



Aberdeenshire
COUNCIL



TOWN CENTRE HEALTH CHECK SEPTEMBER 2021

HUNTLY, ABERDEENSHIRE



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INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

A town centre health check is recommended by the Scottish Government as a way of analysing the factors that contribute to successful town centres and indicate good standards of vitality and viability. Within national planning policy, the vitality of a centre is a measure of how lively and busy it is, whilst viability is a measure of its centre's capacity to attract ongoing investment (Scottish Planning Policy (SPP), paragraph 59).

Town Centre Health Checks have been completed in Aberdeenshire since 2003. However, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the need for robust baseline data, this report has been prepared using new methodology to showcase a fresh and updated approach for Aberdeenshire.

Aberdeenshire is an extremely attractive area with a variety of coastal and rural environments, commuter towns, high levels of employment, and there is considerable new housing and employment land planned for the near future. Maintaining town centres' attractiveness, activeness, and accessibility is vital for the region to be able to continue to thrive.

BACKGROUND

The importance of town centres is widely acknowledged. Town centres are at the heart of communities, providing a sustainable focus for shopping, business, leisure, services and community life, and shaping their sense of place. The planning system has an important role to play in supporting successful town centres, through influencing the form and type of future development. In order to assess how a centre should be supported, evidence of its current performance is required.

SPP sets out how successful, sustainable places can be created and maintained in Scotland. It is vital for town centres in Aberdeenshire to be successful and viable in order to provide for their populations and draw visitors.

Town centres with a vibrant retail scene, a wide variety of services, attractive buildings and open space create economic growth, attract more people to the region, and promote a sense of well-being and identity.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to present the results of the Town Centre Health Check 2021 for Huntly. The results are presented to enable an understanding of the vitality and viability of the town centre. The results are not to be considered definitive of the well-being of a town centre, but rather they are intended to provide an evidence-based comparative perspective on this matter and assist in identifying actions that could be undertaken to improve and maintain their status.

WHY COMPLETE A HEALTH CHECK?

Health checks contribute to the planning system's efforts to support successful town centres through giving an overview of their current performance. They provide an analysis of the infrastructure and viability of the town centre which can be used to inform the Local Development Plan and decisions on planning applications. The findings are also utilised to create help a stronger "town centre first principle" policy.

METHODOLOGY

TOWN CENTRE HEALTH CHECKS SHOULD:

- Support implementation of the Local Development Plan
- Add value by collecting data on a wider set of indicators that provide insight into economic, social and environmental factors that play a part in the vitality of a town centre
- Have a clear, easy to follow and accessible format and methodology
- Work collaboratively both within the Council and externally with businesses and the community to collect and share baseline data
- Provide the foundation for other town strategies and plans and any subsequent funding applications

To achieve these results, the following methods of data collection and presentation were utilised:

DESK TOP RESEARCH

Desk top research was completed to provide the critical first step of gathering information for the town centre. Background information on the current situation of the town centre was then analysed further when out on site. Data was gathered from within the Council and from external partners.

COMMUNITY SURVEY

The community survey was designed to gain an understanding of the views of both the residents and visitors of the town centre. The survey was available on Engage HQ, shared via a press release, advertised on the Council's Social Media and emailed to relevant groups to advertise further. The survey asked questions on several different topics and provided respondents the opportunity to identify what improvements they would like to see to the town centre. The survey was open for three weeks and received 195 responses. A summary of the responses received can be seen on page 46.



Look out for: Quote Boxes. Comments were asked for in both the community and business surveys and a selection have been included in the report to give a flavour of the different responses received.

METHODOLOGY (CONTINUED)

BUSINESS SURVEY

The survey was available on Engage HQ and shared via Huntly Development Trust, Huntly Community Council, Huntly Business Association and The Gordon Schools for completion. Several topics were questioned, including the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on businesses. It also gave an opportunity to comment on improvements they would like to see to the town centre. The survey was open for three weeks and received 20 responses. A summary of the responses received can be seen on page 46.

FOOTFALL COUNT

The footfall count was completed at two locations throughout the town centre to gain information on the vitality at different times of the day. Four time slots were selected to gain information of the vibrancy in the morning, afternoon and evening. The counts were completed for 15-minute periods on a weekday and weekend to try and gain an insight into the number of people moving around the town centre. These footfall counts were a team effort and carried out by Aberdeenshire Council Officers, and members of the Community Council, Huntly Development Trust, Business Association and the local community.

SITE SURVEY

This work was completed on a clear day and provided up to date information on the vitality and viability of the town centre. Several recording methods were used including maps, photographs and written analysis. The Place Standard themes were used to analyse the town centre and allowed for different themes to be analysed on an individual basis but also as a collective.

ACCESSIBILITY AUDIT

Supported by Community Learning and Development officers, we worked with members of the local community with lived experience to undertake an assessment of the town centre, reviewing footway surfaces and obstructions, facilities and signage, maintenance and enforcement, personal security, crossing points and access to buildings. The survey took place on a wet day over two hours.

How a place looks, its history and what other people think of the place can affect how we feel. A strong local identity can help us feel pride in our place, our community and in ourselves as a result.

Observations: Those who use the town centre overwhelmingly feel negative towards it. This is demonstrated by the comments received, where the recent decline is felt strongly by many people who knew the town of old. The word 'sad' is often used to describe the town. However, it is recognised that there is an extensive network of community organisations, working together to begin the process of regeneration which will hopefully have an impact in coming years.

The growth of Huntly: The town grew up around the original castle known as the Peel of Strathbogie, built in the **1180s**. Huntly was historically known as Milton of Strathbogie until **1506**, when Alexander, the third Earl of Huntly was granted a charter to change it to the name we know today. In **1769** the Duke of Gordon established a planned town. By **1799** Huntly had 3,000 inhabitants and a range of industries were based here, with textiles playing a significant part. The railway arrived in **1854** and the town was by-passed in the **1970's**, providing faster connections to Aberdeen and Inverness. The clock tower was built in **1890** and is one of a number of buildings in the town centre largely constructed of an impressive grey stone. The town today is primarily a local service centre with agricultural trades and food processing.

Sources: Understanding Scotland's Places and Undiscovered Scotland.

IDENTITY & BELONGING



How Do You Feel About Huntly Town Centre?

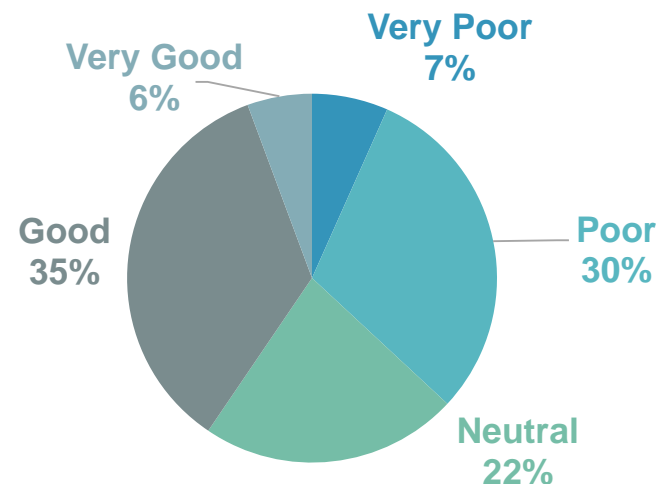


17% Community
10% Businesses



83% Community
90% Businesses

IN YOUR OPINION, COMMUNITY SPIRIT IN THE TOWN CENTRE IS?



"There has been a slow, but steady decline in the town centre over the past 10-15 years."

"What used to be a thriving town looks depressing, uncared for and soulless. With Asda and Tesco it's become just another generic town with no social or business heart."

"No life to the town centre whenever I visit these days. After growing up in Huntly and knowing how bustling the Square/ Duke Street area used to be, it's very sad to see."

"The town is untidy, unkempt, failing and forgotten."

"There are few shops, no bank facilities, and the town feels deserted. Such a sad little town now, compared to 10 years ago."

"The town has changed a lot over the recent years but there are a lot of positive changes taking place."

"Historically it was a lovely town centre. I guess I'd rate it positive because of some loyalty to that history and some of the businesses there."

"I know the community are doing a lot to try and revitalise the centre of Huntly, which makes me feel positive about it."

Feeling safe in and around the places that we spend time can have a significant impact on people's activities and on their health and wellbeing. Through their design and maintenance, good places should feel safe and secure for all, and help to minimise crime and antisocial behaviour.

Observations: Safety during the day was the most positive rated category by both businesses and visitors to the town in the surveys which is reflected in the crime statistics. Safety during the evening was less positive, with many more neutral and poor responses. Comments given seemed to relate the increase in poor responses to antisocial behaviour. CCTV was suggested by a number of respondents. Some lighting columns were needing maintenance.

Key Safety Features:



Lighting was well distributed across the town but some of the columns were poorly maintained



No central CCTV system in place

"There's been no money spent in Huntly for years - the square and surrounding area's are in a bad state street lights are broken and got sandbags covering where they should be and they're needing painted."

31

Incidences of crime reported

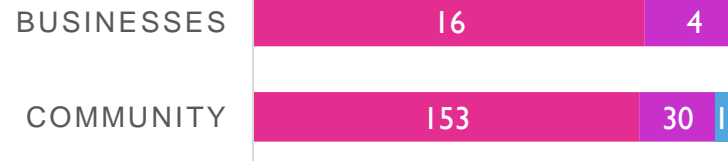
1st September 2020 – 31st August 2021
Police Scotland

FEELING SAFE



HOW WOULD YOU RATE: SAFETY DURING THE DAY?

■ Good ■ Neutral ■ Poor



Images (Clockwise from Top Left): Some maintenance required; Standard LED lighting; Mixture of traditional lighting styles in the Square.

"CCTV to stop unruly behaviour."

"A greater police presence at night who take positive action in cutting down the noise and anti social behaviour of both car racers and drunken behaviour from pubs, especially at the weekends."

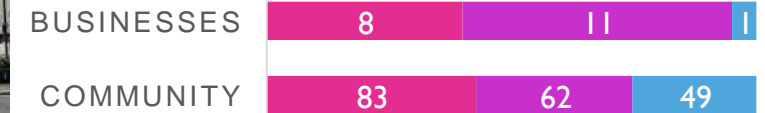
"It's friendly, feels safe and clean."

"We definitely need CCTV in the Square."

"Traffic on the top end of Duke Street is an issue with illegal parking requiring passing vehicles to drive into areas designated for pedestrians."

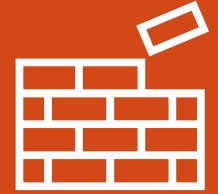
HOW WOULD YOU RATE: SAFETY DURING THE EVENING?

■ Good ■ Neutral ■ Poor



Places that are well cared for can make us feel positive, while those that are not looked after properly can have the opposite effect. Proper maintenance arrangements allow people to feel supported and more positive about where they live.

CARE & MAINTENANCE



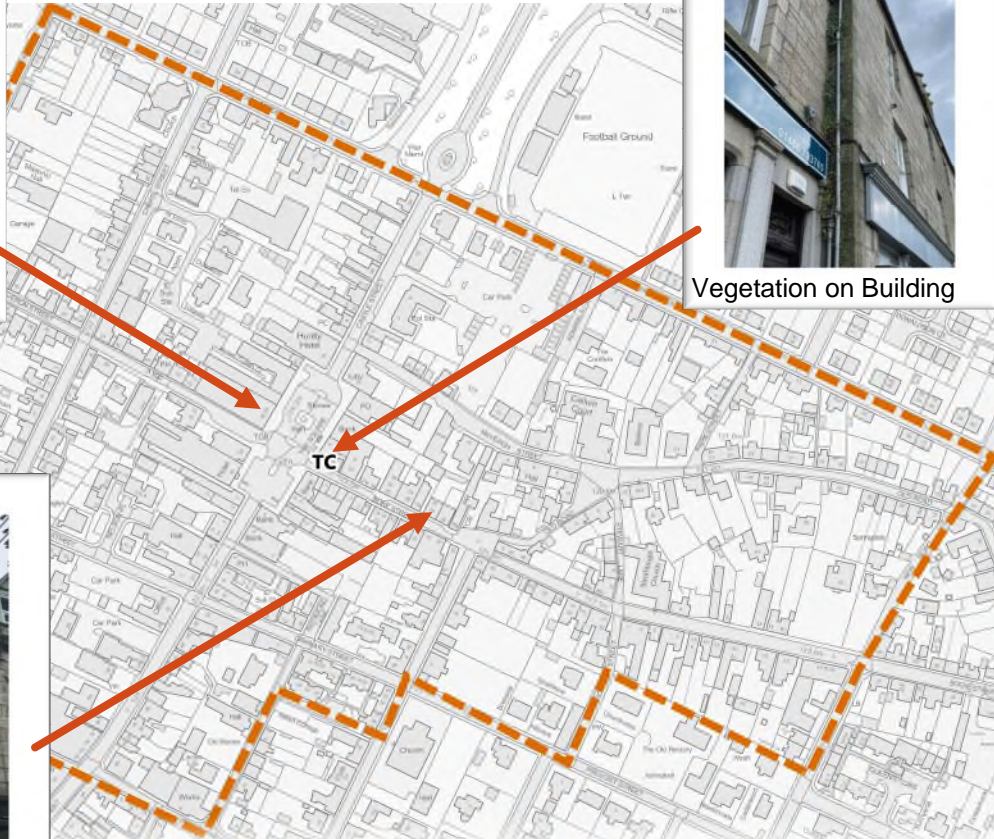
Old Cruickshanks building



Vegetation on Building



Weeds growing out of gutters



Observations: There were a large number of comments received through the surveys in terms of the upkeep of buildings. Most of the comments noted that there needs to be better maintenance to ensure that they help to improve the look of the town centre and to improve the safety of the buildings. Care and maintenance of buildings was rated within the bottom five topics through both the community and business surveys.

The images (left) give an impression of the town centre environment.

HOW WOULD YOU RATE: CARE & MAINTENANCE OF BUILDINGS?

■ Good ■ Neutral ■ Poor

BUSINESSES	2	3	15
COMMUNITY	8	53	130

"Maintenance would be a good start. Danger of being hit by falling masonry is a real risk!"

"Need to improve the buildings - maintenance is poor."

"Weeding and general maintenance in The Square is required."

"Building owners should be made to maintain their buildings."

People's views about their local area should be heard. Having a voice in decision making and feeling able to make changes can help to build stronger communities and better places. Having a sense of control can make people feel positive about their lives.

INFLUENCE & SENSE OF CONTROL



Observations: Huntly Town Centre is well represented with a number of different organisations working together to ensure the best outcomes for residents and businesses alike. The Huntly Town Team provides the mechanism for this. Awareness of the groups in the wider community is good.

Town Centre Groups	Huntly & District Development Trust (HDDT)	Huntly Business Association (HBA)	Huntly Community Council	Deveron Projects
Legal Status	Registered Scottish Charity (SC043353)	Constituted Group	Community Council	Registered Scottish Charity (SC024261)
Membership	Volunteer Board; 500+ community and business members	Businesses from the Huntly and District area.	The community; 11 Councillors*	Volunteer Board
Responsibilities	HDDT work with others to build a resilient, inclusive, enterprising community capable of dealing with ongoing change. They work across a wide variety of projects including Huntly Travel Hub, Greenmyres, town centre regeneration, sports, leisure and wellbeing, heritage and energy. Currently the team are transforming the old Cruickshank building into a multi-purpose venue in the heart of the town.	HBA support all businesses large and small in Huntly and the surrounding areas. They aim to provide a united voice for their Business Members as well as support and networking opportunities. Promoting local projects such as FiverFest.	Community Councils (CC) are the most local tier of statutory representation in Scotland, bridging the gap between local authorities and communities. Key tasks: Representing CCs on other organisations; Campaigning on local issues; Conducting local surveys; Organising public meetings on major development proposals or the Local Development Plan; Statutory Body for public consultation on Planning and Licensing; Representing and providing a platform for public views. Meet every 3 rd Thursday in person or via Zoom.	Deveron Projects connects artists, communities and places through creative research and engagement. The group work to the <i>town is the venue</i> framework to contribute to the social wellbeing of the town. They inhabit, explore, map and activate the place through artist driven projects. Current projects include the Square Deal, the White Wood and Place/Art/Folk.
Contact	www.huntlydt.org	Huntly Business Association	Huntly Community Council	www.deveron-projects.com

*Correct at time of survey.

59% of community survey respondents are aware of groups that support the town centre.

The word cloud (right) shows all responses given, when asked to name groups involved with the town centre. HDDT (58), Deveron Projects (29) and the Community Council (12) received the most mentions.

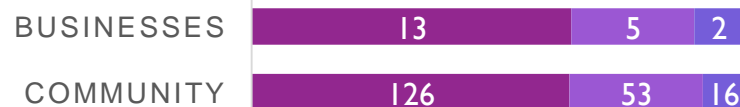


Walking and cycling are good for both our health and the environment. Good places can support and encourage people to walk and cycle by providing good quality routes and a pleasant and safe experience.

Observations: The town centre is a shared space between vehicles and pedestrians. Getting around the town centre was rated well by both community and visitors. However, Huntly Town Centre is very poorly served by infrastructure to support getting around. There is no pedestrian signage, no maps and only one cycle rack for parking. There are no dedicated cycle paths. Huntly is defined as an Integrated Travel Town and a five-year [Masterplan](#) was published in 2018.

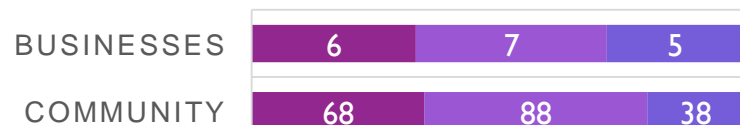
HOW WOULD YOU RATE: GETTING AROUND THE TOWN CENTRE?

■ Good ■ Neutral ■ Poor



HOW WOULD YOU RATE: SIGNAGE?

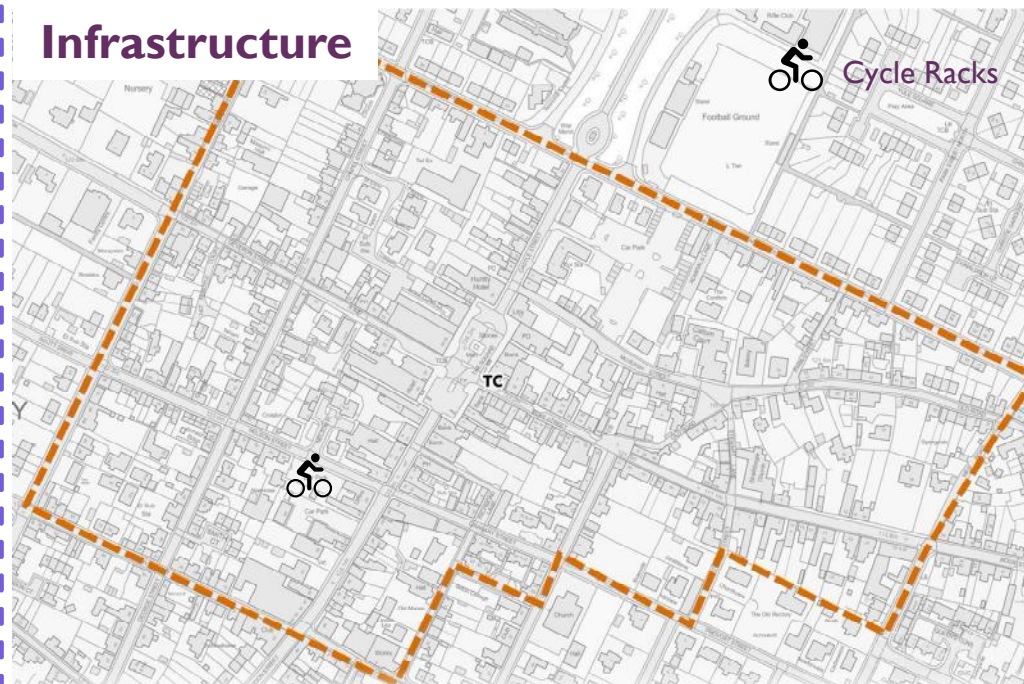
■ Good ■ Neutral ■ Poor



MOVING AROUND



Infrastructure



"Improvement - Make walking and cycling more attractive...introduce landmark lighting, improve interpretation and signage."

"Improved smart signage."

"More signage and celebration of Huntly."

"Bike paths would be a great idea too....it's not the greatest to go on your bike from the square to Asda on your bike. It is a more difficult route with busier roads especially with young children still building up confidence on their bikes."

"Improvement - Bicycle parking."

HOW WOULD YOU RATE: CYCLE PARKING?

■ Good ■ Neutral ■ Poor





Image: Covered cycle racks at Nelson Street carpark.

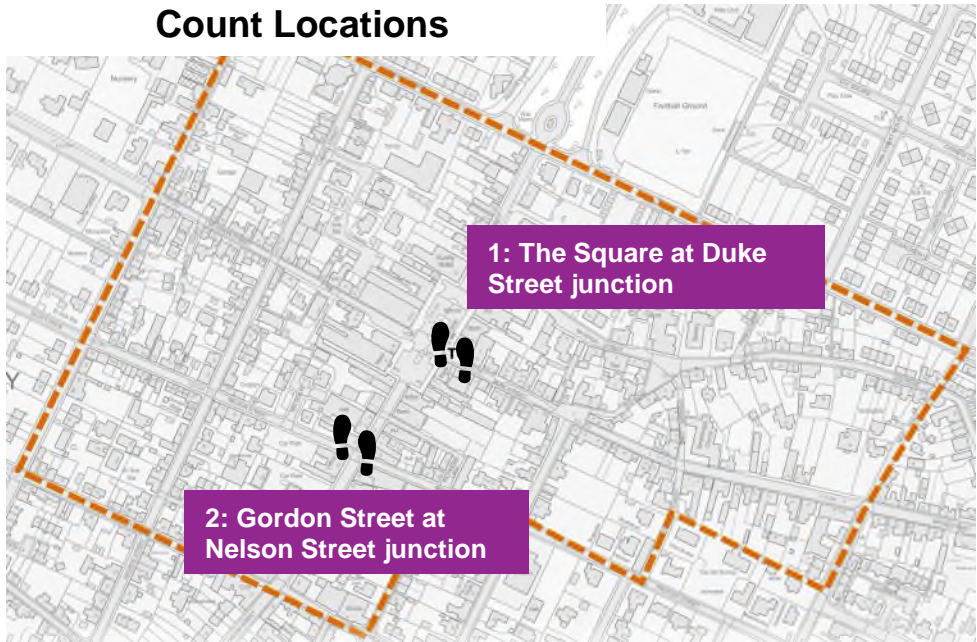
MOVING AROUND: FOOTFALL SURVEY

Footfall is a measure of the vitality of the town centre and can be directly linked to economic activity.

Pedestrian counts were undertaken on Wednesday 15th and Saturday 25th September for a duration of 15 minutes, four times a day, in two locations.

The pedestrian count findings showed the highest footfall count was recorded in the Square on Saturday morning (125 people). It was also the busiest count point in general over the course of the footfall survey.

Day	Time	Location 1	Location 2	Hourly Total	Overall Total
Wednesday 	09:30	57	62	119	441
	11:30	76	68	144	
	14:30	55	48	103	
	18:00	28	47	75	
Saturday 	09:30	91	51	142	575
	11:30	125	61	186	
	14:30	58	91	149	
	18:00	42	56	98	
Totals		532	484	1016	



HEADLINES

Busiest Location: The Square
Busiest Time: 11:30
Busiest Day: Saturday

Quietest Location: Gordon Street
Quietest Time: 18:00
Quietest Day: Wednesday

MOVING AROUND: ACCESSIBILITY AUDIT



Participants were recruited from the local community to undertake a survey to identify the effect of roads on people who walk and to identify barriers to walking and enhance opportunities to improve connectivity, attractiveness and safety.

Volunteers reviewed the following elements, and their comments are noted on the next page:

- Footway surfaces and obstructions;
- Facilities and signage;
- Maintenance and enforcement;
- Personal security;
- Crossing points;
- Access to buildings.

The survey took place on Wednesday 22nd September 13:00 – 15:00. The weather was wet but mild.

ACCESSIBILITY AUDIT:

Observations: Participants identified a number of consistent themes during the audit:

- Yellow and white lines are very poorly maintained across the town centre.
- Poorly maintained tactile pavements and road surfaces.
- Some pavements are difficult to navigate due to being narrow or shared space with vehicles. This is exacerbated by large delivery vehicles and buses, which was witnessed in Deveron Street. However, wide pavements around The Square are good.
- Sense of safety - The town centre feels safe and roads are generally easy to cross.
- Overall the town centre streets and public areas have a run-down, uninviting feel.



"Narrow roads and pavements are dangerous for pedestrians."



"This (left photograph) is a disabled parking space but markings and yellow lines around The Square are very faded."



"Empty buildings are a hazard as sometimes bits fall off."



"Duke Street feels unsafe when walking with my young kids because of the lack of definition between the road and the pavement, especially when big vehicles come down."



"Gordon Street – Yellow and white lines faded and the pedestrian crossing is badly faded too."



"Badly damaged road/ crossing at the top of Duke Street."



"There is damaged tactile paving across the town centre."



"These damaged pavements are a trip hazard."

"Narrow corners are difficult to navigate."

Access to an affordable, reliable and well-connected public transport service is important for all communities. Good public transport encourages people to get around in ways that are better for the environment.

Observations: Huntly has good links east and west via bus and rail (the railway station being 0.5 miles from the town centre) to Inverurie, Aberdeen and Inverness. Access to settlements not on the A96 is limited, particularly in the evening. However, there is an A2B door-to-door service. There is one bus stop in The Square where real time information can be accessed. The majority of survey respondents seemed happy with public transport, however 27% of community respondents rated it poor and this is reflected in some of the comments received.

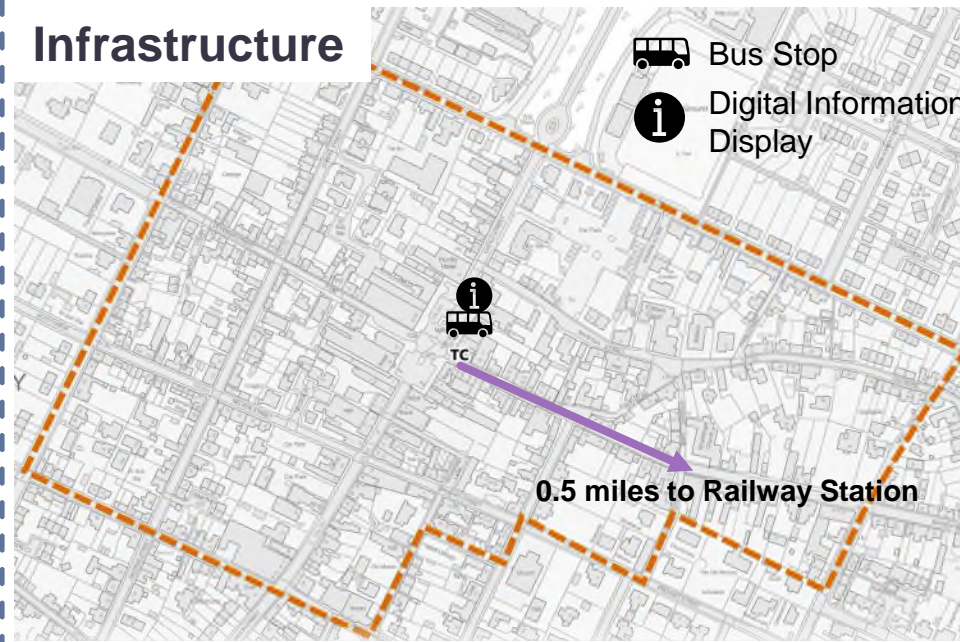


Images (Top to Bottom): The main bus interchange in The Square; Real time digital information display.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT



Infrastructure



HOW WOULD YOU RATE: PUBLIC TRANSPORT?

■ Good ■ Neutral ■ Poor



"I have no bus service to get to Huntly, I have to have a car."

"Not enough bus or trains running to help attract outwith town."

"We have good links both north and south between major cities!"

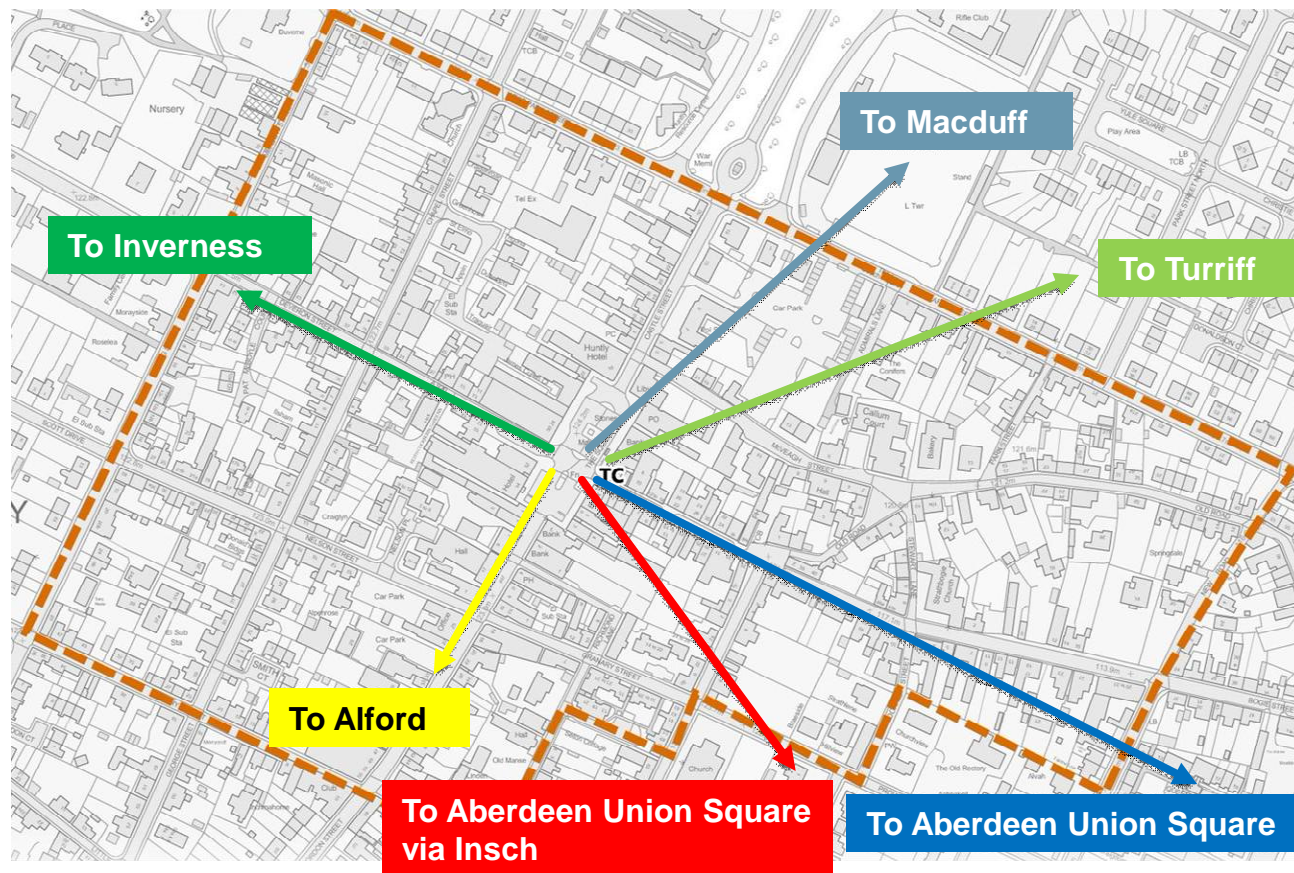
"Not terribly easy to get to Huntly by public transport or active travel even though I only stay in Forgue."

"Bus links from Rhynie do not coincide with rail services and are extremely limited."

"Public transport is good to larger towns but trying to get to work by bus from smaller towns is difficult."

"More buses and trains, more taxis (two taxi companies for whole town, impossible to get one in the morning or afternoon as they do school runs)."

PUBLIC TRANSPORT ROUTES



Key:

	Bus Route 10/10B		Bus Route 303
	Bus Route 10/10B		Bus Route 301
	Bus Route 10C		Bus Route 231

An [A2B dial-a-bus](#), pre-booked minibus service is available in Huntly. In most cases a door-to-door service is provided, operating during weekdays. The service is free to use.

Route*	Frequency (per week day)	Fastest Journey Time	Earliest Travel Time	Latest Travel Time	Cost (Single Standard Ticket)
Bus to Aberdeen (10/ 10B)	16	1hr 34mins	05:39	22:05	£11.00
Bus to Inverness (10/ 10B)	10	2hrs 38mins	07:32	18:09	£11.00
Bus to Aberdeen via Inch (10C)	1	1hr 41mins	08:49	-	£11.00
Bus to Macduff (301)	4	58mins	10:10	17:40	£6.50
Bus to Turriff (303)	2	41mins	08:35	12:20	£5.50
Bus to Alford (231)	1	44mins	15:52	-	£4.00

* Correct at time of survey

Too much traffic can cause problems for people who live in, work in, or visit an area. Traffic and parking arrangements that allow people to move around safely can help people to get the most out of a place.

TRAFFIC & PARKING

TRAFFIC



Image: The Square.

HOW WOULD YOU RATE: TRAFFIC FLOW?

■ Good ■ Neutral ■ Poor

BUSINESS	9	9	2
COMMUNITY	68	83	44

"Traffic issues on Duke Street need to be dealt with."

"Pedestrianisation of all/part of the Square."

"There should maybe be some times that there should be no traffic allowed in the town centre."

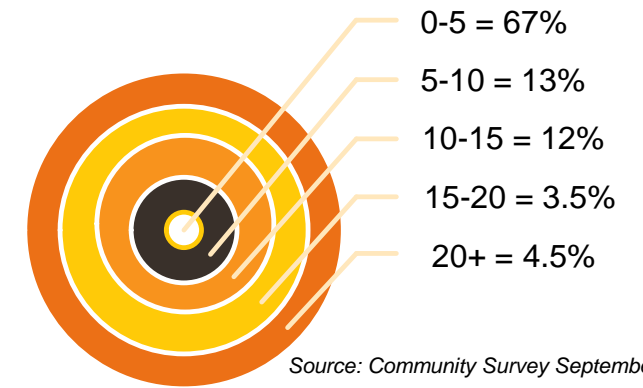
"Traffic management is poor, cars should be diverted away from the square which could be attractively pedestrianised to make moor of a gathering space."

"Remove traffic and make it easier for people to move around the town centre."

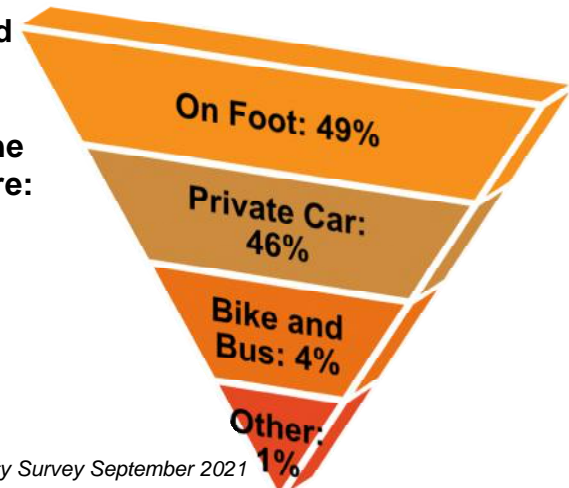
Observations: A number of comments received were in relation to removing traffic from the town centre all together, with a few noting that it would then be easier for pedestrians to move around. A few comments were also received noting the misuse of parking on Duke Street and the request for this to be monitored.

The majority of users of Huntly Town Centre through the survey come from less than 5 miles and just under 50% of users to the town centre come on foot.

Distance Travelled to Use the Town Centre (Miles)



How would you generally travel to the town centre:



TRAFFIC & PARKING

CAR PARKING AFFORDABILITY

Parking Costs

£0.50

Average hourly rate
September 2021

HOW WOULD YOU RATE: PARKING AFFORDABILITY?

■ Good ■ Neutral ■ Poor

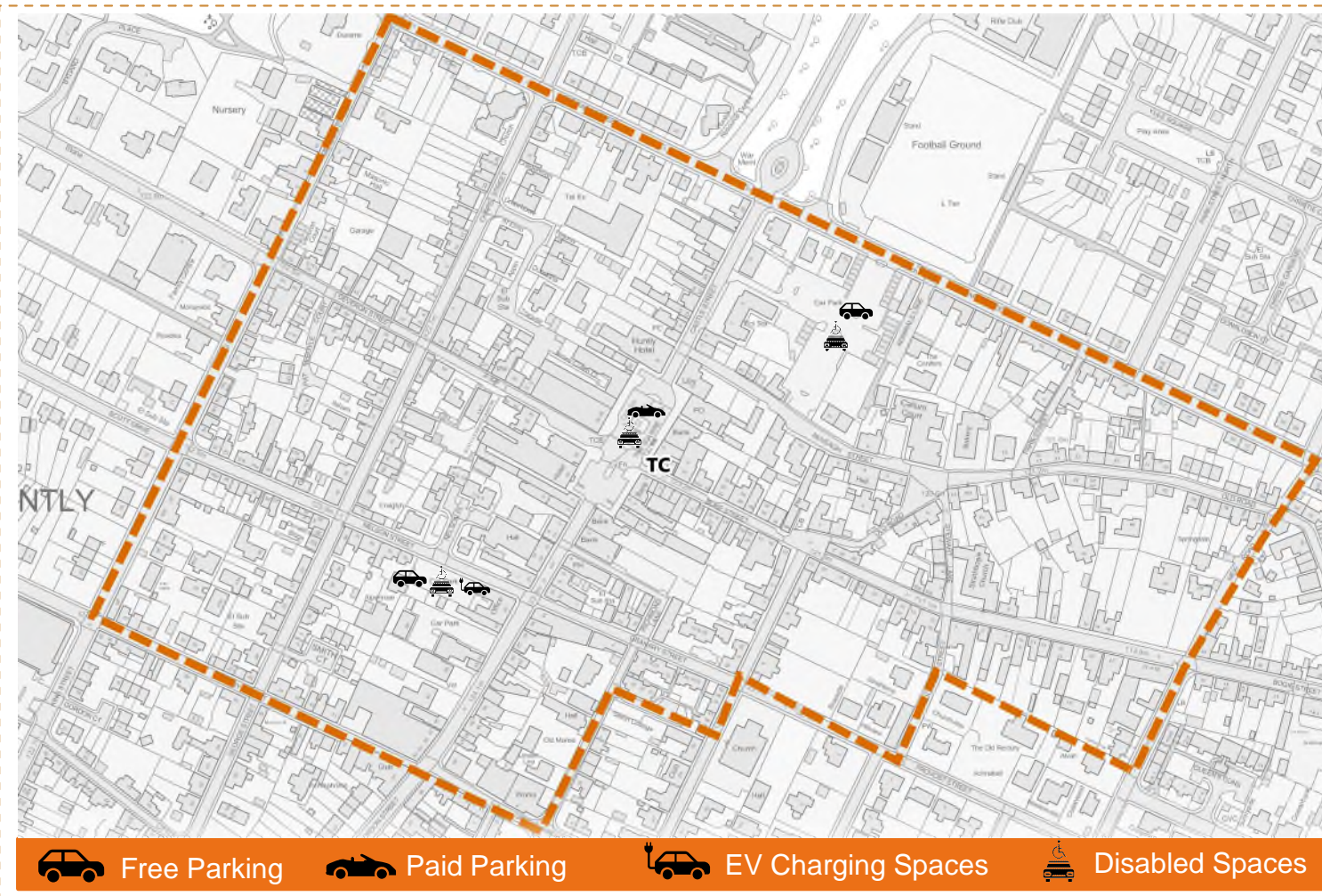
BUSINESS	4	10	6
COMMUNITY	56	80	58

"There is too much emphasis on paid parking."

"Offer free parking in the town centre."

"More free parking spaces."

"Make spaces free in The Square so that people can pop into shops."



TRAFFIC & PARKING

CAR PARKING AVAILABILITY



Images: Car Park Sign, The Square.

“Traffic wardens should be there occasionally to ensure that people are aware of the regulations.”

“There needs to be better quality parking.”

“Parking should be reduced or removed from the town centre.”

“Get rid of the parking in the square and create a lovely eating/ meeting area.”

HOW WOULD YOU RATE: PARKING AVAILABILITY?

■ Good ■ Neutral ■ Poor

BUSINESS	10	10	
COMMUNITY	96	62	37

Spaces

105

No. of Free Spaces

31

No. of Paid Spaces

9

No. of Disabled Spaces

2

No. of EV Charging Spaces

Observations: There were mixed responses received relating to both parking availability and affordability.

Respondents to the community survey indicated that they would like to see more free parking within the The Square as this would help local businesses.

The main themes that came through the survey for parking availability was that what is there needs to be better and that it needs to be monitored better by wardens. Additionally, a number of comments were received through this topic and traffic flow noting some community aspirations to see the parking and traffic removed from The Square to allow for a meeting space to be installed instead for the local community.

TRAFFIC & PARKING

EV CHARGING POINTS

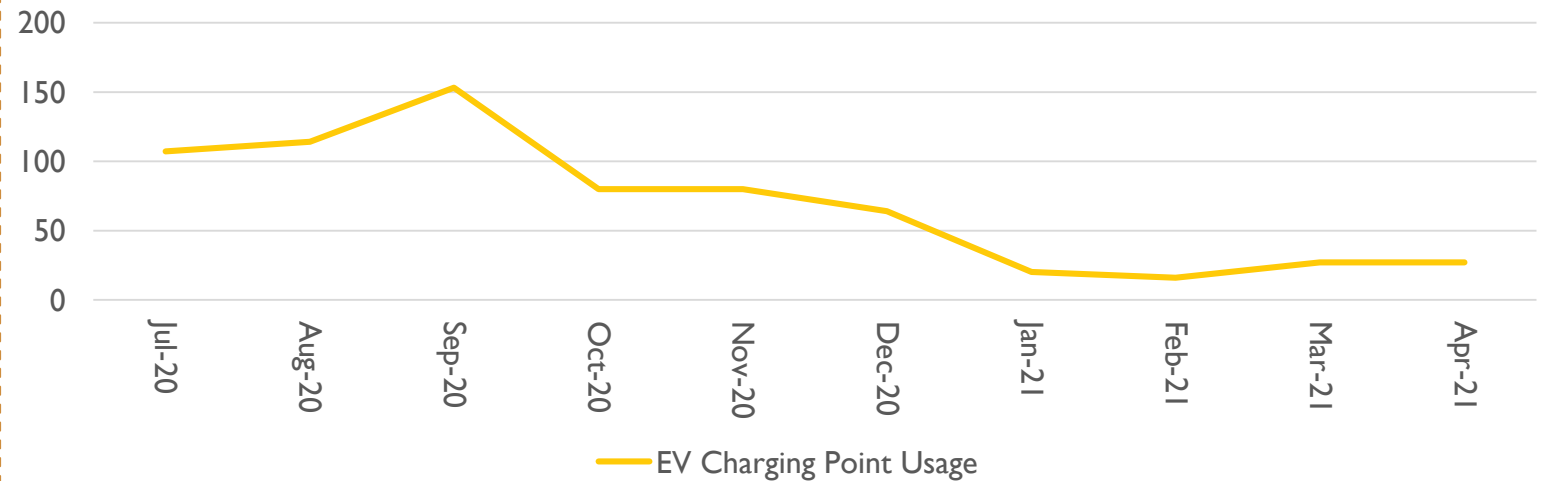
EV Charging Points

2 No. of 50kW charging spaces



Image: Nelson Street Car Park.

EV Charging Point Usage



Observations: The COVID-19 pandemic will have had an impact on this with Scotland being in lockdown for the first quarter of 2021.

EV Charging Points



September 2020

Highest monthly usage of the charging points in Burn Lane

Observations: There are two spaces for electric vehicles in the town centre and are both located within the Nelson Street Car Park. At time of the site visit none of the spaces were in use but looking at usage data since their installation the spaces are used on a regular basis.

Buildings, landmarks, greenery, views and natural landscape can all help to create an attractive, distinctive place that people enjoy. These features can also help people to find their way around.

HOW WOULD YOU RATE: ATTRACTIVENESS OF TOWN?

■ Good ■ Neutral ■ Poor

BUSINESS



COMMUNITY



Observations: There are a number of architecturally significant buildings within Huntly Town Centre which make for an attractive setting. A number of comments were also received through the surveys noting that the volunteers who plant the planters help to brighten up the town centre and again make for an attractive setting.

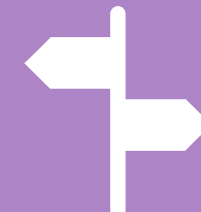
However, there are a number of buildings that are impacting on the attractiveness of the town centre due to the lack of maintenance, this is particularly in relation to the vacant units within the town centre.

“Make The Square more attractive with planters and more places to sit.”

“Regular maintenance of street furniture is required within the town centre.”

STREETS & SPACES

ATTRACTIVENESS OF TOWN CENTRE



Planters in The Square



Stewarts Hall



Huntly Hotel Building



Duke Street

Observations: There are 58 listed buildings within Huntly Town Centre covering all listing categories. There are 34 Category C listed, 22 Category B listed and 2 Category A listed building. The A listed buildings are both associated with the St Margaret's Roman Catholic Church on Chapel Street. The listed buildings within the town centre are generally in very good condition and this should be monitored to ensure that this continues. There are no buildings on the Buildings at Risk Scotland register.



Image: Listed Buildings, The Square.

STREETS & SPACES: HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT



STREETS & SPACES: SEATING



HOW WOULD YOU RATE: SEATING/ AREAS TO CONGREGATE

■ Good ■ Neutral ■ Poor

BUSINESSES



COMMUNITY



"More seating areas would be an improvement."

"Get rid of the parking and create a lovely seating area in The Square."

"More seating."

"More outside seating and not more cold stone benches."

"Some of the seats within the town centre need painted."

Observations: The available seating was in relatively good condition, with all of the seating being located within The Square and was well utilised during the site visit. The seating outside the Library have been designed differently than the rest of the benches within the Square and are engraved with information.

A large number of comments were received through the survey noting the desire to see additional seating within the town centre.

Observations: There is limited public art within the town centre with the only art located within The Square. The first are the decorative benches outside the library which are engraved and are in good condition. These provide a focal point outside the library.

The other public art within The Square is the use of the currently vacant unit (former Cruickshanks building) windows to display what Huntly has to offer to tourists.



STREETS & SPACES: PUBLIC ART



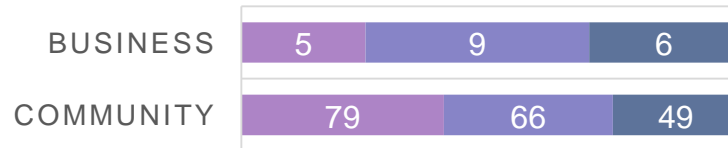
Public Art

Images (Top Left and Clockwise): Benches outside the Library The Square and Empty Windows in former Cruickshanks building, The Square.

STREETS & SPACES: PAVEMENTS

HOW WOULD YOU RATE: PAVEMENT CLEANLINESS?

■ Good ■ Neutral ■ Poor



“Pavements are not maintained well and are often dirty with food, rubbish (high school pupils quite often the reason for this) but also so many cigarette ends in the square and dog mess a frequent problem throughout the town.”

“The pavements need tidied.”

“Need cleaner pavements.”

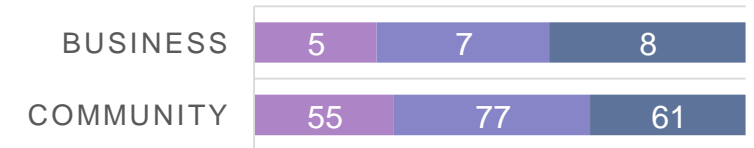
“Pavements are dirty.”

Observations: In general the condition of the pavements over the town centre was good however there were areas where the pavements were dirty or where potential trip hazards were noted. This is something that was also highlighted through the comments of the surveys. One of the main themes coming through the surveys was the need for the pavements to be maintained in terms of the level and the cleanliness of them.



HOW WOULD YOU RATE: PAVEMENT QUALITY?

■ Good ■ Neutral ■ Poor



“Pavements need to be accessible for disabled people.”

“Improved pavements and signage - making it more useful to the disabled and blind.”

“Pavements need to be upgraded.”

“People need to stop parking on pavements as it damages the pavements.”

“The pavements are uneven and easy to trip up on and very slippery when wet, they would be better tarred. The cobbles on Duke street are a disgrace too, uneven and looks terrible.”

"There needs to be regeneration of vacant units."

"Utilise the empty buildings."

"Fill the empty retail units."

"Empty shops need to need to be kept tidy, our town square is starting to look scruffy."

STREETS & SPACES: VACANT RETAIL UNITS


Observations: The vacancy rate within the town centre at the time of survey was 25% which is relatively high and is something that will require to be monitored. The vacancy rate is also substantially higher than the Scottish average at the time of the survey, Q3 2021, which is 15% (Scottish Retail Consortium and Local Data Company).

The vacancy rate is something that was highly commented through the surveys and there is a real community desire to see the vacant units being brought back into use. The need to tidy the vacant units was also commented on through the surveys.



Images (Top Left and Clockwise): Castle Street, The Square, Duke Street and Deveron Street.



 Vacant Shops

Vacant Retail Units:

22

Vacant Units in the town centre

25%

Vacancy Rate at time of survey

Natural space includes parks and woodlands, fields, streams and rivers, green space alongside paths and roads, and tree-lined streets. These can be good for wildlife, improve air quality and benefit our health and wellbeing.

Observations: There is no public green space within the town centre, however this element scored in the top five best features of the town in both business and community surveys. This is perhaps due to the centre's close proximity to large open green spaces by the River Deveron. The Square is home to a variety of different freestanding planters that create an attractive display. Surrounding streets however, had little or no greenery.

HOW WOULD YOU RATE: PARKS & GREEN SPACES?

■ Good ■ Neutral ■ Poor

BUSINESSES	12	5	3
COMMUNITY	106	58	29

"There are plenty of green spaces around the town, but nothing in the centre."

"The volunteers who attend to the flowers in the square are fantastic and brightens the place up."

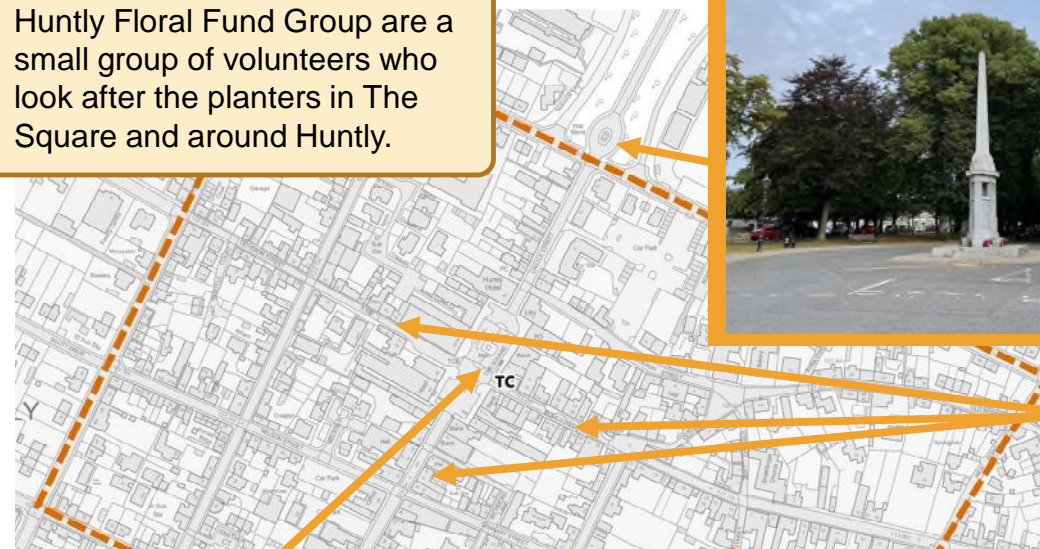
"Green space in the square would be wonderful."

"It's very dull, grey, there is a stark lack of greenery or life in the town centre."

NATURAL SPACE



Huntly Floral Fund Group are a small group of volunteers who look after the planters in The Square and around Huntly.



On the edge of the town centre the War Memorial marks the start of Huntly's expansive green areas, which include parks, sports facilities and the River Deveron



The Square, at the heart of the town centre, has a variety of freestanding planters to soften the hard landscaping



Streets surrounding the Square (Duke Street, Gordon Street, Deveron Street) had little or no greenery

Good places encourage children to play and allow adults to enjoy leisure and sporting activities. Opportunities for play and recreation can improve the quality of our lives and our health.

Observations: There are no play and recreation sites within Huntly Town Centre itself, and this is reflected in the survey responses. Comments focused on a lack of opportunities for young people and a desire to see more play facilities in the town centre were common. However, there are a number of play/leisure just about 1 mile from The Square.

HOW WOULD YOU RATE: LEISURE AND PLAY FACILITIES?

■ Good ■ Neutral ■ Poor

BUSINESSES	4	11	5
COMMUNITY	48	67	80

"It would be great to see a soft play or a role play café in one of the empty buildings."

"There should be leisure activities in the town centre to bring people into the centre."

"It would be great to see locations that could entertain families, for example soft play, ten pin bowling etc."

PLAY & RECREATION



To Nordic Ski Centre
0.6 mile

To Huntly Swimming and
Football Grounds Pool 0.3 mile

To River
Deveron
0.6 mile



To
Battlehill
1.8 mile

Playing Fields 0.4 mile

Facilities and amenities are the things that we need to live and enjoy life. This can include shops, schools, nurseries, libraries, GP surgeries and places to eat, drink and meet friends. Access to facilities and amenities is important to support healthy, fulfilling lives.

FACILITIES & AMENITIES

RETAILER REPRESENTATION



Use Class Order Classification The Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) (Scotland) Order 1997	Number of Units within Use Class	Distribution of Units in Use class
Class 1: Shops (Retail sale of goods other than hot food, post office; sale of tickets; travel agency; sale of cold food for consumption off the premises; hairdressing; direction of funerals; the display of goods for sale; hiring out of domestic or personal goods or articles; launderette or dry cleaners; reception of goods to be washed, cleaned or repaired; where the sale, display or service is principally to visiting members of the public)	40 units	CLASS 1: SHOPS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Charity Clothes & Footwear Entertainment Florists Food & Drink Hairdresser & Barber Home & Garden Other
Class 2: Financial, Professional and other services (Use for the provision of - financial services; professional services; or any other services (including use as a betting office) e.g. offices of accountants, dentists, doctors, solicitors, beauticians, estate agents)	15 units	CLASS 2: FINANCIAL, PROFESSIONAL & OTHER SERVICES <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Banks and Finance Accountants, Solicitors, Estate Agents Beauticians Betting Office Dentists Other



Images (Top to Bottom): Gordon Street Streetscape and Duke Street Streetscape.

FACILITIES & AMENITIES:

RETAILER REPRESENTATION

Use Class Order Classification The Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) (Scotland) Order 1997	Number of Units within Use Class	Distribution of Units in Use class
Class 3: Food and Drink (The sale of food or drink for consumption on the premises. e.g. cafes, restaurants, snack bars)	3 units* *Restaurant still to open	CLASS 3: FOOD AND DRINK <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Café ■ Restaurant
Sui Generis (For the sale of hot food for consumption off the premises. e.g. pizza shops, takeaways, kebab shops, fish and chip shops)	6 units	SUI GENERIS: HOT FOOT TAKEAWAY <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Fish and Chips ■ Chinese ■ Kebab ■ Other
Sui Generis (Use as a Public House)	2 units	2 Public Houses



Images (Top to Bottom) : The Square and Duke Street Streetscape.

FACILITIES & AMENITIES:

RETAILER REPRESENTATION

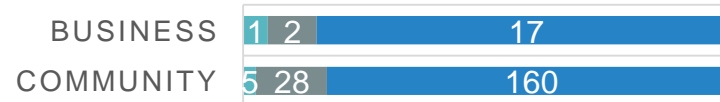
Retailer Representation



Observations: There is a good distribution between independent and multiple (chain) retailers within the town centre. However, a large proportion of the comments received through the surveys related to the lack of variety within the town centre, the topic actually ranked within the 5 lowest ranked topics through the surveys. Comments were received into trying to bring new businesses into the town centre to fill the vacant units but also to increase the variety available.

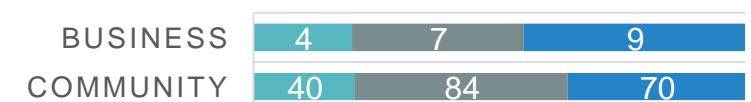
HOW WOULD YOU RATE: VARIETY OF SHOPS?

■ Good ■ Neutral ■ Poor



HOW WOULD YOU RATE: QUALITY OF SHOPS?

■ Good ■ Neutral ■ Poor



"Town needs ore variety of shops."

"A better variety of shops would be an improvement for the town."

"There is not enough variety of shops to encourage people to shop local."

"Very little variety of shops."

"Would be nice to see some more independent shops and some variety."

Image: The Square.

FACILITIES & AMENITIES:

CAFE AND RESTAURANTS

Observations: The choice of cafes and restaurants is something that was rated as poor by the majority of respondents and the desire for more cafes and restaurants was strongly commented through the surveys. This was reflected in the fact that cafe/ restaurant choice was rated amongst the bottom five topics from both the community and business surveys.



"Poor cafe choice."

"Lack of cafes and restaurants."

"There are no cafes or restaurants to draw people into the town centre."

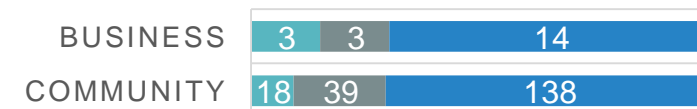
"Need more cafes like other towns such as Inverurie."

"Need more inviting and reasonable priced cafes."

"Need some good quality cafes and restaurants."

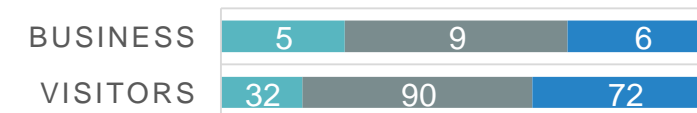
HOW WOULD YOU RATE: CAFE/ RESTAURANT CHOICE?

■ Good ■ Neutral ■ Poor



HOW WOULD YOU RATE: CAFE/ RESTAURANT QUALITY?

■ Good ■ Neutral ■ Poor



FACILITIES & AMENITIES:

CULTURAL AND LEISURE OUTLETS, AND PUBLIC SERVICES

Observations: There is a selection of different cultural, leisure and public services within the town centre. There is a range of uses from the Police Station, Churches, the Library and a Pilates studio. A lack of leisure facilities within the town centre was highly commented on through the community survey in terms of the desire for more places to open within the town centre to encourage people of all ages into the town centre.



Cultural Outlets



Leisure Outlets



Public Services

Images (Left to Right): St Margaret's Roman Catholic Church, Police Station, Strathbogie Drumblade Parish Church and Lengthen Pilates.



FACILITIES & AMENITIES: EVENING ECONOMY

HOW WOULD YOU RATE: THE VIBRANCY IN THE EVENING :

■ Good ■ Neutral ■ Poor

BUSINESS	1	7	12
COMMUNITY	4	32	192

"No more takeaways are needed."

There needs to be more places to go for a meal in the evenings."

"The evening life needs a bit of a makeover. There is nothing for anyone who doesn't want to go drink in a pub."

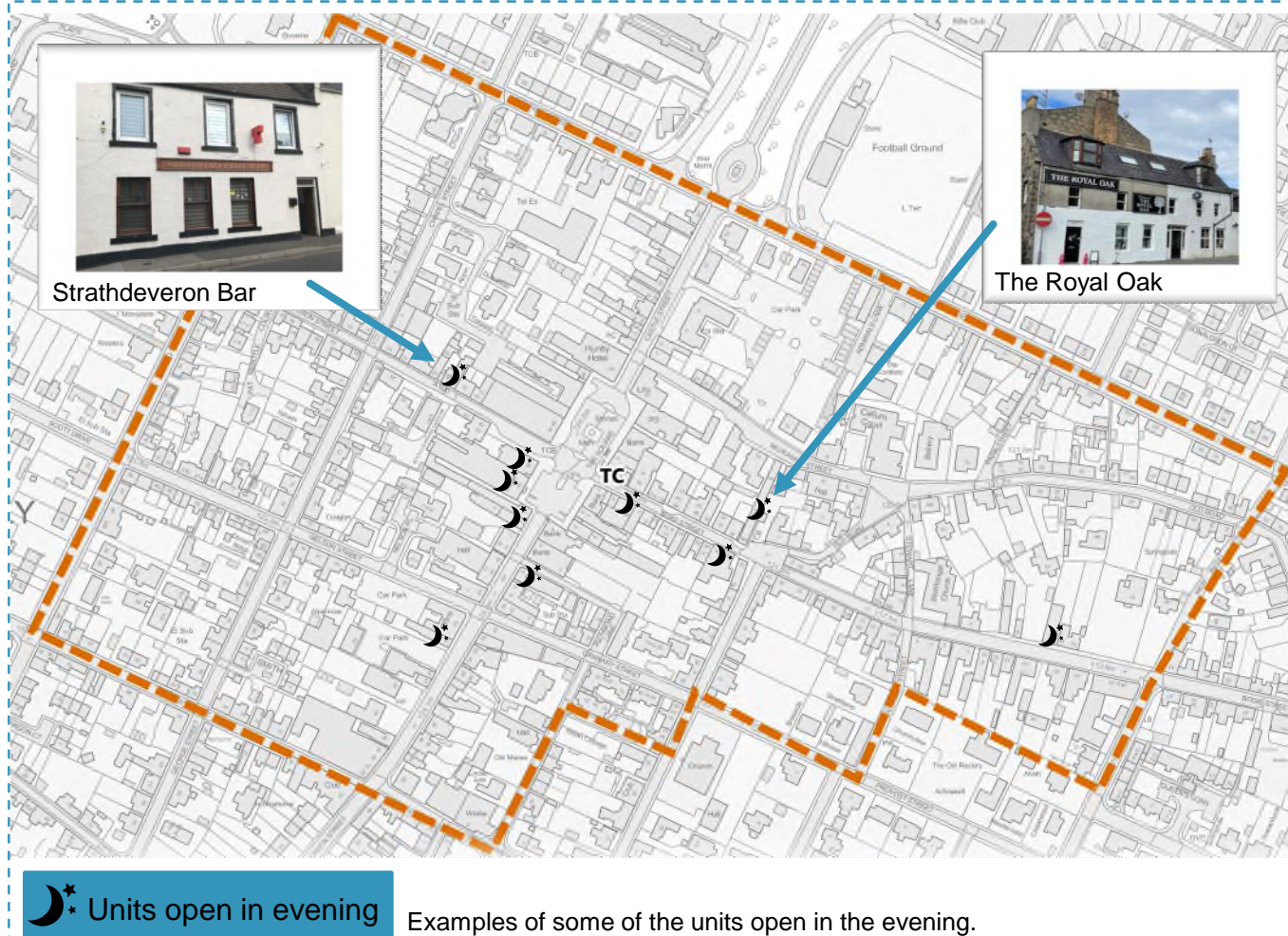
"Would be better to use the empty buildings for another pub or takeaway than for them to sit empty."

"There is nowhere to go out in the evenings."

Observations: There were a large number of comments received relating to the lack of anything to do within the town centre and there was a strong desire from the community to see more places to go in the evening including places to eat.

A few comments were also received relating to using some of the vacant buildings for either a restaurant or a pub to bring more life to the town centre.

Additionally, this topic scored within the bottom five topics within the community survey.

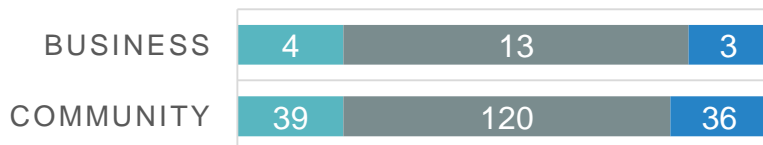


FACILITIES & AMENITIES:

COMMUNITY AND VISITOR SATISFACTION

HOW WOULD YOU RATE: VALUE FOR MONEY?

■ Good ■ Neutral ■ Poor



"The businesses that are within the town centre are really great with friendly and helpful service."

"There is not enough choice but the shops that are there give an excellent service."

"Huntly needs more affordable type shops."



Image: The Square.

Town Centre Offer:

10%

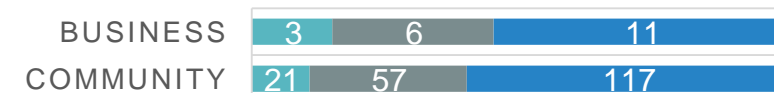
of the community agree that it offers all services expected (retail, café, pubs etc)

Observations: The standard of service in shops rated within the top five of the topics surveyed in both the community and the visitor surveys. A number of comments were received noting the friendly service received within the shops.

However, the variety of goods and value for money were not looked at as positively by the respondents with over 100 respondents noting the variety of goods available as poor.

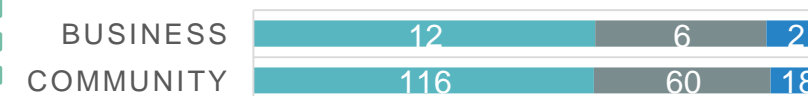
HOW WOULD YOU RATE: VARIETY OF GOODS AVAILABLE?

■ Good ■ Neutral ■ Poor



HOW WOULD YOU RATE: STANDARD OF SERVICE IN SHOPS?

■ Good ■ Neutral ■ Poor



Tourism: Data provided by VisitAberdeenshire shows the number of page views received for Huntly in the 'Towns and Villages' section of their website:

2,007 Jan-Dec 2019

2,053 Jan-Dec 2020

FACILITIES & AMENITIES: MARKET

"More markets would be good within the town."

"Would be good to see more frequent farmers markets."

"Farmers market days are a joy as they create a vibe within the town centre."

"I find the farmer's market has steadily deteriorated in that they are now mainly non local stalls selling very expensive snacks rather than local farmers."

"The farmers market is a real plus!"

"Apart from the Farmers Market, there is nothing to attract people into the town centre anymore, to spend their money in the few shops are left."

"The market is good but is small."

"The farmers market is good."

Observations: Huntly's Farmers Market takes place on the 1st Saturday of the month from 09:00-13:00. There are a range of stallholders who attend the events.

The Farmers Market was rated within the top 5 topics in both the community and the business surveys. A number of comments were received through the survey noting that the farmers market provides an atmosphere within the town centre. Although a few comments were also received noting that the market should be bigger, use more local stallholders and happen more frequently.



HOW WOULD YOU RATE: THE MARKET?

■ Good ■ Neutral ■ Poor

BUSINESS	12	4	4
COMMUNITY	142	44	9

Image: The Square.

FACILITIES & AMENITIES:

ONLINE SHOPPING

Online Offering

65%

of businesses surveyed have online presence

54%

of businesses surveyed sell online

83%

of the businesses surveyed that sell online make 25% or less of their income from this

60%

of the community surveyed said they are more likely to shop online rather than going into the town centre for the same item

68%

of the community survey noted that their attitude towards online shopping had changed because of the COVID-19 pandemic

76%

of the community survey noted that their usage of the town centre had decreased because of the COVID-19 pandemic

Observations: Within the survey there was a real mix of responses to the questions about shopping online. A number of respondents noted that they would rather shop local than buying online. Whilst others noted that convenience, pricing and variety of goods were the main reasons for online shopping.

"I try and shop locally where I can but it is just not always possible."

"Better choice online."

"Not enough choice in Huntly and cost of travel and parking makes it uneconomical even if the item cost is similar."

"Better choice and cheaper online."

"No variety and limited choice within the town centre."

"Online availability is much better."



Image: Gordon Street.

FACILITIES & AMENITIES:

CONNECTIVITY









Observations: Mobile coverage within Huntly Town Centre is very strong with all of the top networks being able to be connected to at a 4G level and the There is currently no coverage of 5G within the town centre.

Broadband coverage is also strong with fibre and superfast broadband being available within the town.



There is no free public WIFI available within the town centre.



Broadband Coverage in Huntly Town Centre:

	FTTH/FTTP	✗
	Ultrafast Broadband (>=100 Mbps)	✗
	Superfast Broadband (>24 Mbps)	✓
	Fibre (FTTC or FTTH or Cable or G.Fast)	✓
	Wireless	✗
	LLU	✓
	ADSL2+	✓
	ADSL	✓

Internet Speed in Huntly Town Centre:

	Download:	11.4 Mbps
	Upload:	0.6 Mbps

Mobile Coverage in Huntly Town Centre:

		Voice	3G	4G	5G
Three	Indoor	✓	✓	✓	✗
	Outdoor	✓	✓	✓	
O2	Indoor	✓	✓	✓	✗
	Outdoor	✓	✓	✓	
EE	Indoor	✓	✓	✓	✗
	Outdoor	✓	✓	✓	
Vodafone	Indoor	✓	✓	✓	✗
	Outdoor	✓	✓	✓	

✓ Good coverage ○ You may experience problems ✗ No coverage

FACILITIES & AMENITIES: OTHER SERVICES

Observations: There is one ATM machine within Huntly Town Centre, however it is located within a shop unit within The Square. This means that the machine is only able to be used during shop opening hours. Additionally, there is a Defibrillator unit within the town centre on the side of the Police Station which can be used by anyone within the town centre should the need arise.



Image: Defib, Castle Street.



Good-quality work offers important benefits through income, activity, social contact, sense of identity and job satisfaction. A thriving local economy can provide work opportunities and help create lively places where people want to spend time.

Observations: The employment and income picture is as would be expected in a small town with a high proportion of retail and hospitality jobs. This is supplemented by a significant percentage of public sector employment. The claimant count rate increased sharply prior to the COVID-19 pandemic but is now dropping back slightly, although still higher than the wider area. This is supported by the deprivation level and median household income level for the town centre.

Settlement Type: Remote Small Town

(Settlements of 3,000 to 9,999 people, and with a drive time of over 30 minutes but less than or equal to 60 minutes to a Settlement of 10,000 or more)
Scottish Government's Urban Rural Classification, 8-fold

Median Household Income 2020
Town Centre Data Zone*
£21,644



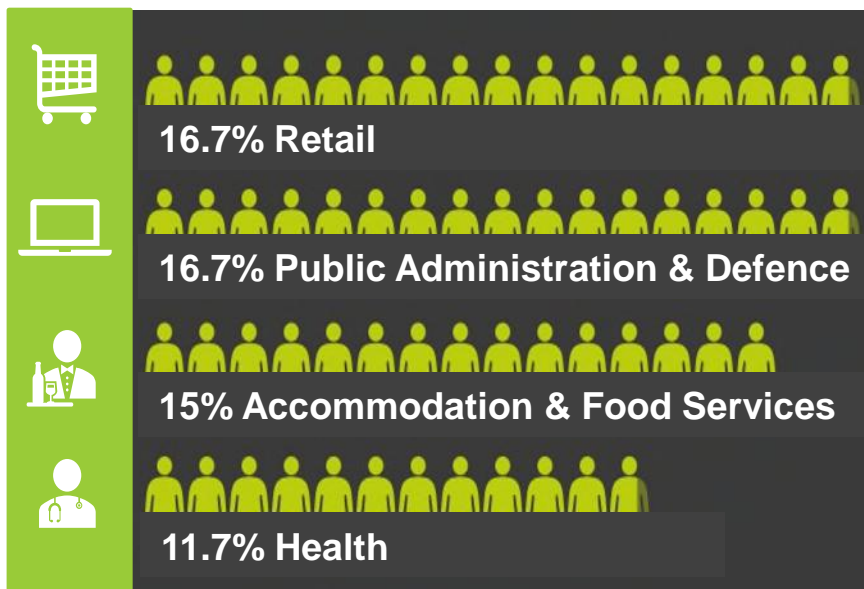
£40,156 Marr; £37,853 Aberdeenshire

Source: © CACI Limited 1996 - 2020 This report shall be used solely for academic, personal and/or non-commercial purposes.

WORK & LOCAL ECONOMY

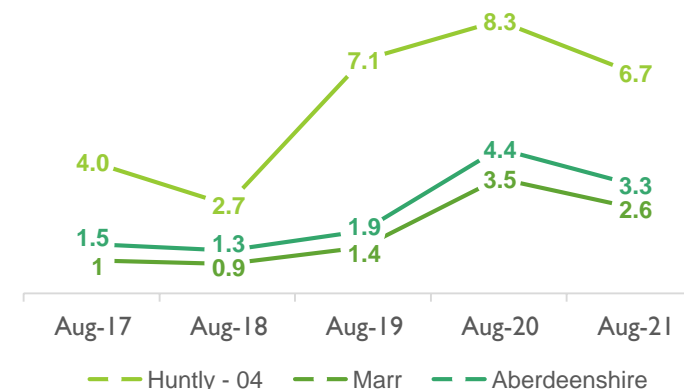


Top 4 Employment Sectors 2020 Huntly Town Centre Data Zone*



Source: Business Register and Employment Survey 2020

CLAIMANT COUNT RATE (%)^



^Includes people claiming Universal Credit or Jobseekers Allowance
Source: ONS Crown Copyright Reserved

Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation 2020

Town Centre Data Zone*:

20-30%

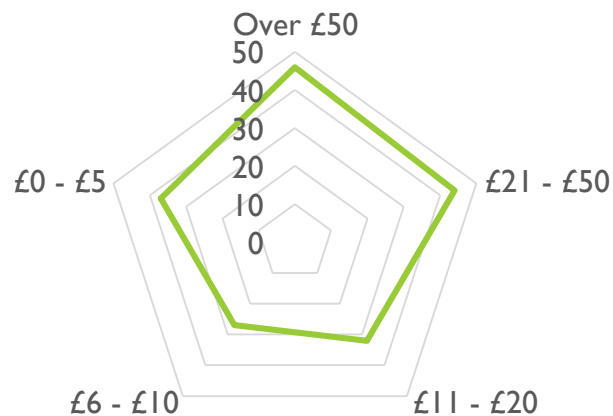
Most deprived in Scotland

* The data zone (S01007011) that includes the majority of the town centre.

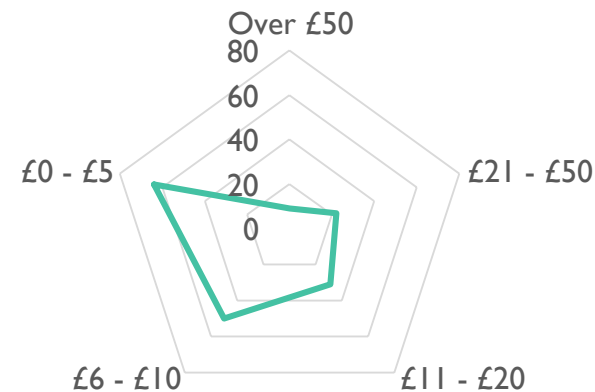
WORK & LOCAL ECONOMY: AVERAGE CONSUMER SPEND

Observations: The graphs highlight that the majority of expenditure across the different sectors is at low levels with food shopping accounting for the vast majority of larger purchases. Takeaways are at mid-range levels, with other shopping accounting for more but lower levels of spend. Hair and Beauty is used less overall but tends towards higher values. Café/ Restaurants and Events/ Entertainment have limited spending which reflects the lack of provision in this area. With the exception of food shopping, all areas offer potential for increased spend in the town centre.

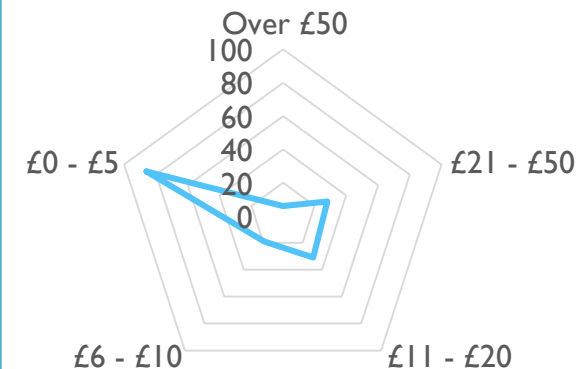
Food Shopping



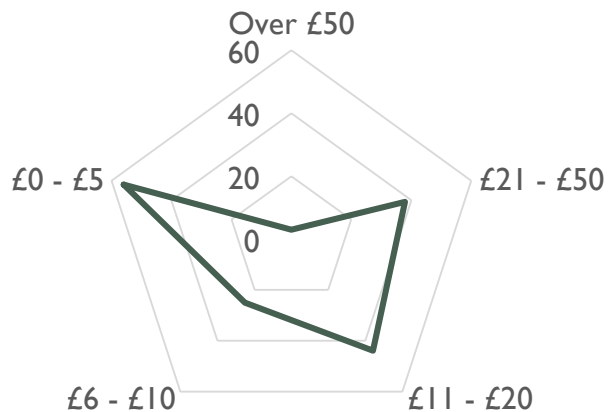
Other Shopping



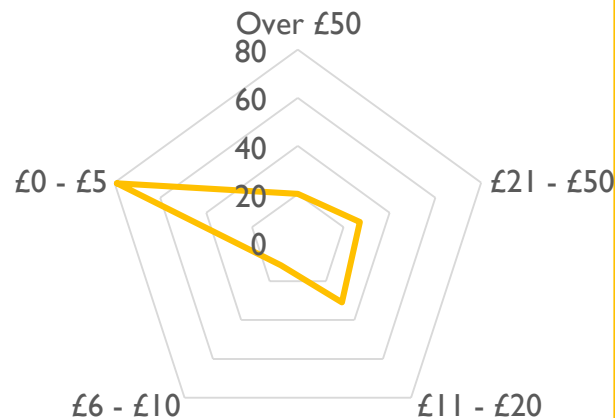
Café/ Restaurant



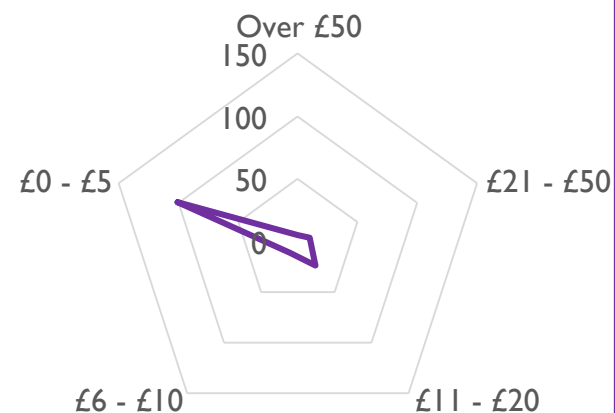
Takeaway



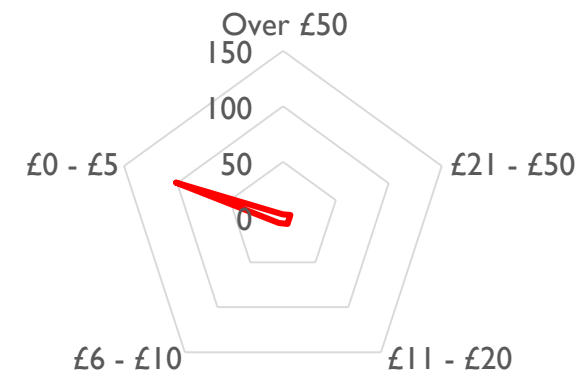
Hair & Beauty



Events/ Entertainment



Other



WORK & LOCAL ECONOMY: BUSINESS SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS

Observations: 20 businesses responded to the survey and provided a mixed outlook for the town, with over half of business respondents reporting a fall in turnover in the past five years and a static or declining picture for employment. 10% of respondents are looking to sell or retire but this is balanced by 10% who are new start-up businesses. In addition the greater proportion of respondents were unconfident about their future business performance in Huntly and this translates into low planned growth or expansion plans. This could be in response to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic but could be related to longer term declining trends. Businesses are making good use of Facebook and websites but there is scope to further explore other online marketing options.

80%

of business owners surveyed are **established** businesses in the town centre. 10% are ready to sell/retire; 10% are start-ups

95%

of business owners surveyed were **independent** businesses

40%

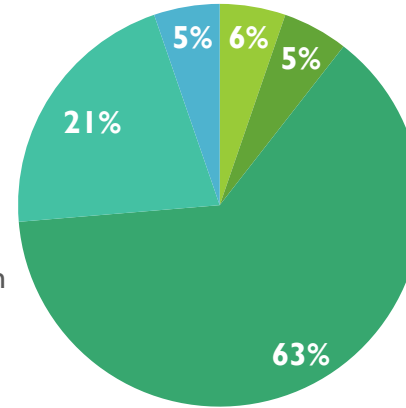
of business owners surveyed were **extremely or somewhat confident** about future business performance in Huntly; 15% were **neutral** and 45% **extremely or somewhat unconfident**

10%

of business owners surveyed are looking to **grow or expand** in the next year, with a further 15% in the next five years. 40% are **unsure** and 35% are **not** currently considering growth or expansion

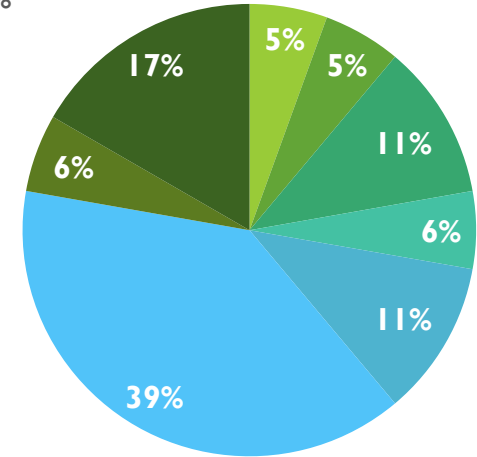
Has employment at your premises changed in the past five years?

- Increased by more than 25%
- Increased by 16-25%
- Stayed the Same
- Decreased by more than 25%
- Decreased by 16-25%



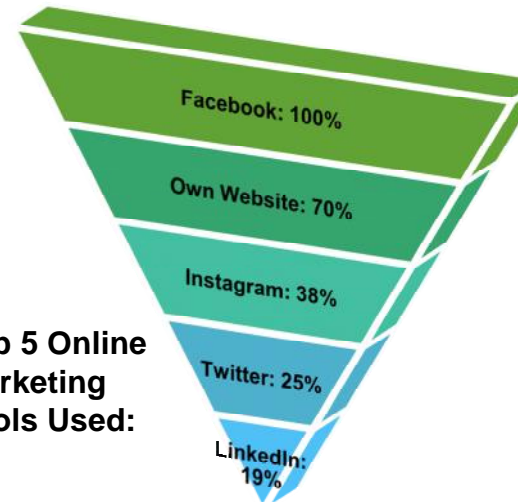
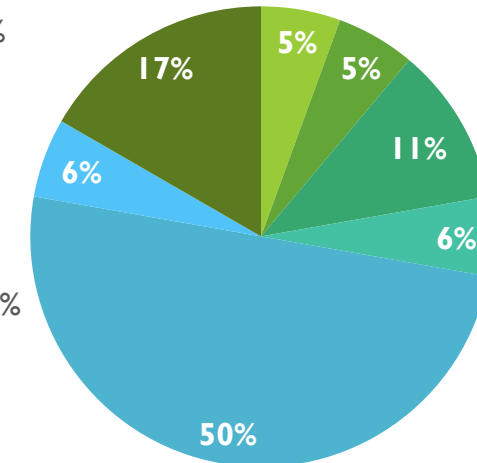
How has turnover at your premises changed in the past five years?

- Increased by more than 25%
- Increased by 16-25%
- Increased by 6-15%
- Increased by 0.1-5%
- Stayed the Same
- Decreased by more than 25%
- Decreased by 16-25%



What difference have the COVID-19 restrictions had on turnover during the period March 2020 to April 2021?

- Increased by more than 25%
- Increased by 6-15%
- Increased by 0.1-5%
- Stayed the Same
- Decreased by more than 25%
- Decreased by 16-25%
- Decreased by 6-15%



Top 5 Online Marketing Tools Used:

WORK & LOCAL ECONOMY:

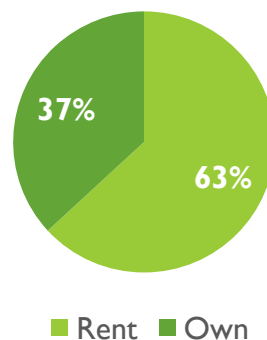
PROPERTY

Observations: Huntly has several vacant premises, many of which are large, empty, older-style, listed buildings which is having a negative effect on the town centre. Local groups such as the Huntly Development Trust are working to secure the future of some of these through purchase and refurbishment. This regeneration was recognised in the survey responses but there is the sense that there is more still to do. There is a high percentage of premises ownership but 80% of business owners are unsure or have no plans for investment. Existing businesses would like to see schemes to encourage new start-up enterprises such as pop-up spaces.



Image: Huntly Hotel, a large vacant building in The Square.

Do you rent or own your premises?



5% of business respondents said they would invest in their premises in the next year with 15% within the next 5 years. 50% were unsure of their investment plans and 30% have no plans for investment.

"Having been here for a number of years now, if I could rewrite time I wouldn't have bought a shop in Huntly."

"Rents are too high, that's why I put my business now on wheels."

"Sad to see so many empty shops, town centre needs some regeneration."

"I know the community are doing a lot to try and revitalise the centre of Huntly, which makes me feel positive about it."

"Would love to see some more small businesses encouraged to open in the centre."

"Etsy like shops attracting new fresh talent at reasonable rental rates."

"Lower rates to encourage new businesses to open."

Planning Applications:

Within the town centre ten planning applications were approved in 2020. Of note were:

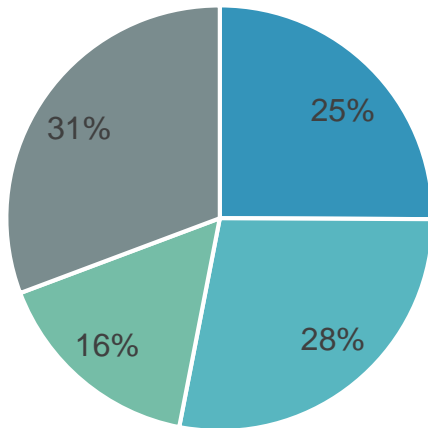
- 1 for External alterations to Multi-Use Community and Heritage Based Hub;
- 1 for Alterations to the Exterior to include repair works;
- 1 Part change of use from Bed and Breakfast Accommodation (Class 7) to form 1 flat (Sui Generis);
- 1 Part change of use from Bed and Breakfast Accommodation (Class 7) to form 3 flats (Sui Generis);
- 1 for Removal of external signage and ATM.

Housing is central to people's lives and helps to shape the appearance and character of places. Good places provide a mix of housing that supports a socially balanced community and meets people's needs throughout life.

HOUSING & COMMUNITY



DWELLING TYPE



■ Detached ■ Semi Detached ■ Flat ■ Terrace

The mix of dwelling types within the town centre is shown above. The majority of the dwellings within the town centre are terraced housing. There is a large proportion of housing currently within the town centre boundary.

Of these dwelling types within the town centre the main tenure is properties either owned outright or with a mortgage.

Huntly Housing Profile and Population

The overall population total for Huntly in 2016 was 4,810 and it is estimated that approximately 515 people stay within the town centre.

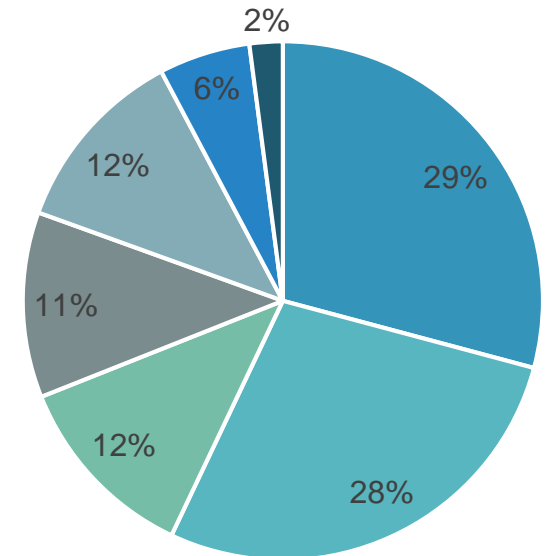
The average house price for dwellings within the town centre boundary in 2018 was £120,287.



Image: Westpark Street.

In terms of Council Tax Bands (2020), Huntly Town Centre has dwellings in Bands A-G on the scale of the Council Tax Bands. The majority, over are located within the first two bands, Band A and B.

COUNCIL TAX BAND



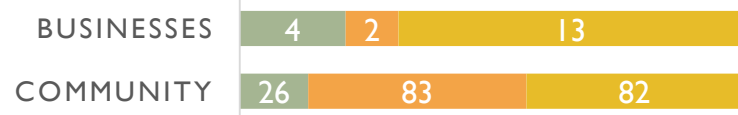
■ Band A ■ Band B ■ Band C ■ Band D
■ Band E ■ Band F ■ Band G

Feeling isolated can be damaging to our health and wellbeing. Good places provide a variety of spaces to meet and spend time with others.

Observations: Range of events was scored relatively poorly in both surveys but this could have been influenced by the COVID-19 restrictions at the time of the survey, it was ranked within the bottom five of all topics in the business survey. There are a number of venues that are available for social interaction in the town centre but there is real community desire to see The Square being used for more events and also to see more events in general for all age groups.

HOW WOULD YOU RATE: RANGE OF EVENTS?

■ Good ■ Neutral ■ Poor



Town Centre Events*^



The following events are planned over the next year:

Farmer's Market

1st Saturday of every month (09:00-13:00)

Huntly Hairst

September 2022

*Not an exhaustive list ^Correct at time of survey

SOCIAL CONTACT



Venue	Indoor / Outdoor	Opening Times
Library	Indoor	Tues 14:00-19:00 Wed 11:00-17:00 Mon & Thurs Click and Collect
Stewarts Hall	Indoor	Currently closed at time of survey
Strathbogie Drumblade Parish Church	Indoor	Sunday service 10:30
St Margaret's Roman Catholic Church	Indoor	Sunday service 09:00



Images (Left to Right): Stewarts Hall, Huntly Library and Strathbogie Drumblade Parish Church.

"More heritage and cultural events would be an improvement."

"More events to create a sense of community."

"Bring back the Music in the Square event."

"We need events to bring people into the town centre."

"More events open to everyone would be good."

"More events that are not sports based for kids."

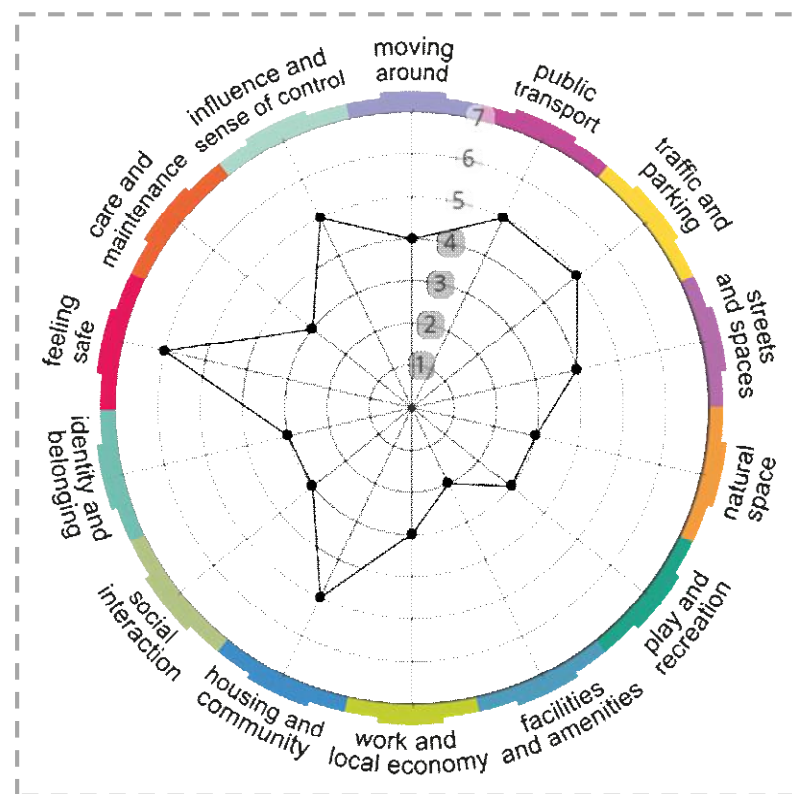
"Years ago there used to be events such like 'music in the square' which was great. Having events like that in the square again would be great, it has so much potential."

"Events are a great idea. Family events are an even better."

"Not everyone has social media so often events and groups get missed as no one knows about them."

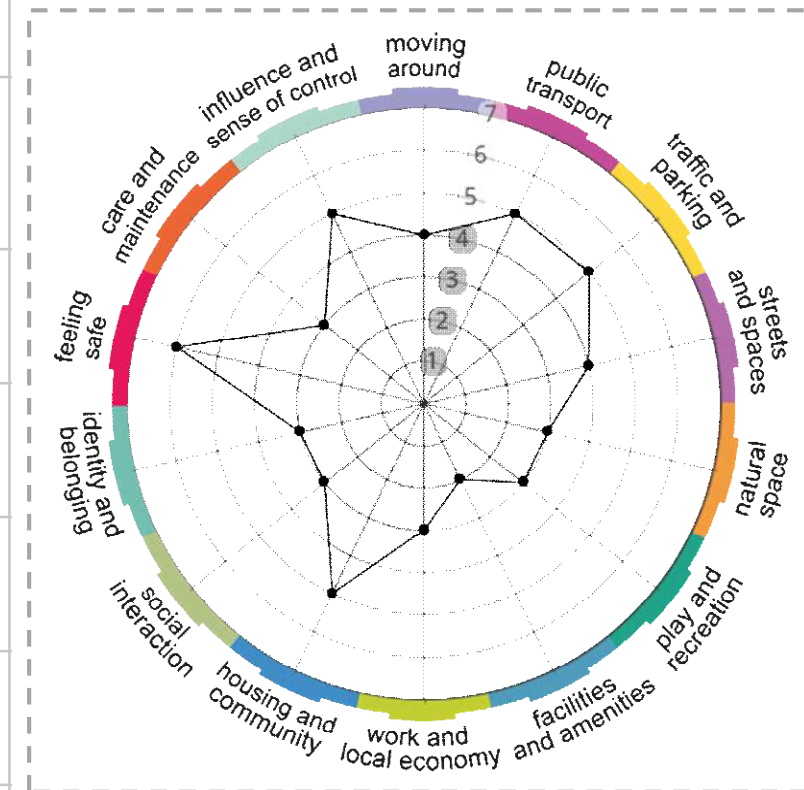
KEY CONSIDERATIONS & OPPORTUNITIES

Theme	Key Improvements
Identity and belonging Rating: 3	Both the community and businesses felt overwhelmingly negative about the town centre and often commented on its recent decline. People care about the town though and are sad to see how it has changed. It is hoped regeneration plans will make a difference.
Feeling safe Rating: 6	Safety during the day scored highly and crime figures are low. To improve in this category people's feeling of safety during the evening should be considered which may benefit from the installation of CCTV and the repair/maintenance of lighting columns.
Care and maintenance Rating: 3	The overall perception of the care and maintenance of buildings within Huntly Town Centre was poor. This ranked within the bottom five topics within the surveys. Interventions looking at improvement works to buildings would be welcomed by the local community.
Influence and sense of control Rating: 5	Huntly has a strong network of charitable and voluntary groups working together to benefit the town centre. Not all people are aware of the groups and their purpose so wider promotion or engagement could be considered.
Moving around Rating: 4	This scored well in the surveys but observations highlighted that there is a lack of infrastructure such as signage, maps and cycling facilities which would benefit peoples ability to get around the town centre. A lack of maintenance in areas such as road markings and tactile paving was also noted.
Public transport Rating: 5	Generally, Huntly has good public transport links when looking to travel east or west however it is more difficult to travel north to south with provision for settlements in the catchment area lacking.
Traffic and parking Rating: 5	Traffic and parking received a mixed response through the surveys. Opinions gathered included people wanting to see parking removed from the town centre whilst others noted that parking within The Square should be free to encourage people to use the local shops.



KEY CONSIDERATIONS & OPPORTUNITIES (CONTINUED)

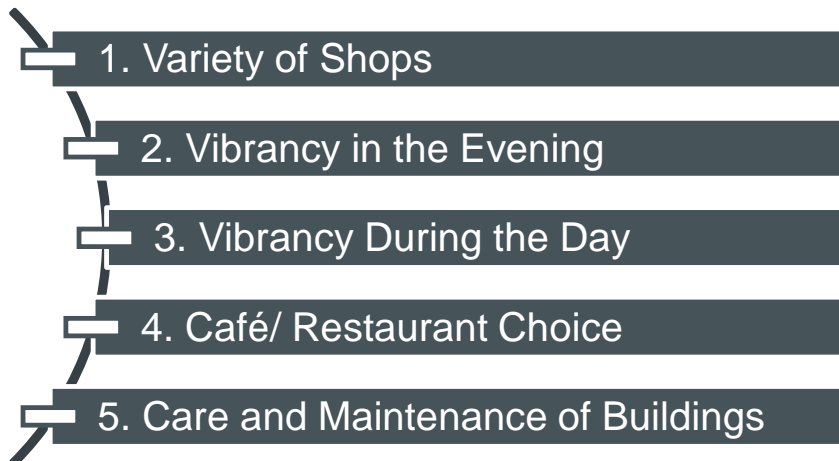
Theme	Key Improvements
Streets and spaces Rating: 4	Both the community and businesses felt negatively towards aspects contained within this topic including the attractiveness of the town, the lack of seats and the condition of the pavements. These topics are all aspects that could be considered through an appropriate strategy.
Natural space Rating: 3	There is no natural space within the town centre. However, volunteers work hard to provide planters in The Square which is welcomed and there is good access to open space in close proximity. There are opportunities to consider the area within The Square for further green space.
Play and recreation Rating: 3	There are no play and leisure facilities within the town centre boundary. However, there are a number of facilities within 0.5 miles of the town centre. There is also an aspiration to see a soft play centre in one of the vacant units in the town centre.
Facilities and amenities Rating: 2	This topic was viewed fairly negatively by both the community and the businesses as only 10% of the community thought Huntly had the services expected in a town centre. Opportunities to fill the vacant units to both improve the vibrancy and variety would help.
Work and local economy Rating: 3	Businesses are lacking in confidence about the future of the town centre. Deprivation and low pay are key considerations. Opportunities to bring new businesses to the town would be welcomed to encourage investment in buildings and staff.
Housing and community Rating: 5	Housing and Community was a strong topic for the town centre. There is a good mix of housing available within the town centre and within a mix of tenures to support all of the people within the community.
Social contact Rating: 3	There was a large desire to see additional events happening within the town centre, including family friendly events which would make better use of The Square. At the times of the survey the Stewarts Hall was being used for vaccinations so not in use for indoor gathering.



BUSINESS & COMMUNITY SURVEY RESPONSES: How Would You Rate? Top 5 Highest and Lowest Scoring Categories**Community****Top 5 Highest Scoring Categories:**

- 
1. Feeling of Safety During the Day
 2. Farmer's Market
 3. Ease of Getting Around
 4. Standard of Service in Shops
 5. Parks/ Green Spaces

Top 5 Lowest Scoring Categories:

- 
1. Variety of Shops
 2. Vibrancy in the Evening
 3. Vibrancy During the Day
 4. Café/ Restaurant Choice
 5. Care and Maintenance of Buildings

Business**Top 5 Highest Scoring Categories:**

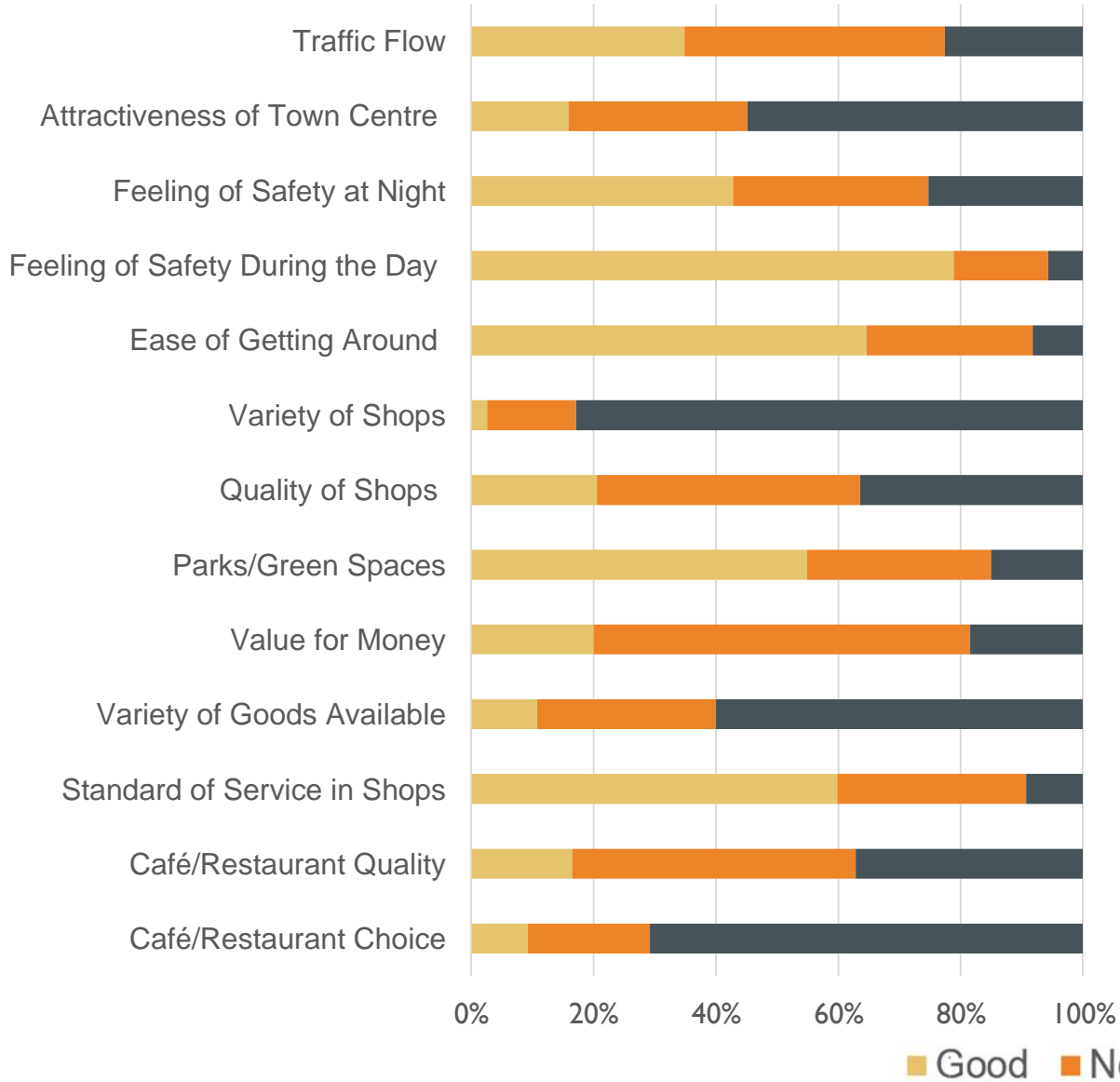
- 
1. Feeling of Safety During the Day
 2. Ease of Getting Around
 3. Standard of Service in Shops
 4. Parks/ Green Spaces
 5. Farmer's Market

Top 5 Lowest Scoring Categories:

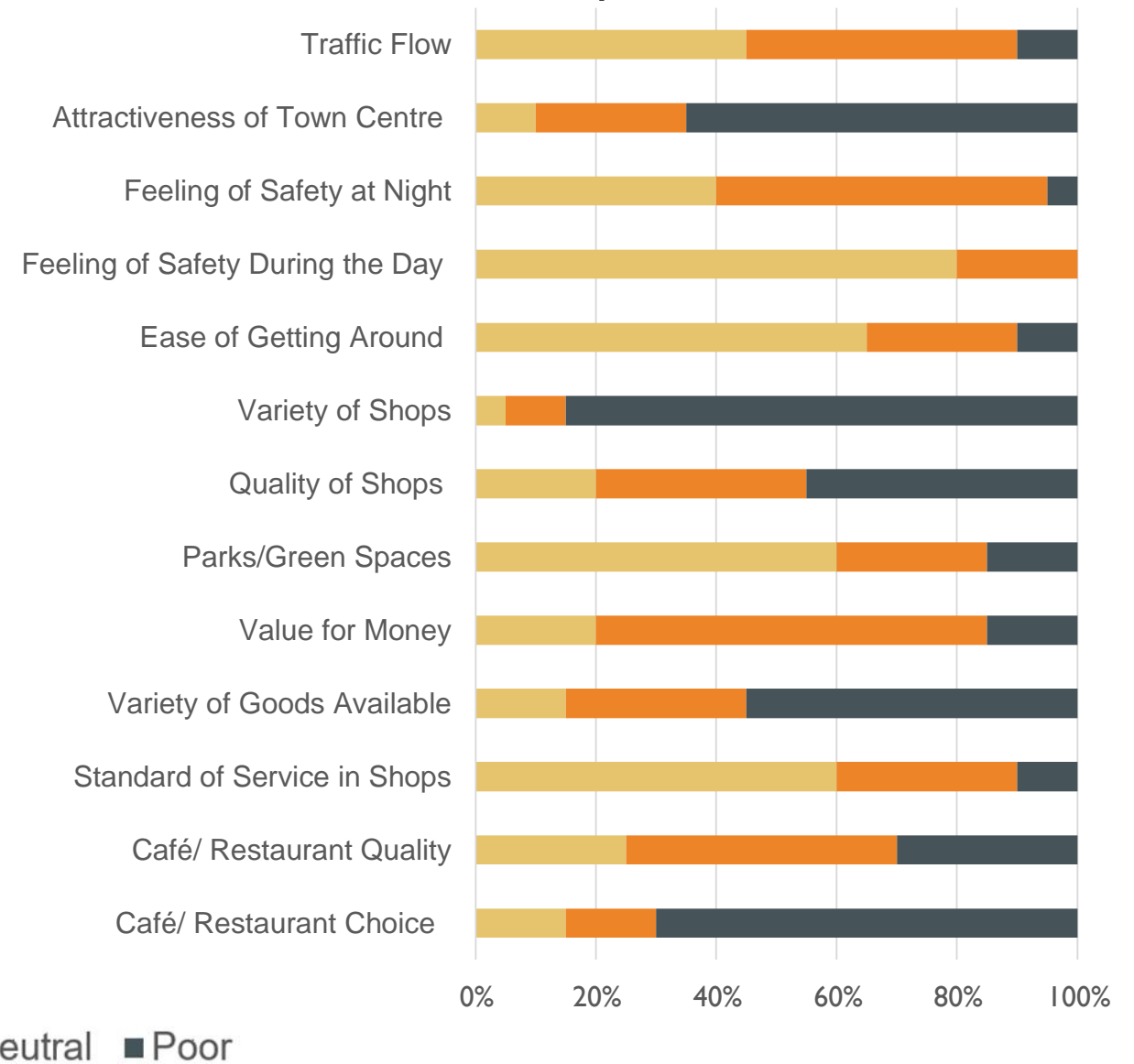
- 
1. Variety of Shops
 2. Care and Maintenance of Buildings
 3. Café/ Restaurant Choice
 4. Attractiveness of Town Centre
 5. Range of Events

BUSINESS & COMMUNITY SURVEY RESPONSES: How Would You Rate?

Community Responses:

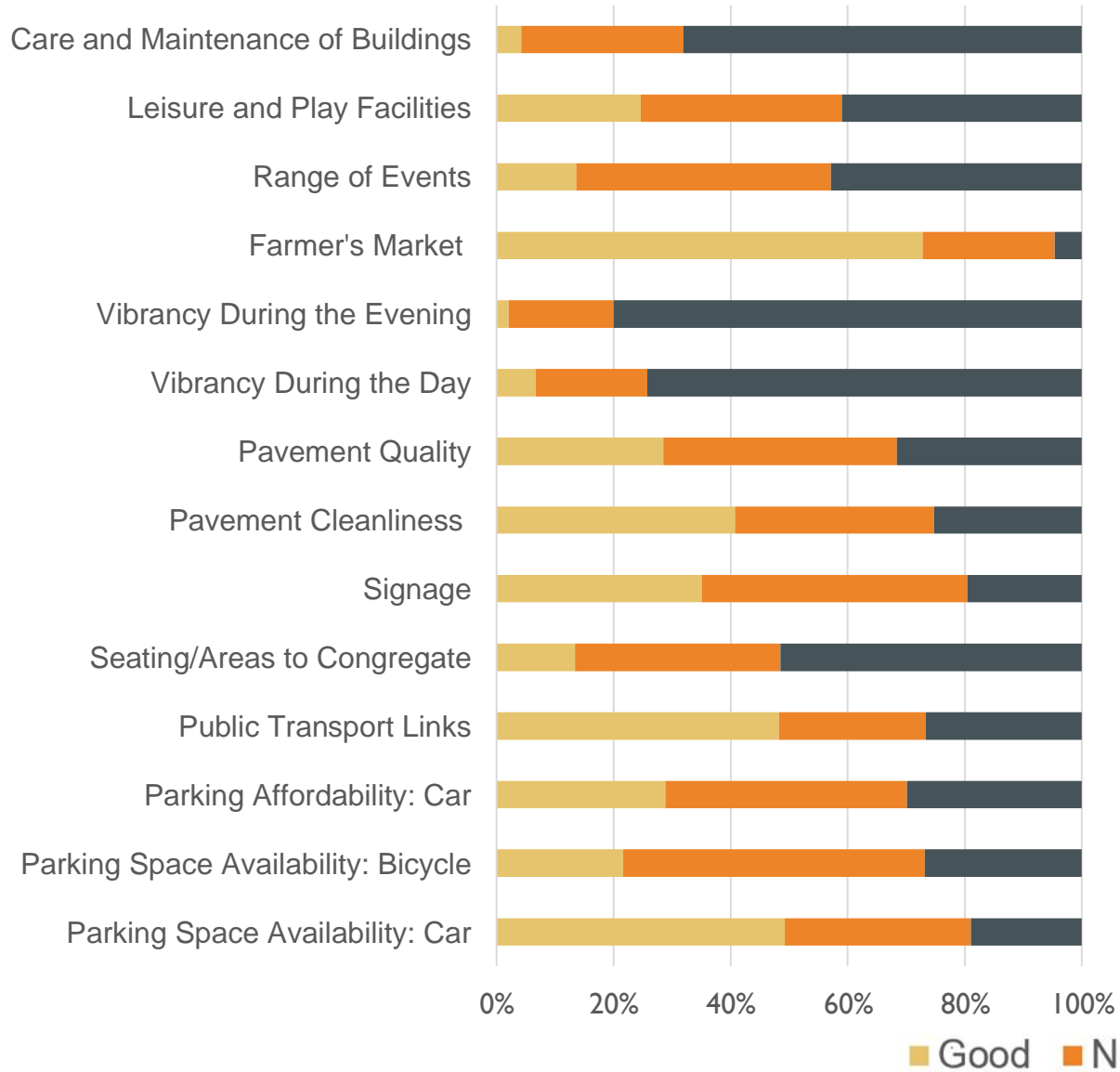


Business Responses:

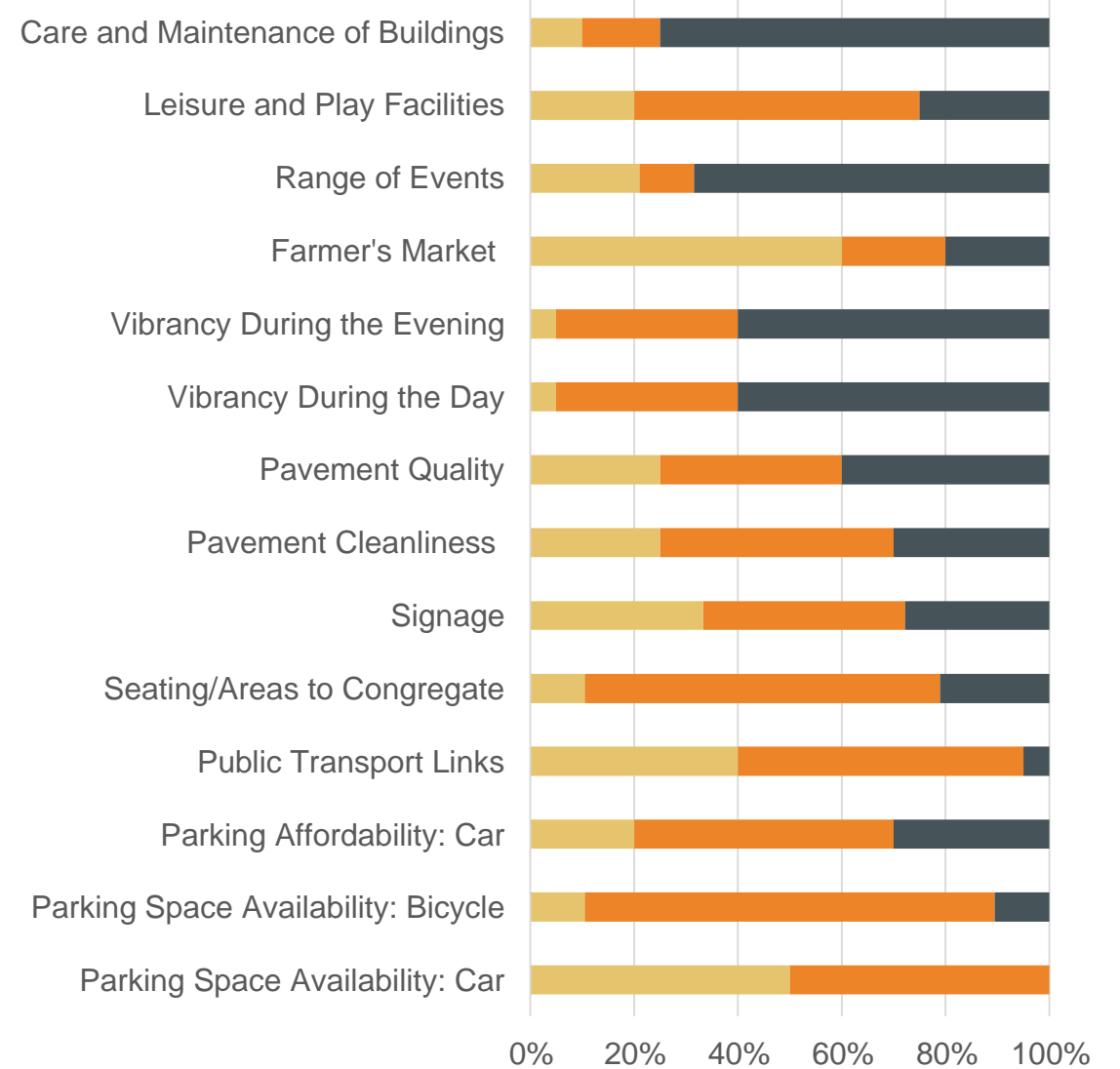


BUSINESS & COMMUNITY SURVEY RESPONSES: How Would You Rate? (Continued)

Community Responses:



Business Responses:



A PARTNERSHIP APPROACH: WORKING TOGETHER FOR THE BENEFIT OF OUR TOWNS

A key element of the new approach to undertaking Town Centre Health Checks in Aberdeenshire in 2021 is to work in partnership with stakeholders with an interest in the success of our town centres to collect and share knowledge, information and opportunities. This has added an extra dimension to the health checks, providing a base from which future, plans, strategies, engagement and collaboration can be built upon. A big 'thank you' goes to the following teams, organisations and individuals for their contributions to the project:

Business and Community:

Huntly & District Development Trust

Huntly Business Association

Huntly Community Council

Networks of Wellbeing

Footfall Count Volunteers

Accessibility Audit Volunteers: 5 adults



Partner Organisations:

Sergeant Mellis, Intervention Hub,
Police Scotland

Elaine Bisset, VisitAberdeenshire



Council Teams:

Planning Information and Delivery

GIS Team

Community Learning and
Development

Marr Area Office

Community Payback Unpaid Hours
Service

Community Engagement and
Equalities

Transportation

Economic Development

Customer and Digital Services

Planning Policy

Aberdeenshire
COUNCIL



Aberdeenshire COUNCIL



TOWN CENTRE HEALTH CHECK
SEPTEMBER 2021

REPORT PRODUCED BY THE PLANNING INFORMATION AND DELIVERY TEAM
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