



# Your Town Audit: Prestwick

July 2023

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## Contents

1.	Understanding Scottish Places Summary	1
2.	Accessible Town Centre	3
3.	Active Town Centre	7
4.	Attractive Town Centre	13
5.	YTA Summary and Key Points	22

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## 1. Understanding Scottish Places Summary

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

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

In total, 46 YTA audits have been prepared for towns across Scotland providing consistent data across the range of KPIs. Where appropriate, this report provides comparisons for Prestwick against the YTA town average<sup>1</sup>.

The [Understanding Scottish Places](#) (USP) data platform provides a summary analysis for Prestwick and identifies six comparator towns that have similar characteristics, with the most similar being Giffnock, Helensburgh, Linlithgow, and Bishopbriggs<sup>2</sup>. The USP platform - [www.usp.scot](http://www.usp.scot) – describes Prestwick in the following general terms:

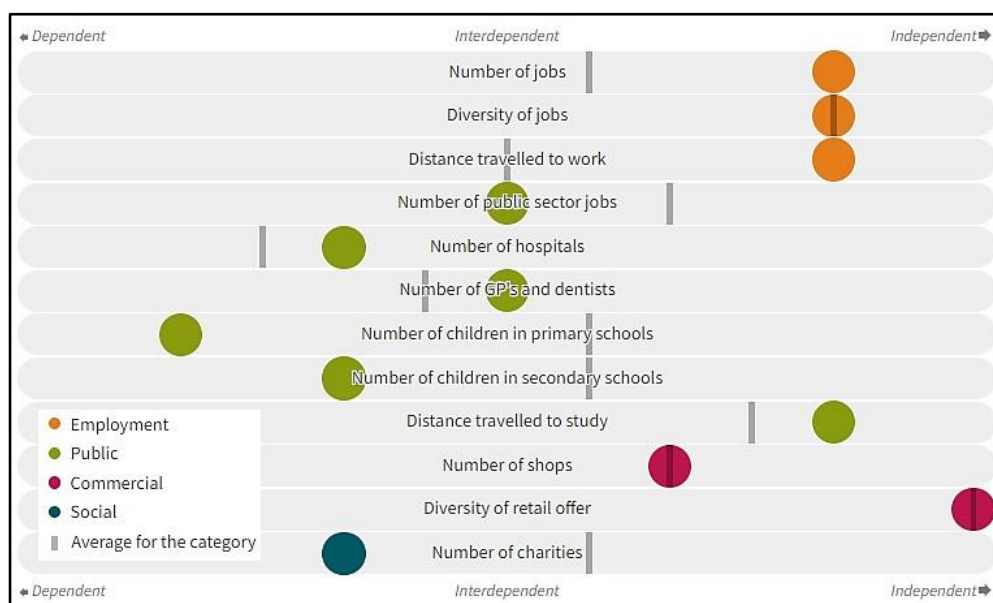
**Prestwick's Interrelationships:** an '*interdependent to independent*' town, meaning it has a good number of assets in relation to its population. Towns of this kind have some diversity of jobs; and residents on the whole travel shorter distances to work and study. These towns attract people from neighbouring towns to access some of their assets and jobs.

**Prestwick's Typology:** This type of large town is a suburban or commuter locality with a prevalence of higher income and private housing. A large proportion of the population are over 45, and many are retired. Many people own their own home. There is also a high proportion of people in professional employment and a high proportion of residents are educated to HNC level or above. Many residents own two or more cars.

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<sup>1</sup> It has not been possible to collect full KPI data for all towns – the number of YTA comparator towns therefore differs across this report.

<sup>2</sup> Other comparator towns include Stonehaven and Ellon.



Comparing Prestwick to towns with similar USP typology and interrelationships shows it has a similar number of hospitals, public sector jobs, shops, GPs and dentists, and similar diversity of retail offer as well as distances travelled to work and study. It does however differ in terms of the number of charities, distance travelled to work and, most significantly, in the number of children in primary schools.

Building on the USP, this report presents the results of our detailed analysis of Prestwick based on the STP and the Scottish Government's Town Toolkit – an online resource which provides advice and inspiration across five thematic areas: arts and culture; buildings and property; clean and green; enterprise and business; and streets and spaces. [The Town Toolkit](#) was revised and relaunched in 2021.

The report is designed as an audit of existing assets – physical and social – and concludes with a set of key findings and issues that will be important to the future performance of Prestwick. Although the report has been informed by the [Prestwick Place Planning - Engagement Outcomes \(2022\)](#) published by South Ayrshire Council, this report is not intended as a detailed strategy or action plan.



## 2. Accessible Town Centre

Situated in southwest Scotland, Prestwick is primarily a residential town, functioning as a local service centre with a strong community focus<sup>3</sup>. With a total population of around 14,800, Prestwick is one of the largest settlements in the South Ayrshire local authority area behind Ayr. The population has remained relatively stable over the past decade.

As defined by the [Local Development Plan](#), the town centre boundary extends from Monkton Road in the north along the main shopping street of Main Street to the south (where it turns into Ayr Road on the A79). Prestwick Beach and Esplanade lie just outside the western boundary of the town centre, near the commercial offering. Residential areas with community and education facilities are found in the streets surrounding Main Street.

**Prestwick Town Centre**



The town centre is small, with one main shopping street, Main Street, running along the A79. The commercial offering is near the waterfront and beach, and nearby there is Prestwick Cricket Ground, tennis courts, and Prestwick Golf Course – one of three golf courses within the town of Prestwick.

The population of Prestwick enjoys excellent access to good quality green and blue space. At Prestwick Beach, there is access to a sandy beach with a children's amusement centre and playpark, as well as grassy area with seating. Within the town centre, there is Boydfield Gardens, including a small playpark, and St. Ninian's Park, which is located next to the main shopping street of Main Street.

<sup>3</sup> South Ayrshire Council (2022) [Local Development Plan](#)

Prestwick has two railway stations – Prestwick Town and Prestwick International Airport. Prestwick Town train station is located in the heart of the town centre, whilst Prestwick International Airport train station is located outside of the town centre to the north adjacent to the Airport. Prestwick Airport offers routes to popular tourist destinations in Spain and Portugal such as Alicante, Barcelona, and Tenerife.



Located on the Glasgow Southwest Line, trains are extremely frequent between Prestwick Town and Glasgow Central via Ayr during the day, with fewer evening services. Trains to Prestwick International Airport are less frequent, though there are still between two and four services per hour during the day, with evening services again being less frequent. The current cost of an anytime day return from Prestwick Town to Glasgow Central is £17.00, and off-peak £11.10.

There are local buses around Prestwick during the day, which run from Ayr to Prestwick, with a relatively high frequency of services (every 20-minutes). There are also services to other areas, such as Irvine, Greenock, and Glasgow. The main way of reaching Prestwick by road is via the A77 which runs along the coast towards Ayr and Stranraer in both directions. The A77 runs to the east of the town centre, with entry to Prestwick via Monkton, or the Whitletts Roundabout.

In 2020, an appraisal of transport in the region, undertaken by Transport Scotland, made a series of long-term recommendations for improving transport across the Southwest of Scotland<sup>4</sup>. Specific references to Prestwick included that:

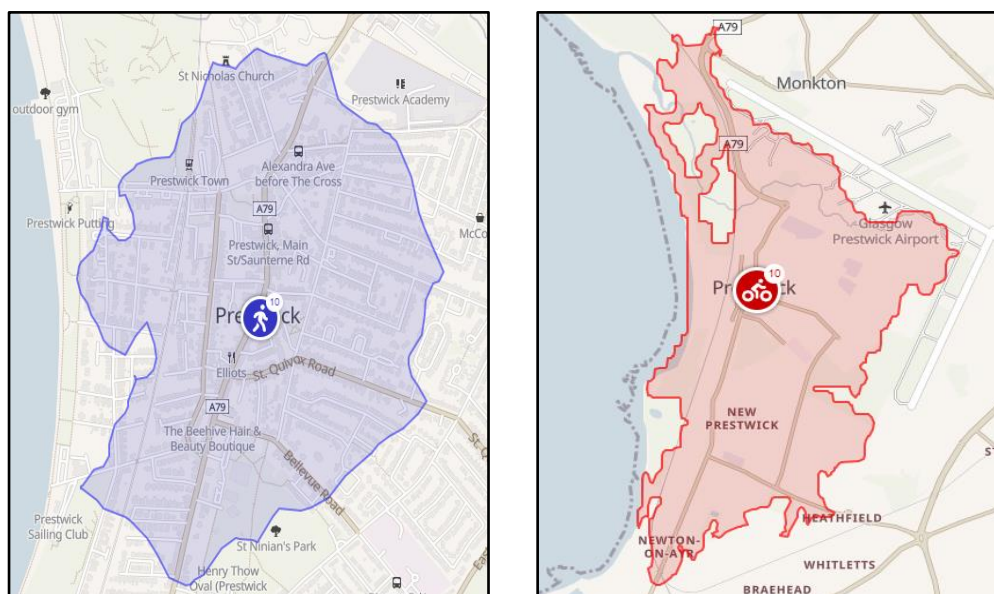
- There is a need for an increase in the number of rail services from Prestwick to Stranraer.
- Improvements to the A77 were identified as necessary as it is an important link to the ferry ports and Prestwick Airport.
- The South Ayrshire Local Development Plan makes reference to the development of Glasgow Prestwick Airport and the area's seaports, particularly with regard to sustainability.

<sup>4</sup> Transport Scotland (2020) [South West Scotland Transport Study - Initial Appraisal: Case for Change](#)

The concept of '20-minute neighbourhoods' has grown in prominence over recent years and is now a key priority for Scottish place and planning policy. This promotes the idea of people being able to reach all of their day-to-day needs within a 20-minute public transport trip or walk/cycle from home – i.e., a ten-minute journey each way. By cutting down on unnecessary car travel, this has benefits for health outcomes, wellbeing and the environment, as well as supporting the local economy.

Prestwick is relatively compact, and the entire town can be reached within a ten-minute cycle, with the town centre generally all within a ten-minute walk from the mid-point of the town centre, as shown on the map below<sup>5</sup>. A considerable portion of housing in the town can also be reached within a ten-minute walk. This places the town in a good position to continue growing active travel trips.

#### Prestwick Town Centre – 10 Minute Walking and Cycling Distance



Source: Commute Time Map

Local groups and organisations are leading the way in this regard – for example, there is a Prestwick branch of [Cycling Without Age](#), a non-profit charity which provides access for elderly and disabled individuals to the outdoors via trishaw rides. This brings accessible and inclusive cycling activities to Prestwick and surrounding communities.

<sup>5</sup> Note: areas which appear inaccessible are areas of beach without sufficient paths for cycling.

This is also reflected in the [Prestwick Place Planning - Engagement Outcomes \(2022\)](#) which acknowledges that while there are good facilities and various routes for walking and cycling in Prestwick, it is currently not safe to cycle on roads. This is mainly due to heavy traffic, a lack of cycle lanes, and poor road conditions (for example, lighting, potholes, and uneven surfaces).

The Place Planning Engagement Outcomes (2022) contains suggestions for more walking and cycling routes, due to these issues. Routes which avoid high traffic areas and are adequately lit will encourage higher uptake of active traffic, as well as being safer.

Free parking is currently available throughout Prestwick town centre, with on-street parking allowed on Main Street from 8am-6pm from Monday to Saturday with a two-hour maximum stay. There are also relatively large surface car parks in close proximity to the main shopping street, on Bellevue Road (which offers electric vehicle charging), Grangemuir Road (adjacent to St. Nicholas Golf Course), and off Midton Road (with a two-hour maximum stay). The [Prestwick Place Planning - Engagement Outcomes \(2022\)](#) found that while there is free parking available, inconsiderate parking is still an issue – with the development of extra parking spaces suggested as a solution.

The [South Ayrshire Council Parking Strategy 2020-2024](#) proposes a consultation exercise on the introduction of a pay and display system, similar to Ayr, to generate greater turnover of parking bays and improve accessibility of local amenities and attractions. A pay and display system for on-street parking would operate all year round (Monday to Saturday) while off-street car parks (with exception of Prestwick Station car park) would have a seasonal pay and display system between April and September.

Prestwick town centre has good mobile connectivity, with 4G coverage from all four networks. 5G coverage is available in some areas of Prestwick, ranging from high to very high levels of coverage. Ultrafast broadband (at least 220 Mbps) is available in the town.

Located outside of the town centre boundary, there is Prestwick Academy as well as four primary schools, including Glenburn, St Ninian's, Kingcase, and Heathfield. Officially opened in June 2023, a new £17.6m shared education campus (Prestwick North Education Campus) brings together Glenburn Primary School, St Ninian's Primary School, and a new early year's centre.



Prestwick's town centre also includes access to a range of sport and leisure facilities including a swimming pool, cricket ground, tennis courts and Prestwick Golf Course – (see Section 4 for more information on leisure).

### 3. Active Town Centre

#### 3.1 Population and Housing

Just under 4,700 people live within the town centre of Prestwick, accounting for roughly one third (32%) of the total settlement's population<sup>6</sup>. This proportion is significantly higher than the average of 19% in other YTA town centres which reflects the large residential area within the town centre boundary.



Over the decade to 2020, the town centre population decreased by 3% (roughly 140 fewer people), while the whole settlement population remained stable. Other audited town centres have generally experienced an increase in town centre living, with an average 10.5% increase across YTA towns.

In 2020, over 2,400 houses were recorded within Prestwick town centre. Over half of housing in the town centre is semi-detached/detached (58%), followed by flats (24%) and terraced housing (17%). The majority of these homes have three or more bedrooms. Over four-fifths of the housing stock in the town is privately owned (84% in the town centre; 77% in the wider town), which is much higher than the YTA average of 57%.

In 2020, the residential town centre vacancy rate was 4%, in line with the average vacancy rate of other YTA town centres (3.7%). Within Prestwick as a whole, the residential vacancy rate was 3%. There can be a number of factors that influence vacancy rates for residential properties in the town centre. Often, this can relate to the type and quality of available properties, ownership issues and local economic conditions.

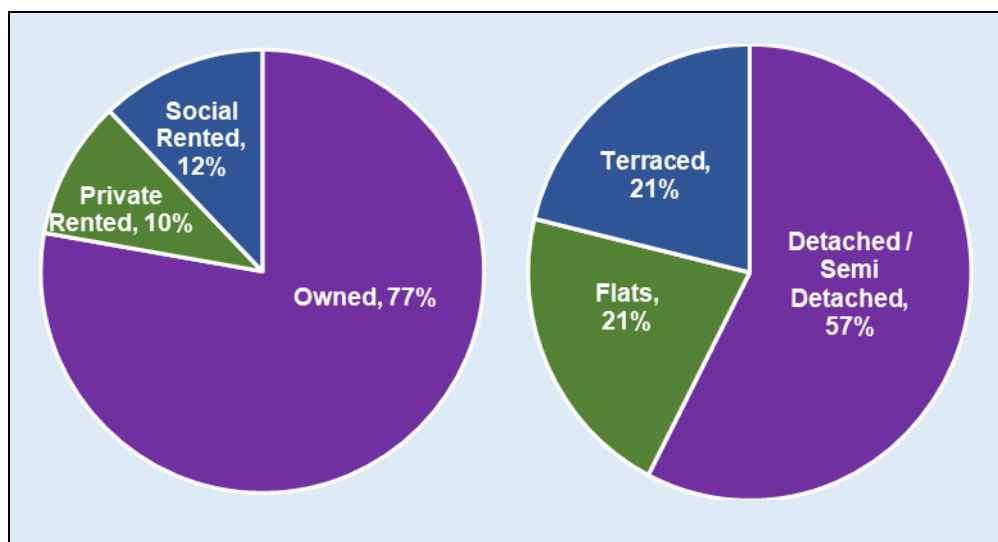
<sup>6</sup> Based on the closest fitting datazones, S01012518: Prestwick West – 01; S01012519: Prestwick West – 02; S01012520: Prestwick West – 03; S01012521: Prestwick West – 04; S01012524: Prestwick East – 01; S01012525: Prestwick East – 02; and S01012526: Prestwick East – 03.

House prices within the town centre are much higher compared to the average across other YTA towns (£202,400 compared to £118,100). This is slightly above the wider Prestwick average of £195,500<sup>7</sup>. Two-thirds of properties within the town centre (66%) are found in council tax bands D or E. This reflects the size of houses in the town centre, which are largely detached or semi-detached.

As town and city centres adjust to a changing retail climate, increasing town centre living is recognised as important throughout Scotland and is one of the key priorities for the Scottish Government's original [Town Centre Action Plan](#) (2013) and its more recent [refresh](#) (2020). The fact that Prestwick town centre and its surrounding areas have a relatively high level of housing puts it in a good position to grow this.

This is echoed in the [South Ayrshire Council Local Development Plan](#) (2022) which states that “*there is clear evidence to suggest there is a requirement to increase the provision of affordable housing, especially within Ayr, Prestwick and Troon*”. A recent example is the former Police Station and Social Work office (Main Street) being demolished and replaced with a modern social housing development of 11 one and two-bedroom flats. The Local Development Plan also refers to a residential development opportunity at land on Annfield Road (within the town centre).

### Prestwick Town Centre Housing Mix



<sup>7</sup> More up-to-date market information from property website Zoopla places the average selling price for residential properties across the whole of Prestwick at £204,900 over the last 12 months.

### 3.2 Businesses and Employment

In 2022, national statistics recorded 515 enterprises registered in the whole of Prestwick, and 300 'local units' in the town centre<sup>8</sup>. Around half (51%) of the 3,150 jobs in Prestwick are located in the town centre area<sup>9</sup>.

While there are over 9,400 jobs in Prestwick, only 17% (equivalent to 1,575 jobs) are located within the town centre boundary. The high number of jobs outwith the town centre area is due, in part, to 'Prestwick Aerospace' which is home to a range of aerospace businesses including: National Air Traffic Services, Glasgow Prestwick Airport, Ryanair and Prestwick Spaceport. To put it into context, Prestwick Aerospace employs over 3,000 employees, which accounts for around one-third of jobs in Prestwick alone<sup>10</sup>.

The town centre audit located 182 units within the town centre area, with 95 being used as retail or retail service units. Compared to the YTA average, retail makes up a large proportion of town centre use in Prestwick (52% compared to 46% across all towns).



For all units (both retail and otherwise, excluding housing), the vacancy rate was 12% broadly in line with the YTA average of 11%. This equates to 22 vacant units which were almost entirely comprised of retail units, predominantly spread along Main Street.

<sup>8</sup> Source: UK Business Count

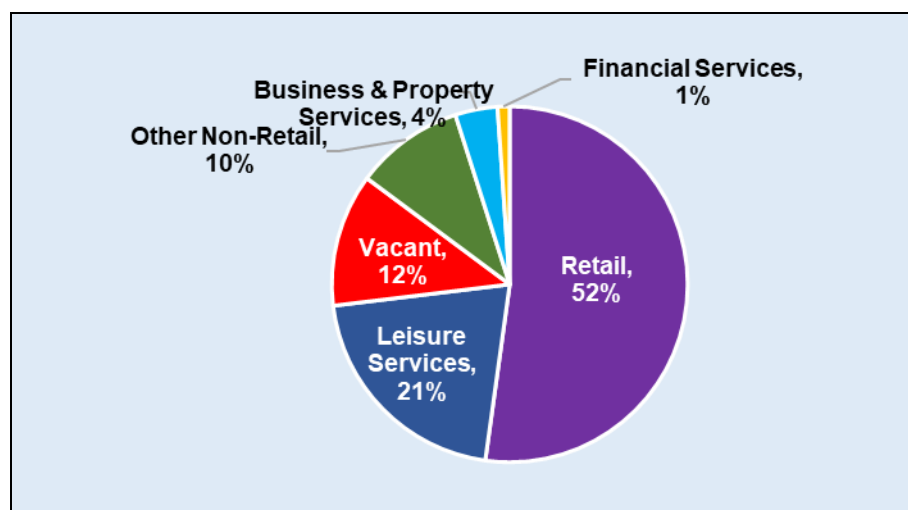
<sup>9</sup> Source: Business Register & Employment Survey

<sup>10</sup> Prestwick Aerospace. [About Us](#).

It is important to note that this is only the fifth Your Town Audit conducted since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. During the walk around, it was clear that some business units had been vacated or had changed relatively recently.

Both leisure services and units classed as other non-retail, such as places of worship and community halls, comprised similar or lower proportions of town centre unit use in Prestwick (leisure: Prestwick 21%, YTA average 22%; and other non-retail: Prestwick 10%, YTA average 14%). These services are largely located outside of the defined town centre within close proximity e.g., Prestwick Swimming Pool and Biggart Hospital.

### Prestwick Town Centre Unit Mix



## 3.3 Retail

The retail offering in Prestwick reflects its role as a local centre. It has a wide range of smaller independent shops although lacks much of a presence from larger, national comparison retailers – particularly given that Ayr, the regional centre with large shopping centre, is a 10-minute drive away. The retail offering is mainly concentrated along Main Street which has 75 retail units – this equates to 79% of Prestwick's 95 retail units within the town centre.

The retail vacancy rate in Prestwick town centre is 12%, equivalent to 20 units. This is slightly higher than the average YTA retail vacancy rate of 10.8% across 42 towns (albeit mostly based on pre-COVID data).

With over half (54%) of the vacant units, Main Street had the most vacant retail units (15) followed by The Cross (three units). Judging by the condition of the vacant retail units, most appeared to have become vacant fairly recently – assuming there was sufficient demand, pop-up shops/stalls in some of the key units could be a temporary solution in order to maintain footfall where shops have closed.



With 155 residents per town centre retail outlet, Prestwick town centre has a high density of retail offering in relation to its population (YTA average: 227 residents per town centre retail outlet). Again, this reflects its function as a local service centre.

**155 residents per town centre retail outlet**

**95 town centre retail units in use**

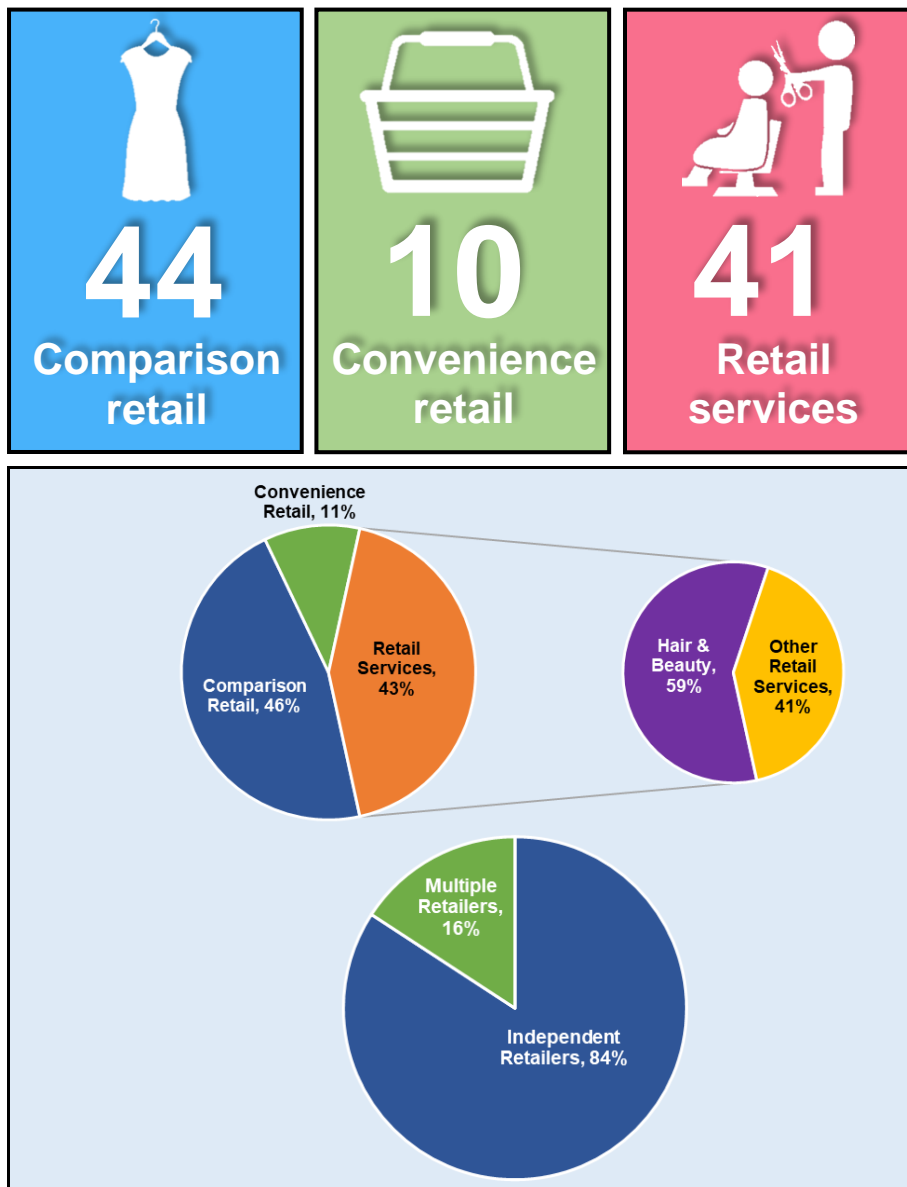
**20 vacant town centre retail units**

Retail forms the largest town centre unit use, amounting to 52% of all units. This is higher than the YTA average of 46%.

The YTA analysis is based on the following retail definitions:

- **Convenience Retail:** primarily low-cost goods that are typically bought out of habit or on impulse i.e., food, drink (alcohol and non-alcohol), news, tobacco, etc. – *10 convenience retailers identified in Prestwick town centre;*
- **Comparison Retail:** all other retail purchases comprising goods bought at infrequent intervals where consumers will compare and contrast products and prices – *44 comparison retailers identified in Prestwick town centre;* and
- **Retail Services:** services that consumers would expect to find in a town centre including hairdresser, beauty salon, repair of goods, hire of specialist clothing, health clinics, post office, travel agent, etc. – *40 retail service operators identified in Prestwick town centre.*





Independent retailers comprise 84% of the total in Prestwick, which ranks significantly higher than the YTA average of 72%. The number of national comparison retailers with larger stores was fairly low – this included Boots, B&M, Savers, and Wright's Home Hardware.

In terms of supermarkets, there is a Tesco Express store and a Nisa Local, as well as an Aldi and Sainsbury's a short distance outside of the town centre.



## 4. Attractive Town Centre

### 4.1 Overview

Prestwick has an active, engaged community of local residents and businesses who are invested in the improvement of the town centre. The town centre has gained recognition at a national level as Prestwick Main Street was crowned Scottish Champion at the Great British High Street Awards in 2019 – winning a prize of £5,000 for the local community. The Main Street was praised for its digital innovation (such as encouraging all businesses to provide free WiFi), community social media pages, community garden, and shop adaptations, in line with the town's dementia-friendly scheme<sup>11</sup>.



Within the town centre, the central focal point of the public realm is Prestwick War Memorial, located at Boydfield Gardens on Mercat Cross – at the intersection between Station Road and Main Street. The Memorial contains plaques with lists of 178 names of Prestwick men who passed in World War One and Two.



<sup>11</sup> Great British High Street 2019. [Main Street Prestwick](#).

Although Prestwick has a range of gardens, parks and playing fields, the Place Planning Engagement Outcomes (2022) noted that there are opportunities to improve the large open parks and playparks. Within the town centre, Boydfield Gardens contains a flower garden, sundial, war memorial, merchant cross and small playpark. Boydfield Gardens also provides a location for events within the town (see section 4.3) and offers a place for socialisation. The garden has real potential in supporting a revitalised town centre.

The Prestwick Sundial is the main public art focus within the town. The Sundial was designed by final year students at Prestwick Academy, in collaboration with Prestwick Academy art department and artist Elspeth Bennie. The Sundial opened in June 1998 and remains a focal point in the town centre. Perhaps, more modern community art or interactive heritage is something which could be explored further to increase the attractiveness of the town centre.

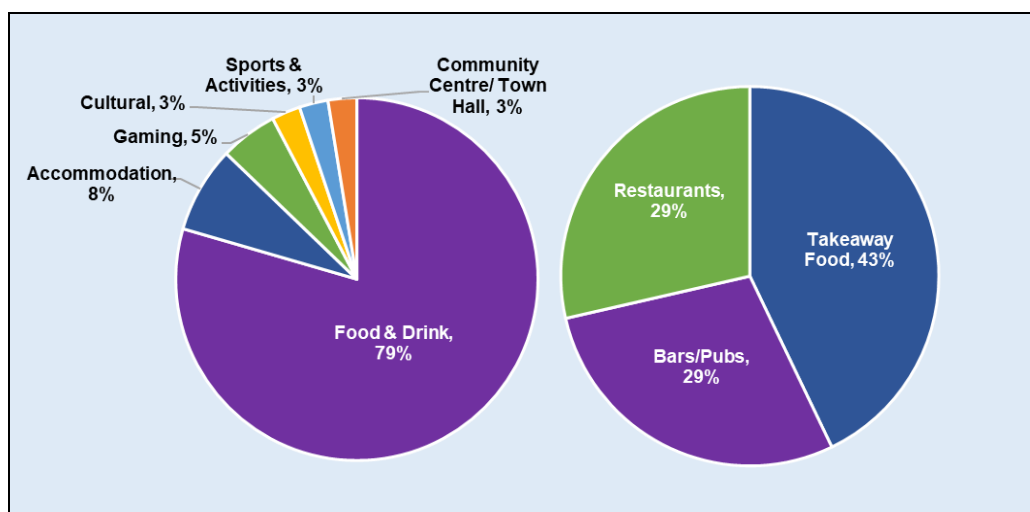


In the [Prestwick Place Planning - Engagement Outcomes \(2022\)](#), a number of opportunities and suggestions were identified by the community. This included that more could be done to communicate the heritage and history of Prestwick through more interactive displays or trails beyond a few historic signs. This could help to significantly improve the attractiveness and vibrancy of the town centre for both residents and visitors.

In terms of buildings, shopfronts were generally in good condition. However, some small renovation works targeted at “sprucing up” specific parts of the town centre or buildings would make a big difference, although identifying owners and then incentivising (or compelling) them to make repairs can be a challenge.

As the audit visit was carried out in February 2023, the majority of flower pots/beds were yet to blossom. There appeared to be an adequate number of displays, hanging baskets and small planters, particularly at Boydfield Gardens – though, more of which would help to further increase the attractiveness of the town centre, particularly along Main Street.

## 4.2 Leisure Mix



Compared to other YTA towns, Prestwick has a similar proportion of town centre units that are used for leisure services (21% compared to 22% average). Of the mix of leisure businesses in Prestwick town centre, the vast majority are food and drink outlets (31 of 39 leisure units).

The evening economy is comprised of nine takeaways, six bars/pubs and six restaurants. Prestwick has a relatively high proportion of evening economy outlets (703 residents per evening economy outlet) compared to the YTA average (924 residents per evening economy outlet).





Prestwick Community Centre was established in 1976 and sits on the site of the former Prestwick Public School, with the building dating back to 1845. The building itself is owned by South Ayrshire Council, while the facility is run by Prestwick Community Association. The community centre provides a hub for the community, with eight rooms and one hall which are available for rental. The centre hosts a range of activities, including children's groups, physical activity and health groups, learning groups, music groups, and hobbies, arts and crafts.

In 2012, a community group was founded – [Friends of the Broadway Prestwick](#) – to bring the former Broadway Cinema (Main Street) back into community ownership. The vision is to reopen the Broadway as a cinema and intergenerational community hub. In April 2023, the community group signed a licence to occupy the C-listed building which paves the way for obtaining the funding needed to restore the Broadway in its entirety.

Prestwick is home to a range of sporting facilities – with three golf courses, tennis courts, a cricket ground, sailing club, swimming pool, and two bowling greens. Most of these facilities are located at, or close to, St Ninian's Public Park which is a large park situated to the southern edge of the town centre. Although Prestwick is well-served in terms of sporting facilities and the range of sports available to play within the town, the Place Planning Engagement Outcomes (2022) highlighted that a community sports hub could be beneficial to the community. There is also an opportunity to grow watersports within Prestwick which could create a stronger link between the beach and town centre.

As mentioned, the town contains three golf courses – St. Nicholas, St. Cuthbert, and Prestwick Golf Course. All are private membership clubs offering a range of visitor fees – Prestwick Golf Course offers an Ayrshire Resident Rate to those with a KA postcode (£85 per round on weekdays).

### 4.3 Community Events and Festivals

Whilst the COVID-19 pandemic has restricted the number of festivals and events in the last few years, large events which typically take place in the town include:

- Boydfield Gardens Prestfest – free annual festival with live music, comedy and food stalls, which runs over the first weekend in September. The festival has been held for ten years and recently secured funding for the next five years. In 2022, Prestfest featured over 150 acts in 10 venues.



- Prestwick Prom – annual event on Prestwick Promenade with entertainment including mini golf, a funfair, horse riding, dog show, and food and entertainment stalls. It is scheduled to return on Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> July 2023 after cancellations from COVID-19 restrictions and budget constraints.
- Lighting Up Prestwick – annual festive event held in November which includes the Christmas lights switch on, a Christmas market and Santa's grotto.

Events are promoted on notice boards within the town centre (as pictured), and also on community social media pages, such as the [Positive Prestwick](#) Facebook page.



#### 4.4 Attractions and Heritage

Prestwick has a small number of visitor attractions on offer. Most notably, Prestwick Beach is located outside of the town centre to the west and attracts visitors to the area, with views of Isle of Arran across the water. The long sandy beach was included in Scotland's Beach Award 2023 which recognises the nation's top beaches as organised by Keep Scotland Beautiful. The beach also has a 'good' bathing quality rating from SEPA.

As noted, the leisure offering at the beach includes a children's amusement centre and playpark, ice cream parlour and grassy area with seating. A new playpark has also recently opened in the area, increasing the attractiveness of the area for both local residents and visitors.



Source: [Positive Prestwick Facebook page](#), 1<sup>st</sup> May 2023

Prestwick has a rich heritage to draw on, with buildings and ruins dating from the 13<sup>th</sup> century. One of the most notable landmarks in Prestwick is the Old Parish Church of St. Nicholas which dates back to the 12<sup>th</sup> or 13<sup>th</sup> century – with modifications taking place in the 18<sup>th</sup> century<sup>12</sup>. The church ruins are located within a graveyard, nearby Prestwick train station.



Also dating from 13<sup>th</sup> century, Bruce's Well (also known as the Well of St. Ninian) located behind St Ninian's Church. Robert the Bruce is reported to have drunk from the Well, which was said to have cured his leprosy<sup>13</sup>. The Well is currently in poor condition and is inaccessible to the public, with railings and a padlocked gate surrounding the well. Members of the public are however still able to view the well through these railings.

Within the town centre, there is Prestwick Freeman's Hall (or Burgh Hall) which was built in 1837 and has had various functions as a prison, school, function hall, and council offices. In 2011, its steeple was dismantled which has led to various proposals in recent years to fund a replacement – however securing funding has been challenging due to rising costs<sup>14</sup>.

As previously mentioned, Prestwick is home to three golf courses. The Prestwick Old Course was the host of the first Open Golf Championship in 1860, continuing to host a further 11 Open Championships until 1872<sup>15</sup>. Prestwick's prestigious and historic golf courses can be a key leisure and tourism asset for the town if supported by greater promotion.

<sup>12</sup> Historic Environment Scotland. [Prestwick, Old Parish Church](#)

<sup>13</sup> South Ayrshire History. [Ayrshire, Bruce and Bannockburn](#)

<sup>14</sup> Ayr Advertiser, [Plan to replace the steeple on Prestwick building is still in limbo](#), 18<sup>th</sup> February 2022

<sup>15</sup> The Open. [Previous Opens](#)



Source: [Prestwick Golf Club](#)

In terms of walking trails, the 100-mile long [Ayrshire Coastal Path](#), which is designated as one of Scotland's Great Trails, passes through Prestwick at Stage 7 (8.5 mile path from Ayr to Troon). The Place Planning Engagement Outcomes (2022) states that there is a lack of walking trails in the area.

The [Ayrshire Active Travel Hub](#) hosted walking and cycling events around South Ayrshire. They had a range of walking and cycling routes, including Prestwick to Troon Town Hall, and Troon to Prestwick Airport. However, the future of the hub is uncertain with funding restrictions suspending all of its activities from mid-July 2023.

While it does not pass through Prestwick, the [South West Coastal 300](#) has been developed to market the South West region as a destination for road trips. It is a 300-mile scenic loop around the region from the coasts as well as towns as Dumfries and Moffat. It is the third route in the series of other driving routes in Scotland which have been developed over recent years, most famously the North Coast 500 and the North East 250.

### South West Coastal 300 Route



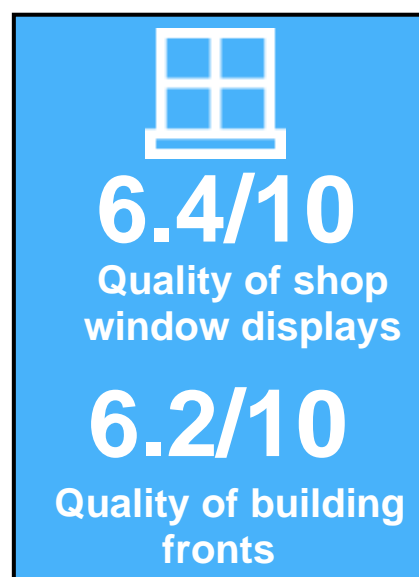
Source: [Scotland Starts Here](#)

With regional and local bodies such as Destination South Ayrshire and Love Prestwick promoting Prestwick as a visitor destination, it appears that considerable work is being undertaken to promote and market Prestwick to a wide audience in innovative ways. For example, Love Prestwick have developed a [digital concierge](#) which maps out the key destinations for food, retail, accommodation, and activities – it is important that such tools are kept up-to-date with accurate, useful and comprehensive information.

## 4.5 Attractiveness Review

The YTA includes an independent review of place and quality impressions, with Prestwick scoring slightly below average in comparison to other towns.

Individual unit fronts and shop window displays were graded out of ten during the on-street audit, with a town centre average score of 6.4 for quality of window display and 6.2 for the condition of unit fronts. This is slightly below the average across other YTA audited town centres, of 6.9 and 6.8 respectively.





Business confidence in the town centre was gauged from a small sample of interviews undertaken with independent traders. On a scale of 0 (not at all confident) to 10 (very confident), scores averaged at 7.1 / 10, significantly higher than the 5.9 average of other YTA audited towns. Feedback from a few Prestwick independent traders was that they are hopeful of new opportunities despite challenges facing town centres across Scotland (for example, decreasing footfall).



## 5. YTA Summary and Key Points

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

### 5.1 Accessible Town Centre

- Prestwick is relatively compact and much of the town is already a '20 minute neighbourhood' – which promotes the idea of people being able to reach all of their day to day needs within a 20 minute public transport trip or walk/cycle from home – benefitting the local economy and population in terms of health, wellbeing, and the environment. This is set to be a key national priority for planning and regeneration in future years, and finding ways to facilitate and encourage it will bring benefits for Prestwick's economy and population.
- With Prestwick Beach, Boydfield Gardens and St Ninian's Park, Prestwick town centre has good access to green and blue space – although the Prestwick Place Planning Engagement Outcomes (2022) notes that there are opportunities to improve the large open parks and playparks.
- While parking is currently free, South Ayrshire Council has proposed a consultation exercise on the introduction of a pay and display scheme in off- and on-street parking to generate a greater churn/turnover within parking bays.
- As the transition to net zero speeds up, the availability of electric charging points in the town centre will be increasingly important. Currently, there are two public charging stations with a total of five points – both at Bellevue Road Car Park.
- Education provision has undergone some recent changes - officially opened in June 2023, a new £17.6m shared education campus (Prestwick North Education Campus) brings together Glenburn Primary School, St Ninian's Primary School, and a new early year's centre.

## 5.2 Active Town Centre

- Both total vacancy rate and retail vacancy rates were broadly in line with the average across all YTA towns – this is encouraging given that the YTA average is mostly based on pre-COVID data. In total, 22 vacant units were recorded in the town centre which was equivalent to 12% of total units (11% YTA average) - 20 of these units were vacant retail units giving a retail vacancy rate of 12% (10.8% YTA average).
- The vast majority of housing stock in the town centre is privately owned (84%) which is much higher than YTA average of 57% – the [South Ayrshire Council Local Development Plan](#) (2022) states that there should be increased provision of affordable housing in Prestwick. A recent example is the former Police Station and Social Work office being demolished and replaced with a modern social housing development of 11 one and two-bedroom flats. The Local Development Plan also refers to a residential development opportunity at land on Annfield Road (within the town centre).
- Prestwick's town centre is rooted in its independent stores, which make up 84% of the total and offer a wide range of goods and services – the importance of a quality local baker and butcher, for instance, cannot be underestimated. This is important in retaining a distinct identity for the town centre and supporting its appeal to visitors.

## 5.3 Attractive Town Centre

- Prestwick has an active, engaged community of local residents and businesses who are invested in the improvement of the town centre – a good example is the Friends of Broadway Cinema who are trying to reopen the former cinema with additional function as a community hub. The town centre has gained recognition at a national level as Prestwick Main Street was crowned Scottish Champion at the Great British High Street Awards in 2019. Therefore, Prestwick is in a relatively good position to address the challenges of a changing high street.
- More could be done to communicate the heritage and history of Prestwick through more interactive displays or trails beyond a few historic signs. This could help to significantly improve the attractiveness and vibrancy of the town centre for both residents and visitors.

- Prestwick is in a strong position to grow its leisure offer by drawing on and further utilising its main key assets (beach and golf courses) to improve the attractiveness of the town centre. Progress is already being made with the opening of a new playpark at the beach and tennis courts set for refurbishment. There is an opportunity to explore the potential of a community sports hub and to grow the watersports offering within the town.
- With a flower garden, sundial, war memorial, merchant cross and small playpark, Boydfield Gardens is a location for events within the town and offers a place for socialisation. The garden has real potential in supporting a revitalised town centre.
- Independent retailers in Prestwick are a key asset that will draw in regular custom to the town centre. Nonetheless, it is not immune to the challenges of a changing retail climate, with the rapid growth in online purchases over the last two years likely to become the norm. Maintaining a vibrant mix of retailers, cafes and other services will be important in ensuring an attractive town centre in future years. It is encouraging that a few independent traders stated that they were confident in their own business future within Prestwick despite these global/national challenges.