



**Aberdeenshire**  
COUNCIL



# TOWN CENTRE HEALTH CHECK SEPTEMBER 2022

PORTLETHEN, ABERDEENSHIRE



# CONTENTS PAGE

Title	Page Number
Introduction & Methodology	1
Identity & Belonging	4
Feeling Safe	5
Care & Maintenance	6
Influence & Sense of Control	7
Moving Around	8
Public Transport	12
Traffic & Parking	14
Streets & Spaces	17
Natural Space	20
Play & Recreation	21
Facilities & Amenities	22
Work & Local Economy	27
Housing & Community	30
Social Interaction	31
Key Considerations & Opportunities	32
Business & Community Survey Responses	34
Partnership Working	36



# INTRODUCTION

## INTRODUCTION

Town centre health checks are a way of analysing the factors that contribute to successful town centres and indicate good standards of vitality and viability. 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.

Town Centre Health Checks have been completed in Aberdeenshire since 2003. However, in 2021 a new methodology was introduced to showcase a fresh and updated approach for Aberdeenshire. From 2022 and then every second year, town centre health checks will be carried out on the remaining eight academy towns that are not classed as Principal Town Centres through the Local Development Plan.

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.

NPF4 notes that policies should 'encourage, promote and facilitate development in our city and town centres, recognising they are a national asset' (NPF4, page 81).

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 2022 for Portlethen. 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 surveys for the eight academy town centres are being conducted every second year in line with when the town centre health checks are being completed. It is considered this would reduce consultation fatigue and allow for monitoring of any changes within town centres which have occurred in that period. 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 in 2022, 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 23 responses. A summary of the responses received can be seen on page 34.



**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 surveys for the eight academy town centres are being conducted every second year in line with when the town centre health checks are being completed. It is considered this would reduce the risk of consultation fatigue and allow for more effective monitoring of any changes within town centres which have occurred in that period. The survey was available on Engage HQ in 2022 and was shared via relevant groups for completion. The survey also gave an opportunity to comment on improvements that businesses would like to see to the town centre. The survey was open for three weeks, however no responses were received from businesses.

## **FOOTFALL AND TRAFFIC COUNTS**

The footfall count was completed at two locations within the town centre to gain information on the vitality at different times of the day. Three time slots were selected to gain information of the vibrancy in the morning and afternoon. The counts were completed for 15-minute periods on a weekday to try and gain an insight into the number of people moving around the town centre. As there were no counts conducted in the evening and weekend, questions were included in the community survey to gain an insight on how often, when and why people visit the town centre. These footfall counts were a collaborative effort and carried out by Aberdeenshire Council Officers and members of the community. Traffic counts were also included in the methodology for all towns. Where possible, traffic counts were carried out at the same location as the pedestrian counts and for the same length of time following completion of the footfall counts. Where traffic counts could not be carried at the same location at the footfall counts, these were done at the closest viable point in order to gain information on the number of vehicles using the town centre.

## **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.

How a place looks, its history and what other people think of a 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:** Of the respondents who used the town centre, the majority felt negative towards it. This was reflected in the comments where it was felt that there was no defined centre or central point for gatherings/ events within Portlethen and a lack of community feeling. Some positive comments felt that Portlethen town centre had a good range of shops and places to go. Community spirit was generally rated as poor or very poor.

**The growth of Portlethen:** Portlethen was originally a small fishing village, with the harbour located in what is now Old Portlethen which lies to the east of the main town. In the **1950s** housing in Portlethen was based around the railway station. In **1955**, one of largest local employers in Portlethen, MacIntosh Donald, was founded and remains to this day. During the late **1950s** and early **1960s**, housing was built along Cookston Road, Burnside Gardens and surrounding area which led to the building of Portlethen Primary School. By the **1970s** the population of the town significantly expanded due to the oil and gas industry with hundreds more houses being built. There is good local employment in food industries and oil related activities.

Source: Understanding Scottish Places, Portlethen Community Council and Portlethen Community Action Plan 2019-2022

## IDENTITY & BELONGING



### How Do You Feel About Portlethen Town Centre?

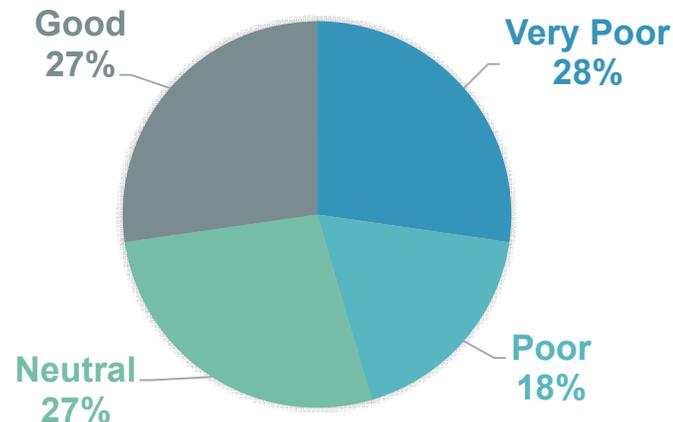


26% Community



74% Community

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



*"It doesn't really have a town centre. It has a retail park and a separate wee group of shops at the Green. No feeling of a centre or community."*

*"There isn't a town centre. There's a large affluent population in Portlethen and surrounding areas but not Town Centre, therefore no community."*

*"I feel there has been a lot of development in Portlethen over the past few years. Still lots of improvement to be had."*

*"Nice wee place, plenty shops and places to go for coffee, lunch etc."*

*"I am not even sure what part of Portlethen classes as the town centre, because there isn't one. There are just several small shopping centres scattered across town."*

*"It's nice to see all the shops at Muirend road all filled now."*

Feeling safe in and around the places that we spend time in 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 scored within the top five most positive categories and received no poor ratings. Safety during the evening was less positive with 35% of the community rating this as poor. Street lighting along the main roads is present and appears to be well maintained, although there were comments made to indicate the lighting is not adequate. Although much of the town centre focuses around main shopping areas, walking routes between these may benefit from additional lighting to increase the feeling of safety. There is no central CCTV system in place

**Key Safety Features:**

-  Lighting appeared to be well distributed along main roads across the town in addition to the retail park, medical centre and railway station
-  Some narrow streets feel dark
-  No central CCTV system in place

# FEELING SAFE



**51** Incidences of crime reported  
1<sup>st</sup> September 2021 – 31<sup>st</sup> July 2022  
Police Scotland

*“I don't feel safe at night- lots of dark alleys and streetlights that aren't bright enough. “*

*“There is nothing available for teenagers to go/do which causes problems.”*

*Business and Community Survey, September 2022*

## HOW WOULD YOU RATE: SAFETY DURING THE DAY?

■ Good ■ Neutral ■ Poor

COMMUNITY



## HOW WOULD YOU RATE: SAFETY DURING THE EVENING?

■ Good ■ Neutral ■ Poor

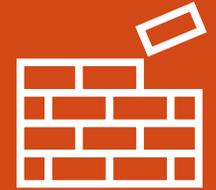
COMMUNITY



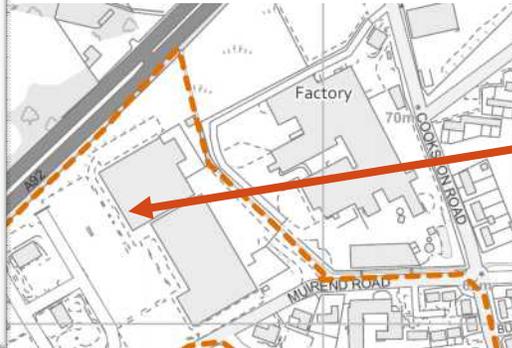
Images (Left to Right): Lighting in Portlethen Retail Park; Lighting along Cookston Road; Lighting at Portlethen Medical Centre.

Places that are well cared for can make us feel better about a place, while those that are neglected can have the opposite effect. Proper maintenance arrangements allow people to feel supported and more positive about where they live.

# CARE & MAINTENANCE



Muirend Road Shops



Retail Park

**Observations:** Overall the care and maintenance of the buildings within the town centre is good as there are no buildings that are in urgent need of renovation work. There are also a number of key buildings that contribute positively to the overall appearance of the town centre.

## HOW WOULD YOU RATE: CARE & MAINTENANCE OF BUILDINGS?

■ Good ■ Neutral ■ Poor

COMMUNITY



Portlethen Parish Church

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:** There are limited groups in Portlethen specifically to help the town centre, however of those that there are they work well to raise funds, organise events and help their community. Portlethen & District Community Council dissolved in 2021 due to not having enough members and this is an organisation which could, in the future, be reinstated to help in various community and town related matters, with collaborative working opportunities with existing groups.

<b>Town Centre Groups</b>	<b>Portlethen Town Association</b>
Legal Status	Constituted Group*
Membership	Local community
Responsibilities	The group aims to create a sustainable and inclusive community group for those living and working in the town through actively supporting economic, recreational and environmental initiatives. The work the group undertakes includes, but is not limited to: supporting community events; develop and maintain the community website; improving conditions for local businesses to expand; encouraging new business start-ups; developing an understanding among people about the issues and needs of the town. It publishes the Clochandighter, a local magazine delivered to each house in Portlethen and District and contains updates from local groups and adverts for local businesses and more and the funds raises from this are put back into the town, for example the Christmas tree and lights. The group also manage and fund the Portlethen gala and provide support to other community groups.
Contact	<a href="#">Portlethen Town Association</a>

\*Correct at time of survey

**35%** of community survey respondents are aware of groups that support the town

*"I know there was something set up due to the lack of a community council."*

*Business and Community Survey, September 2021*

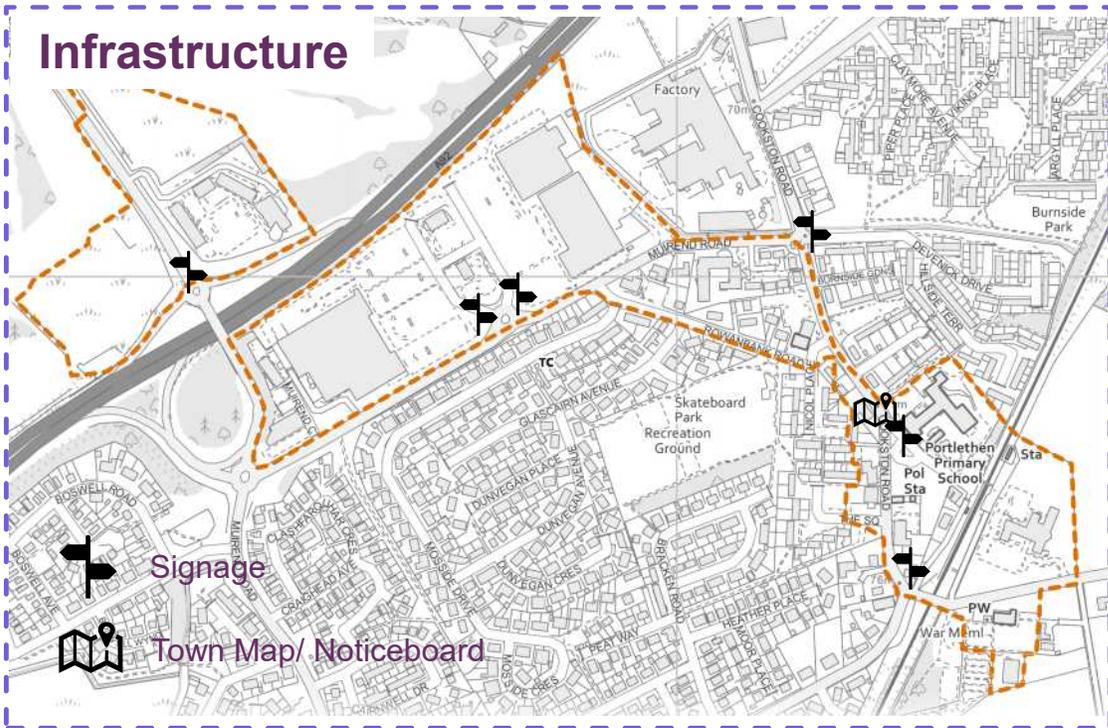
Portlethen Community Woodland    Portlethen Moss Conservation Group    Air Cadets  
 Portlethen & District    **Portlethen Town Association**  
 Men's Shed    Portlethen Youth Club    Portlethen Paths Development Group

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

# MOVING AROUND



**Observations:** The town centre is a shared space between vehicles and pedestrians. Getting around the town centre was well rated by the community, however some comments mentioned a lack of pavements across the retail park, in addition to the dispersed nature of the town centre and lack of connectivity. There is a set of traffic lights on Muirend Road but no other pedestrian crossings. There is limited pedestrian signage and no town maps, but a noticeboard is present at the Jubilee Hall. Signs with a list of shops at the retail park and directional signs to the railway station are present.



*"Better signs."*

*"Crossing the roads on foot and cycling at the retail park are not easy. It's all about the car there."*

*"You can't walk around the retail area, Asda to B&M, for example, there is no pavement for pedestrians."*

*"Portlethen is easy enough to get around, but is poorly connected. It's just very disjointed."*

*"I walk all round Portlethen."*

*Business and Community Survey, September 2022*

## HOW WOULD YOU RATE: GETTING AROUND THE TOWN CENTRE?

■ Good ■ Neutral ■ Poor

COMMUNITY



## HOW WOULD YOU RATE: SIGNAGE?

■ Good ■ Neutral ■ Poor

COMMUNITY



Images (Top to Bottom): Noticeboard, Jubilee Hall, Shopping Centre signage and retail, A92 slip road roundabout; Retail Park Sign, Muirend Road.



# MOVING AROUND: VISITING THE TOWN CENTRE

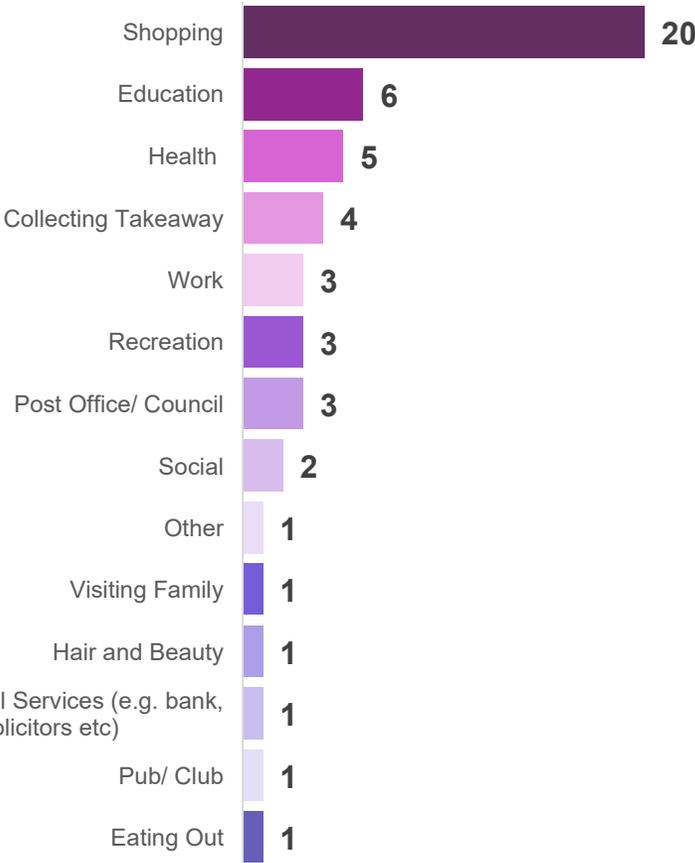
**Observations:** There was an equal number of people who visit the town centre daily and every few days. The main number of visits were during the week, with the exception of trips after 6pm which was the least visited, on both weekdays and the weekend. Shopping was the most common reason for visiting the town centre as can be seen in the graph. Eating out received only one response which reflects the comments submitted.

*“There is no cafés that would entice me to stay longer or meet friends.”*

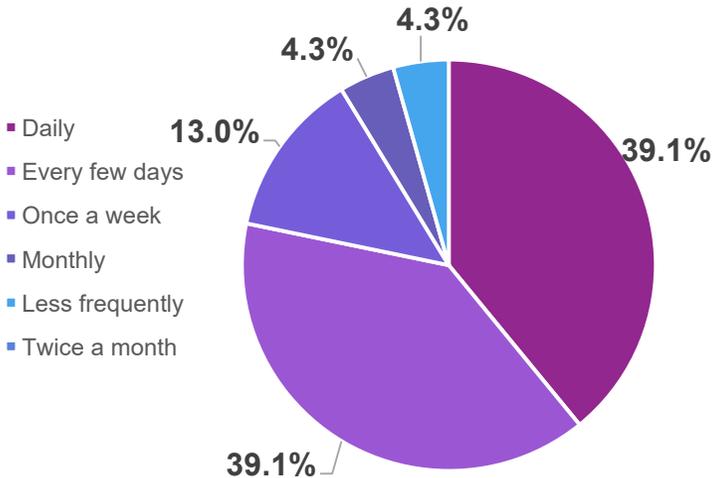
*“There is a few places to eat or meet for coffee. But I feel there isn't much choice.”*

*Community Survey, September 2022*

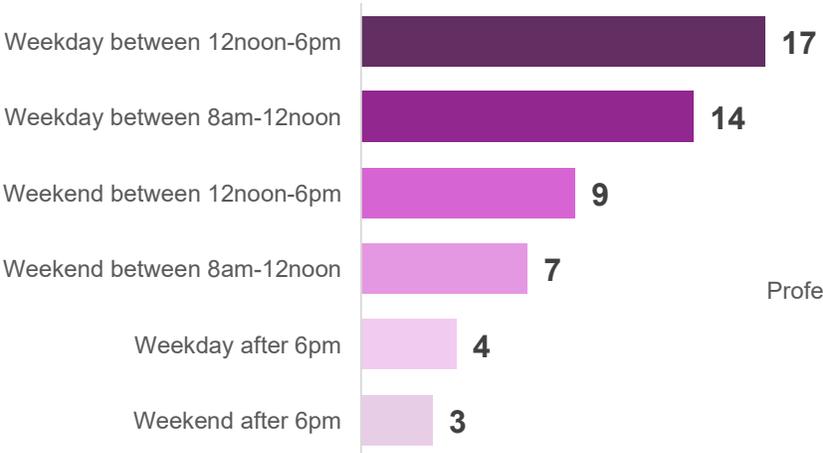
## GENERALLY, WHY DO YOU VISIT PORTHLETHEN TOWN CENTRE?\*



## HOW OFTEN DO YOU VISIT PORTLETHEN TOWN CENTRE?



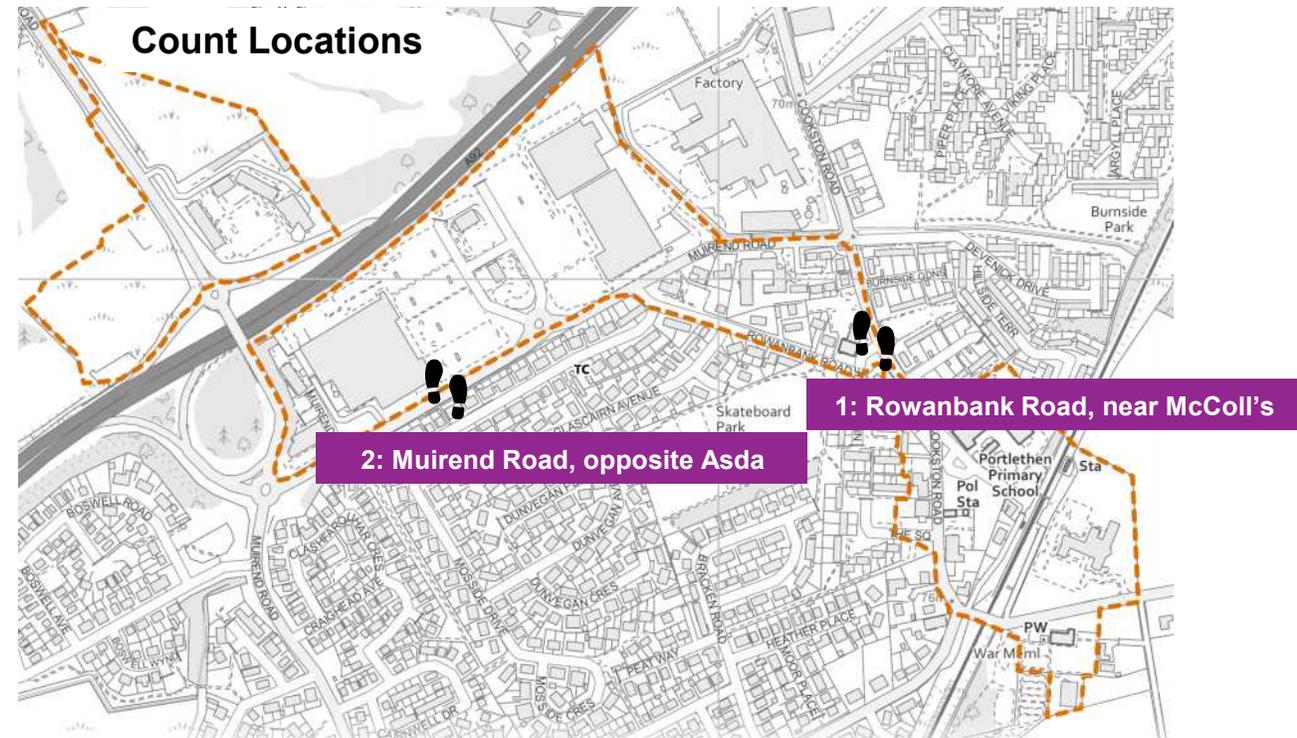
## WHEN WOULD YOU GENERALLY VISIT PORTLETHEN TOWN CENTRE?\*



\*Survey respondents were able to select multiple answers for these two questions

# MOVING AROUND: FOOTFALL SURVEY

Day	Time	Location 1	Location 2	Hourly Total	Overall Total
<b>Thursday</b> 	09:30	17	15	32	<b>103</b>
	11:30	18	11	29	
	14:30	20	22	42	
<b>Totals</b>		<b>55</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>103</b>	



**Observations:** 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 14<sup>th</sup> September 2022 for a duration of 15 minutes, three times a day, in two locations.

The pedestrian count findings showed the highest footfall count was recorded at Muirend Road, opposite Asda, but this was the quietest location in general over the course of the survey perhaps indicating that more people drive to the retail park than walk.

## HEADLINES

**Busiest Location:** Muirend Road  
**Busiest Time:** 14:30

**Quietest Location:** Muirend Road  
**Quietest Time:** 11:30

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.

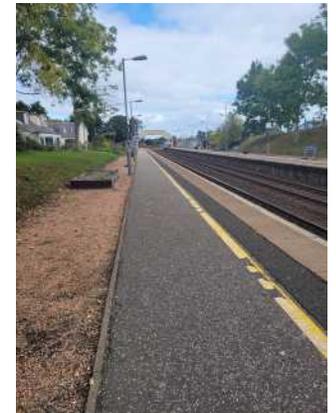
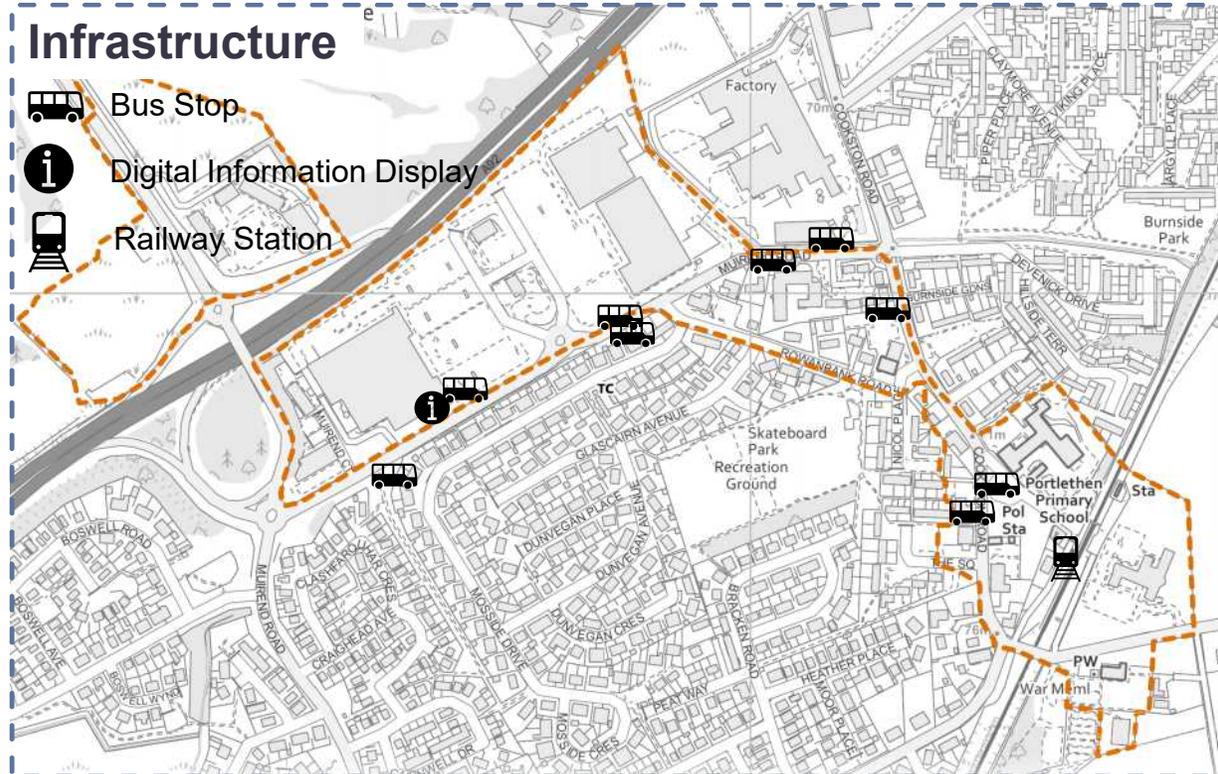
**Observations:** Portlethen town centre has several bus services to Aberdeen and Stonehaven throughout the day. This is further supplemented by train services. In addition, there is also an A2B Dial-a-Bus service which covers the Kincardine and Mearns area. All the stops are covered and have seating, with one on Muirend Road having digital information services. In the survey there were more poor ratings than good for this topic, but very few comments received.

# PUBLIC TRANSPORT



## Infrastructure

- Bus Stop
- Digital Information Display
- Railway Station



## HOW WOULD YOU RATE: PUBLIC TRANSPORT?

■ Good ■ Neutral ■ Poor

COMMUNITY



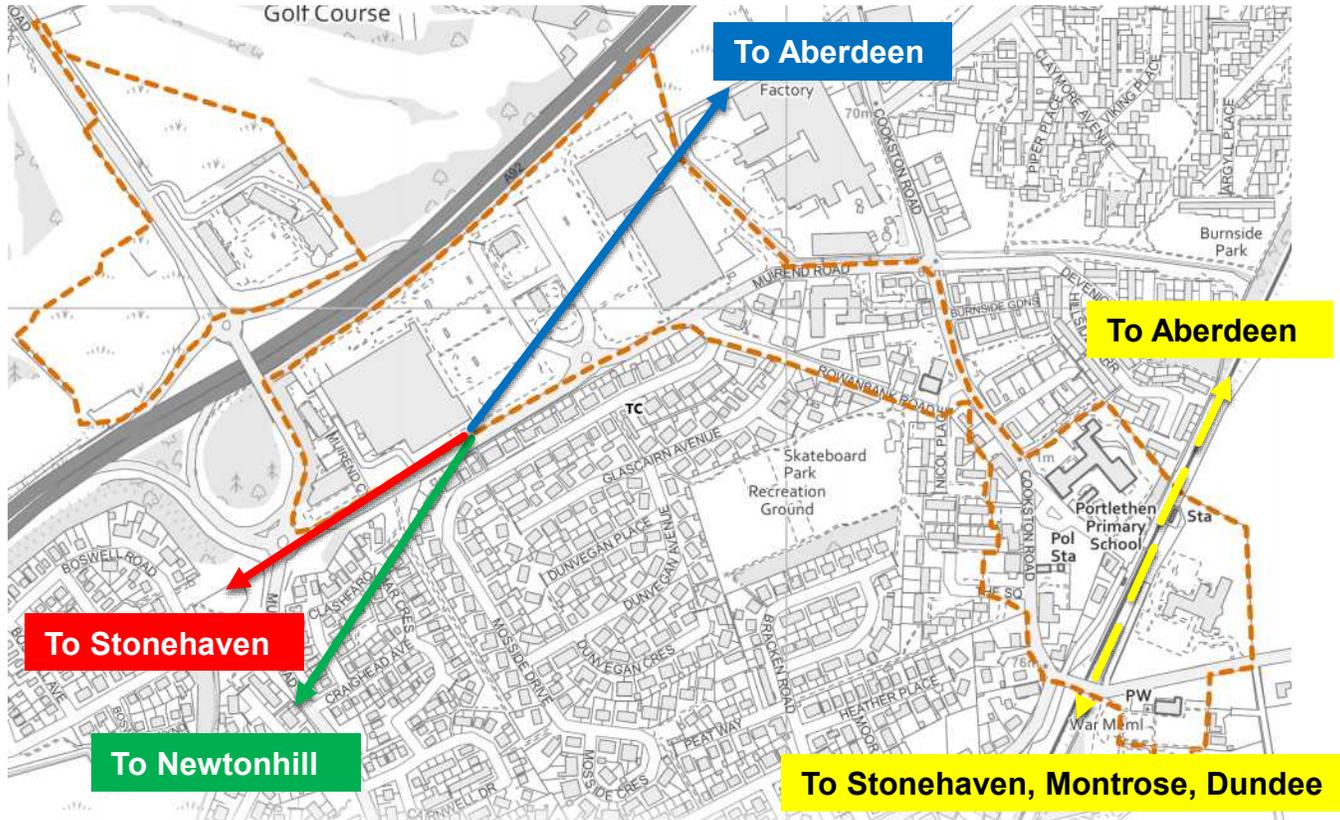
*"It's nice to see all the shops at Muirend road all filled now and the bus travels through the town centre."*

*"Bus links are terrible and the trains are not regular."*

*Business and Community Survey, September 2022*

Images (Top to Bottom): Real time information and covered bus shelter, Muirend Road; Portlethen Railway Station.

# PUBLIC TRANSPORT ROUTES



Route (from Muirend Road)	Frequency (per week day)	Fastest Journey Time	Earliest Travel Time	Latest Travel Time	Cost (Single Standard Ticket)
Bus to Aberdeen (7/ 7A/ 7B)	28	23mins	05:23	22:29	£3.70
Bus to Stonehaven (X7/ 7B/ 8)	10	14mins	09:16	23:18	£4.70
Bus to Newtonhill (7B/ X7)	14	14mins	07:49	23:18	£2.60
Train to Aberdeen	21	11mins	06:55	00:20	£4.30
Train to Stonehaven	20	8mins	05:18	22:38	£4.60

\* Correct at time of survey

## Key:

-  Bus Route 7B/ X7
-  Bus Route 7/ A/ B
-  Bus Route X7/ 7B/ 8
-  Railway

An [A2B Dial-A-Bus](#), pre-booked service provided by Aberdeenshire Council, is available in Portlethen and the surrounding area. In most cases, a door-to-door service is provided if there is no other suitable bus service in the area.

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: Station Car Park.

*“There should be a reduction in speed limit to 20mph.”*

*Business and Community Survey, September 2022*

**Observations:** The ratings for traffic flow were fairly mixed through the community survey, however, the majority of respondents rated the topic as neutral. Some comments were received in relation to potential improvements including reducing the speed limit to increase the safety of the area.

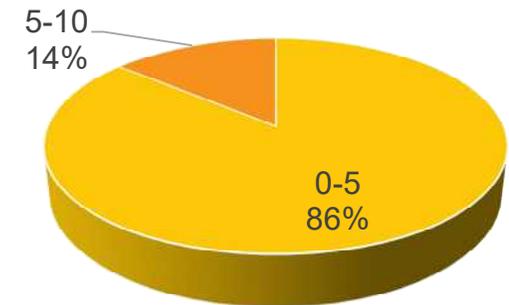
Additionally, it is significant that 86% of people that use the town centre come less than 5 miles which shows that the majority of people using the town live in Portlethen itself.

### HOW WOULD YOU RATE: TRAFFIC FLOW?

■ Good ■ Neutral ■ Poor

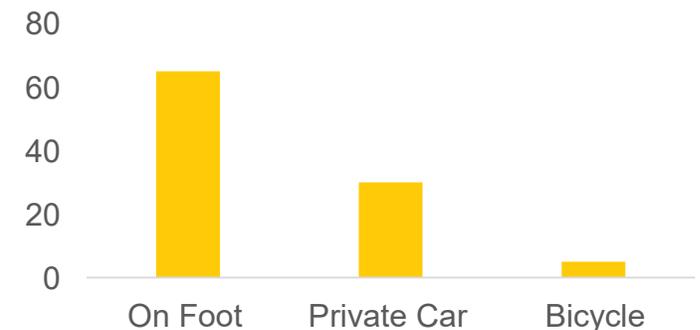


### Distance Travelled to Use the Town Centre (Miles)



*Source: Community Survey September 2022*

### How would you generally travel to the town centre:



*Source: Community Survey September 2022*

# MOVING AROUND: TRAFFIC SURVEY

Day		9:45am-10:00am		11:45am-12noon		2:15:2:30pm		Total number of Vehicles
		Car	Buses	Lorries	Vans	Taxis	Bicycles	
Wednesday	Location 1	Car	156	Car	232	Car	201	705
		Buses	0	Buses	1	Buses	4	
		Lorries	5	Lorries	0	Lorries	0	
		Vans	24	Vans	45	Vans	26	
		Taxis	1	Taxis	2	Taxis	1	
		Bicycles	0	Bicycles	1	Bicycles	0	
		Other	0	Other	2	Other	4	
	Location 2	Car	26	Car	42	Car	28	111
		Buses	1	Buses	1	Buses	1	
		Lorries	0	Lorries	0	Lorries	0	
		Vans	4	Vans	3	Vans	5	
		Taxis	0	Taxis	0	Taxis	0	
		Bicycles	0	Bicycles	0	Bicycles	0	
		Other	0	Other	0	Other	0	
Hourly Totals (all traffic):		217		329		270		816

## HEADLINES

**Busiest Location:** Muirhead Road (Opposite ASDA)

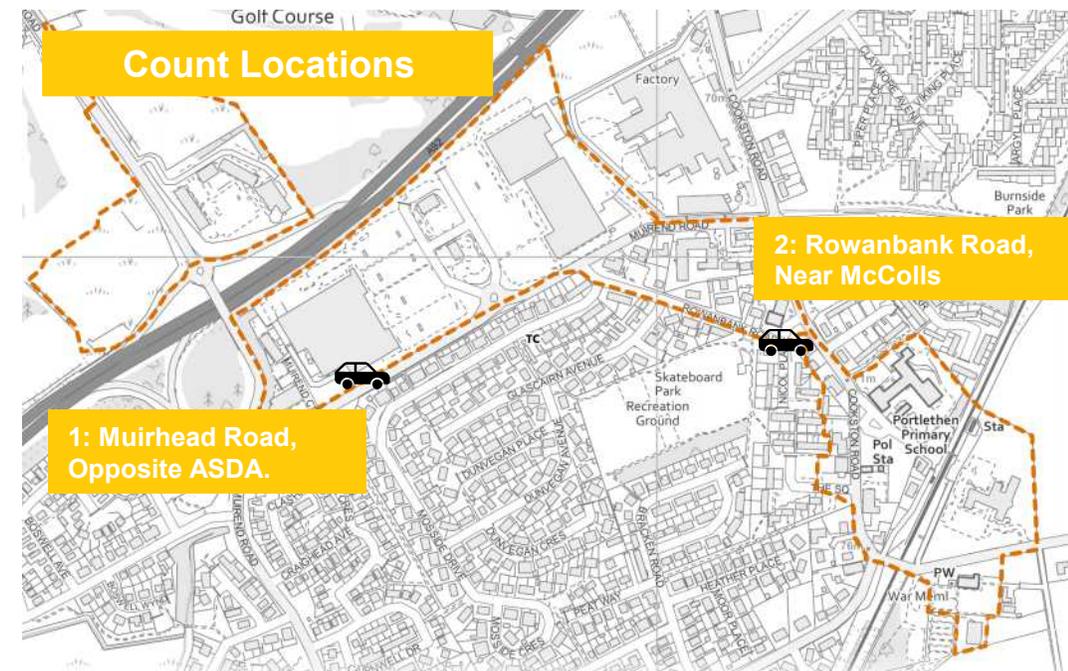
**Busiest Time:** 11:45

**Busiest Day:** Wednesday

**Quietest Location:** Rowanbank Road, Near McColls

**Quietest Time:** 09:45

**Quietest Day:** Wednesday



**Observations:** Vehicle counts were undertaken on Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> September for a duration of 15 minutes, three times a day, in two locations. These give information on the number of cars that are passing through the town centre, it can't be confirmed whether these cars have all contributed to the local economy but were in the town centre at the time of the count. The vehicle count findings showed the highest vehicle count by far was recorded at Muirhead Road on Wednesday afternoon, particularly around midday.

# TRAFFIC & PARKING

## CAR PARKING AFFORDABILITY AND AVAILABILITY

### HOW WOULD YOU RATE: PARKING AFFORDABILITY?

■ Good ■ Neutral ■ Poor

COMMUNITY



### HOW WOULD YOU RATE: PARKING AVAILABILITY?

■ Good ■ Neutral ■ Poor

COMMUNITY



Image: Portlethen Retail Park.



**Observations:** Both topics of parking affordability and availability were ranked within the top five topics surveyed through the community survey. It is worth noting however, that the respondents may have been thinking about the Portlethen Retail Park Car Park when responding but this is not a Council car park so does not contribute to the available car parking spaces for this survey.

### Available Spaces

28

No. of Free Spaces

2

No. of Disabled Spaces

0

No. of Paid Spaces

0

No. of EV Charging Spaces

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



**Observations:** There are no vacant retail units within the town centre which is positive and contributes to the vibrancy and appearance of the town.

However, as the town centre is not a traditional one and is focused around a retail park, the attractiveness of the town centre has been ranked within the bottom five of all topics rated within the survey. A number of comments were received noting that there is not a town centre and that there is a need for improvement which reflects within the ratings of the topic.

*“Create something more like a town centre where there can be events and people walk around.”*

*“I am not even sure what part of Portlethen classes as the town centre, because there isn't one. There are just several small shopping centres scattered across town.”*

*Business and Community Survey, September 2022*

# STREETS & SPACES

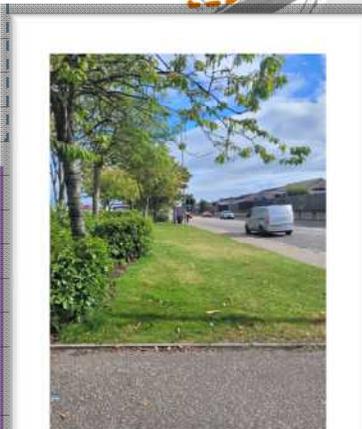
## ATTRACTIVENESS OF TOWN CENTRE AND VACANT RETAIL UNITS



Muirend Road shops



Portlethen Parish Church



Grass verges, Muirend Road



Shop units, Cookston Road



## HOW WOULD YOU RATE: SEATING/ AREAS TO CONGREGATE

■ Good ■ Neutral ■ Poor



**Observations:** There is one listed building within Portlethen Town Centre. The Category C listed building is Portlethen Parish Church which is in good condition.

There are two benches within the town centre, one located outside ASDA within the Retail Park and one located at the train station. The topic was ranked within the bottom five of all topics rated within the community survey with a number of respondents requesting additional seating within the town centre.

In addition, there is one piece of artwork with the town centre at the train station as the planters are a fun addition to the town and brighten up the area.

*“There is no place to meet and congregate within the town centre.”*

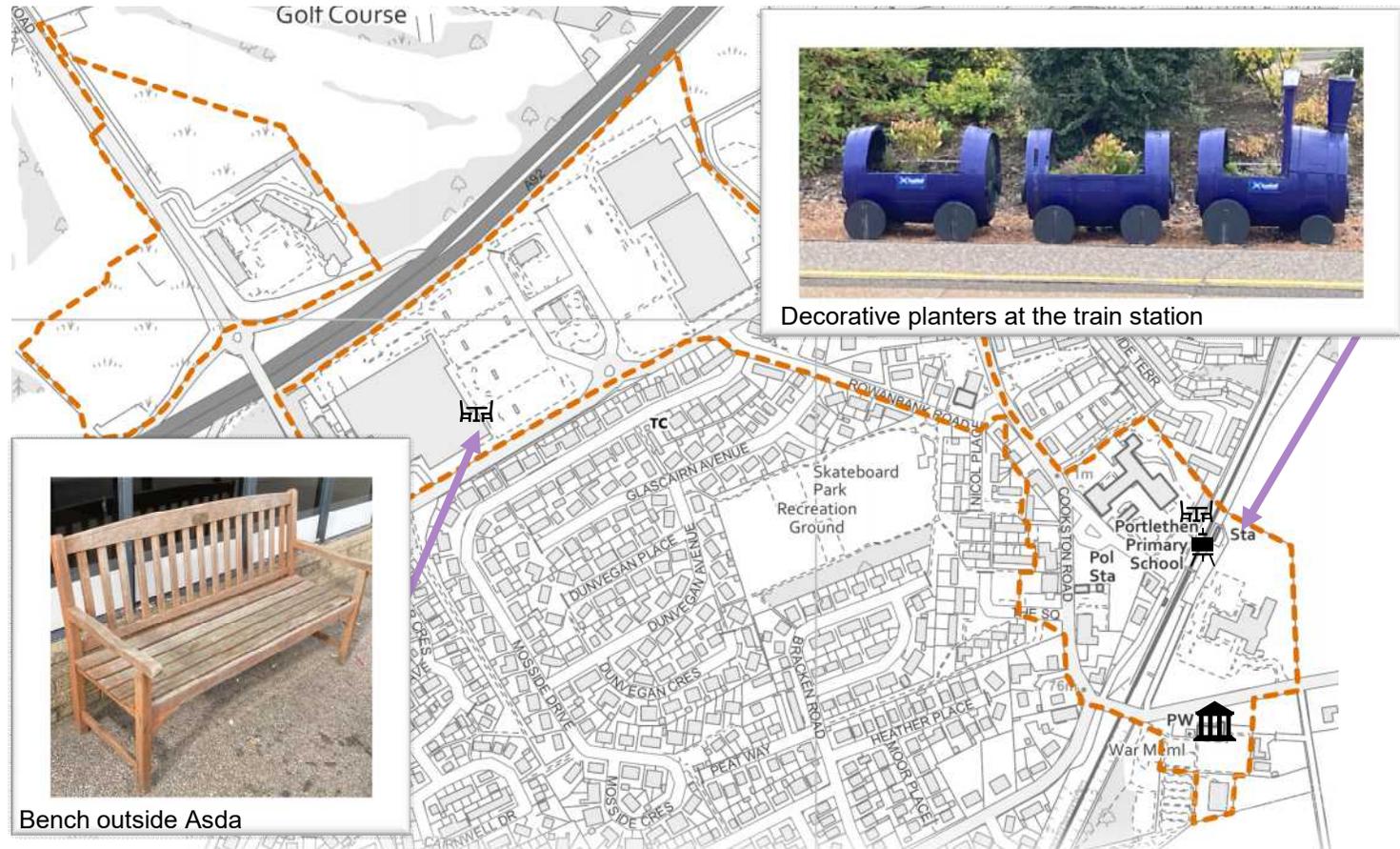
*“Need to have more benches.”*

*“No real areas to congregate- benches are few and far between.”*

*“There are no seats.”*

Business and Community Survey, September 2022

## STREETS & SPACES: HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT, PUBLIC ART AND SEATING



# STREETS & SPACES: PAVEMENTS

## HOW WOULD YOU RATE: PAVEMENT CLEANLINESS?

■ Good ■ Neutral ■ Poor

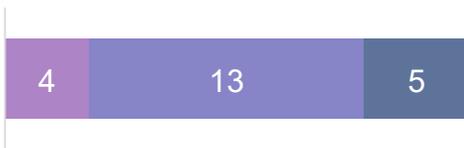
COMMUNITY



## HOW WOULD YOU RATE: PAVEMENT QUALITY?

■ Good ■ Neutral ■ Poor

COMMUNITY

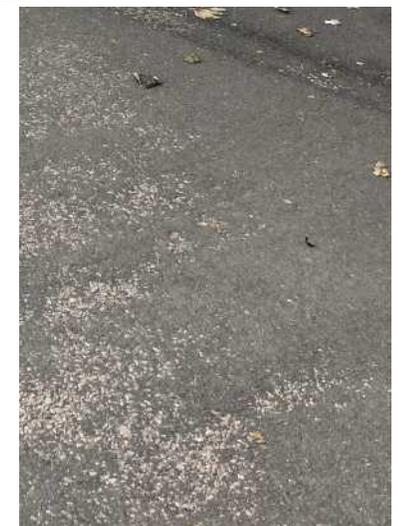


**Observations:** In the survey the cleanliness of pavements scored well with just under half of respondents rating the topic as good. However, in terms of quality of pavements only four respondents rated the topic as good through the survey with the majority of respondents rating the topic as neutral. A number of comments were received through the survey noting that the pavements could be improved.

*“Some of the pavements could be better looked after.”*

*“There is no pavement for pedestrians with the retail park.”*

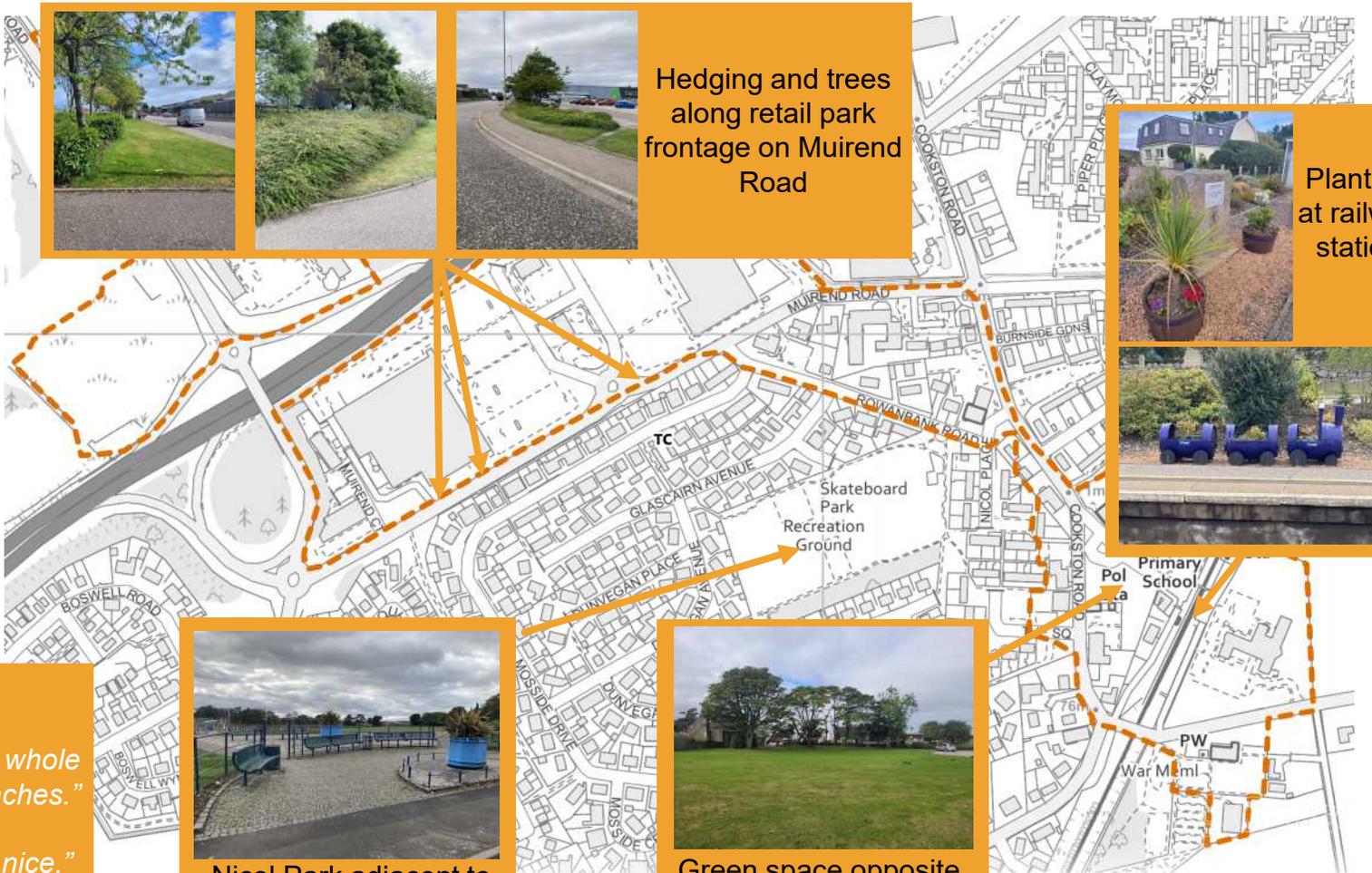
*Business and Community Survey, September 2022*



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 are small pockets of green space within the town centre boundary, including verges along road edges. There is no park, however there is one on the boundary near Rowanbank Road. Trees and shrubs along Muirend Road and to the back of the retail park provide some greenery to the area, however it is largely dominated by roads and parking. There are planters at the railway station but none elsewhere and this could be an area to improve upon as the addition of planters could assist to brighten up the space. This topic was fairly evenly rated, with slightly less rating parks and green spaces as good.

# NATURAL SPACE



Hedging and trees along retail park frontage on Muirend Road



Planters at railway station



## HOW WOULD YOU RATE: PARKS & GREEN SPACES?

■ Good ■ Neutral ■ Poor

COMMUNITY



*“Bigger, more green space with benches etc.”*

*“Portlethen needs more play parks and outdoor spaces for the whole community to use. Like picnic areas with benches.”*

*“Parks need updating. Flower pots around Portlethen would be nice.”*

*Business and Community Survey, September 2022*



Nicol Park adjacent to town centre boundary



Green space opposite Primary School

Good public places and facilities 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.

# PLAY & RECREATION



## HOW WOULD YOU RATE: LEISURE AND PLAY FACILITIES?

■ Good ■ Neutral ■ Poor

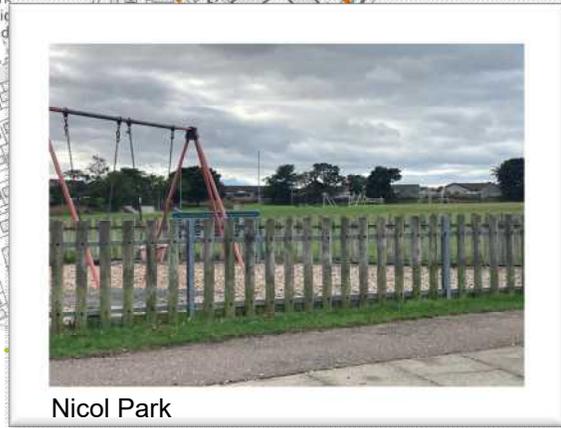
COMMUNITY



**Observations:** Portlethen has no play and recreation sites within the town centre itself, but the presence of a number of facilities on the town centre boundary was reflected through the survey. Although there were comments made through the survey indicating a community desire for more green spaces within the town centre. However, it should also be noted that there are a number of play/recreation facilities less than 1 mile from the town centre.

*“Would be nice to see a bigger green space within the town centre.”*

*Business and Community Survey, September 2022*



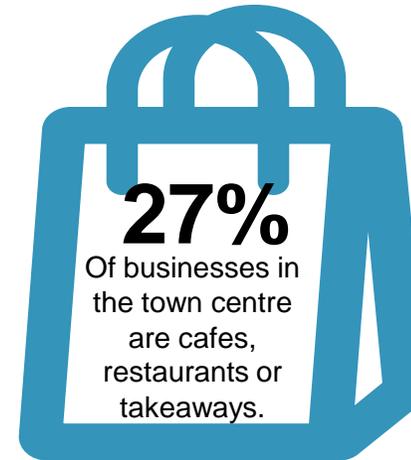
# FACILITIES & AMENITIES: RETAILER REPRESENTATION

## Retailer Representation

**27%** of businesses in the town centre are independent retailers

**61%** of businesses in the town centre are Class 1: Shops

**16%** of businesses in the town centre are Class 2: Financial, Professional and other services



## HOW WOULD YOU RATE: VARIETY OF SHOPS?

■ Good ■ Neutral ■ Poor

BUSINESS	2	9
COMMUNITY	110	92

## HOW WOULD YOU RATE: QUALITY OF SHOPS?

■ Good ■ Neutral ■ Poor

BUSINESS	4	4	3
COMMUNITY	23	48	33

*“There isn’t a town centre just a large number of large warehouses.”*

*“There are a lot of options for shops.”*

*“Retail is good but could have some more little independent shops selling different gifts, crafts, clothes etc.”*

*“Limited offer mainly based around big chains.”*

*“There are just larger shops within the town centre.”*



**Observations:** The majority of shop units within the town centre are multiple retailers, with only 27% of units being independent retailers. This is probably due to the fact that the town centre of Portlethen is not a traditional town centre and is based around the retail park which attracts larger multiple retailers due to the unit size.

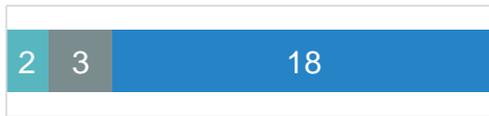
Image (Top to Bottom: Muirhead Shops and Portlethen Retail Park.

# FACILITIES & AMENITIES: CAFE AND RESTAURANTS AND EVENING ECONOMY

## HOW WOULD YOU RATE: CAFE/ RESTAURANT CHOICE?

■ Good ■ Neutral ■ Poor

COMMUNITY



## HOW WOULD YOU RATE: CAFE/ RESTAURANT QUALITY?

■ Good ■ Neutral ■ Poor

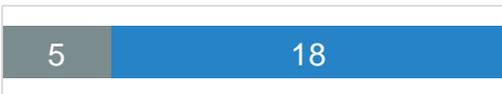
COMMUNITY



## HOW WOULD YOU RATE: THE VIBRANCY IN THE EVENING :

■ Good ■ Neutral ■ Poor

COMMUNITY



**Observations:** Within the town centre there is a restaurant/takeaway, a restaurant and one café for residents to use. In addition to these there are an additional two takeaway units which are open into the evening.

A number of comments were received from respondents noting that there is a community desire to see more of a functional town centre which would include more cafes and restaurants within the town centre.

Additionally, the topics of café choice and evening vibrancy were both ranked within the bottom five topics rated through the survey.

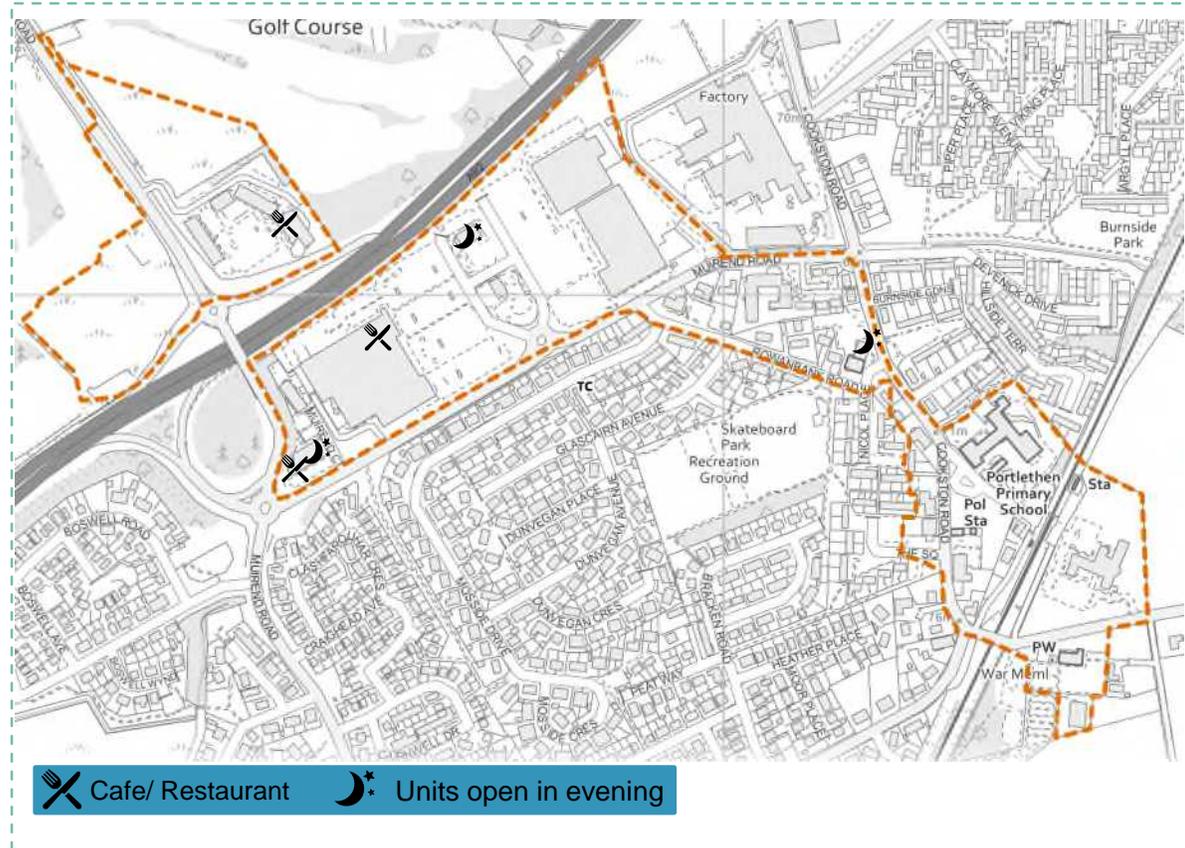
*“Need to improve the offering of cafes, coffee shops and restaurants.”*

*“The town centre could do with a proper café or restaurant.”*

*“There is no café that would entice me to stay longer within the town centre or to meet friends in the town centre.”*

*“There is a real lack of cafes and restaurants.”*

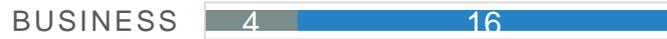
Business and Community Survey, September 2022



# FACILITIES & AMENITIES: CULTURAL AND LEISURE OUTLETS, PUBLIC AND OTHER SERVICES AND FARMERS MARKET

## HOW WOULD YOU RATE: THE MARKET?

■ Good ■ Neutral ■ Poor



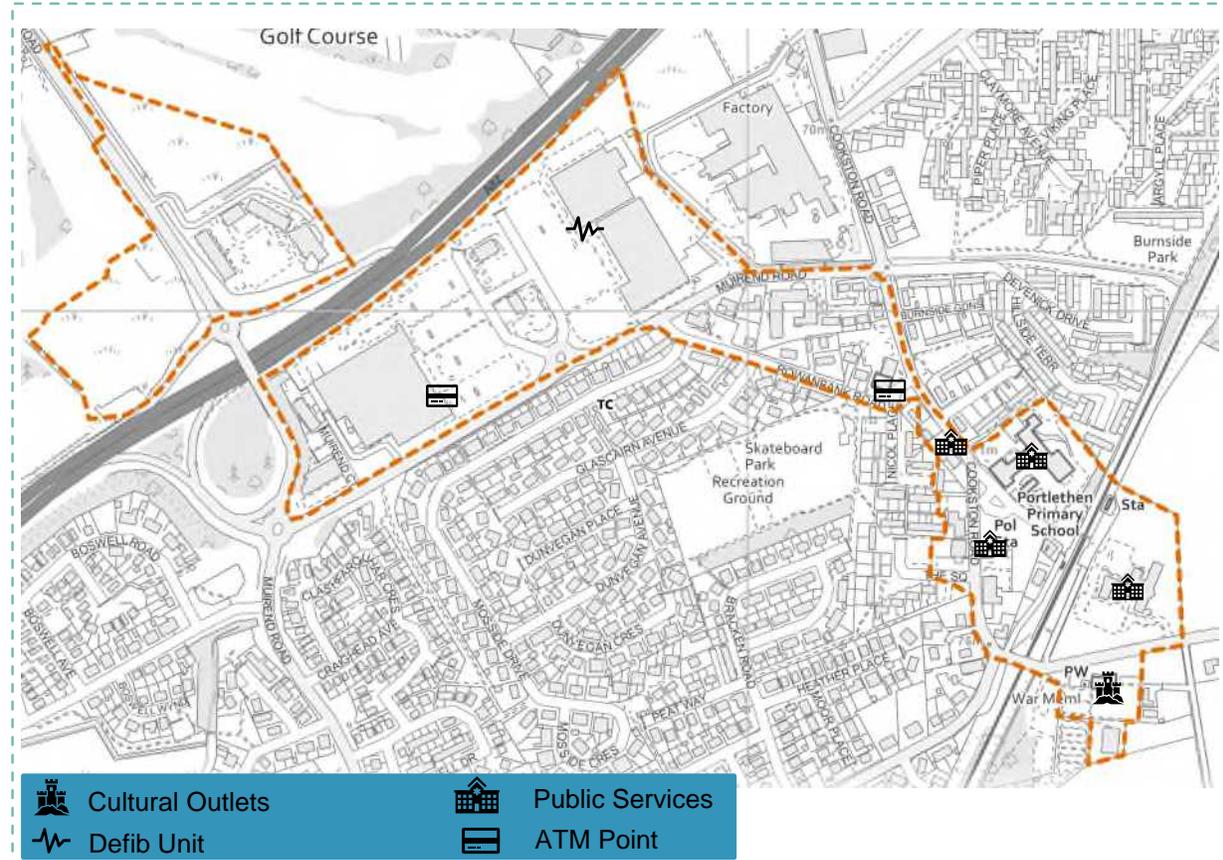
*“There is no Farmer’s Market within Portlethen.”*

*“Portlethen was very poorly planned out and needs a proper town centre where people can come together.”*

*Business and Community Survey, September 2022*

**Observations:** It should be noted that there is no farmer’s market within Portlethen Town Centre and this is reflected through the community ratings of the topic which was ranked within the bottom five topics of those surveyed.

Portlethen has a number of services situated within the town centre, including a primary school, Police Station, hall, medical centre, church, ATM machines and a defibrillator unit at the retail park.



Images (Top to Bottom): Portlethen Police Station, Portlethen Medical Centre and Portlethen Primary School.

# FACILITIES & AMENITIES: COMMUNITY AND VISITOR SATISFACTION

## HOW WOULD YOU RATE: VALUE FOR MONEY?

■ Good ■ Neutral ■ Poor



*“There is a limited offer which is mainly around larger chain shops.”*

*“Retail is good but could have some more little independent shops selling different gifts, crafts, clothes etc.”*

*Business and Community Survey, September 2022*

**Observations:** The topics of standard of service within the shops, value for money and variety of goods available were all ranked within the top five out of all the topics within the community survey.

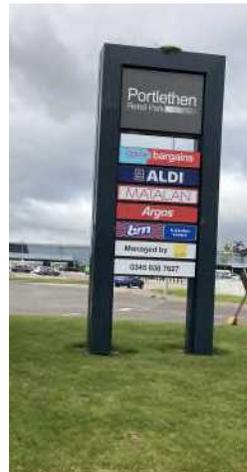
However, a number of comments were received through the survey noting that the community would like to see more variety within the town centre.

## Town Centre Offer:

# 21%

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

*Business and Community Survey, September 2022*



Images (Both): Portlethen Retail Park.

## 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 Portlethen in the ‘Towns and Villages’ section of their website:

# 137

Jan-Dec 2021

# FACILITIES & AMENITIES: ONLINE SHOPPING/ CONNECTIVITY

## Online Offering

61%

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

*Business and Community Survey, September 2022*

*“I try to avoid online shopping.”*

*“It’s quicker to pop to the shops than buy things online.”*

*“There isn’t any choice in the town centre.”*

*“I go online if I can’t get what I want in Portlethen.”*

*“There is more choice and availability online.”*

*“I prefer to shop locally as I like to see what I am buying.”*

*Business and Community Survey, September 2022*

**Observations:** Within the survey there was a mix of responses to the questions about shopping online. A number of respondents noted that they would rather shop locally than buying online.

However, others noted that availability, convenience and variety of goods were the main reasons for online shopping.



## Mobile Coverage in Portlethen Town Centre:

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

✓ Good coverage    ○ You may experience problems    ✗ No coverage    5G Some 5G availability

## Broadband Coverage in Portlethen Town Centre:

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

**Observations:** Mobile coverage within Portlethen Town Centre is very strong with all of the top networks being able to be connected to at a 4G level, and in addition on network to a 5G connection.

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.

Image: Muirhead Shops.

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 largest employment sector in the Portlethen town centre data zone is retail and the remaining sectors show a variety of different opportunities. The claimant count rose as expected in 2020 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic but has decreased since then and remains below the levels of the wider area. The low level of deprivation is reflected in both the claimant count and income levels.

**Settlement Type:**  
**Accessible Small Town**  
 (Settlements with a population of 3,000 to 9,999 people and within a drive time of 30 minutes to a Settlements of 10,000 or more)  
 Scottish Government's Urban Rural Classification, 8-fold

**Median Household Income 2021**  
**Town Centre Data Zone\***  
**£45,308**

£42,819 Kincardine and Mearns;  
 £36,889 Aberdeenshire

Source: © CACI Limited 1996 - 2021 This report shall be used solely for academic, personal and/or non-commercial purposes.

# WORK & LOCAL ECONOMY

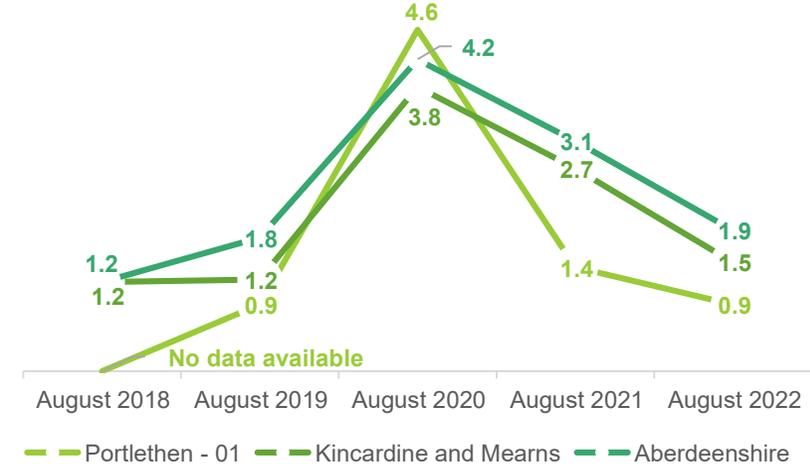


## Top 6 Employment Sectors 2021 Portlethen Town Centre Data Zone\*



Source: Business Register and Employment Survey 2021

## CLAIMANT COUNT RATE^ (%)



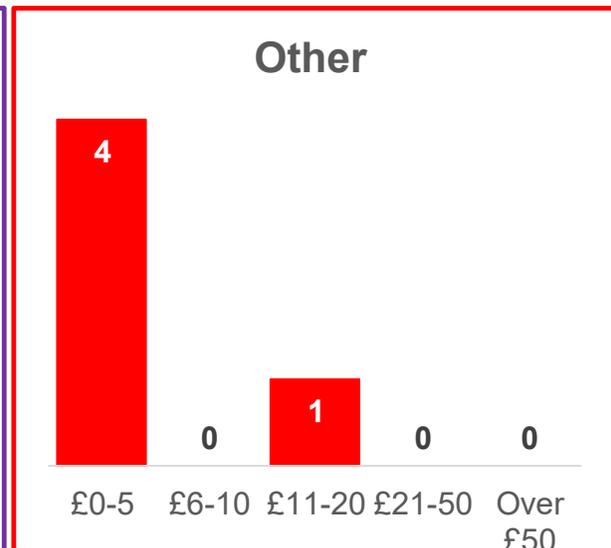
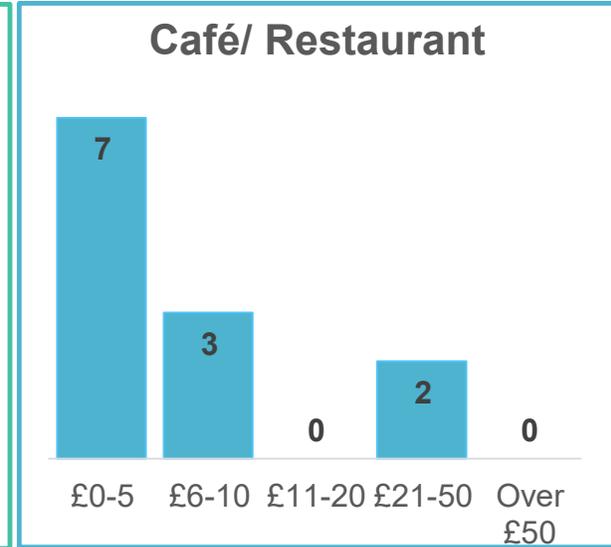
^Includes people claiming Universal Credit or Jobseekers Allowance  
 Source: ONS Crown Copyright Reserved

**Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation 2020**  
**Town Centre Data Zone\*:**  
**5-10%** least deprived in Scotland

\* The data zone (S01006842) that makes up the majority of the town centre.

# WORK & LOCAL ECONOMY: AVERAGE CONSUMER SPEND 2022

**Observations:** As expected, food shopping accounts for the biggest expenditure by visitors. Other shopping was generally more spread out across the price brackets, although with a higher number of people spending £11-20, indicating that people are visiting for a wide variety of different items. Eating out and takeaways were also fairly spread out in terms of spend but neither exceeding £50. There was very little spend on events/ entertainment highlighting the lack of opportunities in this area, picked up elsewhere in the health check.



## WORK & LOCAL ECONOMY: PROPERTY

**Observations:** No businesses responded to the survey. There were a limited number of planning applications approved in in the year 2021/2022, with only one relevant application to the town centre. This is perhaps due to the existing businesses which may be well established and with little change, or are large chains in the retail park area where there is limited opportunity for new development.

Comments received in the survey suggest a desire for more variety in cafés/ restaurants and for independent shops in addition to the larger retailers present. However, others felt that the current offering was good and largely met their needs.

*“It is great for shops, takeaways, cafes, hairdressers etc. Don’t really need to go into Aberdeen city centre if I don’t want or have to.”*

*“Limited offer mainly based around big chains.”*

*“I’d expect more local businesses, small shops like Stonehaven and Ellon. A Costa/Starbucks like Westhill. A M&S like Inverurie. B&M and Home Bargains are fine, but both of them is a bit much.”*

*“The new stores opening in Portlethen have made a huge impact and improved competition.”*

*“Lack of cafés and proper restaurants.”*

*“Retail and 3 pubs great for the size of Portlethen.”*

*“Retail is good but could have some more little independent shops selling different gifts, crafts, clothes etc.”*

*Business and Community Survey, September 2022*

### Planning Applications:

Within the town centre nine planning applications were approved between August 2021 – August 2022. Of note were:

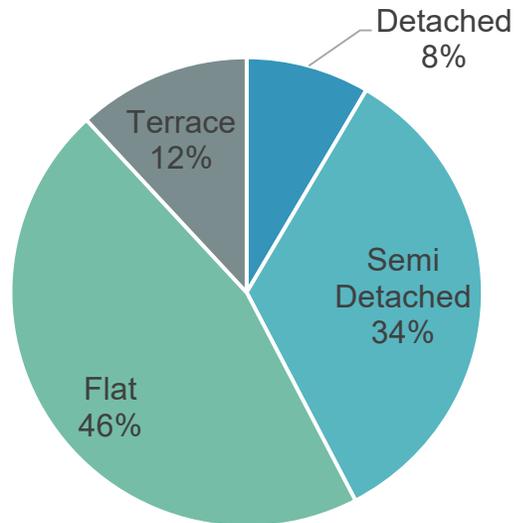
- Installation of Illuminated and Non Illuminated Signs on Existing Building and Installation of 1 Illuminated Signs on Existing Totem;

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



The mix of dwelling types within the town centre is shown above. The largest proportion of the dwellings are flats.

Of these dwelling types within the town centre the main tenure are properties which are either owned outright or owned with a mortgage as these properties make up 94% of the total.

## Housing Profile and Population

The overall population total for Portlethen in 2020 was 8,940 and it is estimated that approximately 134 people live within the town centre in 2022.

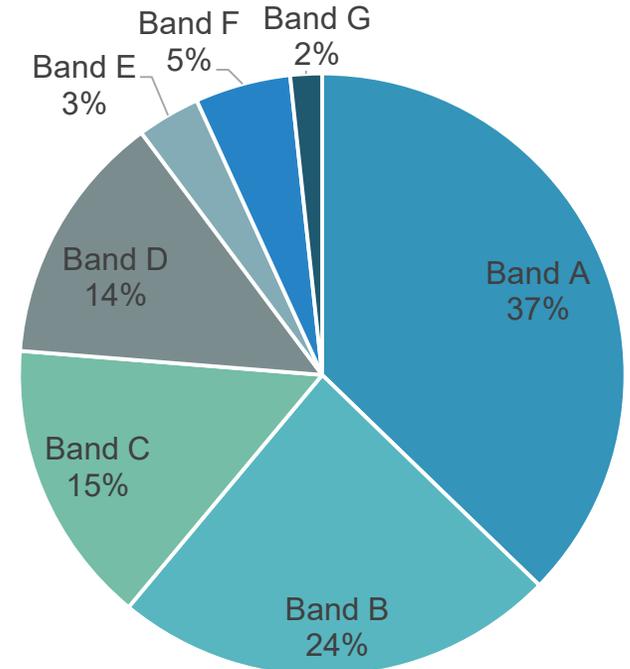
The average house price for dwellings within the town centre boundary in 2018 was £236,678.



Image: Muirend Road.

In terms of Council Tax Bands (2021), Portlethen Town Centre has dwellings in Bands A-G on the scale of the Council Tax Bands. There is a mix of bands within the town centre but the majority are within Bands A-C.

## Council Tax Band



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, it was ranked within the bottom five of all topics in the community survey. There are a number of venues that are available for social interaction in the town centre but there is a community desire to see more events and also to see something for children and young people to do.



Image: Portlethen and District Men's Shed.

## SOCIAL CONTACT



Venue	Indoor / Outdoor	Opening Times
Jubilee Hall	Indoor	Opening Hours Vary. Available for private bookings.
The Porty Cabin	Indoor	Mon 18:00 – 20:00, Wed 16:00 – 18:00, Thurs 10:00 – 12:00noon, Fri 14:00 – 17:00 and Sat 10:00 – 12:30 Support Group & Larder  Sun: 14:00 Church Service
Portlethen Parish Church	Indoor	Sun: 10.00 Sunday School 10.30 Church Service
Portlethen and District Men's Shed	Indoor	Opening Hours Vary.

*"The community really needs a youth club for the kids in Portlethen."*

*"There are no events to attend."*

*"There is nowhere to meet and congregate within the town centre."*

*"It would be great to see some street food markets and farmers markets within the town centre."*

*"It would be great to see somewhere that holds activities for children/ young people in the town centre."*

*Business and Community Survey, September 2022*

### HOW WOULD YOU RATE: RANGE OF EVENTS?

■ Good ■ Neutral ■ Poor

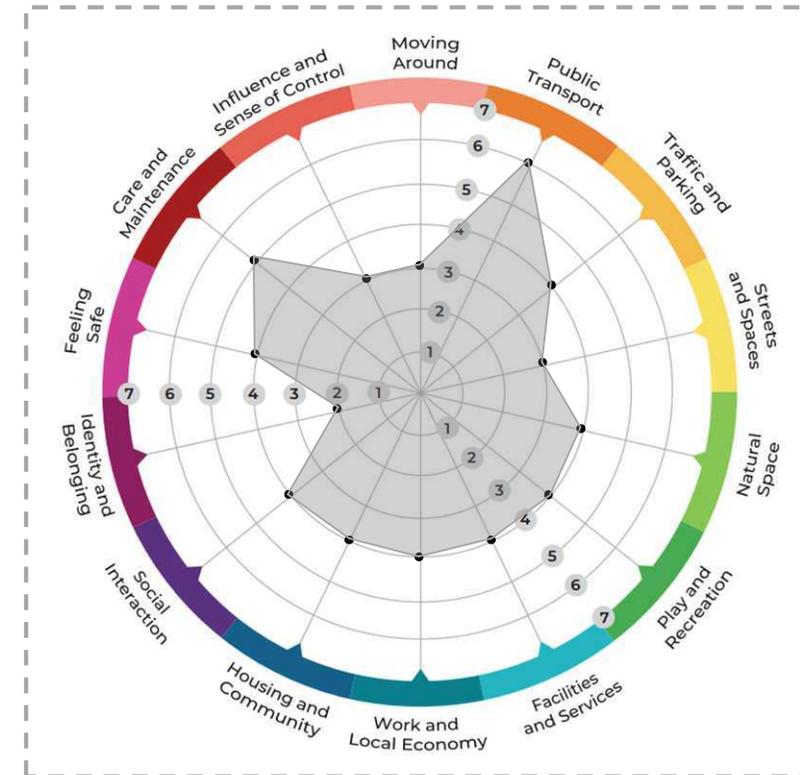
COMMUNITY

5

18

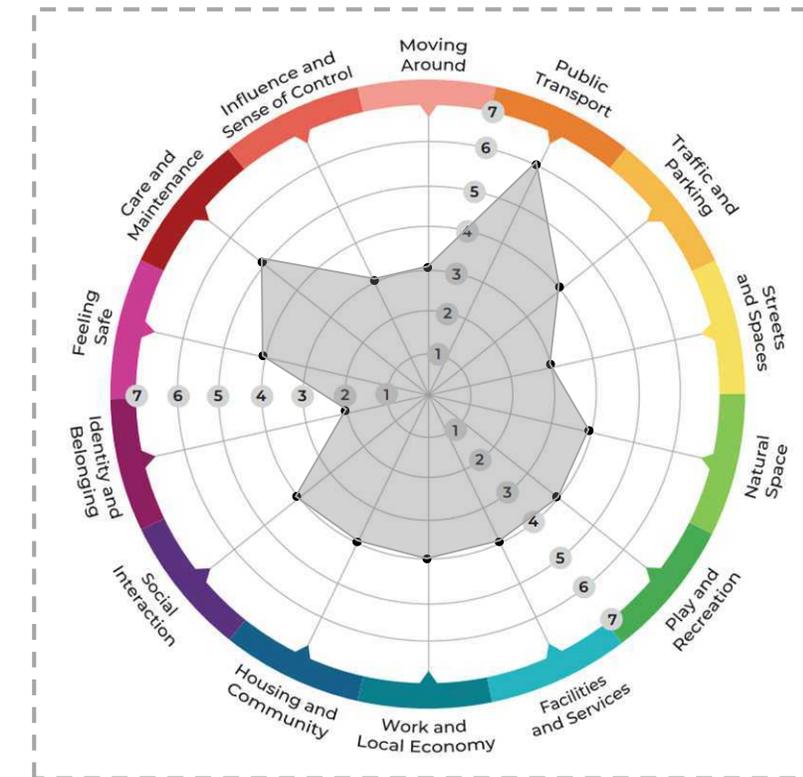
# KEY CONSIDERATIONS & OPPORTUNITIES

Theme	Key Improvements
<b>Identity and Belonging</b> Rating: 2	The community felt largely negative towards Portlethen Town Centre, likely due to the dispersion of the shops and lack of focal point for the community to gather.
<b>Feeling Safe</b> Rating: 4	Safety during the day scored well, with no poor ratings received. Safety during the evening was less positive with the community raising concerns of antisocial behaviour, linked with a lack of things to do, and dark streets. Pedestrian links could perhaps be improved with better lighting to make people feel safer.
<b>Care and Maintenance</b> Rating: 5	Overall the general care and maintenance of buildings within Portlethen is good as there are no buildings that are in urgent need of maintenance. The upkeep of the buildings should be monitored and any necessary action can be taken at an early stage.
<b>Influence and Sense of Control</b> Rating: 3	There are limited groups which support the town centre, however one group are working with existing businesses and the community to help improve the town. There is a lack of a community council and re-establishing this could help the community feel more heard and supported.
<b>Moving Around</b> Rating: 3	Moving around scored reasonably well with respondents, but as mentioned previously the dispersed nature of the town makes it feel disjointed. Improved pedestrian connectivity throughout the retail park is desired by the community. There is signage indicating to the retail park however additional signage to other facilities in the town centre would be a welcome addition.
<b>Public Transport</b> Rating: 6	Bus links are good to the north, with slightly less services to the south of Portlethen. However there is a Dial-a-Bus to supplement these services. In addition the railway station is located within the town centre boundary and provides several services per day to the north and south.
<b>Traffic and Parking</b> Rating: 4	Traffic and parking received a mixed response through the surveys, although it should be noted that the larger car park at Portlethen Retail Park is not a Council Car Park so doesn't contribute to numbers within the survey however, availability was noted as a strong point.



# KEY CONSIDERATIONS & OPPORTUNITIES (CONTINUED)

Theme	Key Improvements
<b>Streets and Spaces</b> Rating: 3	The town centre is generally well kept but received a mix of ratings through the surveys. The main factor of this was that because Portlethen does not have a traditional town centre respondents noted that there was no core to the town centre and there should be more pavements and seating within the area to make it more pedestrian friendly like a town centre.
<b>Natural Space</b> Rating: 4	Small pockets of green space such as verges and planting are located within the town centre which contribute positively to the feel of the area. It would be advantageous to increase planting where possible, such as planters to brighten up the area. There are no parks within the town centre but one is situated on the boundary.
<b>Play and Recreation</b> Rating: 4	There are no play and recreation facilities within the town boundary. However, there are several are several parks and golf club within 1 mile of the town centre.
<b>Facilities and Amenities</b> Rating: 4	There are a number of services within Portlethen Town Centre but through the surveys only 21% of respondents noted that they agreed Portlethen had what they would expect to see in a town centre. This links with the community desire to see a more traditional town centre.
<b>Work and Local Economy</b> Rating: 4	There are low levels of deprivation in the town centre which is reflective of the low level of the claimant count and high income levels. Consumer spend is relatively spread out with the exception of little spend on events/ entertainment highlighting a lack of opportunities in this area.
<b>Housing and Community</b> Rating: 4	There are a mix of house types within the town centre and this should continue to be monitored to ensure there are types and tenures of housing that would provide for all of the community.
<b>Social Contact</b> Rating: 4	There are a number of venues for people to meet within the town centre. However, there was a large desire to see additional events happening within the town centre, particularly events for young people.



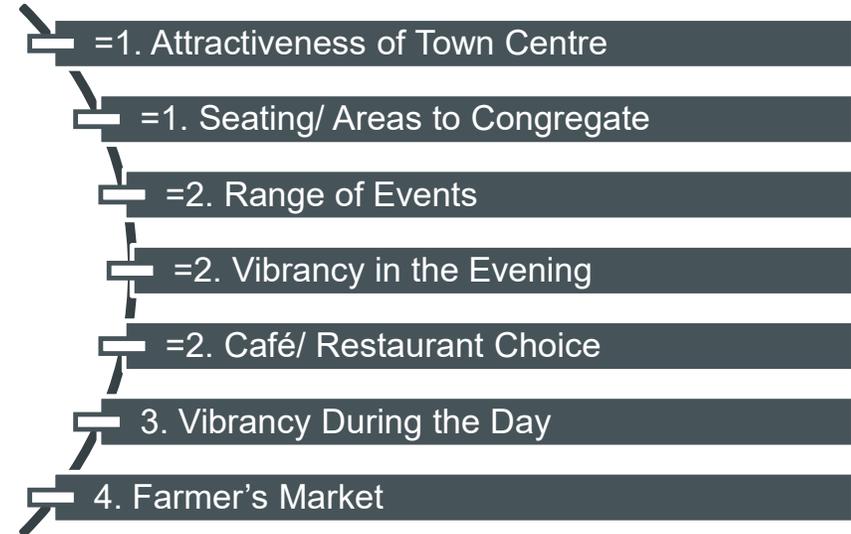
## COMMUNITY SURVEY RESPONSES: How Would You Rate? Top 5 Highest and Lowest Scoring Categories

### Community

#### Top Highest Scoring Categories:

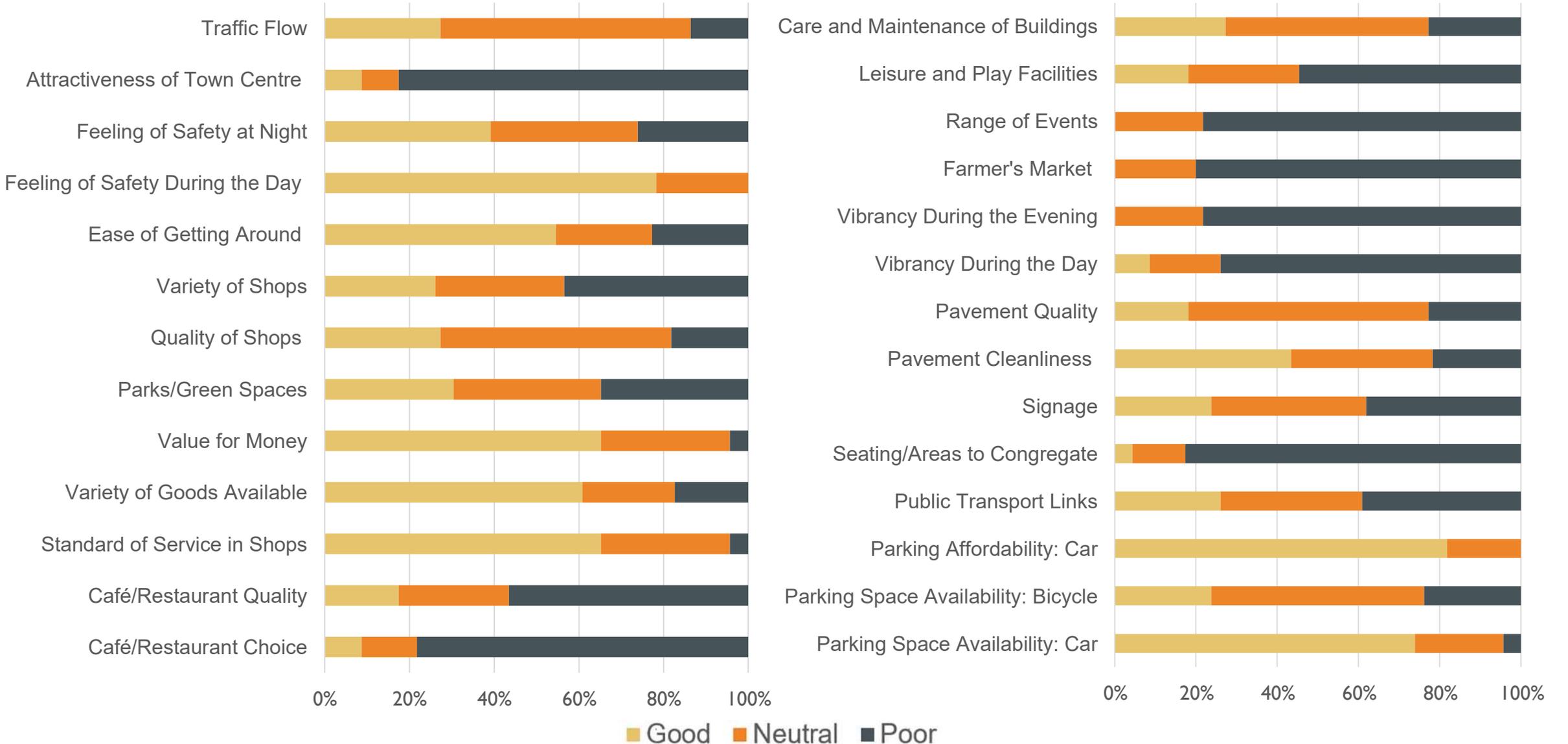


#### Top Lowest Scoring Categories:



# COMMUNITY SURVEY RESPONSES: How Would You Rate?

## Community 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 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 in 2022 for their contributions to the project:

## Business and Community:

Footfall Count Volunteers

## Partner Organisations:

Sergeant Walker, Partnerships,  
Preventions and Interventions, Police  
Scotland

Elaine Bisset, VisitAberdeenshire



## Council Teams:

Planning Information and Delivery

GIS Team

Community Learning and  
Development

Kincardine and Mearns Area Office

Community Payback Unpaid Hours  
Service

Community Engagement and  
Equalities

Economic Development

Transportation

Planning Policy

Customer and Digital Services

**Aberdeenshire**  
COUNCIL



# Aberdeenshire

## COUNCIL



TOWN CENTRE HEALTH CHECK  
SEPTEMBER 2022

REPORT PRODUCED BY THE PLANNING INFORMATION AND DELIVERY TEAM  
PLANNING AND ECONOMY ; ENVIRONMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES ; ABERDEENSHIRE COUNCIL

WOODHILL HOUSE, WESTBURN ROAD, ABERDEEN AB16 5GB

[Delivery@aberdeenshire.gov.uk](mailto:Delivery@aberdeenshire.gov.uk)

[www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/planning](http://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/planning)