer Hebrides are, however, a major destination for cyclists with the Lewis section of the Hebridean Way Cycling Route – a 62 mile route – taking cyclists from the Lochs of Lewis in the south to the Butt of Lewis in the north, via the Callanish Stones. The route does not connect with Stornoway, but a new section could be added along the existing road network that connects the town with the main route at Barvas and at Leurbost, effectively providing a circular route round Lewis.

In relation to [digital infrastructure](#), and similar to most rural communities, Stornoway has limited mobile and broadband connectivity. At present the town centre has good 3G mobile signal (indoor/outdoor) with 4G scheduled but no date for delivery. Outwith the town centre, 3G coverage is available outdoors across most of the town but drops to 2G coverage further afield.

Digital Scotland has been working to extend fibre broadband coverage across rural Scotland and premises in Stornoway were enabled in 2015. Service is, however, subject to available service provider product offerings.

Standard broadband (up to 17Mb, estimated speed 7Mb) is available across Stornoway and while some premises are connected to superfast broadband (fibre optic cabling, up to 76Mb) demand has outstripped the capacity of the street-side cabinets and further capacity is required.

There is no free WiFi service covering the whole of the town centre, but individual businesses provide access for customers.

## 4. Active Town Centre

### 4.1 Population and Housing

Stornoway had a [population](#) of 6,200 residents in 2013, a decline of 1.5% over the previous ten years. We have been unable to compile a reliable population base for the town centre as datazones do not fit comfortably into the town centre boundary. Taking a best fit against the Stornoway Development Area (covering the town centre and immediately adjacent areas) we have identified a population of around 3,200 people living in this area in 2013, representing a decline of 2.3% since 2004.

This decline is in contrast to most other towns where we have completed YTAs where the town centre population has increased. Across the 11 towns where we have been able to identify reliable TC population data there has been an average population increase of 12.6% over the previous ten years.

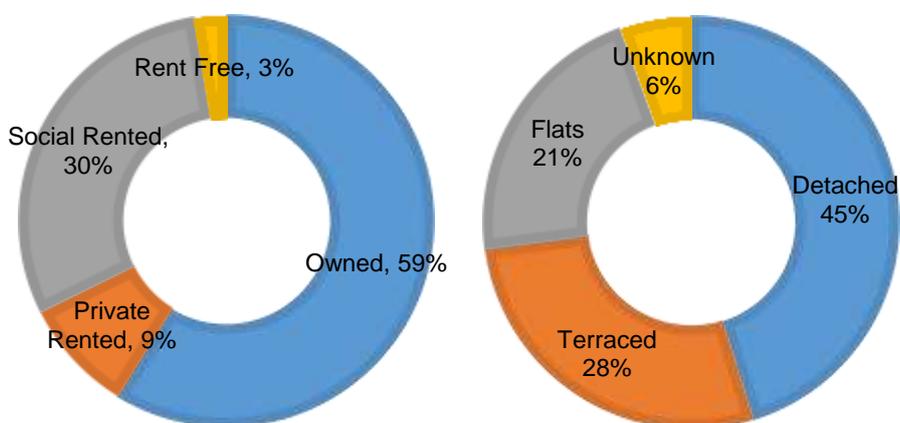
The decline in town centre population is also set against an overall increase in the population across CnES – 2.3% increase over the ten years to 2014. This is, however, below the increases at the national level of 5.2% or against comparator island authorities – Shetland at 5.2% and Orkney at 8.9%.

There is limited [housing](#) within the tightly defined town centre boundary – a small number of flats above retail and commercial properties and some recent new-build apartments. Of the 3,200 houses in the whole town 2.6% are listed as vacant – this is broadly in line with other YTA towns where the average is 3.3% vacant with a range from 1.0% in Kirkcaldy and Clarkston to 7.8% vacant in Kilmarnock.

Housing is largely a mix of detached/semi-detached (45%) and terraced (28%), with only 22% flatted dwellings. This is unusual compared to other towns but reflects the wider area definition used for Stornoway, and the limited number of homes above commercial premises in the town centre. It does, however, mean that there is limited footfall in the town centre outwith commercial hours and outwith the tourist season.

The average purchase price of a residential dwelling in Stornoway is £106k, an increase of 77% over the previous ten years. Whilst not the absolute highest price (and only marginally above the average of £100k), this is the highest increase of the YTA towns where we see an average increase of 50% across 13 towns. This increase does suggest supply/demand issues and potential to build more homes in the town. Focusing this development in the town centre would create a ready footfall for businesses and an element of passive policing outwith commercial trading hours.

### Stornoway Housing Mix



The data shows that 1.6% of all residential properties in Stornoway are second or holiday homes – this equates to just under 50 units. Compared to other YTA towns this is a small proportion – the average across 15 towns is 2% - particularly given Stornoway’s recognised status as an attractive holiday destination.

Of the YTAs completed, the urban towns around cities have very low levels of second/ holiday home ownership (typically under 1%) with rural and seaside towns tending to have higher rates. We are also aware that other Scottish islands have far higher rates of holiday home ownership – e.g. on Tiree the rate is around one-third of all dwellings. There are upsides and downsides from holiday homes, but it is likely that Stornoway could sustain a slightly higher rate, albeit this is likely to require an increase total stock to ensure that local resident needs are satisfied.

## 4.2 Employment and Business Base

The majority of Stornoway’s 6,400 jobs are likely to be based within the town’s Development Area, but there are a number of large employers located on its edge including CnES HQ, the Nicolson Institute (secondary school), Lewis Sports Centre, and the UHI Lews Castle College campus.

We are unable to identify the employment profile within the town centre, but based on our audit we have identified 92 **businesses** operating within the defined town centre, and 175 within the larger 'effective' town centre area. At an average of around 15 to 20 jobs per town centre business – identified from other YTA towns – we would assume that Stornoway has somewhere in the region of 2,600 to 3,500 within the wider 'effective' town centre area, around half of all jobs in the town.

Of the business base we identified, 42 and 71 are retailers (defined and effective TC area). Based on the population of 6,200 reported earlier there are 87 residents per town centre retail business (based on the effective TC area). This is lower than other YTA towns and reflects the role of Stornoway as the regional capital (for retail and services) and its profile as a tourist destination.

**87 residents per town centre retail outlet**

**71 town centre retail units in use**

**20 vacant town centre units**

### 4.3 Retail

Only 59% of all retail units within the effective TC area are located within the defined town centre boundary, but this varies between the type of retail use. Convenience retail uses are almost exclusively contained within the defined area (89%), whereas retail services are almost exclusively based in the wider area (75%).

The YTA analysis is based on the following retail definitions:

- **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 – *9 convenience retailers identified in Stornoway, of which 8 are within the defined town centre boundary;*
- **Comparison Retail:** all other retail purchases comprising goods bought at infrequent intervals where consumers will compare and contrast products and prices – *42 comparison retailers identified in Stornoway, of which 29 are within the defined town centre boundary;* and

- **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 – *20 retail service operators identified in Stornoway, or which only 5 are within the defined town centre boundary.*



Based on the YTA findings, it may be appropriate to review the defined town centre boundary to ensure that retail uses are predominantly contained within the 'town centre' and avoid further leakage of retail activity. This is slightly unusual as most town centres have an over-supply of retail units.

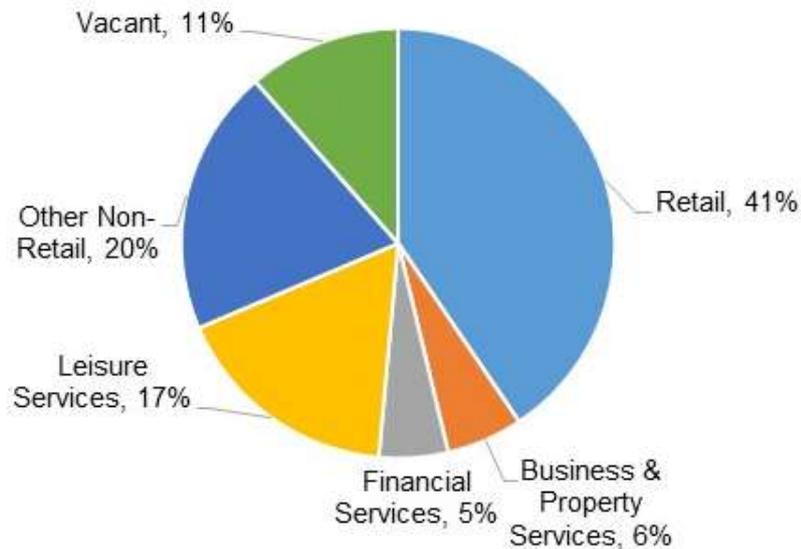
Within Stornoway we identified 20 vacant properties across the effective TC area, of which 9 are within the defined area. The overall vacancy rate is 11.4%, increasing slightly to 13.8% when non-retail units are excluded (e.g. places of worship, detached offices, transport hubs). The retail vacancy rate is marginally higher than the YTA average of 12.2% (from 15 towns) and is set within a range of 5.2% in Clydebank / 5.3% in Musselburgh to 16.7% in Kirkcaldy and 18.7% in Alexandria.

The vacancy rate needs to be taken into account in any review of the designated boundary – there is a need to understand why the vacant properties are not able to secure tenants. It may be due to the date of the audit – March – and that in the peak summer season there are few vacant properties. Or it may be that the vacant properties are not of a size, quality or price that is attractive to occupiers.

Shops in the town centre operate standard opening hours of around 9am to 5.30pm, Monday to Saturday, with a few opening on Sunday, mainly in the busy summer season. There are three supermarkets in Stornoway – all within the Development Area – none of which open on Sunday. The two Co-Op stores (Cromwell Street and Macaulay Road) open Monday to Saturday 8am to 10pm; the Tesco store (Ferry Road) opens Monday to Friday 6am to midnight, and Saturday 6am to 10pm.

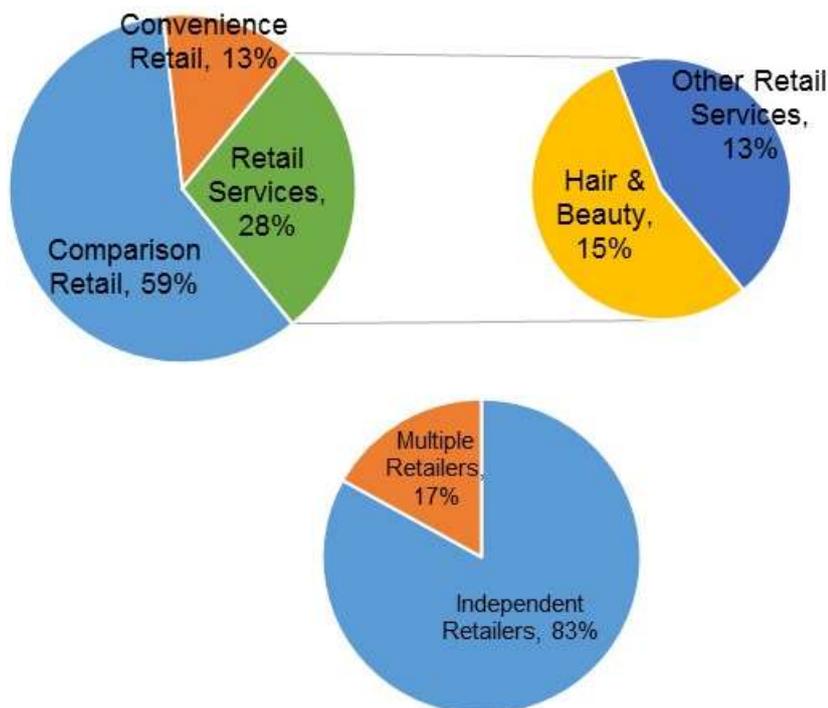
It is unusual to have no food store open on Sunday, and the Tesco outlet is noted as their only UK store that does not open on Sunday.

**Stornoway Town Centre Unit Mix – All Properties (excl. Residential)**

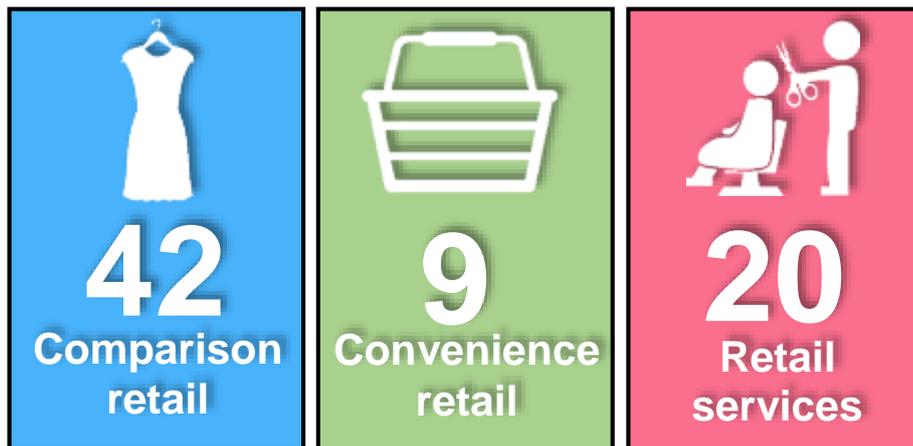


In line with other audited town centres, retail forms the largest single unit use, at 41% of all units, slightly higher than the 46% average across 14 YTA towns. Stornoway has a higher than average proportion of 'other non-retail' uses (35 units) – these are made up of a wide mix of uses including commercial businesses, places of worship and community-based charities.

**Stornoway Town Centre Retail Mix**



Stornoway has a very high proportion of independent retailers, creating a sense of uniqueness about the town's retail offering. At 83% this is the second highest level of independent retailers of all 16 YTA towns, behind only Eyemouth, and significantly above the average of 68%.



The town also has a higher proportion of comparison retail than the average across YTA towns – at 59% of all retail this is only marginally below the two highest rates in Clydebank (62%) and Ayr (61%) and again demonstrates the profile of Stornoway as the regional retail centre.

## 5. Attractive Town Centre

### 5.1 Overview

As discussed at the introduction, the public realm in Stornoway has been improved over the past decade through the focused effort of the partnership Regeneration Group, supported with the efforts of other organisations, groups and bodies. In particular, the introduction of leisure craft moorings along the seafront at Cromwell Street has created an active and attractive waterfront setting that complements the commercial port and harbour operations at South Beach.

The town's Conservation area is broadly in line with the 'effective' town centre area as defined through the YTA street audit, albeit the area includes the Lews Castle grounds on the west side of the river.



**Stornoway Conservation Area**



**Listed Buildings Stornoway TC**

Through Conservation Area status, CnES and partners secured £1.8m for the Stornoway Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI). This is part of the overall regeneration strategy for the town and is focused on conserving the historic environment as a driver of future growth. With THI funding, four key project elements have been delivered:

- public realm works – including Cromwell Street repaving and Lews Castle sea walls repair;
- property grants scheme – grant funding to repair and restore buildings using traditional materials and methods – 22 projects ranging from small building repairs to major refurbishments;
- critical project – the restoration and re-use of a major building in the town – the Category B listed Stornoway Town Hall; and
- complementary initiatives – activities and events to raise the profile and awareness of the conservation efforts, and training in traditional skills.



While these projects have delivered major improvements in the attractiveness of Stornoway town centre, it is clear from the audit that there are still areas within the town centre that would benefit from public realm improvements and building refurbishments. In particular, the street surfaces on Point Street and the seating area to the west of the Town Hall.



A second round of THI would further enhance the public realm within Stornoway and the attractiveness of the town for residents and visitors. Where possible, any further improvement should tie-in and enhance a series of existing improvement projects (public art, signage, lighting, etc) to bring together a sense of co-ordination across the town centre, although some aspects are likely to need complete replacement.

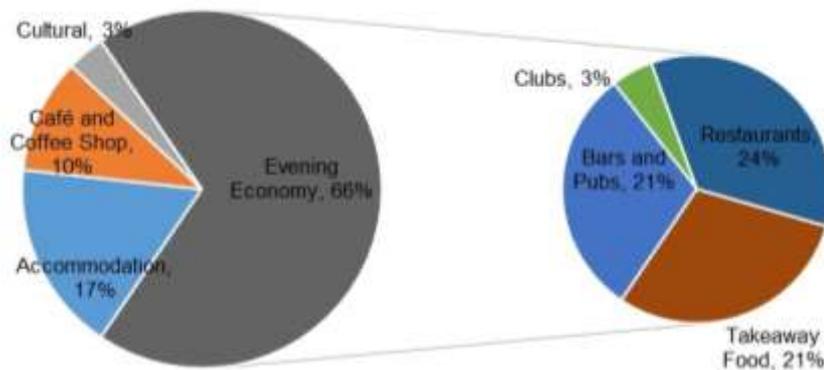
The town centre is a safe and attractive setting for pedestrians, with large parts pedestrianised or with restricted traffic access. There appears to be enough crossing points and the volume / speed of traffic does not feel threatening. There are a number of finger post directional signs, however, these would benefit from review and consolidation to give more clarity.



Improvements could also be achieved by addressing the issue of bin storage within the town centre, which somewhat detracts from the quality of the setting and improvement projects that have been completed. There is an abundance of bins across the town centre – of different styles and colours, many of which are in very prominent locations.

Recently, a number of local businesses have come together through the Stornoway Development Group to ensure that the town centre retains a focus within CnES forward strategy and investment priorities. There is a real opportunity to support this group, encourage input from all town centre businesses and build links across public and third sector services – all of which could support further project development and delivery in the town centre. Other towns have used their business groups (whether BID, Development Trust or other non-constituted body) to support project activity focused around marketing, events, promotion, lobbying, etc.

## 5.2 Leisure Mix



The leisure mix in Stornoway is dominated by 'evening economy' uses – these businesses are typically open during the day as well as evening.



The new leisure craft marina pontoons have added to the leisure mix in the town centre and create an active waterfront setting by attracting a broader mix of visitors to the town. Evidence from a wide range of research studies reports that water-borne visitors are relatively high spenders, particularly where they have step-shore access via pontoons, as in Stornoway. These are therefore a welcome addition.

There are also a number of leisure uses and activities located just outwith the town centre, including the Lewis Sports Centre – this offers a mix of wet and dry sports and leisure activities for residents and visitors to the town. There is also bowling green, tennis club and play grounds at Bayhead to the immediate north of the town centre; and an indoor soft play facility for children near the ferry terminal.

Lewis Castle, Museum and grounds also provide high profile leisure activities for residents and visitors, and once complete will significantly enhance the leisure offering. Further benefit could be secured from these major investments by improving access links with the town centre, which although visually close (over the river) are not easily navigable by visitors due to the absence of a pedestrian crossing point over the river.

The YTA street audit identified five hotels / B&B outlets in Stornoway – of which two are within the defined town centre (Crown and Royal Hotels) and three are in the wider 'effective' TC area (County Hotel, Heb Hostel and Stornoway B&B). There are also another two accommodation outlets within the town's Development Area (Hal O' the Wynd Guest House and Caladh Inn), plus the student/visitor accommodation block in the Bridge Centre.

The three town centre hotels (Crown, Royal and County) are independently owned and all have bar, restaurant and conferencing facilities.

### 5.3 Attractions and Heritage

The YTA street audit identified two formal tourist attractions within the town centre (in the wider effective TC area) – An Lanntair Arts Centre (cinema, art gallery, café, shop and event space) and Lewis Loom Centre (gift shop, guided tours, talks and demonstrations on Harris Tweed).

There is also an important site on the immediate edge of the town centre within the Development Area – Lewis Castle, Museum and Grounds (currently under major refurbishment) which, once complete and open, will be a major draw for visitors. As discussed earlier, further benefit could be achieved through the creation of a new pedestrian footbridge.

Given the number of heritage and listed buildings in the town centre it is somewhat surprising that there is no formal town trail or guide for visitors. A heritage trail (printed map, website or app) would help visitors to understand the rich heritage and history of the town. This could be taken forward as part of a second phase THI projects and include plaques on the key buildings.

#### 5.4 Attractiveness Review

The YTA includes an independent review of place and quality impressions.

Business confidence in the town centre was gauged from a small sample of interviews undertaken with 19 independent traders. Scores averaged at 7.8 / 10, considerably above the average of other YTA towns of 5.8 / 10. This is the highest individual score for completed YTA town audits and demonstrates good potential for the future.



Individual unit fronts and shop window displays were graded out of ten during the on-street audit, with the town centre average score of 7.4 / 10 for the condition of unit fronts (the second highest score and against an average of 6.9) and 6.8 /10 for the quality of window displays (marginally below the average of 7.0). There is therefore scope to build on the quality of the town’s built fabric – many traditional and good quality buildings – but potential to work with traders on visual merchandising.

It is important to note that some traders had excellent window displays with individual scores, with seven ranked at 10/10, and only eight scoring less than 5/10. A visual merchandising programme could be taken forward with the Stornoway Development Group, either bringing in the services of an external consultant or with advice and tips given by existing traders. This could also be taken forward with a co-ordinated town centre wide window display timed and themed with key events e.g. Lews Carnival, Stramash Music Fest, Hebridean Celtic Festival, etc. This approach would further enhance the unique sense of place for residents and visitors.

## 6. YTA Summary and Key Points

The following are offered as final comments on the Your Town Audit of Stornoway, within the framework of the Scottish Government's Town Centre Toolkit.

### 6.1 Accessible Town Centre

- Stornoway is the regional capital for the Outer Hebrides, providing the main retail and service function for a much larger population than just the residents of, and visitors to, Stornoway;
- in terms of the town centre as defined the Local Development Plan, it has a very tight boundary with considerable town-centre activity located within a wider 'effective' town centre area – it would be prudent to review the actual boundary and, if appropriate, re-zone to include parts of this wider area to ensure that relevant activity is contained within the defined town centre;
- the town has considerable levels of off- and on-street car parking – dependent on the results of the current parking review it may be prudent to rationalise parking and ensure that sufficient spaces are available for customers (residents and visitors) through the provision of short-term and/or paid car parking spaces;
- there is a need to improve the digital connectivity within the town centre, and indeed the wider town – both 4G mobile signal and enhanced broadband. This could be delivered alongside free town centre WiFi for customers; and
- cycling infrastructure in the town centre could be improved – this could be delivered alongside an extension to the island's main cycle route which does not currently connect with Stornoway.

### 6.2 Active Town Centre

- Stornoway is a busy and thriving town with a wide mix of uses and activities to draw in residents and visitors. The town's retail vacancy is 13.8% - this may have been a factor of the date of the audit (March) with more units being occupied during the busy tourist season. There is a need to understand why vacant retail units are not occupied, especially as this is set against considerable retail activity outwith the defined town centre, as discussed above;

- the town has a very attractive and traditional setting, with an active waterfront on all sides – commercial ferry and port activity to the south and leisure moorings to the west. Introduction of the leisure moorings has created an added sense of place and active waterfront – there may be potential to increase the number of moorings but priority should be given to short-term visitor moorings to ensure maximum spend (and economic impact) for the town’s businesses;
- increasing the resident population within the town centre would create activity outwith daytime business hours, increase passive policing and meet an anticipated demand. Stornoway has a lower profile of town centre living than the other YTA towns reviewed and, in these other towns, we have identified strong demand for town centre living with both higher increases in population and house prices than the town-wide averages; and
- there is potential to use the waterfront space at Cromwell Street – currently used for boat storage – as a public events area, particularly if this can be linked to a new pedestrian footbridge to Lews Castle grounds. This area could accommodate a range of civic, commercial and cultural events that would generate spin-off benefits for nearby retailers by increasing footfall.

### 6.3 Attractive Town Centre

- the town has an attractive public realm and key buildings have been improved through the Conservation Area and THI investment, but additional streetscape and associated signage/ furniture/ public realm improvements would further enhance the attractiveness of the town and preserve its heritage for the future;
- securing a further round of THI (or other investment model) could be delivered alongside a number of smaller projects that would add to the sense of place and attractiveness e.g. Town Trail, visual merchandising support, waste bin rationalisation;
- there has been a series of one-off public art projects undertaken at various times over recent years that help to enhance the unique sense of place in Stornoway and celebrate the town’s history and heritage – these have been delivered as individual projects by a number of groups, primarily the Stornoway Amenity Trust. Any further public artworks should seek to consolidate and build on the themes that are already in place to maximise the visual impact;

- the Stornoway Development Group –private sector businesses – should be supported to ensure that there is continued focus on, and investment in, the town centre and to build capacity within the town’s business base; and
- there is potential to work up some bespoke shovel-ready projects for the town centre that could respond to any new funding opportunities and further enhance the attractiveness of the town centre.