**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CROSS PARTY GROUP ON TOWNS AND TOWN CENTRES**

**Wednesday, 9 December 2020, 13:00 – 14:30**

**Online Meeting**

1. **Welcome and Opening Remarks**

Convener, John Scott MSP welcomed all to the meeting.

Attendees and Apologies are noted in Appendix 2.

1. **Approval of the Minutes of the Meeting of the Cross Party Group held 9 September 2020**

The Minutes of the Meeting were accepted as a true and accurate record with no matters arising.

1. **Together Towards Change**

Phil Prentice welcomed all to the meeting. The key words today are together and change. COVID 19 has changed the way we think, live, work. Whilst the pandemic has had an unimaginable impact, towns and cities have been hit particularly hard, no one sector is going to stand alone as we move towards the recovery phase. We have a strong set of speakers who can shed light on how we can work together towards change.

Presentation slides available on the STP website with summary points below.

* 1. **David Cowan, Head of Regeneration Unit, Scottish Government**

Now is a good time to reinforce this message. Scottish Government is talking to Ministers about Place Based Investment and the Town Centre Action Plan; recognising challenges; and the need to put place at the heart of the agenda.

The Town Centre Action Plan was born out of the national towns review in 2013, creating a partnership approach by Scottish and local government, for communities, local authorities, third sector, businesses, to take action locally. The place principle was then developed, building on Town Centre First principle, asking people to work together to maximise energy and resources and understand what is happening in a place before deciding on investments.

We have a sound policy for towns in place in Scotland. The Welsh have adopted the Town Centre First approach and Northern Ireland also looking at what we are doing, as well as having gained international recognition.

Culture and behaviours are important, removing artificial barriers, inspiring activities across the country. The regeneration capital grant fund saw local government working with communities on different and creative ways to turn around the fortune of towns.

The Supporting Communities Fund was introduced in lockdown, to get money to communities to support communities quickly and without too much red tape - as a result, powerful partnerships came together which will hopefully continue post COVID. £4m was secured, supporting BIDs, Scotland Loves Local and town centre partnerships, resulting in core support to local businesses.

The Town Centre Action Plan Review chaired by Professor Leigh Sparks, is due for completion next week.

The Place Based Investment Programme (PBIP) will link placed based funding initiatives to ensure funding for urban and rural places, for neighbourhoods. It is making good progress with view to starting in Spring 2021. This will be matched by £275m over 5 years to support the PBIP - some of this will go towards the regeneration capital grant fund, supporting projects in towns across the country.

Collaboration and working together is key - we know how to do it – we need to be supportive and ask challenging questions. The key thing is for everyone to work together to make this work.

* 1. **Douglas Duff,** **Acting Director, Development Services, Falkirk Council**
* Falkirk Communities, collaborating on change.
* Investment zone for Falkirk and Grangemouth, a new agenda for places in transition.
* Revitalising the town centre.
* Collaborations and partnerships for change and next steps.

Investment Zone:

* A catalyst for investment in key sectors and clusters.
* Safeguards a nationally significant site.
* Enhancing productivity, skills and innovation.
* Partnership to deliver on national priorities for net zero transition, resilience and growth.
* A key opportunity for Scotland.

Innovative Industry:

* UK innovation district – chemicals and manufacturing, Centre of Excellence.
* Sustainable transport engineering, Centre of Excellence.
* Strategic business parks.

National Economic Infrastructure:

* Strategic junctions and route improvement.
* Greener, smarter networks.
* Integrated, smarter travel.

Creating Great Places:

* Growth vision, promotion and delivery of the opportunity.
* International tourist development.
* Future town centres – revitalising and repurposing.

Revitalising Town Centres:

* Falkirk - development and revitalising partnerships.
* Council HQ and Arts Centre.
* Grangemouth – community consultation on longer term options linked to investment zone.
* Bo’ness – build on THI work to date.
* Denny – Phase 1 redevelopment is complete, Phases 2 and 3 progressing.
* Stenhousemuir – complete.

Falkirk Town Centre Vision:

* Strong and distinctive place to live, work and rest.
* A vibrant place for interaction, for people to congregate.
* Centre of economic powerhouse (TIF investment zone).
* Diverse range of uses with culture at its heart.
* Attract people and business back.
* Exploits benefits of heritage.
* Community ownership, inclusion is non negotiable.

Town Centre Action Plan:

* Strong governance model and partnership for diversity.
* Communication.
* Creating hubs.
* Reinvigorate retail.
* Residential opportunity.
* Enhance infrastructure.
* Early wins and longer term actions.
* Responsibilities and resources.

HQ and Arts Centre:

* New office HQ for council and partners for modern, flexible working.
* Art centre, performance and creative spaces, library.
* Day time and evening economy.
* Shares spaces with new council HQ.
* Town centre is transformed from a retail to a working, living and leisure destination.

Town Centre Benefits:

* Economic regeneration.
* Increased cultural offer at the Arts Centre and Studio.
* Enhanced customer service.
* Redevelopment enables new commercial working.
* Zero carbon building with significant reduction in floorspace.
* Co-location benefits with staff in fewer locations.
* Sell surplus properties generating receipts for investment.

Town Centre Capital Fund:

£2.6m received from Scottish Government to be committed by 2021, projects drawn down include;

* Car parking upgrades.
* Conservation schemes.
* Demolition of surplus assets.
* Public realm improvements.
* Enhancements and improved links between rail station and town centre.
* Town centre wifi.
* Public art.
* Extension of sustainable travel links.
* Luggage/business parcel lockers.

Falkirk Loves Local Campaign:

* Support Falkirk BID.
* Business resilience and survival.
* Environmental improvements.
* Improving visitor experience.
* Maximise investment in public WiFi.
* Extending support to district towns.

Next Steps:

* Key time for our communities.
* Investment zone and town centre change programmes.
* Place based interventions are key to a greener, more inclusive and vibrant future post –COVID.
* Fullest collaboration with partners is vital to successful change.
  1. **Alan Anthony, Scottish Chair, Revo and CEO, 360 Architecture**

The Paisley Vision Pilot project was launched by Renfrewshire Council in 2019, Paisley was chosen as it is the largest town in Scotland:

* Why is the High Street Important?
* A place of shared stories and wellbeing.
* A landscape of collective memories.
* Accessible, central and sustainable.
* Where we share memories together.
* Where we celebrate together.
* Where we picture when thinking of home.

What happened to Paisley High Street?

* A significant over provision of retail space.
* Interactions not transactions.
* Shopping centre occupies 45% of town centre.

Paisley 2030 – the aims for then, now and next are:

* A balanced, thriving, inclusive and accessible town centre.
* Making place into space - identify where investment has the greatest impact.
* Show the co-ordinated ambition of your town.
* Set the bar and guidelines for future development.
* Mobilise, energise and create ambassadors.
* Reconnect the whole community.

A Vision for High Street Regeneration - manifesto for change, 18 steps to rebalance, repopulate and reposition the high street. Identify sites –

* A high street cinema - community owned.
* Piazza Centre - to consolidate retail and produce residential.
* Health on High Street – a large NHS asset to be located in the town centre.
* Paisley shopping centre was sold - the buyer has promised positive engagement with council and community trust to implement the proposals in the Paisley vision.
  1. **Emma Mackenzie, Head of Asset Management, Director, NewRiver**

One of the few positives as a result of the pandemic is, where there is a will, there is a way and how people can come together to make things happen.

Overview:

* About NewRiver.
* Market Context.
* Wider Influences.
* What does this mean for our town centres?
* Need for Collaboration.
* Measuring successful regeneration.
* Strategic partnership and Opportunities for Positive Change.

About NewRiver:

* NewRiver are specialist investors in convenient and community retail and leisure assets.
* Listed real estate investment trust founded in 2009.
* One of the UKs largest owners/managers of shopping centres.
* Invested in 700+ communities across the UK working with 60+ local authorities.
* Strong relationship with Local Authorities.

Market Context:

* Diversified income steams focussed on essential goods and services.
* Town centre focus, no out of town retail properties.
* 7 out of 10 sales are still made on the high street while online sales peaked at 33% in May, now back to around 21%.
* Oversupply of space – over 20 years of retail vacancies has continued to rise.
* Digital impact – continues to rise.
* Decline in capital value and returns – aggregate impact has led to a decline in capital values with retail under performance widening.
* Marketing dislocation presents attractive buying opportunities with attractive returns for astute investors.
* Requires specialist and experienced operators to accurately price risk and asset manage the retail assets.
* NewRiver is recycling capital into joint ventures to take advantage of the opportunities with both local authorities and private equity.

Wider Influences | Collaboration | Successful Regeneration | Partnerships and Opportunities for Change

* Barriers to growth.
* Strategic partnership and opportunities for positive change.
* Metrics for social and economic prosperity.
* Delivering alternative uses.
* Profit, purpose and partnership.

In Summary:

* UK retail market facing significant change.
* Changes in the way consumers shop has created an over- supply of retail space.
* In every crisis there is an opportunity.

1. **Discussion**

How do Councils continue to take on the challenging regeneration agenda?

D Cowan – Town centre regeneration is led by local government, in collaboration with Scottish Government. As mentioned earlier, £275m is being made available over 5 years - there will be a continuation of the capital grant fund, enabling them to carry on the conversation on how that funding can be used to leverage private investment. Capital investment plan is being developed to take on distressed assets in town centres.

D Duff - Look at what is most valuable against what is cheapest - cheaper may not be of longer term value to the community. Hugely challenging to councils, building a good and positive case is vital, reuse of properties makes good carbon sense and jobs are critical to our community. It is difficult to involve people in current climate but talking to communities on how we move forward is important, particularly in the cultural sector - need to involve in decision making.

D Rodwell – What do you see as the role of the planning system to avoid mis-investment and over supply?

E Mackenzie – The town centre first approach was adopted for oversupply, limiting what additional space is built for retail, supporting flexibility and change and different uses for buildings, supports a nimble approach to entrepreneurship.

Andy Mosley – How do we make social and affordable housing in town centres available for everyone?

A Anthony- Proposals already mentioned would involve collaboration with a social housing landlord, an opportunity to fix a gap in the market for affordable homes for entry level residents - particularly important for the aging population so they can access all the facilities.

D Cowan – Town centre living was one of the main themes in the Town Centre Review. There is an opportunity with Housing 2040. Strong message came out about town centre living. SG working with colleagues to explore options.

Ed Archer – What is the best way of working with the general public and the retail sector as councils, development and community trusts have different perspectives on what they want done?

D Cowan – things happen most effectively where there is a shared vision and a shared ambition. People need to enter into discussions and iron out differences before looking for funding to make things happen.

D Duff - Agrees that collaboration is vital for continuity. Concerned that momentum has dropped off during COVID - it’s important to rebuild trust.

Dennis Rodwell – Should planning consent be granted for new builds in town centres if vacant properties are available?

David Lonsdale – We have discussed the medium to long term, what about the short term?

A Anthony – Would like to retain heritage in townscapes - need to protect our heritage for future generations.

E Mackenzie – many different uses can be accommodated in different buildings, we should ask if a building can be repurposed.

D Cowan – The National Planning Framework was published recently, new builds should be the last option.

D Duff – Grangemouth has highest amount of carbon emissions in Scotland, aiming for net zero - working with Scottish Futures Trust to achieve this.

1. **Any Other Competent Business and Date of Next Meeting**

There was no other business. John Scott MSP thanked the speakers for a very stimulating conversation and for the STP team for putting the programme together. All presentations will be available on the STP website.

**Date of Next Meeting:** Wednesday 10 March 2021, 13:00-14:30

**Appendix 1**

**The Cross Party Group on Towns and Town Centres**

13:00 – 14:30, Wednesday 9th December 2020

**Online Meeting**

**AGENDA**

13:00    Welcome and Opening Remarks – John Scott MSP, Convener

13:05    Minutes of the Meeting of the Cross Party Group held 9th September, 2020

13:10    Matters Arising from the Minutes

**‘Together Toward Change’**

13:15    Introduction: Phil Prentice, Chief Officer, Scotland’s Towns Partnership

13:20    David Cowan, Head of Regeneration Unit, Scottish Government

13:30    Douglas Duff, Acting Director, Development Services, Falkirk Council

13:40    Alan Anthony, Scottish Chair, Revo and CEO, 360 Architecture

13:50    Emma Mackenzie, Head of Asset Management, Director, NewRiver

14:00    Discussion

14:20    Any Other Competent Business

14:30    Close of Meeting

Date of Next Meeting: Wednesday, 10th March 2021 (13:00 – 14:30)

**Appendix 2**

Due to online nature of the meeting, attendance list based on those indicating attendance or in attendance for majority of session.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **NAME** |  | **ORGANISATION** | |
| Karen | Anderson |  |  |
| Bill | Anderson | Carluke Trust | |
| David | Anderson |  |  |
| Melanie | Andrews MBE |  |  |
| Alan | Anthony | 360 Architecture/REVO | |
| Valerie | Arbuckle | Police Scotland | |
| Ed | Archer |  |  |
| Rob | Arthur | The Big Picture | |
| Alison | Baisden | Historic Environment Scotland | |
| Colin | Barrows | Kirkintilloch BID | |
| Dawn | Black | Dawn Black Photography | |
| Laura | Blair | Zero Waste Scotland | |
| Bill | Bowman | MSP |  |
| Joanne | Boyle | Scottish Government | |
| Raymond | Boyle |  |  |
| Alister | Brown | Orkney Islands Council | |
| Diane | Brown | Alloa First |  |
| Rhona | Brown | Scotland's Towns Partnership | |
| Nicola | Brown | Carrick Management | |
| Cllr Jim | Brown | Scottish Borders Council | |
| Stephen | Brown |  |  |
| Claire | Carpenter | The Melting Pot | |
| Pete | Cheema | Scottish Grocer's Federation | |
| Graham | Clark | Living Streets | |
| Jim | Clarkson | VisitScotland | |
| Duncan | Clelland | South Ayrshire Council | |
| Colin | Clement |  |  |
| Ian | Cochrane | South Ayrshire Council | |
| Janice | Connelly |  |  |
| John | Corbett | SAOL |  |
| David | Cowan | Scottish Government | |
| Elaine | Cowan | Scottish Parliament | |
| Sarah | Craig | Dundee City Council | |
| Gemma | Cruickshank | Elgin BID |  |
| Justine | Daly | SIBNI |  |
| Angela | Davis | Coalfields Regeneration | |
| Brian | Devlin | Digital Place Making | |
| Michael | Dogan | Eyebright |  |
| Tom | Donaldson | OPUS |  |
| Veronica | Donnelly | Azets |  |
| Peter | Drummond | P D Arch |  |
| Kyle | Drummond | City of Edinburgh Council | |
| Douglas | Duff | Falkirk Council | |
| John | Duffy |  |  |
| Peter | Duncan | Message Matters | |
| Andy | Dunlop | East Renfrewshire BIDs | |
| William | Dunlop |  |  |
| David | Dunlop | Cty of Glasgow Council | |
| Patrick | Dunne | South Ayrshire Council | |
| Victoria | Eccles | South Lanarkshire Council | |
| Ewan | Eccleston | City of Glasgow Council | |
| Geraldi e | El Masrour | Motherwell Shopping Centre | |
| Graham | Esson | Perth and Kinross Council | |
| Kim | Fellows | LGiU |  |
| Jamie | Ferguson | Dumfries and Galloway Council | |
| Jane | Fifield | Fifield |  |
| Jennifer | Fingland | Cycling Scotland | |
| Tony | Fitzpatrick |  |  |
| Alex | Fleming | 4 The Benefit of All | |
| Doug | Flett | ICCC UK |  |
| Malcolm | Fraser |  |  |
| David | Gear | East Dunbartonshire Council | |
| Pauline | Grandison | Coalfields Regeneration | |
| Anne | Grove | Scottish Government | |
| David | Grove | Fife Council | |
| Ros | Halley | Tartan Jigsaw | |
| Pearl | Hamilton |  |  |
| Neale | Hanvey | MP |  |
| Lucy | Harding | Nairn Connects | |
| Nicola | Hay | Angus Council | |
| Jim | Hiddleston | Roslin Village Group | |
| Alison | Horner |  |  |
| Stephen | Horsburgh | East Dunbartonshire Council | |
| Mark | Hughes | Renfrewshire Council | |
| Reid | Hutchison | Aberdeenshire Council | |
| Deryck | Irving | Green Action Trust | |
| Andy | Kille | Aberdeenshire Council | |
| Lynn | Kilpatrick | Historic Environment Scotland | |
| Ian | Kinsey |  |  |
| Roberta | Kirosingh | Scottish Parliament | |
| Angus | Knox | Ask Financial | |
| Anantha | Krishnan |  |  |
| Jane | Lamont | Beith Trust | |
| Caroline | Lawrie | SGN |  |
| Euan | Leitch | Built Environment Forum Scotland | |
| Richard | Logie | Gets Local |  |
| David | Lonsdale | British Retail Consortium | |
| Tyler | Lott | Grand Bequest | |
| Colin | Love | South Ayrshire Council | |
| Angus | MacDonald | MSP |  |
| Alison | Macdonald | Public Health Scotland | |
| David | MacDougall |  |  |
| Ian | Macgregor |  |  |
| Emma | Mackenzie | NewRiver |  |
| Cameron | MacQuarrie |  |  |
| Lindsay | Marshall | Visit Dunfermline | |
| Steve | Mathieson | VisitScotland | |
| Donna | Mcarthur |  |  |
| Debbi | McCall | Midlothian Council | |
| Caitlin | McCorry | East Lothian Council | |
| Corene | McCrindle | South Ayrshire Council | |
| Melissa | McGarey | Dumfries and Galloway Council | |
| Gordon | McGhee |  |  |
| Ross | McGinn |  |  |
| Kevin | McGlone | DWF Group | |
| Craig | McIntyre | North Lanarkshire Council | |
| David | McKay | Workman LLP | |
| Iain | McLean | DWF Group | |
| Ruby | Merriman | Stromness Orkney | |
| Audrey | Michie | Aberdeenshire Council | |
| Derek | Miller |  |  |
| laura | Mills | Entourage UK | |
| Shaun | Moat | Forres Community Council | |
| Gordon | Mole | Fife Council | |
| Sandra | Montador-Stewart | Fife Council | |
| Hannah | Moore | Visit West End BID | |
| Andy | Moseley | Shelter |  |
| Colin | Moulson | Dunoon Presents | |
| Rebecca | Muir | Scotland's Food and Drink BID | |
| Jackie | Mulligan | Shopappy |  |
| Graham | Murdoch | Murdoch Butchers | |
| Rose | Murdoch |  |  |
| Fergus | Murray |  |  |
| Deborah | Murray | Visit West End BID | |
| Stewart | Ness | West Lothian Council | |
| Grace | Newman | Shopappy |  |
| Jan | Nisbet |  |  |
| Evelyn | Noble | One Linlithgow BID | |
| Suzanne | O'Hare | Lanarkshire People Advertising | |
| Bill | Pagan |  |  |
| Chris | Parker-Brads | Miconex |  |
| Gary | Porter | Coalfields Regeneration | |
| Yvonne | Prager | Scotland's Towns Partnership | |
| Phil | Prentice | Scotland's Towns Partnership | |
| Jillian | Price | Sustainable Development Group | |
| David | Ratter | DWF Group | |
| Janine | Redford | Shopappy |  |
| Suzanne | Rhind | Aberdeenshire Council | |
| Marilyn | Rieley | Argyll and Bute Council | |
| Grant | Riley | North Lanarkshire Council | |
| Cliff | Robertson |  |  |
| Derek | Robertson | Green Action Trust | |
| Ewan | Robertson | Scotland's Towns Partnership | |
| Dennis | Rodwell |  |  |
| Iain | Ross | South Lanarkshire Council | |
| Christian | Rovan |  |  |
| Lucy | Schofield | East Lothian Council | |
| John | Scott | MSP | |
| Laura | Scott-Simmons | Benton Scott-Simmons | |
| Pat | Scrutton | Intergenerational National Network | |
| Danielle | Smith | GoForth Stirling | |
| Mike | Smith | Inverness BID | |
| Tom | Sneddon | Scotland's Towns Partnership | |
| Leigh | Sparks | Scotland's Towns Partnership | |
| Hazel | Stephen |  |  |
| Ian | Stephen | SBRC |  |
| Elaine | Stewart | Coalfields Regeneration | |
| Chris | Story | Message Matters | |
| Caitlin | Stott | Scottish Parliament | |
| Jane | Strang | Renfrewshire Council | |
| Alyson | Taylor | Taylor Media | |
| Malcolm | Thomas-Harley | Hamilton BID | |
| Richard | Todd | East Dunbartonshire Council | |
| Frances | Tonner | East Renfrewshire Council | |
| Iain | Tulloch |  |  |
| Sunil | Varu |  |  |
| Sonya | Warren |  |  |
| Adrian | Watson | Aberdeen Inspired | |
| Douglas | Watt | Galashiels Heartland | |
| John | Weir | Isle of Bute BID | |
| Margaret | Whitelaw | Lenzie Community Development Trust | |
| John | Whitelaw |  |  |
| Valerie | Whyte |  |  |
| Angela | Will |  |  |
| Mike | Wilson | Mike Wilson Media | |
| Derek | Wilson | Argyll and Bute Council | |
| Ian | Winton |  |  |
| Jane | Wood |  |  |
| Jean | Young | Uptown Girl Shoes | |
| David Russell | Young | Peak Concepts | |