



# **Scotland's Towns and Town Centres: Creating Confidence – Changing Futures**

**Prepared by the Scottish Towns Policy Group**

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# Scotland's Towns and Town Centres:

## Creating Confidence – Changing Futures

### Summary and Recommendations

1. Scotland's towns and town centres are a defining feature and vital resource for the country. They provide enormous social and economic benefits, improving quality of life and meeting Scottish Government priorities. In a carbon challenged future they enhance accessibility and environmental resource sharing. As such they are at the heart of Scotland and Scottish life.
2. Yet, Scotland's towns and town centres are at best in a state of decline and arrested decay. Notionally supportive national policy has been inadequately reinforced through implementation and a lack of dedication to meeting the stated aims of enforcing and developing the strengths of towns and town centres. Many activities encourage fragmentation, decentralisation, neglect and decline in towns.
3. Towns and town centres can be the focal point for Scotland and for many of Scotland's consumers (voters) and visitors. People want places that are clean, safe and attractive and that provide a suitable mix of functions and activities in a local setting. Towns provide economic, social and environmental benefits. For the future health and well-being of Scotland they need to be renewed and supported. Towns and town centres need to be the focus for public and private sector investment. Political parties and other organizations that do something positive about the situation of Scotland's towns will enhance the Nation and their own reputations.
4. Many of the solutions for towns and town centres are in the hands of the individual locations, but clear guidance and support can be given. Amongst the broad ideas that can be considered, we recommend that:
  - Action to support towns and town centres needs to be concerted and co-ordinated, for maximum impact;
  - Data has to be collected routinely and systematically to allow analysis and benchmark measurement;
  - Funding streams have to be repositioned and focused on towns and town centres;
  - Organizational freedom has to be given for local solutions and innovations to be developed, tried and backed;
  - Policies should be aligned to fully support towns and town centres.

5. More specifically this could mean:

- a) Rethinking taxation and charging elements to be location sensitive eg reduced VAT on refurbishment in town centres, differentially charging in non-town centre and town centre locations, or car parking charges equalisation across commercial locations;
- b) Changing and speeding up processes to enforce timeously remedies for defective buildings (including reconsidering CPO processes and costs) at the cost to the landlord and to ensure landlords pay and play their full role in new management structures for town centres;
- c) Requiring local authorities and other organisations to monitor, benchmark and implement activities for the town centre in a coherent single fashion, with the rethinking of the finance 'ownership' accordingly;
- d) Engagement strategies for all users and stakeholders in the town centre with decision-making powers on some items such as the redevelopment or regeneration of specific sites;
- e) Linking stakeholder engagement via re-shaped CPP and LDP processes;
- f) Implementing a new continuous version of the Town Centre Regeneration Fund, on a more focused and consistent basis. This long-term programme would include capital and an element of revenue funding. Applications would depend on coherent, locally driven and fully supported plans being in place and with specific objectives in mind for revitalisation in that local context;
- g) Locating essential services and local administrative functions overwhelmingly in the town centre and proactive development of residential space and mixed-use functions in town centres;
- h) Ensuring all business support mechanisms and funding, including advice, is available to all town centre users, with associated coordinated resource direction and monitoring;
- i) Altering use classes to ease management of town centre development and interactions.

## A: Introduction

6. Scotland's Towns and Town Centres are the heartbeat of the country, recognized as one of its defining characteristics and central to much national policy. They are the most visible embodiment of Scottish communities and local pride. Yet, from all parts of Scotland and across all political parties there is evidence that all is not well. Some town centres are run-down. Others are unattractive, inaccessible and poorly connected. Many have vacant buildings and outlets. Dereliction is the defining sense of some streets and places. Social problems are prevalent in some centres. These problems are accelerating. Scottish town centres do not match local or national ambitions. Their visible face shows that there are severe problems and a backlog of restitution, let alone enhancement, to be undertaken.
7. People want, and deserve a clean and pleasant place to live and function and to "call home". All the evidence suggests that clean, well-ordered and pleasant town environments with services for local inhabitants and visitors have a positive effect on people and behaviors including reducing crime and vacancy, increasing sense of place and generating positive environmental impacts. Scotland's towns and town centres can contribute so much more than they do currently. There is recognition from political parties, businesses and consumers (voters) that town centres can be a force for positive local and national success. They improve social cohesion and interaction, are environmentally sustainable and assist in delivering a low carbon future.
8. There are serious problems in town centres across Scotland, involving physical, economic, social and perceptual issues. Costings suggest addressing physical issues would run into many millions of pounds per location. Whilst not all towns face such problems, towns as a whole get "lost" between emphasis on cities on the one hand and remote rural settlements on the other and as such they face major problems and often multiple deprivation. There is an ambition to make town centres the focus for economy and society and to harness opportunities in the current situation, with existing investment and new management and organizational ideas to enhance locations and make them places people need, want, inhabit and value.
9. This paper sets out to promote debate on the actions needed to enhance Scotland's towns by:
  - a) Reviewing the situation facing Scotland's towns and town centres;
  - b) Reflecting on the most recent national initiative in this field, the Town Centre Regeneration Fund (TCRF);
  - c) Considering the requirements and possibilities at a time of economic and financial stress;
  - d) Beginning to identify what could be done.

10. This paper has been prepared by the Scottish Towns Policy Group, a grouping brought together under the aegis of the Centre for Scottish Public Policy (CSPP). Details of the Group are provided in Appendix One. The paper is not intended to be exhaustive but has drawn on significant discussion and debate as well as a substantial body of evidence and literature. Some indication of this is provided as further reading in Appendix Two.

## B: Scotland's Towns and Town Centres

11. It is widely recognized and accepted that Scotland's town centres are vital components of the social and economic fabric of the country. The nature of Scotland's urban infrastructure means that there is distinctiveness about the range and type of town centres. They have a significance and contribution that is essential to the current and future prosperity of the country. This has been recognized by the placing of town centres at the heart of much national policy over recent years, including economic strategy and economic recovery plans.
12. Town centres are not homogenous. There are many types of town centres providing different roles and functions, in the same way that there are many different types of towns across Scotland. The context and situation is vital to understanding the nature and function of the town centre. Whilst there are some common themes, the exact nature of a town is very much a local feature. This localization is a consequence of history, and current local (in)actions. It is this heterogeneity and local nature that allows town centres and towns to provide a "sense of place" and thus diversity and choice. In most towns and town centres there remains some sense of local place, albeit one that this has eroded in recent times, as identikit and "clone" town accusations testify.
13. This sense of place is a fundamental component of town centres. Underneath this however, there are many other strong reasons why town centres are so vital to the Scottish economy:
  - a) Concentration and competition provided locally;
  - b) Business inter-linkages, supply systems and support mechanisms;
  - c) Diversity of operating practices and styles;
  - d) Focus for small and medium sized local business of many forms;
  - e) Enhanced social mix and multi-use opportunities;
  - f) Increased accessibility;
  - g) Reduced carbon emissions and environmental impacts.
14. Town centres can provide choice, adding economic benefit and improving the quality of life for people, regardless of their interests and means. Town centres have been a focus not only for employment, businesses and social interactions, but also particular mixes and types of employment and business relations. The town centre is not solely focused on shopping and purely commercial activities, as important as these are. They are instead the focal point for a location and its population. They also provide often unseen advantages and implications, including developing social capital, bringing people together and ameliorating health inequalities. They are the key driver of essential services, the social and perceptual 'glue' for places and people and the physical expression of civic pride and community vibrancy. Town centres are sustainable activity hubs for people and businesses.

15. If town centres are so important, then why have they become so vulnerable and why are so many in decline? To some extent they have been victims of their own success in that, as they have developed over historical time, they have become less suitable for some modern operations. They have also been taken for granted. There is often a lack of physical and ownership coherence to town centres, which makes them vulnerable to individual and collective inaction and piecemeal decentralisation. Over decades this has led to a sense of benign decay in many town centres, such that “out-of-town” alternatives look ever more attractive as the drive for modern facilities and ‘expansion’ has taken hold (often met in new build decentralized sites).
16. The exact reasons for the strength or weaknesses of individual town centres require analysis at the local level, but some over-arching elements are common. These include, but are no means confined to, the:
- a) Decentralization of many previous town centre activities;
  - b) Complications over ownership and risk and return in town centres;
  - c) Increasing mobility and accessibility of consumers;
  - d) Developing competition for consumer and commercial spending;
  - e) Difficulties of developing modern facilities in historical or constrained sites;
  - f) Fragmentation of responsibility for and management of towns and town centres;
  - g) Problems of physical fabric update with historical legacy and fragmented, often remote ownership.
17. The net effect is that many town centres have entered a spiral of decline, recognized by the increasing concern over town centres and the need to regenerate them. However in the same way that the reasons for decline are very local, the need for regeneration is also very localized, based on a sense of what might work in a particular place, and what the needs are of that place. No “one size fits all” solution is possible; local flexibility for local situations is needed.
18. However towns and town centres do not exist in isolation. They draw on particular local circumstances as well as interactions with other centres and populations. Some centres are relatively isolated and serve a distinct local need, but others are embedded within a network of centres. The functions they provide may thus be determined not only by the local centre itself, but also by the interactions people, companies and other organizations have across this network. These interactions have altered through time, and can only be understood at the local level. Town centres are now more embedded than before in dynamic networks. The status and function of town centres at a local level thus may have to resist local pressures attempting to replicate unthinkingly past situations and ‘glories’.

19. Town centres are currently claimed to be a priority for all political parties and are at the heart of Scottish policy. Nonetheless there is a lack of accurate recognition of the potential capabilities of a town centre at the local level and an inability to harness all stakeholders to share the same vision. If town centres are a national priority then what does this mean in practice on the ground? Why is it that some local authorities are still relocating their own, let alone other facilities and offerings away from town centres? Why are other organisations able to do the same, and in many cases operate more cost effectively there than in town centres? How do we value the social and economic collectivism of town centres in such calculations – and how does this feed into environmental costing?
20. The current state of Scottish town centres is recognized as being problematic. In many cases we have been restricted simply to observing decline and/or arresting decay. There is a long history of talking about the demise of the town centre, and there would seem to be a number of remedial mechanisms or regeneration approaches in place, though their efficacy has been questionable. These raise many questions, amongst which are:
- a) Whose responsibility is it?
  - b) What should be “rescued” or protected?
  - c) How should this be managed?
  - d) Who pays for it?
21. The obvious starting point is a clear understanding of the role and function of the local town centre (and town). What purpose does it serve? What is it trying to achieve? Who are the customers? What data are available to understand the changes in the town centre? There is no one remedy for the ills of town centres, so the role for them has to be seen at the local level and based on local understanding and local capabilities.
22. It is widely recognised that town centres need a critical mass of people and activities, with only the rare centre being capable of surviving on one activity alone. This is not to say that town centres should not seek distinctiveness, but this has to be allied with wider activities. They have to attract consumers across the day and year and encourage diversity and opportunities. Town centres have to be accessible, clean and safe. Exactly what this means in practice has to be the responsibility of those involved on the ground.

23. The responsibility for town centres across Scotland is thus shared by everyone. At a national level it can be argued that much of the policy framework is in place. Whether the tools to fully implement these general policies are present and appropriate is another matter. At the local level it is questionable whether there is sufficient knowledge and understanding of the location and its strengths and weaknesses. There is often a lack of coordinated management of the town centre (despite emerging new methods such as Town Centre Management and Business Improvement Districts) and not every stakeholder is engaged in an active contribution. In the same vein not all policies and practices support the town centre and competing influences are at work. Not everyone is pulling in the same direction.
24. This is not an easy position to be in. We value town centres and assume they will work. The evidence is that they are failing. Despite great intentions, patching up the fabric (even if it could be afforded) will not solve the problems. What is needed is a more thorough and coherent response to the decline of town centres. This does not mean throwing new money at the problem, but it does require harnessing all possible stakeholders and decisions to achieve the objective of appropriate vital and viable town centres.
25. There is of course an option of doing nothing and continuing to watch decline. The consequences of this approach are far-reaching and include:
- a) Some centres will collapse totally;
  - b) Environmental targets will be much harder to achieve;
  - c) Social and economic inequalities will be expanded;
  - d) Scotland as a country will be less attractive to visitors;
  - e) A spiral of neglect and decline will blight towns, accelerating problems, increasing crime and insecurity.
26. The world has changed in many ways, so the call cannot be to restore towns and town centres to what they were or how they functioned in the past, but rather to deal with towns and town centres to make them appropriate for the present and the future. Given the demands on economy and society as well as the environment and other resources in the coming years and decades, maximizing the advantages of such locations becomes imperative.

## C: The Town Centre Regeneration Fund

27. The position we currently face has been recognized for some time and a number of initiatives and proposals have been previously suggested. However there appears to be a shared recognition that the situation has reached some tipping point and action is needed. The most recent national example of this was the Town Centre Regeneration Fund, which received widespread applause and pan-national recognition as an attempt to alter the situation.
28. The Town Centre Regeneration Fund (TCRF) was an attempt by the Scottish Government to meet the recognised problems of town centres. A £60 million one-off capital fund attracted huge interest and was heavily oversubscribed despite tight deadlines and various restrictions. The TCRF is a groundbreaking initiative which has been rightly applauded and is a step in the right direction. This should not be forgotten. The TCRF is a beacon; the question is how to follow its light?
29. The origins and timings of TCRF conditioned the methods used in the selection process of projects. Concerns have been raised over a number of the practical processes. Amongst these are the:
- Short-term timing of applications and spend;
  - Focus on capital and not revenue spend;
  - Lack of flexibility in the approach;
  - Hurdles and evidence base that needed to be overcome;
  - Lack of strategic focus for individual projects.

There have also been concerns that many good (and necessary) schemes did not come forward because of:

- Issues around capacity to respond and to manage projects;
  - Issues around the re-profiling of resources within a short timescale;
  - The lack of enabling funds to get the process under way;
  - The limited nature of local empowerment in some respects;
  - Difficulty of engaging local stakeholders in a short timescale;
  - An inability to raise the additional resources required to carry out projects or to leverage the project into other spending.
30. Many of these issues are common and as such the TCRF tended to favour certain areas, public-sector capital public realm works and certain authorities, irrespective of need. The TCRF raised a lot of expectations and whilst there has been considerable positivity about the scheme and its projects, there is also a considerable desire to see the work continue, but to be enhanced and reformed.

31. It is too early to judge the success or otherwise of the TCRF projects on the ground. It is also not clear what the appropriate benchmarks are. Measuring direct, indirect and ancillary impacts and outcomes requires a consistent, replicative, pan-national learning process. The very existence of the TCRF is recognition of the problem and has focused minds and attention. But a large number of small-scale projects will not 'solve' the town centre problem, however welcome they are. In isolation, the individual projects may or may not work, and may or may not have a desired regeneration impact at the very local level. Collectively however they show Scotland cares about town centres. But so much more needs to be done, and can be achieved.
32. Despite these reservations, the TCRF has helped reinforce a sense of place in many locations. The democratic deficit has been partially overcome in this instance, with many proposals seeing genuine involvement, engagement and debate within local communities. The fact that so much energy is being captured by the TCRF should itself be a serious indicator of the role and benefit of town centres and peoples' desires to see them thrive. As plans and projects are delivered, this engagement could drive further local involvement in town centres.
33. So, if the TCRF has been such a catalyst, why then should it end after one year? Scottish towns and Scottish town centres are too fundamental to the well-being of the country to leave alone. With the backlog to be tackled, the perceptions to be altered and involvement generated, there has been a groundswell of interest, activism and action. Whilst it can be argued that any fund will generate interest, the TCRF seems to have found particular resonance across diverse stakeholders. If the aim of the TCRF was to generate sustainable regeneration, growth and impact then future practice needs to reflect the requirement for these longer term impacts and engagements.

## D: The Possibilities

34. Towns and town centres are a distinctive and positive feature of Scotland and Scottish life. There are many social, economic and environmental benefits to making them work and be suitable for modern life. We cannot simply turn the clock back to a (probably non-existent) golden age of town centres, but we can rethink what it is we need town centres to do in the modern age.
35. Towns and town centres have to be created and rethought at the local level, but there are some common requirements that might be placed upon them; these are to:
- a) Have a sense of place and to make people proud of that location;
  - b) Offer a place for social and economic diversity to be enhanced;
  - c) Be safe, clean and inviting;
  - d) Offer opportunities for multi-use activities including residence;
  - e) Become as environmentally sustainable as possible.
36. However, the economic situation which faces Scotland is not particularly favourable. In many ways this makes change and coherent thought about town centres even more necessary. It has never been the case that the problems of town centres could be solved by “throwing money” at them and that is undoubtedly the case in the present straitened circumstances. There are big choices to be made about what has to be done, and how things are done. There is also a need to recognize that “doing nothing” and continuing to observe decline and then collapse, simply stores up problems for the future and at the same time abrogates the responsibility we all have to social and economic well-being in Scotland. It runs counter to the national interest.
37. There are thus decisions to be taken about the approach at the national and the local level. National policies can help the situation but only if they are followed through and there is a focus on ensuring that all activities that can help or hinder a town centre are known, quantified and harnessed in the right direction. Much of the understanding of what is possible and what is not will however have to be undertaken at the local level, due to the mainly local nature of town centres and the interactions within them.
38. National policy in support of towns and town centres needs to be thought through and then fully implemented and supported. There would seem to be a number of components to this:
- a) All towns and town centres need first to understand themselves through a systematic, replicative, efficient and affordable data collection and benchmarking exercise. This could be part of a wider planning process, but needs as well to be as real time as possible.

- b) Activities should be channelled to town centres and developed in such ways as to support town centres. It may have to be accepted that there could be some activities best carried out away from town centres (e.g. safety reasons), but they should be kept to the bare minimum required.
  - c) The corollary of this is that the inherent problems in town centres need to be addressed and new powers developed if necessary. It has to be unacceptable to abdicate responsibility for buildings and development. There needs to be reasons for people to enter town centres as consumers, residents or employees. Locations need to be fit for modern demands.
  - d) There has to be recognition of reality that sometimes centres will not regain their former status and that some contraction is needed in many locations. Policies and actions need to make such changes of use more easily achievable. This requires a coherent plan for town centres (and indeed towns) and not simply a 'wish list' of leading retailers to take sites. Town centres may have to be resized and rethought.
  - e) Consideration of the management of town centres is vital. This has to be locally constructed and driven and has to involve all stakeholders. New ways of leveraging activities and priority investment has to be found across all public and private bodies. The current separation and fragmentation of roles, responsibilities and finance needs to be ended.
  - f) It is against such steps and background that any revised TCRF and other potential actions and policies should be introduced. They need to be based on the localisation of activities and decision making and on local 'ownership' of the developments. Commitment to the changed emphasis of town centres has to be demonstrated in order to be eligible for such funding.
39. If we are serious about transforming Scotland's town centres, then we require a dedicated pro active challenge to the status quo, addressing existing unintended and unwanted side-effects. This requires an engagement of all parties in town centres. There needs to be a search for efficiencies across all activities in order to both focus the activities themselves, but also to free up possible finance for new activities. The mechanisms to support town centres have themselves to be fully supported by central and local government, and private sector interests. Finally there needs to be long-term certainty and continuity over the activities desired and the funding possible.

## E: What can be done?

40. National policy is in place to support town centres. This should be reiterated and strengthened, though it does appear that the framework already in place could be workable. Strengthening it would enhance the possibilities. Mechanisms to deliver better town centres also exist and have been tried in some places. There is a lot of small-scale learning and sharing occurring that needs to be extended and built upon (see Appendix 2 for examples). The problem is essentially the lack of consistent application and full thrust of what town centre support means. Every element of national and local activity has to be focused on town centre support.

41. Many of the solutions for towns and town centres are in the hands of the individual locations, but clear guidance and support can be given. Amongst the broad ideas that can be considered, we recommend that:

- Action to support towns and town centres needs to be concerted and co-ordinated, for maximum impact;
- Data has to be collected routinely and systematically to allow analysis and benchmark measurement;
- Funding streams have to be repositioned and focused on towns and town centres;
- Organizational freedom has to be given for local solutions and innovations to be developed, tried and backed;
- Policies should be aligned to fully support towns and town centres.

42. More specifically this could mean:

- a) Rethinking taxation and charging elements to be location sensitive eg reduced VAT on refurbishment in town centres, differentially charging in non-town centre and town centre locations, or car parking charges equalisation across commercial locations;
- b) Changing and speeding up processes to enforce timeously remedies for defective buildings (including reconsidering CPO processes and costs) at the cost to the landlord and to ensure landlords pay and play their full role in new management structures for town centres;
- c) Requiring local authorities and other organisations to monitor, benchmark and implement activities for the town centre in a coherent single fashion, with the rethinking of the finance 'ownership' accordingly;
- d) Engagement strategies for all users and stakeholders in the town centre with decision-making powers on some items such as the redevelopment or regeneration of specific sites;
- e) Linking stakeholder engagement via re-shaped CPP and LDP processes;
- f) Implementing a new continuous version of the Town Centre Regeneration Fund, on a more focused and consistent basis. This long-term programme would include capital

and an element of revenue funding. Applications would depend on coherent, locally driven and fully supported plans being in place and with specific objectives in mind for revitalisation in that local context;

- g) Locating essential services and local administrative functions overwhelmingly in the town centre and proactive development of residential space and mixed-use functions in town centres;
  - h) Ensuring all business support mechanisms and funding, including advice, is available to all town centre users, with associated coordinated resource direction and monitoring;
  - i) Altering use classes to ease management of town centre development and interactions.
43. Scotland's town centres have to be re-thought and re-imagined. This is not an easy task, nor is it straightforward. It has to be driven through at the local level with the context clearly set and measured and supported fully by national government. There has to be zero tolerance of lack of engagement with towns and town centres. It is a challenging time, and the needs of, and for, towns and town centres do not go away in a recession. It is thus opportune to rethink what we do, so as to position restructured and revitalised Scottish town centres for the upturn that will come and to satisfy local and national aspirations. Moreover, it will bring real benefits to local people, who will undoubtedly recognize and reward those who serve them better. Scotland's town centres can help create confidence to change futures.

## Appendix One: Scottish Towns Policy Group

The Centre for Scottish Public Policy (CSPP) is an independent forum for organisations and individuals to develop ideas which can be drawn upon by government and other policymakers. It aims to ensure that the policy debate reflects the distinctive concerns of Scottish society whilst drawing upon the best of new thinking and new ideas from other countries. The CSPP is independent of political parties and open to relevant policy debate whatever its source. Its activities are founded on a vision of a society where a modern, vibrant and sustainable economy is accompanied by fairness and social inclusion. CSPP aims to promote the development of public policy in Scotland by providing new thinking for our political institutions whilst challenging existing structures, systems and levels of public engagement.

The Scottish Towns Policy Group was established in 2009, and comprises:

Tom Campbell	Essential Edinburgh
Garry Clark	Scottish Chambers of Commerce
Viv Collie	Vivid Ideas & Solutions
Scott Davidson	Halcrow
Ian Davison Porter	Business Improvement Districts Scotland
Mhairi Donaghy	ekos consulting
Anne Findlay	Institute for Retail Studies, University of Stirling
Andy Godfrey	Boots
Mary Goodman	Federation of Small Businesses Scotland
Geoff Gregory	Riverside Inverclyde
Anne Houston	Industrial Communities Alliance Scotland
Fionna Kell	DTZ
Andy Kennedy	Stirling Council representing Association of Town Centre Management
Ian Lindley	Scottish Small Towns Group and South of Scotland Alliance
Ross Martin	Centre for Scottish Public Policy
Andy Milne	SURF
Fiona Moriarty	Scottish Retail Consortium
Fiona Robertson	streets-UK
Heather Sim	Space Unlimited
Leigh Sparks (Chair)	Institute for Retail Studies, University of Stirling

This paper has been lead-authored by Professor Leigh Sparks with support and input from all members of the Group. The views in this paper reflect the Scottish Towns Group and CSPP as a whole, rather than representing individual interests, organizations and viewpoints.

## Appendix Two: Supporting Material and Further Reading

The intention here is to be indicative not exhaustive. Even so, the listings below show how much concern over Scotland's towns exists. Given all this commentary and effort, why does the situation continue to decline? Does this suggest a failure of coherence and focus as much as effort?

This Appendix is structured into sections on literature and websites.

### A: Literature

Aberdeenshire County Council **Creating a future for small town centres**, Huntly: Aberdeenshire County Council, 2007. [www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/support/events/smalltowncentres.asp](http://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/support/events/smalltowncentres.asp)

The presentations from this seminar included a number of practitioner approaches to town centre regeneration in smaller towns. These included:

- [Damien Wilson - presentation \(pdf 1.66mb\)](#)
- [Douglas Wheeler - presentation \(pdf 962kb\)](#)
- [Keith Hargest - presentation \(pdf 394kb\)](#)
- [Melanie Odell - presentation \(pdf 451kb\)](#)
- [Piers Blaxter - presentation \(pdf 381kb\)](#)

British Retail Consortium, **21st Century high streets: A new vision for our town centres**. London: British Retail Consortium, 2009, 29p.  
[www.brc.org.uk/showDoc04.asp?id=3953&moid=6733](http://www.brc.org.uk/showDoc04.asp?id=3953&moid=6733)

An introductory section outlines briefly the problems facing UK high streets. Priorities for action are then discussed in some detail. These are: A Unique Sense of Place, An Attractive Public Realm, Planning for Success, Accessibility, Safety and Security, Supportive Regulatory and Fiscal Regimes. Case studies are used to show good practice examples.

Bromley, G. and Kirk, K. Does planning make a difference to urban form? Recent evidence from Central Scotland, **Environment and Planning A**, 37(2), 2005, 355-378.

New developments change urban form. Sometimes these developments result from planning initiatives and sometimes they emerge despite planning restraints. The case studies in this article include Braehead shopping centre. The development went ahead despite planning, being given the go-ahead as the result of an appeal. It had been argued that it did not meet the terms of the strategic plan and contravened other guidance. The potential regeneration impacts led to the appeal succeeding. It has shaped urban form in the area and is now a key aspect of future strategic plans for the area. It is suggested that private service and industry sector developments arise in different ways from public sector and housing developments and that as a result they often impact on urban form but not as a result of pro-active planning.

Carley, M. and Donaldsons **Sustainable transport and retail vitality. State of the art for towns and cities**, Edinburgh: Historic Burghs Association of Scotland, 1996, 59p. (Research Paper 2)

Although from written from a transport perspective the focus of this paper is the retail viability and vitality of town centres. It presents the findings from the Scottish section of an investigation and surveys of town centres within the wider context of retail vitality. Ayr, Berwick-upon-Tweed, Dunfermline, Hamilton, Inverness, Kilmarnock and Stirling were the towns where surveys of streets, retailers, property and performance indicators were carried out. Focus groups were also held. Transport options including acceptable walking distances, pedestrianisation, cycling and parking are all considered.

Carley, M., Kirk, K. and McIntosh, S. **Retailing, sustainability and neighbourhood regeneration**. York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2000, 79p.

The report begins from the premise that the revitalisation of local areas in deprived parts of cities is worsened by the lack of adequate retail facilities. Retailing is a regenerative force in areas of social exclusion. 14 initiatives involving refurbishing of retail parades, precincts and market halls, rebuilding shopping centres on estates and the creation of new high streets are reviewed. These provide examples of good practice and are instructive in highlighting the factors which need to be addressed from a policy perspective. In each case study key questions were investigated. Retail questions included the impact on vitality and viability, relationships between existing retailers and the new development and the retail offer. Social, environmental and managerial issues included relationship to the community, community involvement, design, travel issues and training and employment.

Chase, M., Burnett, M. and Buchanan, M. **The health of historic towns in Scotland: the seven burghs study**, Bridge of Allan: Historic Burghs Association, 1997, 21p. (Historic Burghs Association Research Paper 1)

This study tries to develop comparisons in performance between towns. Indicators of vitality and viability are graphed for the burghs of Ayr, Berwick-upon-Tweed, Dunfermline, Inverness, Kilmarnock, Stirling and Hamilton. Data from GOAD, Investment Property Databank and Management Horizons are used. The comparative study identifies aspects of historic burghs that could enhance the retail offer for the tourist market in historic towns. It is intended to be comparable with the work of the English Historic Towns Forum.

Cummins, S., Findlay, A., Petticrew, M. and Sparks, L. Healthy cities: The impact of food-retail led regeneration on food access, choice and retail structure, **Built Environment**, 31(4), 2005, 288-301.

The paper arises from a study of diet and health related effects of a superstore in a deprived area of Glasgow, Springburn. The paper specifically presents the results of the impacts on retail structure showing that the superstore has not led to the closure of existing retail outlets, even in the fresh food sector, but has stimulated retailing in the area with lowered vacancy rates and greater retail employment in the area.

Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, **Healthy High Street? A Healthcheck for high streets and town centres**, London: Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, 2010, 20p.

[www.bis.gov.uk](http://www.bis.gov.uk)

Healthy high street? is intended as a resource for anyone interested in high streets to attempt a healthcheck. It is intended to allow interested individuals or groups to formalize their view of the local situation, addressing all high streets and not waiting for obvious signs of stress or decline to emerge. Advice on support and future actions is also provided.

Federation of Small Businesses (Scotland) **The effect of supermarkets on existing retailers**, Glasgow: Roger Tym, 2006, 78p.

[www.fsb.org.uk/policy/rpu/scotland/images/FSB\\_Scotland\\_Independent\\_Supermarket\\_Report.pdf](http://www.fsb.org.uk/policy/rpu/scotland/images/FSB_Scotland_Independent_Supermarket_Report.pdf)

This study takes up the issue of the impact of supermarkets on smaller retailers. Case studies from Dumfries, Alloa and Dingwall are used as evidence for the study. It is set within the context of the clone town debate. Declines in smaller shops are attributed to the arrival of new supermarkets.

Findlay, A. and Sparks, L. Weaving new retail and consumer landscapes in the Scottish Borders, **Journal of Rural Studies**, 24(1), 2008, 86-97.

This paper uses data from surveys over a 20 year period in the Scottish Borders. This permits an examination of consumer switching behaviour. Although clawback was used to justify new developments in the Scottish Borders the outcome has been that the network of centres within the Scottish Borders has become increasingly focused on the town of Galashiels

Findlay, A. and Sparks, L. **Literature review: policies adopted to support a healthy retail sector and retail led regeneration and the impact of retail on the regeneration of town centres and local high streets**, Edinburgh: Scottish Government, 2009, 47p.

[www.scotland.gov.uk/socialresearch](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/socialresearch)

This report had three aims: identify what a healthy/vibrant town centre/local high street looks like; identify, in the UK, what policies/approaches have been implemented to: (a) Support a healthy retail sector in local high streets and town centres, and (b) Undertake retail led regeneration; explore what impact retail has had on the regeneration (in its widest sense – social, economic and physical) of town centres and local high streets, and how this has impacted on the wider community.

Hargest and Wallace Planning Ltd and Donaldsons LLP **Town centre and retailing methodologies**, Edinburgh: Scottish Government, 2007, 268p. Hargest and Wallace Planning Ltd and Donaldsons LLP **Town centre and retailing methodologies: summary of main findings**, Edinburgh: Scottish Government, 2007, 12p.

The full report is a substantial volume which combines reviews of methodologies and the results of survey work with practitioners. It covers retail capacity studies, town centre health checks, strategic retail planning and retail impact assessment. It includes detailed discussion of different definitions and measures assessing their contribution in terms of accuracy, transparency, availability and usefulness. It is intended to form the basis of a Planning Advice Note to accompany SPP8. Key themes which are emphasised include improving data collection and the availability of comparative data. Sensitivity tests are also noted as important being viewed as key to avoiding problems resulting from assumptions. The full report provides useful tabulations of key positions on each of the topics and as such is a reference work with relevance wider than Scotland.

Lindley, I. **Scotland's small towns still breathing: but for how long?** Scottish Small Towns Group, 2009, 24p. [www.scotborders.gov.uk/pdf/30127.pdf](http://www.scotborders.gov.uk/pdf/30127.pdf)

This paper seeks to continue the conversation commenced in 2005 with Scottish Government to better recognise the role, needs and potential of small towns to the nation. It seeks to facilitate a policy response for greater support and practical, urgent action for small towns and their town centres. The main sections consider: the challenges for small towns, deterioration of the physical fabric, towns and government policy and a presentation of the case for small towns. The paper takes forward earlier work from the [Scottish Small Towns Report: 2007-2013](#) and [Making towns count: Reviewing the case for Scotland's small towns](#).

McLeod, D. Scottish theme towns: have new identities enhanced development? **Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change**, 7(3), 2009, 133-145

This article considers how successful themed towns have been in regenerating towns in Dumfries and Galloway. Wigtown book town, Kirkcudbright Artist's Town, Castle Douglas Food Town are all considered in terms of how the themed approach came to be, its economic impact and integration with the town. The social capital aspects of the themed town approach are discussed.

Maye, D. and Ilbery, B. **Regional economies of local food production: tracing food chain links between 'specialist' producers and intermediaries in the Scottish-English Borders**, **European Urban and Regional Studies**, 13(4), 2006, 337-354.

Local food chains are essentially hybrids. Rarely do they form independent chains from producer to sales. Rather they intersect with different parts of existing food chains whether for suppliers or retailers or other distributors. Three sectors were studied in the Scottish Borders – livestock products, bakery products and fish products. They varied in their use of existing channels and in the ways in which spaces had been found for these products in existing channels.

Mitchell, G., Boxall, I., Grant, M. and Noon, A. **The vitality and viability of historic towns: the small towns study**. Bridge of Allan: Historic Burghs Association of Scotland, 1999, 53p. (Research Paper 3)

This paper presents the results of retailer and consumer surveys in small towns. Comparisons are made between the small towns and the historic burghs study. The importance of these centres to local users is more significant than the town centres were to local users in the historic burghs study. Issues such as parking, location of parking, range of goods, multiple representation, diversity of goods and shopper types were studied. The towns involved were Aberfeldy, Alloa, Blairgowrie, Callander, Castletown, Cupar, Dunbar, Girvan, Hawick, Jedburgh, Lanark, Montrose, Peel, Stonehaven, Port St Mary, South Queensferry and Thurso. Useful data summary tables are included.

Scottish Borders Council, COSLA and South of Scotland Alliance **Scottish small towns report 2007-2013**, Melrose: Scottish Borders Council, 2006, 115p.

This paper covers a wide range of issues relating to small towns in Scotland. Towns across Scotland were surveyed. SPP8's principles are discussed in relation to the small towns and the potential for health checks and town centre strategies to deliver more vibrant town centres are considered.

Scottish Enterprise **Understanding the role of places in city regions and rural Scotland**. Glasgow: Scottish Enterprise, 2008, 75p. [www.scottish-enterprise.com/about-us/research-publications/~media/publications/About%20Us/economic%20research/understanding\\_the\\_role\\_of\\_place.ashx](http://www.scottish-enterprise.com/about-us/research-publications/~media/publications/About%20Us/economic%20research/understanding_the_role_of_place.ashx)

Scottish Enterprise developed an economic typology as a framework for understanding the different roles of places. They coined new terms for different types of settlement including terms such as growing gateway, towns in miniature, urban solitude, remote diversity and commuter comfort. The study then attempted to understand how places change and how their position within the typology could develop and change. The aim of the project was to develop a spatial prioritisation scheme to guide future investment by benchmarking places and assessing their potential for change in specific directions.

Scottish Executive **Scottish planning policy SPP8: Town centres and retailing** Edinburgh: Scottish Executive, 2006, 16p.

This is the final policy statement. It outlines the key principles and the way they will be applied. The town centre focus remains. The importance of the plan-led approach is emphasised in the recognition of a network of centres, flexibility, the involvement of stakeholders and negotiation between developers and planners on issues such as design.

Scottish Executive **Research study on the effectiveness of NPPG8: Town centres and retailing**, Edinburgh: Scottish Executive, 2004, 152p.

This document presents the research commissioned by the Scottish Executive from CBRE, University of Stirling and Colin Buchanan and Partners. The research included an assessment of existing findings on retailing in Scotland, survey work and focus groups and represents a broad based consultation with experts and practitioners. Topics included in the document are: retail change, defining centres - their use mix and status, sequential approach – flexibility and definition, support for new development, retail deprivation and retail assessment methodology. The report urges better data collection and more evidence based research. Flexibility is required with greater attention to locally meaningful interpretations of concepts such as edge of centre. Equally a consumer based understanding of the relationship between parking and shopping is required.

Scottish Executive Development Department **Improving town centres**, Edinburgh: Scottish Executive Development Department, 1999, 50p. (PAN 59) 0-7408261-1

This planning document reviews town centre health checks and town centre management schemes in Scotland. It has a list of schemes and their supporters. It makes policy statements relating to future developments. In particular it includes directions on the use of the sequential approach and the possibility of edge of centre development that complement town centre developments.

Scottish Government **Linking Opportunity and Need: Maximising regeneration benefits from physical regeneration**. Edinburgh: Scottish Government 2008.  
[www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/235197/0064528.pdf](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/235197/0064528.pdf)

LOAN is a scheme whereby physical regeneration benefits are maximised in terms of employment benefits. The paper reviews the policy, gives case studies and makes suggestions for best practice.

Smith, A. and Sparks, L. Planning for small-scale retailing: evidence from Scotland, **Planning Theory and Practice**, 2(3), 2001, 277-292.

The article provides a review of planning and other policies towards small shops and the perceived effectiveness of these policies. 32 Scottish planning authorities were surveyed to discover what policies they had towards small shops, how these operated and their perceived effectiveness. The authorities were also asked about other types of policies which they felt could be operated. The research involved study of structure plans, a questionnaire survey of planning authorities and focus group discussion with respondents. Policies being operated were largely land use based and did not distinguish between organisational forms so that smaller independent retailers were not explicitly recognised. The need to go beyond land use based planning was emphasised by the research findings.

Smith, A. and Sparks, L. **Retailing and small shops**, Edinburgh: Scottish Office, 1997, 114p.

The points of view of retailers, consumers and planning authorities on the issue of small shops were examined through a survey of the small shop sector in Scotland. Survey work was carried out in West Dumbarton, Bearsden Cross, Newton Mearns, Balloch, Renton, Claypotts, Stow, Tomintoul, Aberdour, Hawick, Peebles, New Elgin, Stirling and Aberdeen. This provided a variety of small shop situations. The planning survey showed an awareness of the decline of the small shop and an appreciation of the fact that it plays both a commercial and social role in many communities. Current planning policies were not found to be directed towards the problems identified in the study as being influential in the decline of the small shop sector.

Smith, A. and Sparks, L. The role and function of the independent small shop: the situation in Scotland, **International Review of Retail, Distribution and Consumer Research** 10(2), 2000, 205-226.

This article reports on survey work undertaken in Scotland on a variety of small shops in different locations. It looks at the roles and functions of small shops. It distinguishes between generic small shop problems and location specific issues. Solutions to problems facing small shops and strategies for small shop development will depend on the different roles small shops can play in different types of communities and locations.

Sparks, L. **Town centre uses in Scotland**, Edinburgh: Scottish Office, 1998, 88p.

This monograph looks at what makes a good town centre from the various perspectives of users, developers and administrators. Planning policy on town centres and town centre management are discussed in some detail.

Vestri, P. and Colwell, A. **'Making towns count': reviewing the case for small Scotland's small towns**, Melrose: Scottish Borders Council, 2008.

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/94257/0097297.pdf>

The COSLA Small Towns Group commissioned Adrian Colwell Associates and Hexagon Research and Consulting to undertake a review and evaluation of the policy context for Scottish towns and to identify the potential for more integrated support from the Scottish Government. The report takes forward the work of the Small Towns Group with a view to implementing the recommendations of the [Scottish Small Towns Report: 2007-2013](#).

## **B: Web Sites**

### **[www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Built-Environment/regeneration](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Built-Environment/regeneration)**

This web site documents Scottish Government publications and research on town centres. Details of the Town Centre Regeneration Fund are available. There are also links to other funding sources including Jessica. It includes case studies, briefing papers, learning points and reports and summaries of papers and presented at conferences and seminars in the section on Town centres under regeneration. The following are currently available:

#### *Briefing papers*

#### **Family Businesses and Town Centre Regeneration**

The Scottish Family Business Association (SFBA) and the Town Centres and Local High Streets Learning Network held workshops in Hamilton, Paisley, Inverness and Glenrothes for family businesses located within these town centres. Discussions were around the views of family businesses, the current situation of the towns, how the town got into that situation and possible solutions.

#### **Whole Town Strategies: Who is Doing What in Scotland?**

This review maps out how Local Authorities and their partners are approaching town centre regeneration and the extent to which Whole Town Strategies are part of this picture.

#### **Learning and Networking to Support Growth and Change in Towns**

This paper looks at how organisations are sharing their practice and learning from each other through networks and activities; what activities and learning tools seemed to be effective; new or emerging examples of supporting learning about towns or other relevant fields; examples of individual learning being embedded in people's own jobs and their organisation; and how the outcomes of learning were being captured and shared.

#### *Learning points*

#### **Performance Management in Towns: An Introduction to Milestone**

Developed from an event held in November 2009, which focused on performance management in towns and the need for robust quantitative and qualitative data to enable monitoring and evaluation.

#### **Renaissance Towns**

This Learning Point is developed from an event held in February 2010, which explored the Renaissance Towns approach to urban regeneration. It brought together people from the public, private and voluntary sector across Scotland to debate the issues and share their experiences.

#### **Securing private sector investment in town centre regeneration**

This event focused on how to secure private sector investment in town centre regeneration. It brought together people from the public, private and voluntary sector across Scotland to debate issues and share experiences.

### [\*\*Piecing together the towns jigsaw: Developing and implementing whole town strategies\*\*](#)

This Learning Point is developed from an event held in October 2009, which focused on the development and implementation of Whole Town Strategies. It brought together people from the public, private and voluntary sector across Scotland to debate issues and share experiences.

### [\*\*Town centres and local high streets creating places that work for people and business\*\*](#)

This learning point is about the key issues and challenges currently facing Scotland's town centres and local high streets. It is based on learning from the Town Centres and Local High Streets Learning Network launch event, held in Stirling on February 12, 2009.

### [\*\*How do we change the way people feel and think about places\*\*](#)

This SCR Learning Point looks at what action can be taken to change negative perceptions into positive ones as part of the wider regeneration of neighbourhoods.

### [\*\*Successful regeneration: the practitioners view\*\*](#)

This SCR Learning Point records the views of practitioners working at project level in the regeneration field on what makes regeneration effective, and what factors helped or hindered them in the establishment of good practice.

### [\*\*Using evidence to mainstream equalities in regeneration\*\*](#)

Communities Scotland published a report in 1996 which includes a number of sources of information and tools for analysis. This gives information about the (then) legislative framework, suggests ways of gathering evidence and provides tools to help develop an evidence base.

### [\*\*Using evidence to help plan regeneration\*\*](#)

This SCR Learning Point summarises the discussions at an event which showcased how evidence has been used in planning four different Scottish examples of regeneration work.

### [\*\*Joint statement of commitment to community empowerment\*\*](#)

Published in April 2008 by Scottish Government and COSLA to establish a long-term path to ensuring community empowerment.

### [\*\*National standards for community engagement\*\*](#)

Launched in May 2005, they set out best practice principles for the way that government agencies, councils, health boards, police and other public bodies engage with communities. The idea for developing the standards came from people on the front line of community engagement.

### [\*\*Better community engagement: A framework for learning\*\*](#)

This sets out a framework of competencies designed to enable the planning of learning in community engagement, and to test models for delivering effective learning for community engagement. Published by Scottish Government

### [\*\*Developing buildings as community assets\*\*](#)

This SCR Learning Point captures the key lessons from our Masterclass, 'Delivering Buildings as Community Assets'. It focuses on issues that are important if agencies are to help communities successfully take on the challenges involved.

## *Good practice and guidance*

### [Neilston Renaissance Town Charter](#)

The residents of Neilston formally handed over their charter for the future of their village to East Renfrewshire Council's leader Councillor Jim Fletcher, at a conference on the Scottish Renaissance Towns Initiative on 25 June 2009. Created by the residents of Neilston, it documents their 20 year vision on how to inject new life into their village. Although similar renaissance projects have been undertaken in the USA, Australia and in the Yorkshire towns of Wakefield, Doncaster and Scarborough, this is the first of its kind in Scotland.

### [This way to better residential streets](#)

This CABE briefing follows 'This way to better streets (2007)', in which CABE Space looked at the design of 10 streets from town centres to ring roads and beyond. Here, CABE focuses on the design of residential streets in new developments.

### [Open space strategies: Best practice guidance](#)

CABE has published this guidance for local authorities and their stakeholders on how to prepare, deliver, monitor and review an open space strategy. It includes best practice examples which show the benefits of a strategic approach.

### [Looking after our town centres](#)

This short guide by Communities and Local Government is for town centre managers and their local partners. It offers practical help in setting out how we can work together to make sure that our town centres reach their full potential, even in tough times, so that we can all enjoy, and be proud of, the centres of our great towns. But it also looks further ahead. It is vital that those involved in town centres - planners, service managers, businesses, local groups and communities - develop a clear vision, and actively plan to take advantage of new opportunities when the recovery begins.

### [Historic towns forum](#)

The Historic Towns Forum (formerly EHTF) has been supporting professionals working in the historic built environment since 1987. The events, publications and guidance focus on perennial and topical issues, drawing together practitioners from across the disciplines and sectors. This collective offers a strong platform from which to lobby policy makers on behalf of historic towns and cities. Check out their website (link above) for more information on HTF

### [Making the links and making it happen - Greenspace for a more successful and sustainable Scotland](#)

The first half (*'making the links'*) draws on international research and project examples from around Scotland to demonstrate how greenspace contributes across the Government's five strategic objectives and national outcomes to create healthier, safer and stronger, wealthier and fairer, smarter and greener communities. The second part (*'making it happen'*) looks at the actions that are needed by a range of partners to make greenspace deliver these outcomes and benefits; this section signposts readers to a range of useful tools and resources, and highlights examples of good practice from across the country.

## Planning

### [Designing streets: A policy statement for Scotland](#)

Designing Streets is the first policy statement in Scotland for street design and marks a change in the emphasis of guidance on street design towards place-making and away from a system focused upon the dominance of motor vehicles. It has been created to support the Scottish Government's place-making agenda and is intended to sit alongside the 2001 planning policy document Designing Places, which sets out government aspirations for design and the role of the planning system in delivering these.

### [Delivering planning reform](#)

The planning system is critical to increasing the rate of sustainable economic growth. It should be one of the main creative driving forces behind the delivery of better places in Scotland - helping the public sector, development industry and communities work together to make good development happen in the right place. Sets out the Scottish Government's shared determination to speed up reform of the planning system.

### [SP=EED: A practical guide to better public engagement in planning in Scotland](#)

Planning Aid for Scotland's practical guide to aid community engagement in Scotland. SP=EED stands for Scottish Planning = Effective Engagement and Delivery. It has been designed to help contribute to improving public involvement and efficiency in the planning system, a key requirement of the Planning etc (Scotland) Act 2006. SP=EED provides a checklist and good practice examples of community engagement and will be developed over time.

Other web sites include:

[www.bids-scotland.com](http://www.bids-scotland.com)

The Scottish BIDs web site both provides material on the legislative framework and concept of BIDs in Scotland and acts as a gateway for links to individual town BIDs web sites where business plans and updates are available. Examples include:

**Experience Milngavie Experience Milngavie BID; Consultation Results, 2010**

**Elgin City Centre Business Improvement District Elgin Business Plan 1<sup>st</sup> February 2010- 31<sup>st</sup> January 2016.**

**Enterprising Bathgate Business Plan 2008-2013.**

**IBP Strategy and Research Clarkston Business Improvement District; Business and Shopper Surveys, 2009**

[www.scotlandstowns.org](http://www.scotlandstowns.org)

This site brings together those with an interest in Scotland's towns and is intended to provide information on new developments, opportunities to share best practice, news of forthcoming events and links to others engaged in furthering development of towns in Scotland.

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Built-Environment/regeneration/town-centres/tcrf>

The part of the Scottish Government's website which details the Town Centre Regeneration Fund. It covers the aims and objectives of the schemes, the way in which it ran, the details of the award holders and those unsuccessful as well as some case studies.

<http://www.scotborders.gov.uk/council/yourcouncil/workinginpartnership/smalltownsgroup/index.html>

The Small Towns Group website is hosted by Scottish Borders Council and provides details of activities, members and reports. The Small Towns Group was established in 2005 following a conference held in 2004 by the South of Scotland Alliance on 'Small Towns under Threat'. The Group published the [Scottish Small Towns Report 2007-2013 in August 2006](#). In 2009, the Group published further research, '[Making Towns Count](#)' to update its future work programme. This paper seeks to continue the conversation commenced in 2005 with Scottish Government to better recognise the role, needs and potential of small towns to the nation. It seeks to facilitate a policy response for greater support and practical, urgent action for small towns and their town centres.

[www.susset.org](http://www.susset.org)

The Toolkit for Sustainable Small Town Strategy was established by Nick Brown. In addition to the toolkit this interactive web site includes case examples from Aberdeenshire.

[www.nrpf.org](http://www.nrpf.org)

The National Retail Planning Forum web site includes a wealth of material on retail planning and town centres. There is a ten year knowledge base available for searching, as well as briefing papers and reports on recent conferences and events on current retail topics. Papers include:

**Scottish Retail Planning Policy**

**Retail Vacancy**

**Retail Diversity**

[www.scottishfarmersmarkets.co.uk](http://www.scottishfarmersmarkets.co.uk)

This web site details the timetable for Scottish farmers' markets, the producers involved and information about the way these markets are organised.

[ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/funds/2007/jii/jessica\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/funds/2007/jii/jessica_en.htm)

This is the site for the funding programme Jessica. JESSICA, Joint European Support for Sustainable Investment in City Areas, is an initiative of the Commission in cooperation with the European Investment Bank and the Council of Europe Development Bank in order to promote sustainable investment, and growth and jobs, in Europe's urban areas.

[www.cittaslow.org.uk](http://www.cittaslow.org.uk)

The Cittaslow web site details the concept of slow food towns as a theme and how these are networked. Perth is one town featured on the web site.

[www.atcm.org](http://www.atcm.org)

ATCM is Europe's largest membership organisation dedicated to helping town and city centres realise their natural roles both as prosperous locations for business and investment, and as focal points for vibrant, inclusive communities. Its members are primarily public private partnerships from across the UK as well as both public and private sector stakeholders. The webs site contains a variety of publications and details about town centre management.