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| Agenda Item | 5 |
| Report No | CIA/35/21 |

THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: City of Inverness Area Committee

Date: 18 November 2021

Report Title: Inverness Strategy

Report By: Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment & Economy

1. Purpose/Executive Summary

1.1 This report presents the emerging bold and ambitious strategy for Inverness City. The documents described provide the framework to promote Inverness as the hub of economic, social and cultural activity in Highland. This work underpins the central role of the city recognised in the [Indicative Regional Spatial Strategy](#), approved by Members earlier this year, and provides the tangible actions required to deliver positive change, which the recently published [One City, One Vision](#) report aligns with. The strategy also fulfils the place-based approach to investing in our communities as outlined in the [Ambitious Highland - Health and Prosperity Strategy](#).

1.2 The Inverness Strategy comprises:-

- Inverness City Centre Masterplan – presented for approval for consultation;
- Rethinking Inverness report – presented for information following engagement undertaken;
- Inner Moray Firth Proposed Local Development Plan – latest stage presented for approval under a separate item; and
- Inner Moray Firth Transport Strategy - presented as an integral part of the separate IMFLDP item.

2. Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to:

- i. Agree the Draft Inverness City Centre Masterplan for public consultation; and
- ii. Note the ongoing role of the Rethinking Inverness Report, including engagement undertaken, and Inner Moray Firth Proposed Local Development Plan in shaping and delivering the Inverness Strategy.

3. Implications

3.1 **Resource** - The work undertaken to date has involved a range of Officers across a broad range of Council services. Ongoing support to consult, finalise and deliver the document will be required.

3.2 **Legal** - No implications

3.3 **Community (Equality, Poverty, Rural and Island)** - Public consultation will form a central element of preparing and finalising the strategy, including active engagement with local communities, other stakeholders and the Inverness CPP.

3.4 **Climate Change / Carbon Clever** - A range of the work detailed in the report addresses various aspects of the climate and ecological emergency as they relate to transport and the built environment.

3.5 **Risk**: No implications.

3.6 **Gaelic**: No implications.

4. Current Investment Activity

4.1 Inverness is at a pivotal moment as it emerges from the Covid-19 pandemic. Major investment is already underway across the city centre with further ambitious projects in the pipeline. This investment provides an essential ingredient for reinventing the city so that is a resilient, more vibrant and lower carbon place that attracts people and jobs far into the future. Cranes are towering over the skyline and this is a positive news story for the city, where multiple sectors are currently showing their confidence and commitment through the broad range of projects they are investing in:-

- **Council Investment** : The Council is leading the way in supporting the city through investment in its own properties, including refurbishment of the town house remodelling of the Victorian Market and conversion of Inverness Castle into an iconic international tourism attraction.
- **Housing** is a fundamental component of a successful, vibrant and mixed-use place, supporting a 24-hour economy and providing natural surveillance of our city streets. This is recognised by the suite of live council led construction projects underway to deliver new places for people to live in the heart of Inverness, including 10 new homes and a retail unit in Church Street; the former Arnott's Building delivering 53 new homes and new ground floor commercial uses to add life and vibrancy to Union Street and Baron Taylors Street; the former Chisholm's building which is delivering transformation in the historic heart of the city and 9 new homes and the recently completed Wyvern House on Academy Street, providing 37 new homes and active commercial ground floor uses.
- **Employment** opportunities are supported across the city, with major expansion of life science and healthcare uses currently underway at Inverness Campus including the specialist NHS Highland Elective Care Centre and recent HIE-UHI collaboration on a Life Science Innovation Centre; key city centre tourism developments which are creating new jobs (see below); and construction of new process plant and silos at Bairds Maltings in the Longman Industrial Estate.

- **Tourism** has and will continue to play a central role in the city centre economy, illustrated by the major private sector investments underway creating both additional bed spaces and entire new hotel developments, such as at Glebe Street and Rose Street. Parallel public sector investment is also underway including the Victorian Market food hall and Inverness Castle Project. Combined these multi-stakeholder interventions will both generate both income for the city and footfall that will support further growth of services and facilities.
- **Low carbon** projects are key to creating a high-quality, people-centred environment so that our important public places, such as Inverness City Centre, feel safe, welcoming and comfortable to spend time in. Major projects are underway including Academy Street public realm redevelopment, with maximum space for people secured temporarily with bollards (a separate Member workshop is scheduled on this project); Inverness Rail Station Masterplan entering its second phase, with major ambitions and aspirations to create positive change for that part of the city centre; a suite of sustainable transport schemes for the city with a combined potential value of up to £40M at various stages of construction or design development; and new low carbon energy generation schemes including the River Ness Hydro project, which is creating a renewable energy generating plant on the River that will reduce the Council's carbon footprint, whilst simultaneously adding another public attraction for the city. The longer term ambition for a Green Energy Hub with a significant focus at Longman was recently agreed at Council as part of the Strategic Partnership Plan. The potential for the development of the hydrogen economy for Highland with the city at the centre is a key part of the work underway.

4.2 Further major city investment was recently secured from the UK Government's **Levelling Up Fund** which awarded £19.9M for the **Inverness Zero Carbon Cultural Regeneration Project** which combines a suite of environmental, cultural and economic regeneration projects in the City. Bringing together projects located along the River Ness, this investment will realise the ambition to deliver a heat recovery scheme for Inverness Castle; major renovation of the Northern Meeting Park, including low carbon heating for its buildings and low carbon heating for the redevelopment of Bught Park Stadium.

5. The City Centre Masterplan

5.1 The City Centre Masterplan emerged as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, but the work provides a solid appraisal of the current situation and what actions are required far beyond the recovery from the Covid-19 crisis.

5.2 The masterplan provides a cornerstone of the Inverness Strategy and concludes **5 key outcomes**:-

- The City centre is recognised as the prime destination for people and businesses to invest their time and money;
- It provides welcoming mixed-use neighbourhoods that provide quality homes for young people, families and older people;
- It is an attractive, healthy built and natural environment where people can meet, dwell and socialise in safe accessible public spaces;

- Regeneration and new development in the city centre facilitates a just transition to a low carbon, green and circular economy; and
- It provides a safe place that is easy to walk and wheel around, where public transport is accessible, and vehicles do not dominate available space.

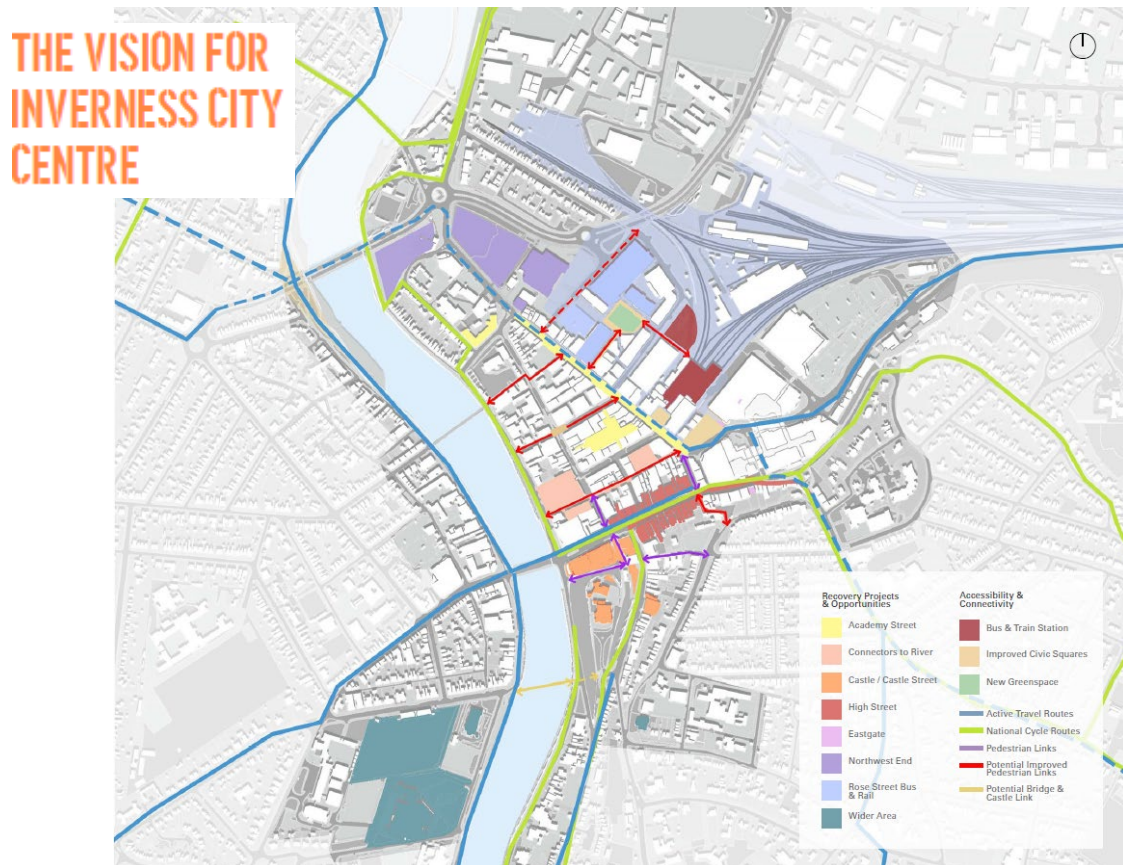
5.3 The purpose of the masterplan is threefold: assessing how the city centre is performing now; identifying the interventions underway to address shortcomings of the city centre; and identifying ambitious potential future projects. The Executive Summary of the report is provided in **Appendix 1**. The full City Centre Masterplan is available in **Appendix 3**. A high-level summary of the key elements of the report is summarised below:-

- **Inverness Today:**

Large floor area retail spaces are less in-demand and are creating vacancies across the city centre, where an over-reliance on retail has left it vulnerable to changes (such as internet shopping). Retail will remain a core function of the city centre, but it will become increasingly independent, compact and diverse, adding to a unique experience rather than replicating other city centres dominated by national and international brands. Diversification of uses is required to increase footfall, and this will be achieved by creating more places to live, work and spend leisure time and this needs to offer a genuine alternative to out-of-town retail parks. This will require more green and civic space, including connecting to the River Ness, as well as growing the cultural and tourism offer. A suite of positive moves already underway are highlighted in the report, such as Wyvern House on Academy Street, Inverness Castle and Justice Centre; and the suite of established and emerging independent food and drink offers. This part of the report poses exploring questions about the future of the city centre:-

- What if we encourage new residential developments bringing people back to live in the heart of the city centre?
- What if we improve ground floor activation of key streets through the introduction of [new]...uses?
- What if we...strengthen the evening economy...?
- What if we provide new performance venues for...the evening economy and tourism offer?
- What if we improve existing and create new cultural offers...?
- What if we transform how people travel...by promoting and facilitating sustainable forms of transport?

This part of the report concludes with the mapped vision for the city centre:-



- **Projects and Opportunities:**

The vision for the city centre is based on a range of projects and opportunities, which are described in detail in this section of the report and comprise Developed Projects that are underway and Potential Opportunity projects for the future. The range is diverse and provides detail about works such as the Victorian Market Food Hall, Academy Street and the Former Arnott's Building, as well as a range of exciting potential opportunities to transform various sites and buildings, such as Upper Bridge Street, Farraline Park and Baron Taylor's Street. This section of the report sets a high ambition for what the city centre is already becoming and could achieve in the future.

- **Accessibility and Connectivity:**

The influential role of transport on the experience of the public space between buildings is dealt with in detail in this part of the report. Recognition of the work underway to transition to a fairer, healthier and safer transport network is summarised alongside a range of exploring questions posed about how we address the needs and impacts of transport on the city centre:-

- Can we make key city centre streets more pedestrian and cycle friendly?
- Can we better connect the Cathedral and Eden Court to the city Centre and Castle?
- How do we alleviate the A82 barrier to connectivity?
- What if we strengthen the connection to Longman...?
- What if we strengthen links from the heart of the city centre to the River Ness?

5.4 Members will recall receiving a recent briefing on the masterplan report. A similar exercise was also provided to Inverness BID. A further range of full and comprehensive engagement is proposed to be arranged in consultation with the Provost.

6. Rethinking Inverness report

- 6.1 As part of the recovery plan for the City a project was commissioned Autumn 2020 to identify key unique qualities which could be used across the community to create an identity for the City and Area. These would be used to “market” the City and Area as a place to live, visit and invest.
- 6.2 Following interviews with market and sector leaders, as well as two workshops, the focus stretched beyond a narrower perspective of Inverness City Centre retail and tourism, to a wider perspective of Inverness’s role within the Highlands and (inter)national.
- 6.3 This produced an aspirational strategy for the place – Rethinking Inverness, involving stepping up, shaping up with an important emphasis on joining-up – as so many of the elements are already part of existing plans, strategies and projects in the pipeline.
- 6.4 This work developed into the report attached at **Appendix 4**. This Rethinking approach, built around four workstreams, has gained partner support.
- 6.5 Following this process work was undertaken to:-
1. draw the elements (plans, projects, emerging ideas) together and complete this stage/output, in a manner that maintains the potential to take forward at the right time into public and business domain;
 2. consider the wider Inverness-Highland relationships that this has highlighted as being significant and plan how to widen the discourse, engagement and strategy; and
 3. build shared confidence and trust among the relevant organisations involved in taking things forward.
- 6.6 The themes originally identified were:-
- Connected Place
 - Green and Outdoor Place
 - Gateway – Arrival & Orientation Place
 - Cultural & Historic Place
 - Retail & Services Place
 - Food & Drink Focus
 - Capital of Highlands Hinterland
 - More than City Fabric and Extent
 - Place of Pulsating, Increasingly Confident Vitality
 - Portal to Outdoors & Healthy Lifestyle

The report has developed these to give Inverness a set of key attributes and overarching themes which allows the report to be used as a working document in support of promoting the City and Area as a place to live, work and invest in.

7. Inner Moray Firth Proposed Local Development Plan

- 7.1 The Inner Moray Firth Proposed Local Development Plan (IMF) sets the spatial planning framework for the city and wider region.
- 7.2 The IMF sets a high level of ambition to support, safeguard and grow diverse uses in the city, setting broad placemaking priorities:-
- Support the regeneration of Inverness City Centre by directing footfall-generating uses there and by preventing an increase of town retail development.
 - Celebrate the City centre as a core of living, working and leisure destinations for the Highland region.
 - Deliver the City's housing needs in strategic expansion areas, shown on the Inverness Spatial Strategy Map, so that services and infrastructure can be effectively planned and delivered.
 - Bolster existing neighbourhood service centres and employment destinations by ensuring new development is conveniently located and well connected with them.
 - Prioritise transport improvements that get more people walking, cycling and using public transport.
 - Safeguard and enhance the green networks, including the city's green edge, that run through the City and those that surround it.
- 7.3 The IMF Spatial Strategy identified key actions that will deliver on the above priorities, allocates land for the range of uses required to meet the needs of our growing city for employment, housing, community and support infrastructure, and sets out new far-reaching policies to ensure all future development proposals are managed in coordinated way that delivers a fairer, healthier and low carbon city and region.
- 7.4 The IMF has shaped and has been shaped by the other projects referred to in this report. It will form the Council's policy for planning decisions and therefore has a statutory role, as well as an enabling one that sets vision and ambition for the city.
- 7.5 The full detail of the IMF is presented as a separate item to this meeting and is presented under a separate item for approval to consult.

8. Partnership approach to engagement and deliver

- 8.1 Rather than being put forward simply for consultation and publication, the Inverness Strategy package is intended to act as a portfolio for those with a shared interest in the City and City Centre to own and deliver collectively. This approach will initiate a new way of working between partners, with an ongoing process of input and collaboration to steer the delivery of both individual projects and, in turn, the wider vision and outcomes for the area outlined in the Inverness Strategy. To this end, it is proposed that a range of partners and organisations are engaged during the consultation on the Draft Masterplan and the associated workstreams, including businesses and business groups and the Community Planning Partnership and Board. Details of the consultation process will be developed in consultation with the Provost after the Committee but is likely to include questions that seek views on how partners wish to contribute to the ongoing process.
- 8.2 This approach will enable an (initially) officer-led group to be established oversee and steer the monitoring and coordination of activity and impacts. The detailed

arrangements for the group, and its membership and configuration, will be informed by feedback received during the consultation. Participation and input to the group could vary according to the priorities and issues being handled at any point in time. The group would be chaired initially by the Council's Executive Chief Officer or a suitable representative and regular reporting would be made to the City of Inverness Area Committee and other appropriate forums. The key duties of the Board could involve monitoring and reviewing current and future development activity against the vision and outcomes in the Inverness Strategy.

- 8.3 Coinciding with this the Member-led Inverness City Area Recovery Group (CARG) is considering shifting its focus from recovery to development and this work can be supported and informed by the work of the officer-led partnership group. This approach aims to ensure effective working between partners to help draw in investment and to enhance the role of the City and the City Centre as the region's prime location for living, working, visiting and investing. This change of emphasis may be reflected in a change of name.
- 8.4 Discussion at CARG has led to the development of an integrated engagement plan (**Appendix 2**). This has been developed in collaboration with Inverness Chamber of Commerce and is already delivering through workshops being held with Inverness Business Improvement District. Progress has been made on establishing joint objectives which will underpin key City projects such as Academy Street. The engagement plan will also form the basis of wider consultation with community interests outside the business sector. The objectives set by the plan are interchangeable with a wide range of community interests and directly reflect the values within our community established by the 'Rethinking Inverness' report.

Designation: Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment & Economy

Date: 28 October 2021

Author: Craig Baxter, Planner
Scott Dalgarno, Development Plans Manager
Allan Maguire, Head of Development & Regeneration
David Haas, Inverness City Area Manager

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The vision for Inverness City Centre is an attractive, greener, high-footfall place that people can comfortably live, work and visit for a wide range of services, facilities and to spend their leisure time.

The key deliverable is a Vision that demonstrates how the city centre can continue to be a vibrant, healthy and attractive place to work, live and do business.

The Vision is based on an analysis of the community, heritage, culture and existing uses within Inverness city centre and seeks to showcase a number of projects that are either 'shovel ready' or already on site and how these, coupled with opportunities identified through the analysis can be transformational to Inverness city centre.

The Vision seeks to further enhance the diversity of both uses and users within the city centre, repair the urban grain, improve connectivity and permeability and increase footfall.

Area of Study

A concentrated area has been identified for the purposes of this study that truly 'feels' like the city centre. The key zone is between Academy Street, Bank Street with High Street at its epicentre.



Recovery Projects & Potential Opportunities

It extends north to incorporate the bus and train stations and the Eastgate Centre, and south to include Inverness Castle and the opposite bank of the Ness from Greig Street Bridge down to Eden Court.

The area beyond Friars Lane toward the A82 is excluded from this inner boundary as the city centre begins to break down beyond this point, becoming more piecemeal and lower in scale.

Whilst the majority of the projects and opportunities are contained within this tighter definition of the city centre, the entire extents of the wider area have been considered.

Analysis

The analysis undertaken during this study highlighted the following:

- **There is a need to diversify the offer and introduce a wider dynamic range of uses such as community and healthcare.**
- **There is insufficient civic and greenspace.**
- **The River is a key asset and more should be made of it to maximise its potential. Furthermore, the connections to it from the city centre should be strengthened.**

PROJECT OUTCOMES:

1. **The recognised prime destination for people and businesses to invest their time and money.**
 - a. Supports the economic recovery of the City and Area.
 - b. Identifies funding sources that can support recovery.
 - c. Promotes 'shovel-ready' projects.
2. **Welcoming mixed-use neighbourhoods that provide quality homes for young people, families and older people.**
 - a. Takes account of the housing needs and demands of the Inverness city housing market.
 - b. Addresses identified vulnerability factors: Poverty/ Mental Health/Wellbeing; Community wealth building.
 - c. Provides more homes in proximity to services and facilities that meet the needs of all parts of the population, including young people, families and older people, as well as those with protected characteristics and particular support needs.
3. **An attractive, healthy built and natural environment where people can meet, dwell and socialise in safe accessible public spaces.**
 - a. Creates an attractive place to live, work, visit and do business.
 - b. Increases green infrastructure (trees, shrubs & planters).
 - c. Provides opportunity for people of a range of ages to stay, play and socialise in public spaces across the city centre.
4. **Zero Carbon Region & Just Transition**
A just transition to becoming a zero carbon region, fair to all, which supports a green circular economy now and for future generations.
5. **A safe place that is easy to walk and wheel around, where public transport is accessible, and vehicles do not dominate available space.**
 - a. Makes walking, wheeling and cycling the easiest way to move around the city centre
 - b. Supports people to easily access the city centre by cycling or public transport
 - c. Ensures those that do need to drive understand how to behave, and where to park vehicles.

- **The growing tourism economy, evidenced in the recent increase in hotel developments could support more in terms of a cultural / tourist attraction offer.**
- **There is a lack of diverse residential accommodation in the city centre and an increase would bring vitality and passive surveillance and support the desire to increase the evening economy.**

Response

In light of these findings, a number of 'What If?' questions have been posed and the responses to these have informed the proposed moves

that will assist Inverness city centre and ensure that the key project outcomes are met, namely:

- **What if we encourage new residential developments bringing people back to live in the heart of the city centre?**
- **What if we improve ground floor activation of key streets through the introduction of the right type of retail, public services & alternative uses?**
- **What if we promote the strengthening of the evening economy through the introduction of new F&B**

/ Leisure uses, increasing footfall and activity?

- **What if we provide new performance venues for music & comedy to strengthen the evening economy & tourism offer?**
- **What if we improve existing & create new cultural offers to benefit the local population & encourage tourism growth?**
- **What if we transform how people travel to & move through the city centre by promoting & facilitating sustainable forms of transport?**

Appendix 2: Inverness City Area Recovery Group (CARG) Business Engagement Plan

1. Objectives

- a. To ensure that CARG and the City of Inverness Area Committee (CIAC) consider proposals in the context of the views expressed by the City and Area's business and residential community.
- b. To ensure that so far as reasonably practical the Council engages with the Business and residential community within the City and Area during the process of preparation of proposals that materially impact the life of people living and working within the City and Area
- c. To produce confidence in the processes used by the Council in the preparation of plans that impact the lives of people as in b. above.
- d. To provide protection to the reputation of the Council in all its dealings in respect of decisions taken by CIAC to the extent that even though people may not agree with them, they can recognise that fairness has been applied in considering as full a range of views as possible before the decision was taken.

2. Principles of Engagement

- a. Those providing services – advise professional service providers of opportunities for new business. This could apply to work on new masterplans and other business connected with investment in the City and Area.
- b. Branding and Values – any work undertaken on these aspects needs very early engagement with the Business community as well as people living in the City and Area.
- c. Competition with other Cities – Businesses in particular need to know what we are planning right from the start. This will influence their decisions on investment and enable them to sell the City and Area as a place to invest across the UK and beyond.
- d. Identity – we need to be clear regarding the place we are creating. This means that any strategic planning needs to be joined-up and be based on common themes which will be relevant to the attributes and ambitions of the City and Area.
- e. Alignment with the Highlands – our engagement needs to show consistency on how the City and Area interrelates to the rest of the Highlands and the value that investing in the City and Area brings to the whole of the Highlands.
- f. Vision for the City and Area – overall, any proposal needs to be based on a common vision for the City and Area – this is tied in with the Inner Moray Firth Local Development Plan.

3. Methods of Engagement

- a. Stakeholder Groups – these have proved successful in developing projects. The Redevelopment of the Market Hall and Fish Hall was underpinned by the work of the Victorian Market Stakeholder Group. This was achieved by engaging with businesses both inside and outside the market along with the leaders of business groups at an early stage.
- b. Business Forums – where we are promoting the development of a wider Vision or a series of connected projects then a Forum within which an open and candid discussion can take place in confidence, will provide the best chance of success.
- c. Community Councils.
- d. Forum for representatives of Disability Groups.

Suggested Terms of Reference for a City and Area Development Forum could be as follows:-

- to scrutinise and comment on the implementation of the decisions taken by the CIAC relevant to the ongoing development of Projects for the City and Area;
- to agree refreshed draft Action Plans relating to the development or implementation of City/Area projects for presentation to CARG/CIAC;
- to provide a framework for project content in line with the objectives of and the legal duties on the Council in line with the Council's Programme and Planning Policies;
- to identify opportunities to develop youth training and employment and provide outcomes for local people linking in with the development of business vibrancy and where practicable, the Council's Employability Action Plan;
- to scrutinise all aspects of the development of the Action /Business Plans;
- to agree options for public engagement to enable effective community involvement as appropriate; and
- agree the membership and meeting schedule of the City and Area business Forum; and
- to consider the most appropriate methods of improving income streams from Third Party Funding Sources.

**THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL
INVERNESS CITY CENTRE VISION**





FOREWORD

The Highland Council (THC) will make a just transition towards becoming a zero carbon region which means supporting a green and circular economy now and for future generations.

These overarching aims underpin this project, which seeks to set out how Inverness city centre can continue to be the prime destination for people and businesses to invest their time and money.

The Covid-19 pandemic has impacted the lives of everyone in Highland. Major changes have happened with how we live, work, shop and spend our leisure time. This has had profound and far-reaching consequences for the city centre. Some changes, such as the shift to online retail, are existing trends that have been accelerated by the pandemic. Other changes, such as the mass transition to home-working, have changed the needs and demands for office and other location-based jobs, along with the associated services and infrastructure, such as transport and internet connectivity, that support them. No opportunities presented in this Vision are a 'fait accompli' but rather ideas to stimulate thought and opinion, and that are aligned with current local and national policy.

Consultation is important to The Highland Council. In the case of this project we have created this report to collate all of the ideas and thinking in one place before embarking on widespread engagement. This Vision is the source material upon which future consultation will happen.

This Vision project aims to identify a solid foundation for the city to continue to be a vibrant, healthy and attractive place to work, live and do business.



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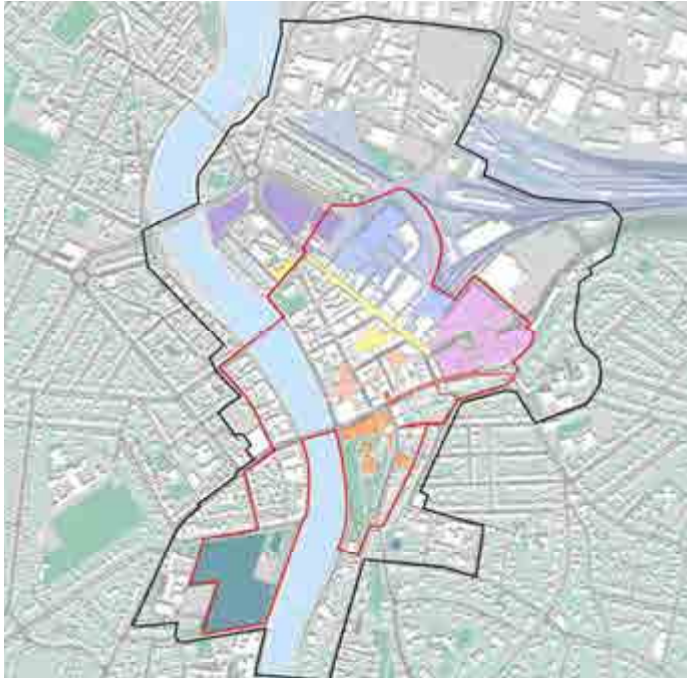
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- **There is insufficient civic and greenspace.**
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- b. Addresses identified vulnerability factors: Poverty/ Mental Health/Wellbeing; Community wealth building.
- c. Provides more homes in proximity to services and facilities that meet the needs of all parts of the population, including young people, families and older people, as well as those with protected characteristics and particular support needs.

3. An attractive, healthy built and natural environment where people can meet, dwell and socialise in safe accessible public spaces.

- a. Creates an attractive place to live, work, visit and do business.
- b. Increases green infrastructure (trees, shrubs & planters).
- c. Provides opportunity for people of a range of ages to stay, play and socialise in public spaces across the city centre.

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A just transition to becoming a zero carbon region, fair to all, which supports a green circular economy now and for future generations.

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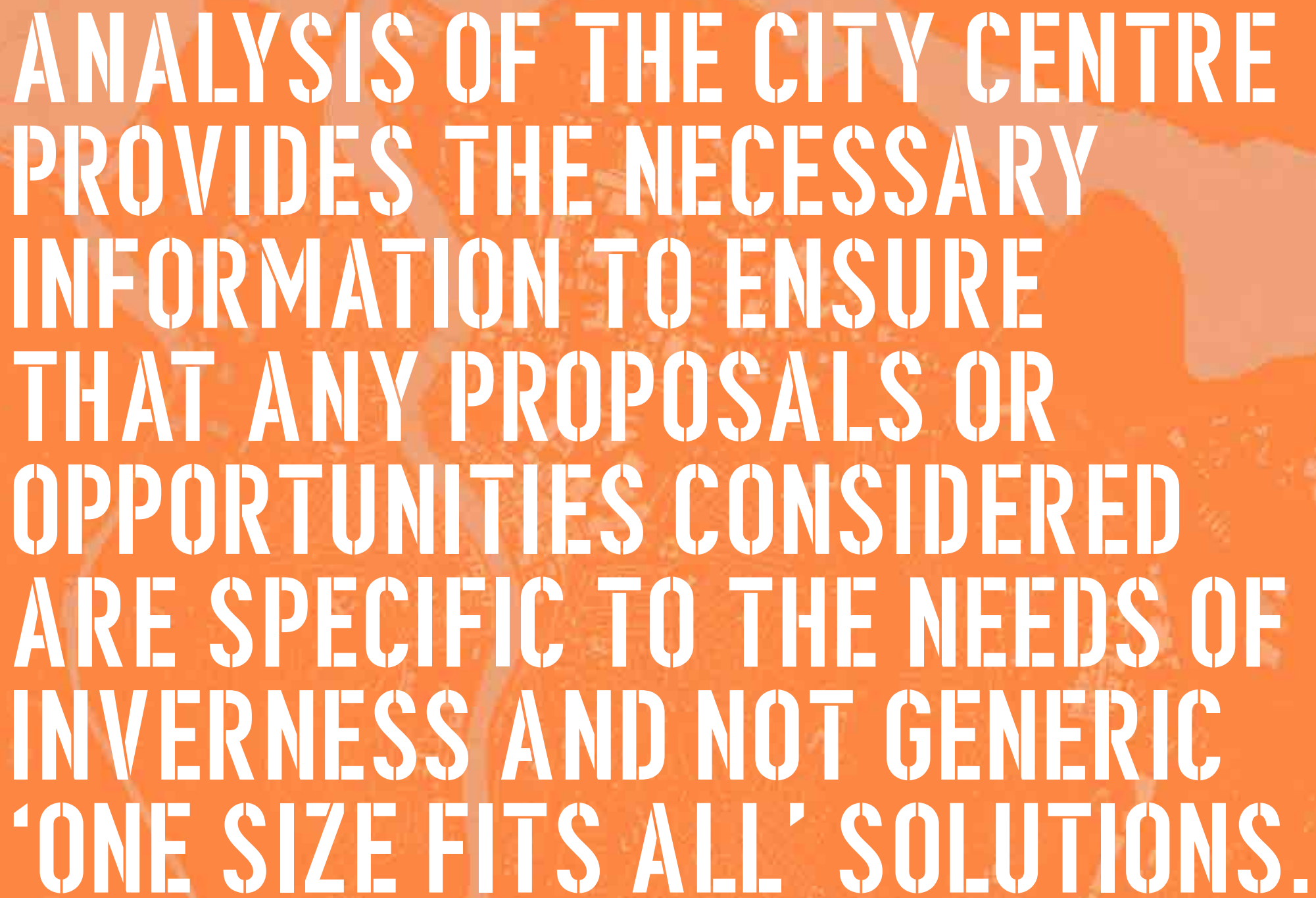
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- **What if we improve existing & create new cultural offers to benefit the local population & encourage tourism growth?**
- **What if we transform how people travel to & move through the city centre by promoting & facilitating sustainable forms of transport?**



1.
INVERNESS TODAY

An aerial photograph of a city center, likely Inverness, is shown with a semi-transparent red overlay. The text is printed in white, bold, uppercase letters across the center of the image.

**ANALYSIS OF THE CITY CENTRE
PROVIDES THE NECESSARY
INFORMATION TO ENSURE
THAT ANY PROPOSALS OR
OPPORTUNITIES CONSIDERED
ARE SPECIFIC TO THE NEEDS OF
INVERNESS AND NOT GENERIC
'ONE SIZE FITS ALL' SOLUTIONS.**

INVERNESS TODAY

CONTEXT -

OUR TOWN / CITY CENTRES

The issues identified in this document are not unique to Inverness. In many historical town centres, the change in shopping patterns has led to a surplus of retail floorspace and, in particular, large floorplate users are becoming increasingly thin on the ground.

Our town / city centres must adapt to this new environment and the solution lies in reducing and concentrating retail space rather than propping up an old retail led approach.

This consolidation of retail will allow us to rebalance our towns with the reintroduction of the uses squeezed out by previous retail dominance. These uses will then be in the centre – the most universally accessible location for our community and the highest quality and most meaningful backdrop.

Long ago the logistics of retailing stock systems made the upper floor storage areas fallow and there is now the opportunity to populate this “airspace” and some of the repurposed retail with town / city centre living and work-place to further energise the town.

Retail goes where people go – there will always be a place for it, but it will be increasingly independent, compact and experiential and it will add to the unique experience of our town / city centres to evolve them from the 80's/90's “Clone Towns” they once were.

THEN:

In Town / City Centres

- All Retail
- Banking
- Civic
- Offices
- Healthcare
- Education
- Sports



NOW:

After 60 Years Erosion

Mainly in Town Centre

- 20% of all Non-Food Retail / 20% of all Food Retail

Increasingly on Internet

- 17% of all Non-Food Retail / 6% of all Food Retail
- Banking
- Education

Mainly not in Town Centre

- 63% of all Non-Food Retail / 74% of all Food Retail
- Cinema
- Education
- Healthcare
- Residential



NEXT:

What We Need Now

- Residential
- Leisure / Sports
- Offices / Workspace
- Maker Space / Studio Space
- Education
- Healthcare
- Culture / Tourism



Note: Percentages quoted above are pre-pandemic and are representative figures across all towns

INVERNESS TODAY

ANALYSIS - PROJECT STUDY BOUNDARY



The adjacent map shows the area considered to be the city centre (identified by the black line).

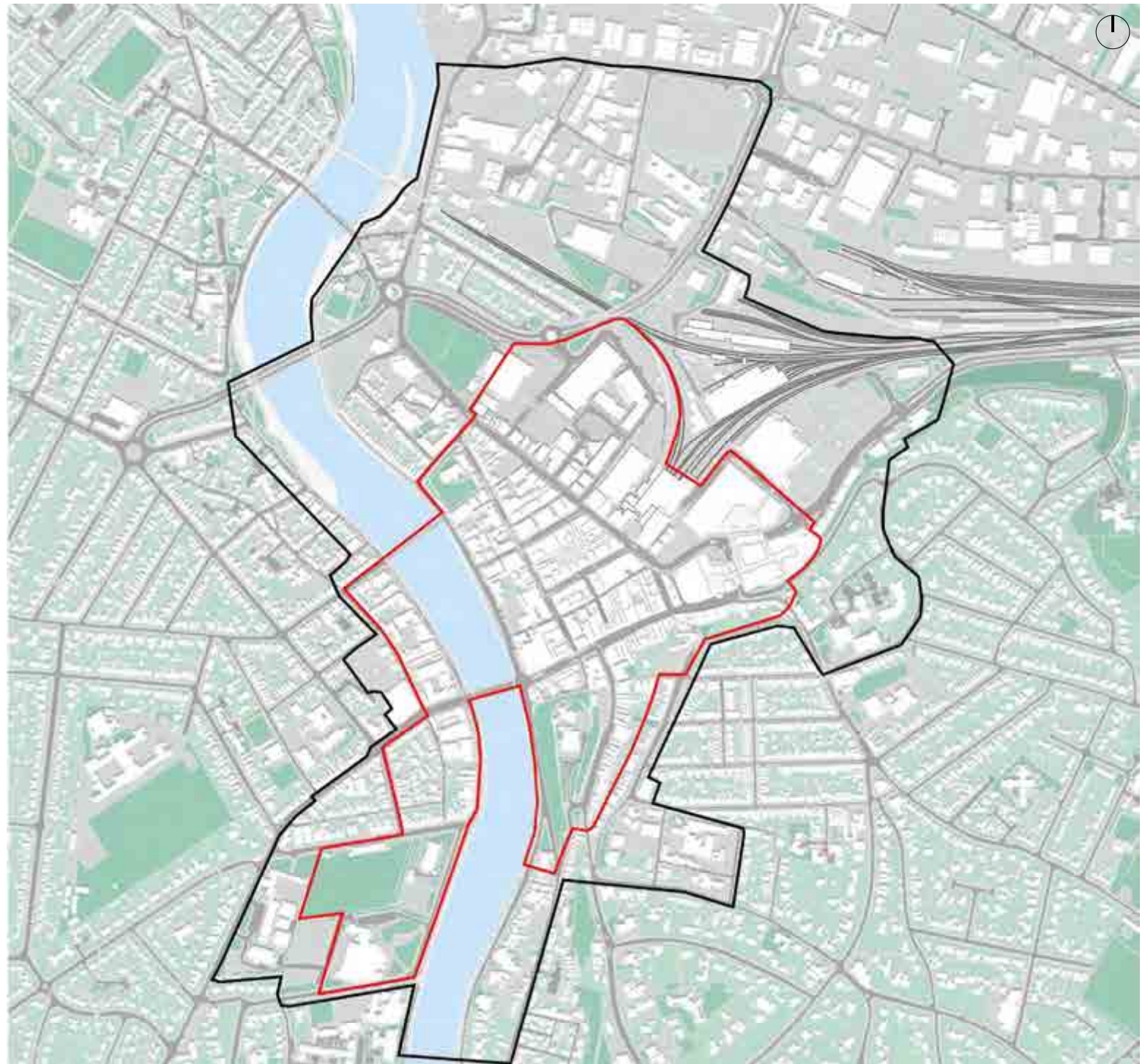
The central part of the city centre has been identified for the purposes of this study to concentrate on the priority actions, albeit recognising that the wider area is integral to the success of the city centre. This concentrated area features the key zone between Academy Street, Bank Street and High Street.

It extends north to incorporate Farraline Park, the Train Station and Eastgate Shopping Centre, and south to include Inverness Castle and the opposite bank of the Ness from Greig Street Bridge down to Eden Court.

The area beyond Friars Lane toward the A82 is excluded from this inner boundary as the city centre begins to break down beyond this point, becoming more piecemeal and lower in scale.

Whilst the majority of the projects and opportunities are contained within this tighter definition of the city centre, the entire extents of the wider area have been considered.

-  City Centre Boundary
-  'Concentrated' Study Zone



INVERNESS TODAY

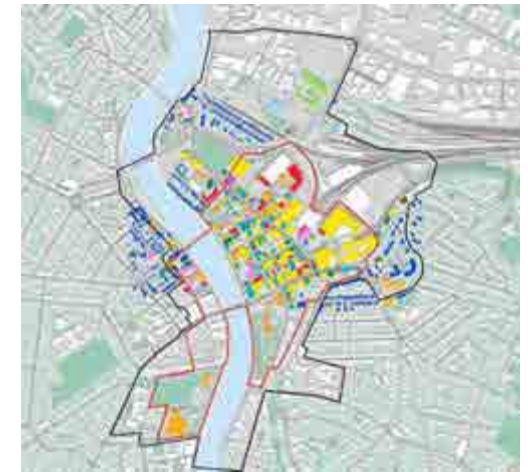
ANALYSIS - CONCLUSIONS

The physical characteristics of the city centre have been explored as part of this study. A number of the maps and diagrams can be seen in the adjacent images.

This analysis of existing uses, built form and streets and spaces within Inverness city centre has highlighted the following:

- There is a need to diversify the offer away from retail and introduce a more diverse range of uses
- There is insufficient civic and greenspace
- The River is a key asset and more should be made of it to maximise its potential. Furthermore, the connections to it from the city centre should be strengthened
- The growing tourism economy, evidenced in the recent increase in hotel developments could support more in terms of a cultural / tourist attraction offer
- There is a lack of residential accommodation in the city centre and an increase would bring vitality and passive surveillance and support the desire to increase the evening economy

Full details of the analysis undertaken can be found in appendix B at the end of this document.



INVERNESS TODAY POSITIVE MOVES

As part of this study, it is important to acknowledge that a number of recent developments, from infrastructure improvements and refurbishments of heritage assets, to the establishment of successful new local businesses have made a significant contribution to the life of the city centre.

The key examples of these are illustrated below.

Full details of the identified projects can be found in the appendices section of this document.





WHAT IF?...

**RESPONDING TO THE ANALYSIS
& BUILDING ON THE POSITIVE
MOVES**

WHAT IF?....

....WE ENCOURAGE NEW RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENTS BRINGING PEOPLE BACK TO LIVE IN THE HEART OF THE CITY CENTRE?



The reintroduction of urban living to the city centre greatly assist in the aim to repopulate and reinvigorate the heart of Inverness.

A new influx of residents will encourage existing and new businesses and help in positioning Inverness as a safe place to visit and spend time, both by day and in the evening, due to the general activity and passive surveillance that the new community will bring, supporting an improved F&B and leisure offer.



Intergenerational living: appealing to a broader demographic

Any new offer should consider the inclusion of a variety of tenures (private for sale, affordable, social housing, elderly- supported / sheltered, student).

This prevents the creation of a monocultural residential offer and will make the city centre attractive to people from all walks of life.

WHAT IF?....

.....WE IMPROVE GROUND FLOOR ACTIVATION OF KEY STREETS THROUGH THE INTRODUCTION OF THE RIGHT TYPE OF RETAIL, PUBLIC SERVICES & ALTERNATIVE USES?

Changing shopping habits such as the proliferation of out of town retail parks, and the increasingly sophisticated online offer have resulted in struggles for many established national chains, leading to an increased number of vacant retail units in our town centres.

Retaining resilient brands and augmenting with local independent retailers together with convenience retail to support the expanding residential community can provide a strong, attractive retail mix within a right sized offer.

Introduce Active Alternative Uses to Retail

Activity at street level is vital to create a vibrant town / city centre and we can no longer rely on retail alone to fulfill this need.

A number of other uses such as Healthcare, Leisure, Creche/Daycare, Commercial and Maker Spaces that historically were located in our town / city centres can be reintroduced to occupy space vacated by retail, encouraging greater footfall and making these services accessible to all.



Eryk Stawinski / Shutterstock.com



1000Words / Shutterstock.com



WHAT IF?....

....WE PROMOTE THE STRENGTHENING OF THE EVENING ECONOMY THROUGH THE INTRODUCTION OF NEW F&B / LEISURE USES, INCREASING FOOTFALL AND ACTIVITY?

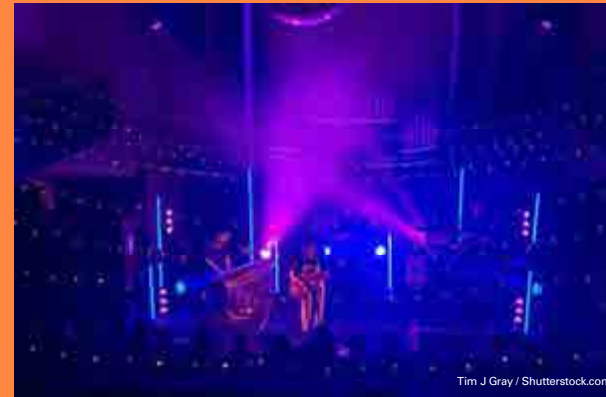
Our town / city centres for too long have been dependent on retail at the expense of other uses that encourage their use outwith typical 9am-6pm hours. This has led to the creation of empty and unwelcoming environments once the shops are closed. Inverness is a prime example of this.

A good evening economy encourages footfall, increases passive surveillance and greatly improves the local economy. It may require a pro-active approach to historical use class and licensing restrictions to bring these areas to life.



WHAT IF?....

.....WE PROVIDE NEW PERFORMANCE VENUES FOR MUSIC & COMEDY TO STRENGTHEN THE EVENING ECONOMY & TOURISM OFFER?



CASE STUDY: ST. LUKES, GLASGOW

One of Glasgow's oldest churches, having lain empty for many years was purchased in 2013 and transformed into a multi-purpose music venue, bar and kitchen; serving to revitalise the community while maintaining many of its stunningly rendered original features.

On the edge of the famous Barras Market and close to the Merchant City, St. Lukes has been a very successful since its launch in 2017.

The venue can host up to 600 people at a standing gig and 300 in a theatre setting, and can be hired out for corporate events and weddings.

The large bar area is supported by an external terrace and is extremely popular with both gig-goers and most importantly, the surrounding local community.



WHAT IF?....

.....WE IMPROVE EXISTING & CREATE NEW CULTURAL OFFERS TO BENEFIT THE LOCAL POPULATION & ENCOURAGE TOURISM GROWTH?

Improving & building on existing cultural assets

The introduction of new cultural uses can have a transformative effect on our town / city centres.

Explore working with existing Institutions and community groups to bring new galleries / performance spaces / museums to the heart of the city.

Where existing facilities are located within the town / city centre area, investigate ways to allow them to have a greater influence through improvements to their frontages, new signage and lighting and the adoption of external space.

Curate specific exhibitions and events that engage the community and entice those from further afield to visit.



.....WE PROVIDE NEW PLACES TO SAFELY GATHER AS A COMMUNITY, CAPABLE OF HOSTING A VARIETY OF EVENTS?

Where community truly occurs

Key to the re-energising of any town / city centre is the creation of places to hold events that attract both local residents and those from further afield.

These external 'rooms' will support a wide series of events in terms of both their scale and flexibility and will encourage a vibrant all year round calendar that takes advantage of seasonal holidays, local historical events and more.

Every town / city has its own unique narrative and this can be exploited through the staging of events that bring the community together in celebration.

WHAT IF?....

.....WE TRANSFORM HOW PEOPLE TRAVEL TO & MOVE THROUGH THE CITY CENTRE BY PROMOTING & FACILITATING SUSTAINABLE FORMS OF TRANSPORT?

Consideration should be given to introducing healthier, low carbon ways of moving around, such as improved space for walking, wheeling and cycling, and improved public transport. Such changes could make a dramatic change to how safe and welcoming the city centre feels. Moreover, it would go a significant way to improving accessibility to and use of the city centre by low car ownership groups.

Increasing cycling as a way of moving around is widely recognised as one of the easiest ways to reduce the carbon footprint of transport, and is safer, healthier and more compatible with a welcoming city centre environment than motor vehicles. It has also become an increasingly popular leisure activity enjoyed by people of all ages and types.

As a sustainable transport form that also has enormous public health benefits we should ensure that it is actively encouraged by providing the right infrastructure and facilities in the city centre.

A balanced approach to car use

The future trends in transport are likely to include more active travel along with reduced car ownership/dependence, more on-demand transport (such as 'Uber') as well as driverless cars.

However, in the shorter term, as well as maximising the share of trips made to the city centre by active travel and public transport, there is still a need to recognise the role of cars, particularly for disabled people and people that do not have access to alternative transport options.

As highlighted elsewhere in the report, there is a large amount of parking within the city centre, but its role, for now, remains relevant.

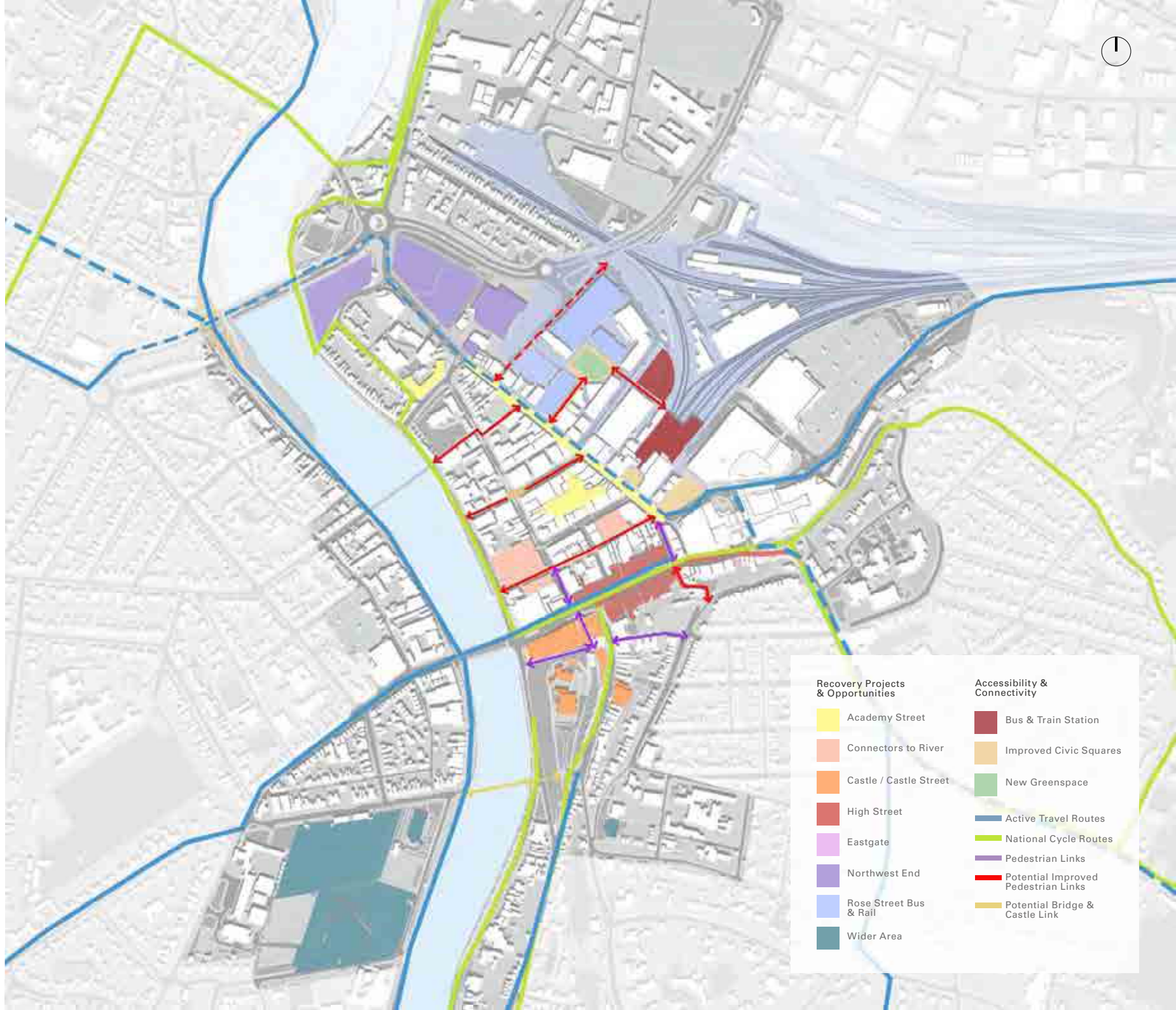


THE VISION FOR INVERNESS CITY CENTRE

The projects and opportunities explored in this vision combine to respond to all of the key project objectives and would deliver a city centre that will be more diverse, inclusive and both socially and economically sustainable.

The combination of urban realm improvements, active travel routes, National Cycle routes & an improved public transport infrastructure can create a more pedestrian and cycle friendly city centre, less dependant on car usage & ownership, strengthening connectivity between the identified recovery projects and making the opportunity sites more attractive for repurposing or redevelopment.

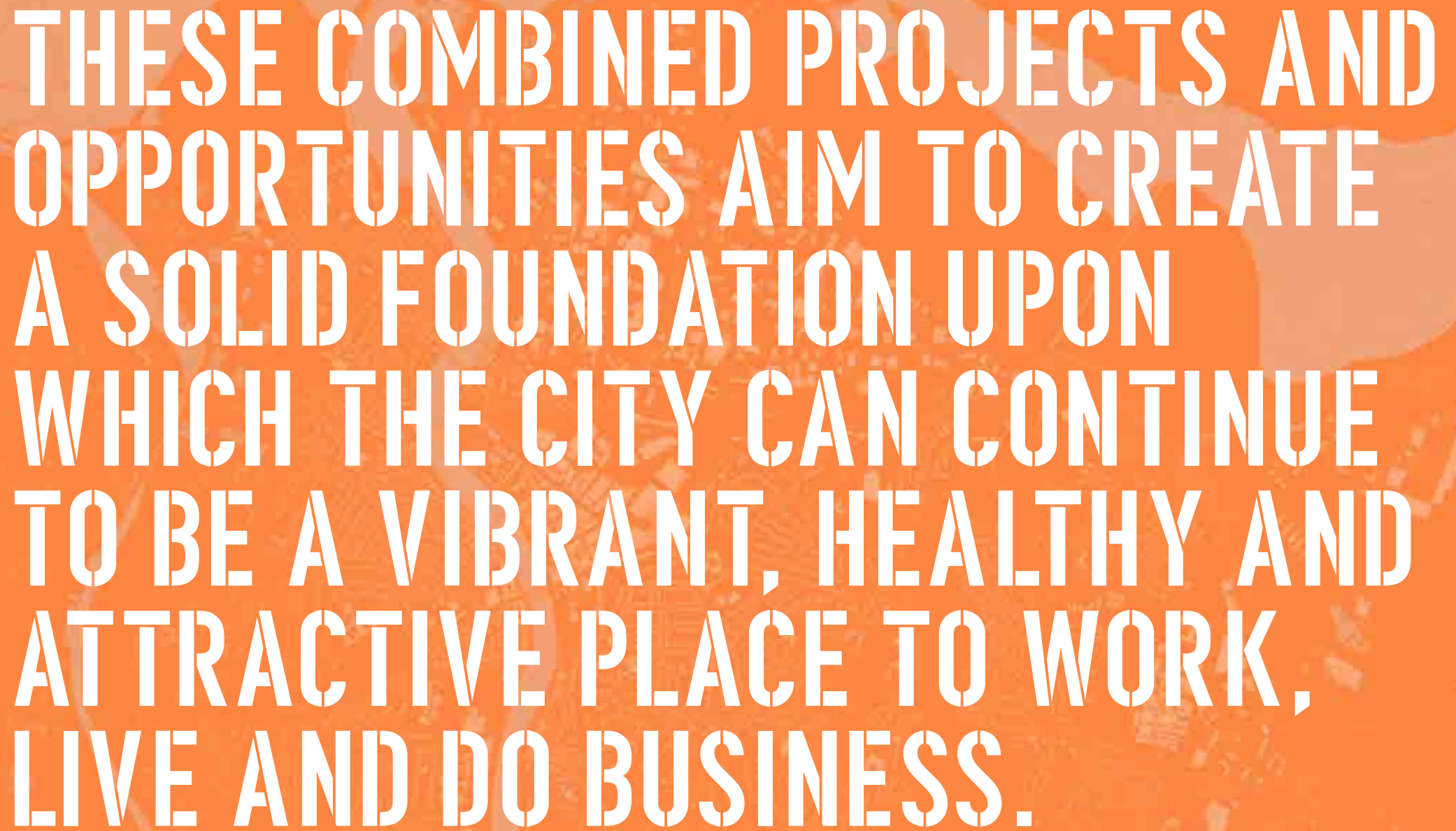
Active travel will transform Inverness city centre and help Highland Council in their objective to become an exemplar of how a region can address the climate emergency. Decarbonising roads will be a vital and achievable step towards a net zero emission city.



| Recovery Projects & Opportunities | Accessibility & Connectivity |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Academy Street | Bus & Train Station |
| Connectors to River | Improved Civic Squares |
| Castle / Castle Street | New Greenspace |
| High Street | Active Travel Routes |
| Eastgate | National Cycle Routes |
| Northwest End | Pedestrian Links |
| Rose Street Bus & Rail | Potential Improved Pedestrian Links |
| Wider Area | Potential Bridge & Castle Link |



2.
RECOVERY PROJECTS
& OPPORTUNITIES

An aerial photograph of a city, likely Los Angeles, showing a network of roads and green spaces. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent orange filter. The text is centered and reads:

THESE COMBINED PROJECTS AND OPPORTUNITIES AIM TO CREATE A SOLID FOUNDATION UPON WHICH THE CITY CAN CONTINUE TO BE A VIBRANT, HEALTHY AND ATTRACTIVE PLACE TO WORK, LIVE AND DO BUSINESS.

RECOVERY PROJECTS & OPPORTUNITIES

INTRODUCTION

A diverse range of projects within the agreed city centre boundary form the basis of the Vision study.

They are divided into two distinct groups:

1. Developed Projects that are being taken forward (Map on page 23)
2. Potential Opportunity sites / projects (Map on page 33)

A selection of these developed projects and opportunities are shown together below to demonstrate the variety, scope, scale and ambition of this recovery vision.

The projects / opportunities have been colour coded by area within the city centre and identified on the maps in these groupings. The particular project colour is shown within the images below.



INVERNESS CITY CENTRE VISION — PROJECTS

The list below and adjacent map highlights the projects underway, some of which are already on site within Inverness city centre.

They are subsequently described in greater detail and in each case their contribution toward fulfilling the 5 key aims of the vision are shown.

Academy Street

- Academy Street- Reallocation of Space / Public Realm Improvements
- Victorian Market Refurbishment

Bisecting Connectors to River

- Former Arnotts Building - New Housing Development
- Former Service Point Building - New Hotel

Castle / Castle Street

- Inverness Castle
- Castle Street Housing

Northwest End

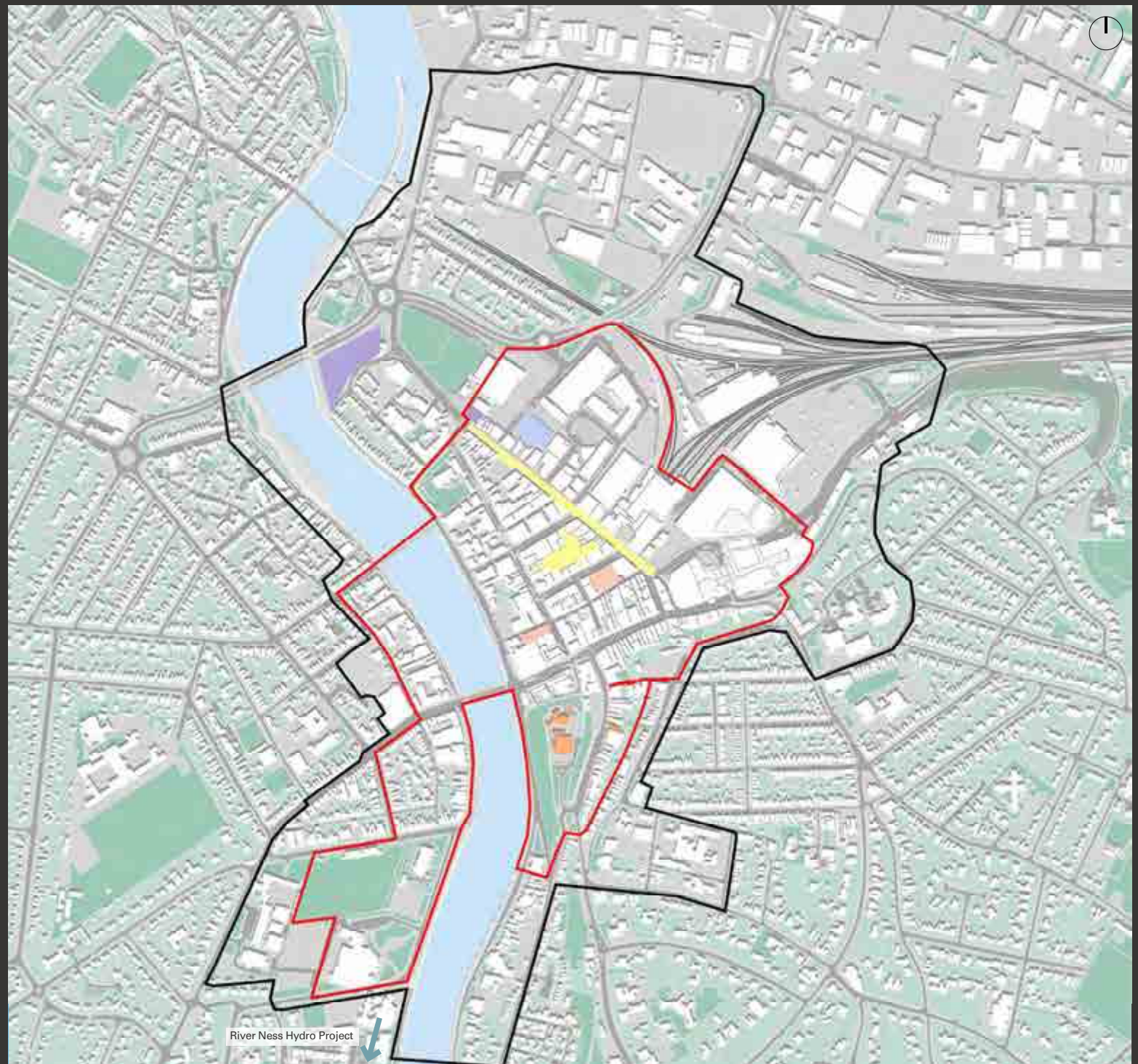
- Former Swimming Pool Site - Moxy Hotel Development

Rose Street Bus & Rail

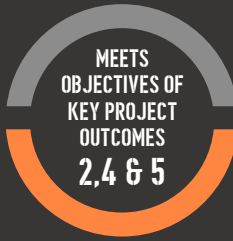
- Former Deck Car Park Site - New Hampton Hotel

Wider Area

- River Ness Hydro Project



PROJECT FOCUS — ACADEMY STREET IMPROVEMENTS



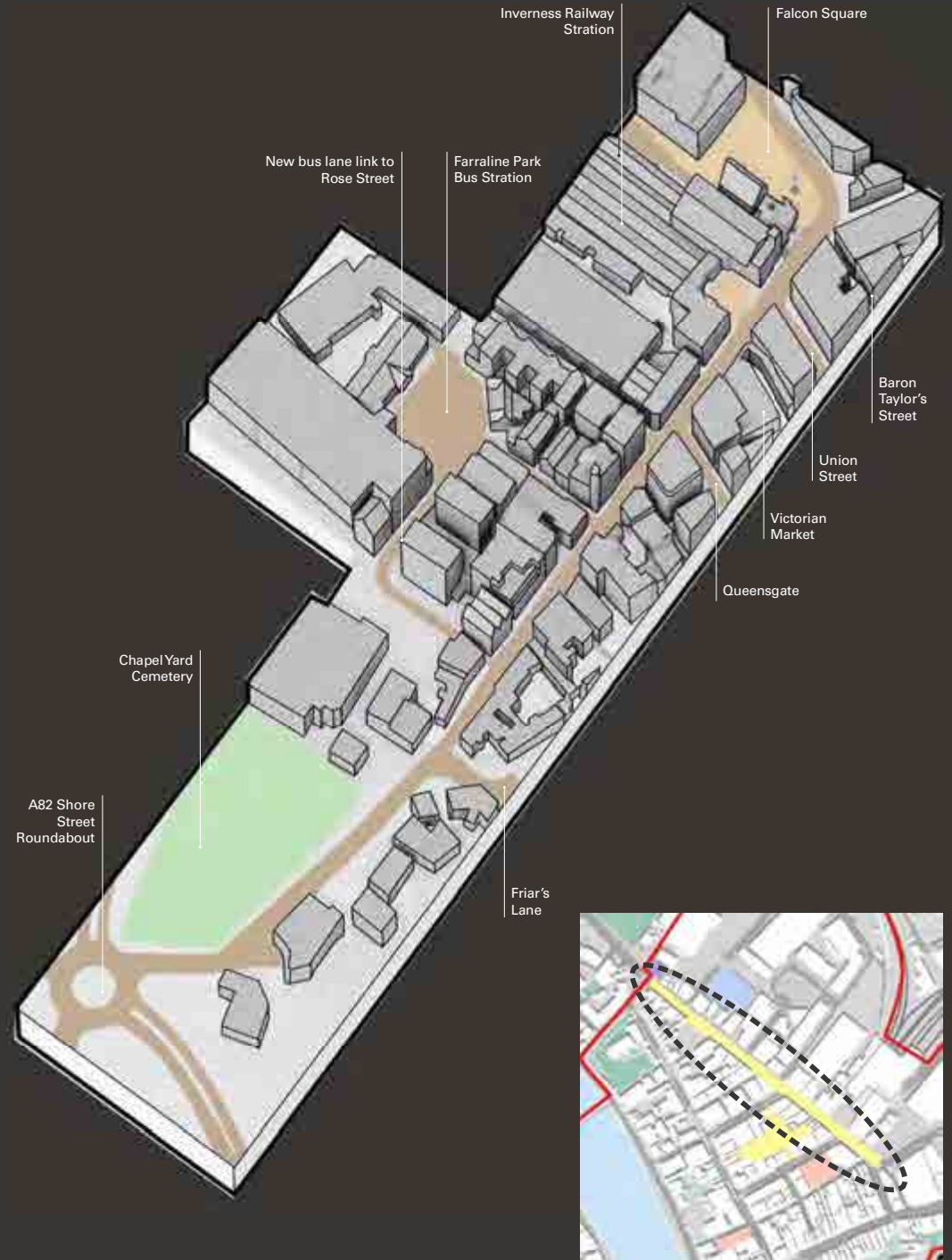
THE KEY EAST-WEST LINK THROUGH THE CITY CENTRE

Major funding is in place to reallocate road space in Academy Street to make safer space for a wider range of people.

This project will enable the Council to provide improved public realm and space for walking, wheeling and cycling along Academy Street, which is currently blighted by the high volume of traffic and the majority of available space given away to motor vehicles.

Initial data from sensors recently installed indicate that the majority of trips in this important city centre street are made on foot, rather than by car. It therefore makes sense that most of the available space be shared in a fairer, more equitable way.

The Council's response to the Covid-19 pandemic, Spaces for People, has demonstrated that some of the available road space can be reallocated without an unacceptable impact on vehicular traffic, or local businesses. Therefore, a permanent improvement of this integral city centre street will help the city's recovery.



PROJECT FOCUS — VICTORIAN MARKET

ACADEMY STREET / CHURCH STREET / UNION STREET / QUEENSGATE

MEETS OBJECTIVES OF KEY PROJECT OUTCOME

3

A VIBRANT TRANSFORMED FOOD LED ATTRACTOR

This project, currently on site, will be a contemporary European style food hall within the much-loved historic setting of the Victorian Market (the main market hall and the fish hall).

Due to open early in 2022, it will house a number of food operators and complimentary businesses where the theatre of food preparation is celebrated and front and centre. In particular there will be a focus on promoting regional produce.

The central space, the hub of the development houses shared seating and is a flexible covered civic space which adapts at different times of the day to hold specific one off and seasonal events.

The layout and the operation of this development will support and nurture operators and incubate businesses. The new food hall will have a regenerative effect on the arcade markets and the immediate town centre and be a vibrant focal point for the wider community.

In particular it is intended to anchor onto and contribute to the night time economy of Church Street and the vibrant smaller businesses clustered on Market Lane.



Threesixty Architecture

Threesixty Architecture

Threesixty Architecture

PROJECT FOCUS — FORMER ARNOTTS BUILDING UNION STREET / BARON TAYLOR'S STREET



Ollier Smurthwaite Architects

AFFORDABLE LIVING AT THE HEART OF THE CITY CENTRE

This transformative project at 7-17 Union Street in the former Arnotts department store will see six new commercial units created, with two accessed from Baron Taylor's St.

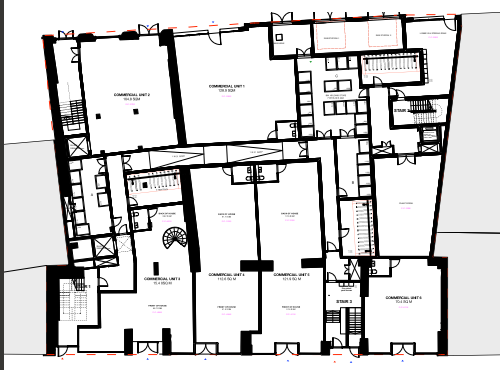


The upper floors will house 53 new apartments for long term rental through Highland Council and Highland Housing Alliance, providing much needed housing for the city centre.



The development, which will restore features such as the original facade on Union Street and shopfront detailing, will connect Union Street to Baron Taylor's Street, breathing new life into this key route.

The existing buildings at 33-41 Baron Taylor's Street, which will form part of the retail space, include one of the earliest steel framed buildings in Scotland.



As well as revitalising a neglected quarter of the city centre, the development will secure up to 200 jobs during the construction phase.

Renovation and construction work has begun, with a planned completion date of the third quarter of 2022.



Ollier Smurthwaite Architects



PROJECT FOCUS – INVERNESS CASTLE

TRANSFORMATION OF HERITAGE LANDMARK TO PROVIDE A MAJOR TOURIST ATTRACTION

The transformation of Inverness Castle is supported by £15 million Scottish Government funding, a £9 million Highland Council investment and £3 million UK Government funding through the city region deal. It will create a gateway for Highland tourism, contributing to reinvigoration of tourism across the area and providing much needed investment for the industry to aid the recovery from the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic. The project will support economic growth throughout the Highland area, creating a sustainable, viable and “must-see” attraction that will celebrate the spirit of the Highlands.

The Inverness and Highland City Region deal is a joint initiative supported by up to £315m investment from the UK and Scottish governments, The Highland Council, HIE and University of the Highlands and Islands, aimed at stimulating sustainable regional economic growth.



“The Inverness Castle project is vital to the regeneration of our city centre and the wider tourism economy of the Highland region. It is exciting to see the progress towards the Inverness Castle becoming a ‘must-see’ attraction that will draw visitors to the Highlands.”

Cllr Helen Carmichael,
Provost of Inverness





Colin Armstrong Architects

PROJECT FOCUS —
FORMER SERVICE POINT BUILDING
CHURCH STREET / BANK LANE

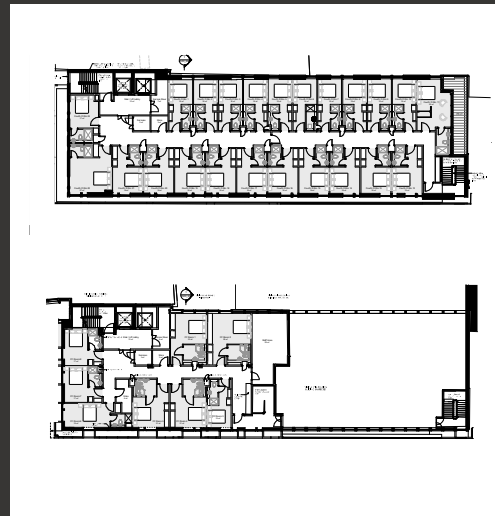
A NEW HOTEL
ENERGISING A KEY
ROUTE TO THE RIVER

This prominent Highland Council office block in Inverness is to be converted into a 79-bed hotel by Kingsmills Hotel to meet growing accommodation demand in the city.

The unloved Church Street block occupies a prime city centre spot but is in need of extensive refurbishment, converting existing office space to hotel rooms and adding an additional upper storey, recessed from the street.

Proposed work will see window cill levels lowered to maximise views and light with a new staggered façade finished in porcelain rainscreen with light grey cladding panels used for the upper level extension.

The project will transform this key corner at the junction of Church Street and Bank Lane and augment the growing hotel accommodation required to meet the needs of the expanding tourism market in the city and wider Highland region.



PROJECT FOCUS — CASTLE STREET HOUSING CASTLE STREET

NEW AFFORDABLE HOUSING IN A TRANSFORMED FORMER DERELICT BUILDING

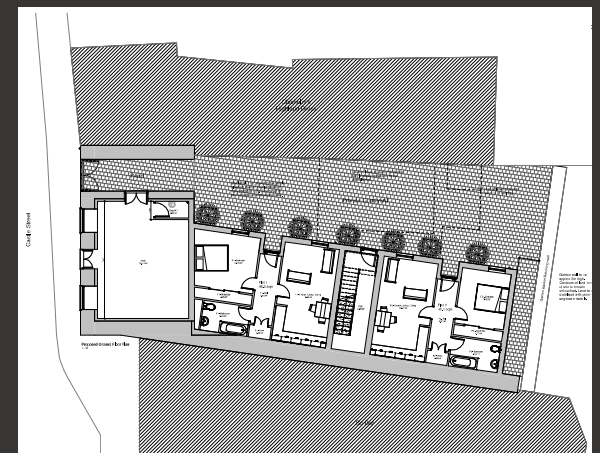
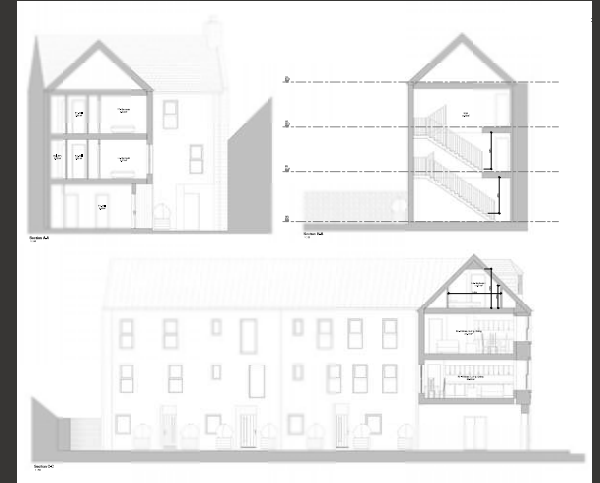
Highland Housing Association is transforming this key building that forms part of the historic Castle Street front.

The dilapidated late 18th century building will see the façade of the rebuilt to using the original stone.

Works begun on the project at the start of August 2020 and due for completion Winter 2021.

The development comprises of 8 new flats for rent and 1 new commercial unit.

MEETS
OBJECTIVES OF
KEY PROJECT
OUTCOMES
163



**PROJECT FOCUS —
MOXY HOTEL
GLEBE STREET / FRIAR'S BRIDGE**



**A NEW RIVERSIDE
HOTEL DEVELOPMENT
BOOSTING TOURISM**

This new 177 room hotel, currently under construction, is located on the site of the former city baths at Glebe Street, which was demolished in 1999.

The Glebe Street location is bounded by the busy Friars Bridge and has open views across the River Ness, which will be addressed directly by a public 'plinth' of restaurants and bars.

The design also addresses and activates the highly visible riverfront through the creation of a large south facing terrace which is directly accessible from the restaurant/bar.

The hotel mediates between a civic scale fronting the bridge to a more domestic design facing the city centre with bedrooms stacked above, all finished in a palette of buff ceramic tiles above a rose-toned ceramic tile base.



Keppie Design



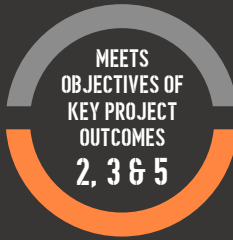
Keppie Design



Keppie Design

Clockwise from top right:
Aerial view of new hotel looking from Friar's Bridge
// Massing sketches of proposed building // view of development site as existing

**PROJECT FOCUS —
FORMER CAR PARK – HAMPTON HOTEL**
FARRALINE PARK / MARGARET STREET



**NEW HOTEL
DEVELOPMENT AT
THE HEART OF THE
CITY CENTRE**

This new 210-bed hotel, which will be the largest in Inverness, is located on the site of the former decked car park off Rose Street and received planning approval in late 2019.

The development includes a dedicated street and bus lane linking to the adjacent bus station, facilitating the reduction of bus congestion on Academy Street. The ground floor is given over to either office or retail use with the hotel occupying the upper floors.

Centred on a feature glazed corner and gym the hotel will feature 'bookend' corners clad in light grey rain screen panels with bedrooms framed benefitting from floor to ceiling windows.

A combination of retail and commercial units will create an active frontage to Rose Street.



Clockwise from bottom left
Views of former decked car park and access ramp //
View of new hotel with commercial / retail space at
ground floor // View of new hotel from Farraline Bus
Station // Rear parking courtyard

**PROJECT FOCUS —
RIVER NESS HYDRO PROJECT
BUGHT ROAD**



**AN INNOVATIVE
APPROACH TO
ENERGY GENERATION**

The Ness hydro scheme, located adjacent to the river close to the Holm Mill road bridge, features a turbine design attributed to Ancient Greek polymath Archimedes, known as the Archimedes Screw.

The massive screw is held inside a trough with a generator and gear box situated above.

The weight of water passing down the screw causes the blades to turn, ensuring turbine efficiency remains high even at very low flow rates, this also permits fish and other debris to pass through unscathed.

The power generated will be used by Inverness Leisure and the 555,000kWh generated annually will be fed in to Inverness Leisure Centre, offsetting the centre's current energy spend by approximately £70,000 and reduce carbon emissions by 140,000kg CO2e.

Originally conceived with one Archimedes Screw, the scheme has been expanded to include two screws in a structure 27m long, 10m high and 6m wide.

Members of the public will be able to visit the facility, which will be covered by a stainless steel perforated dome structure, designed to show the power generation at work safely.

This dome structure was designed by local artist Claire Maclean, inspired by not only the river and the plants and creatures that call it home but also by the mythology surrounding the Loch Ness monster.

At night, dynamic LED lighting will illuminate the building powered by kinetic tiles that convert footsteps into electrical energy.

An adjacent hard landscaped area will contain benches and interpretation panels.

Construction is expected to begin in early summer with a view to be complete and fully commissioned by March 2022.



INVERNESS CITY CENTRE VISION — POTENTIAL OPPORTUNITIES

The list below and adjacent map highlight the potential opportunities that have been identified in and around the city centre for consideration.

Academy Street

- Fraser House, Friars Lane

Bisecting Connectors to River

- Baron Taylor's Street / Bank Lane

Castle / Castle Street

- Upper Bridge Street
- Phase 2 Castle Project: Town House Car Park

High Street

- Stephens Brae
- High Street Upper Levels Over Retail
- Market Gate Steps

Eastgate

- Eastgate Hostel
- Falcon Square

Northwest End

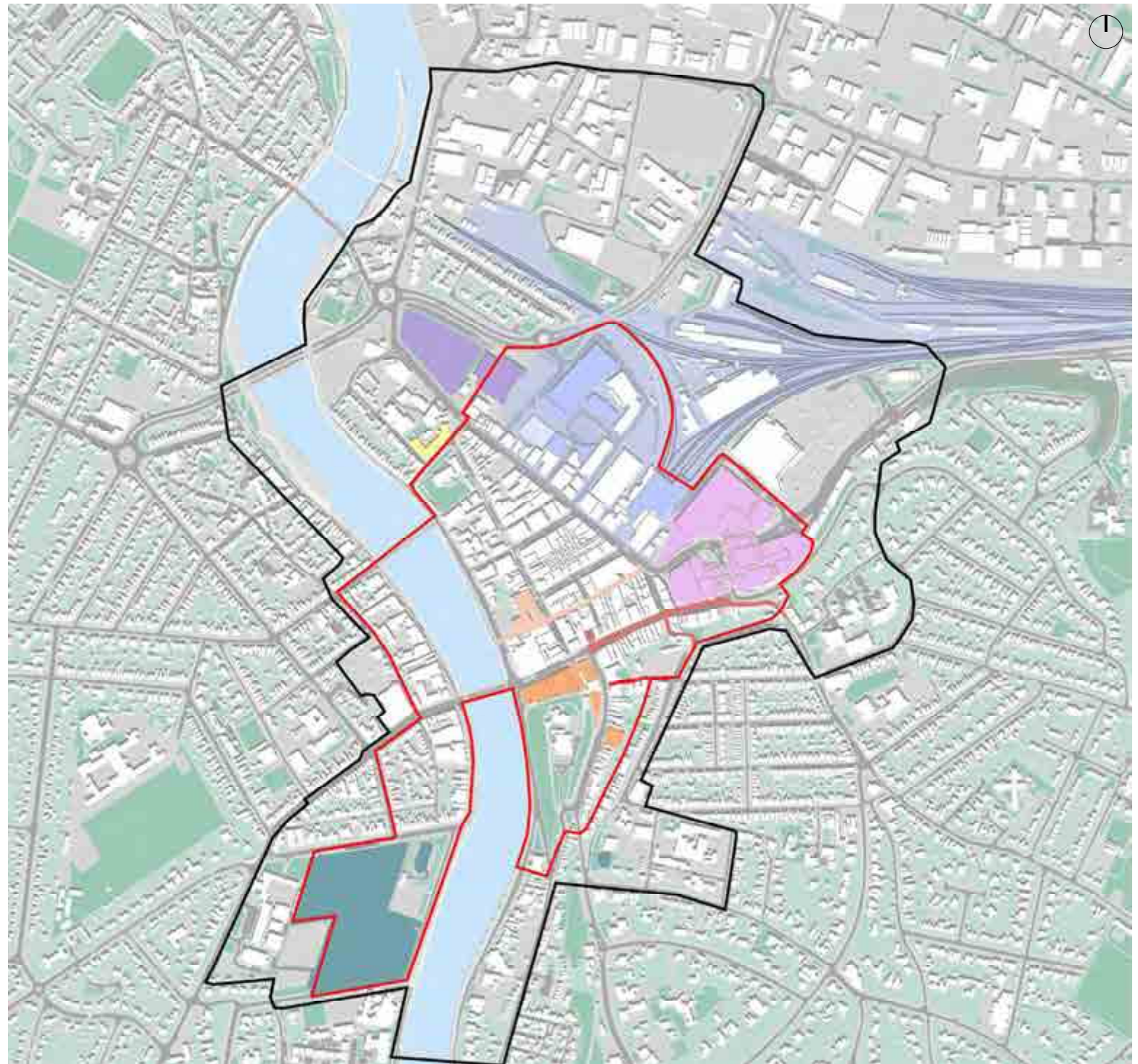
- Chapel Yard Cemetery

Rose Street Bus & Rail

- Farraline Bus Station
- Inverness Library
- Spectrum Centre
- Rose Street Car Park
- Railway Station Land Masterplan Area

Wider Area

- Inverness Cathedral / Northern Meeting Park / Eden Court Theatre
- Viewhill House



OPPORTUNITY — VIEWHILL HOUSE OLD EDINBURGH ROAD

POTENTIAL
TO MEET KEY
PROJECT
OUTCOMES
2 & 4

HISTORIC BUILDING & GATEWAY TO CITY FROM THE SOUTH

Viewhill House at 1 Old Edinburgh Road, Inverness, is a B-listed 3 storey villa, built circa 1835.

It is a 5-bay building with a raised basement, in painted harl with red sandstone detailing.

The house was built by Joseph Mitchell for his own residence, then was operated as a Youth Hostel from the late 20th century to 1998, when its doors were closed.

Various extensions were added in the mid-20th century, including a large flat-roofed extension at basement level in the 1960s.

In September 2007, the building was badly damaged by fire. It has remained surrounded by scaffolding and in a state of disrepair since.



WHAT IF?....

....WE BROUGHT THIS BUILDING BACK TO LIFE TO PROVIDE RESIDENTIAL ACCOMMODATION THROUGH RETAINING THE FACADE (IF POSSIBLE) OR BY CREATING A NEW SYMPATHETIC DEVELOPMENT?



OPPORTUNITY — INVERNESS CATHEDRAL / NORTHERN MEETING PARK / EDEN COURT THEATRE

KEY HERITAGE, CULTURE & LEISURE ASSETS

Located on the left bank of the River Ness, these much loved buildings and spaces are important to Inverness and the wider region but are currently disconnected from the heart of the city centre.

Inverness Cathedral was completed in 1869 and is the principal church of the Diocese of Moray, Ross and Caithness as well as a focus within the City of Inverness due to its prominent position on the banks of the River Ness.

In normal circumstances, the doors of the Cathedral are open 365 days of the year to welcome congregants and visitors.

The Northern Meeting Park was the world's first Highland Games Stadium, established in 1864 for an annual highland games. It plays host to a variety of events

throughout the year, including the annual Northern Meeting Piping Competition.

Eden Court Theatre consists of three connected buildings that collectively span three centuries. First opened in 1976, it closed in 2004 for a £25m extension and refurbishment, reopening in 2008.

It contains two theatres: 'The Empire' with 869 seats and 'The One Touch' with 275 seats, two multi-purpose studios, two cinemas and three art galleries, all supported by a shop, bars and a restaurant, serving local produce.



INVERNESS CATHEDRAL



NORTHERN MEETING PARK

EDEN COURT THEATRE



WHAT IF?....

....WE EXPLORE WAYS TO BETTER CONNECT THESE MUCH LOVED ASSETS TO THE HEART OF THE CITY CENTRE? (EXPLORED ON PAGE 77)

OPPORTUNITY — BARON TAYLOR'S STREET / BANK LANE

POTENTIAL
TO MEET KEY
PROJECT
OUTCOMES
3, 4 & 5



POTENTIAL KEY CONNECTION TO THE RIVER FROM THE HEART OF THE CITY

This relatively narrow vennel, that runs between Academy Street and Bank Street has a direct connection to Falcon Square, a key civic space within the city centre.

Public realm improvements have been made to the northern end close to Academy Street and the current redevelopment of the former Arnotts Department Store building (as outlined on pages 94 & 95) will bring new active ground floor units and residential accommodation above, reinvigorating a stretch of the street that currently feels like a back-alley and is not an attractive environment at night.

There are opportunities to make further improvements to create a Creative and F&B led route that will appeal to both tourists and the local community, breathing new life and reinforcing connections down to the river.

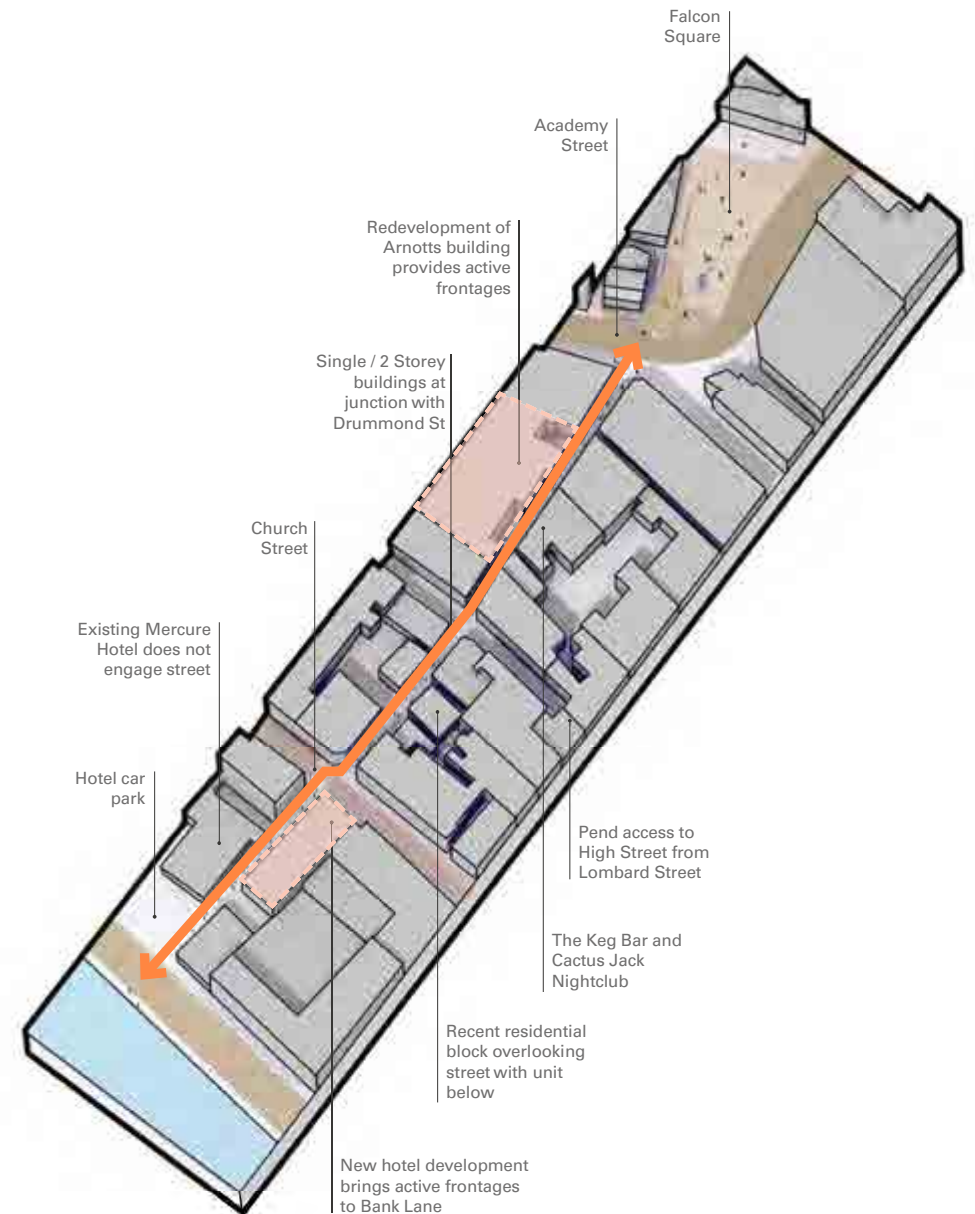
The following pages detail a number of precedents that give a idea of the potential of this type of space.



BARON TAYLOR'S STREET / BANK LANE - HISTORY

A HISTORIC & LONG ESTABLISHED ROUTE IN THE CITY CENTRE

Baron Taylor's Street / Bank Lane has been ever-present in the centre of Inverness, as demonstrated in the adjacent historic maps, where it can be seen as far back as 1821.



BARON TAYLOR'S STREET / BANK LANE - ANALYSIS

WHAT IF?....

...WE MAXIMISE THE POTENTIAL OF THIS KEY ROUTE TO THE RIVER THROUGH THE INTRODUCTION OF NEW SPECIALIST RETAIL / F&B AND DYNAMIC LIGHTING TO SUPPORT A GROWING EVENING ECONOMY?

PRECEDENTS— ASHTON LANE, GLASGOW

A VIBRANT LANE IN THE WEST END OF GLASGOW

Located in Glasgow's west end, this back lane was once home to stable blocks and gardeners accommodation serving the grander properties of Byres Road. It was transformed over time into a thriving and vibrant hub that is now one of the principal locations in the city for entertainment, being home to numerous bars and restaurants, a boutique cinema and specialist retailers.



PRECEDENTS— LANEWAYS, MELBOURNE

FORWARD THINKING POLICIES ENERGISE THE CITY CENTRE

The grid iron layout of Melbourne, common in many towns and cities, consists of main streets and rear, subservient lanes. These 'service' lanes have been transformed to create a series of connected pedestrian friendly spaces, full of

creative businesses, cafes and bars, galleries and specialist shops.

This has created a vibrancy in the city centre that extends from early morning to late at night and has encouraged more city centre living as a result of this improved environment.

This was brought about in the early 1990's when the local government, seeking to breathe life back into a CBD that was routinely dead by

6pm every evening, brought in new regulations that relaxed alcohol licensing laws, protected live music and late night venues and subsidised rents for creative businesses and artists studios.

Melbourne regularly tops international lists of most liveable cities and the laneways, thanks to the forward thinking policies of the local government, have been an important contributor to this.

WHAT IF?....

PRECEDENTS— THE LANES, BRIGHTON

AN ATTRACTIVE, TOURIST FRIENDLY QUARTER WITH INDEPENDENT RETAIL AND F&B OFFERS

Once the heart of the old fishing town of Brighthelmstone, The Lanes, Brighton's historic quarter is an intricate maze of alleyways, offering an extraordinary mix of history and heritage that now plays host to antique, jewellery, boutique fashion and design shops.

Four hundred year-old fishermen's cottages and flint stone exteriors sit alongside cosy pubs and brick-paved courtyards.

Today these twisting alleyways of The Lanes are full of independent boutiques selling designer fashion, accessories, homewares, jewellery & food. You'll also find some of the city's best restaurants, pubs and bars.

The area is a huge draw for both tourists and the local community alike.



WHAT IF?....

PRECEDENTS— TRANSFORMATION WITH LIGHTING

The images above demonstrate a number of approaches that can be taken to introduce dynamic lighting in our urban spaces.

From suspending 'nets' of light, to flooding facades with colour or projection and even creating

a carpet of light on the walking surface, spaces can be transformed and given a new life at night, helping to improve safety and encourage an increase in visitors to bolster the evening economy.

**OPPORTUNITY —
UPPER BRIDGE STREET
BRIDGE STREET /CASTLE ROAD / CASTLE WYND**

POTENTIAL
TO MEET KEY
PROJECT
OUTCOMES
2 & 3

**SIGNIFICANT
DEVELOPMENT
OPPORTUNITY WITH
RIVER FRONTAGE AT
FOOT OF CASTLE**

This site sits in a prominent location in relation to three of the city's greatest assets, Inverness Castle, Town House and the River Ness.

The need for change is clear, but its transformation requires careful consideration and significant funding to realise the scale of change likely.

There is opportunity in the shorter term to offer refurbishment with paint, cladding or other external

treatment to reduce the negative visual impact of the buildings on their sensitive surroundings.

Combined with ensuring the buildings remain occupied and support city centre footfall, this will provide time to develop further options for this key city centre site.



WHAT IF?....

....WHAT IF WE IMPROVE THE EXTERNAL FINISH OF THE BUILDINGS IN THE SHORTER TERM TO REDUCE THEIR IMPACT UNTIL A PERMANENT CHANGE TO THE SITE IS DEVELOPED?

OPPORTUNITY – CASTLE PHASE 2: TOWN HOUSE CAR PARK CASTLE STREET

POTENTIAL TO FORM NEW CONNECTIONS

The land between Castle Street and Castle Brae steps was historically part of the built environment, but its current use offers little to the street scene, or setting of Inverness Castle or Town House.

This gap site has major potential to add to the Inverness Castle project and serve as a new and integral connection between the Town House, Castle and surrounding streets, provided an appropriate funding vehicle can be secured to realise its potential.



WHAT IF?....

....WHAT IF WE REPURPOSE THE SPACE BETWEEN CASTLE BRAE AND CASTLE STREET INTO NEW MIXED USE DEVELOPMENT THAT ADDS GROUND FLOOR ACTIVE FRONTAGES AND TIES THE CASTLE, TOWN HOUSE AND PUBLIC REALM TOGETHER?



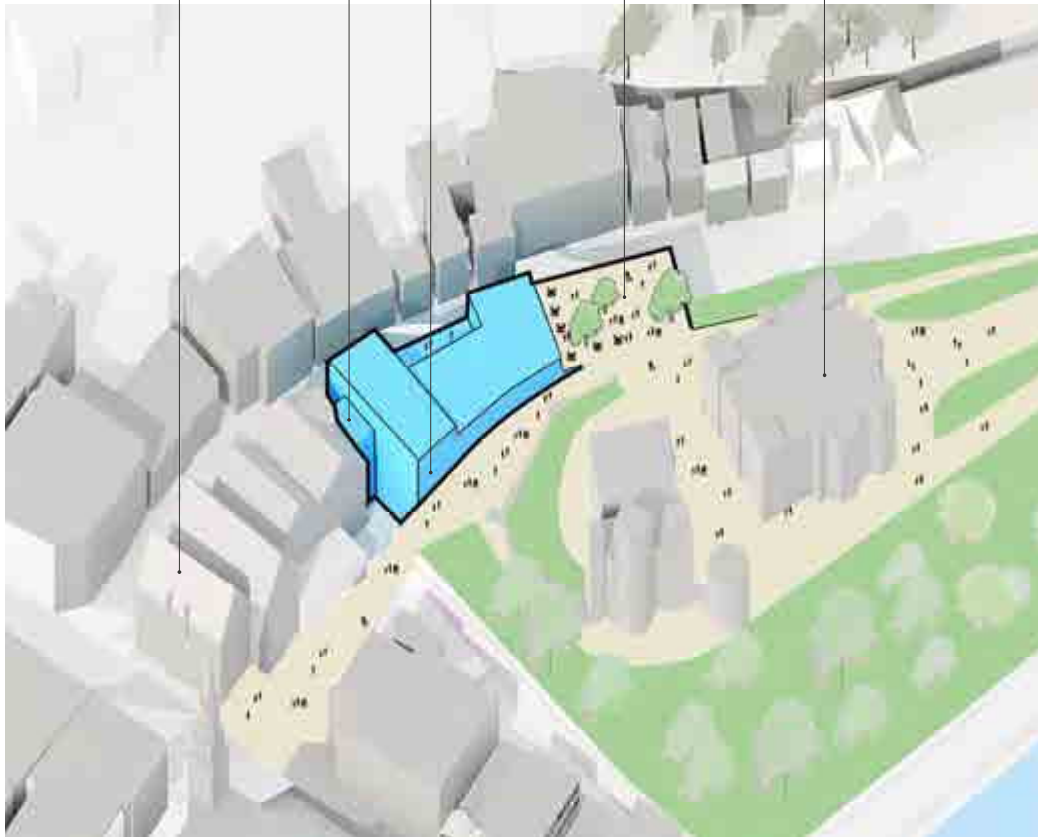
The Town House

Potential connection to the Town House

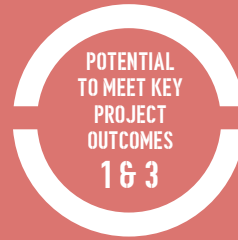
New building could provide active frontage to Castle Brae

Opportunity for new landscaped deck connecting to Castle grounds

Inverness Castle



OPPORTUNITY —
UPPER LEVELS OVER RETAIL
HIGH STREET



....WE ONCE AGAIN OCCUPIED THESE NEGLECTED SPACES WITH NEW USES, BRINGING LIFE, VIBRANCY & PASSIVE SURVEILLANCE TO THE HIGH STREET?

POTENTIAL FOR
UPPER FLOOR USES
OVER RETAIL ON HIGH
STREET

Historically, as outlined earlier in this document, our High Streets were home to much more than just retail. Over the years, as the clamour to maximise available ground floor retail space, the upper floors above were either converted to storage or mothballed, leaving a monocultural environment.

With the changes taking place in retail, we now have the opportunity to repurpose the upper levels of buildings of architectural merit with new uses.

Inverness High Street contains many buildings that could provide attractive accommodation for a number of uses, (residential / commercial / boutique hotel) that would bring life and passive surveillance back to this important thoroughfare.



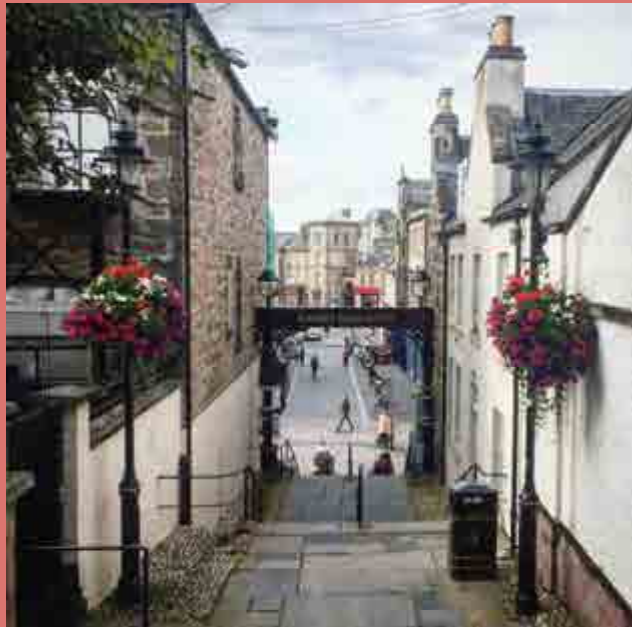
**OPPORTUNITY —
MARKET BRAE STEPS
HIGH STREET / EASTGATE**

POTENTIAL TO IMPROVE THIS POPULAR ROUTE CONNECTING TO THE CROWN

This attractive route from High Street / Eastgate up to the Crown conservation area is currently home to a number of independent businesses and residential units.

Unfortunately, the central section is dominated by large advertising boards that block views of the sloping landscped area beyond and are not in keeping with the intimate scale of the remainder of the space.

There is also the opportunity to bring back into use the elevated back court of one of the listed heritage assets on the High Street. This space directly connects into Market Brae Steps.



Clockwise from top left
Approach from High Street / Eastgate // Rear court of High Street heritage building // Over-sized advertising boards // Potential access to rear court // View back toward Inglis Street

WHAT IF?....

...WE REPLACE THE OUTSIZED ADVERTISING WITH PUBLIC ART AND ADD A NEW FOOD & BEVERAGE OFFER WITH EXTERNAL TERRACE IN THE UPPER LEVELS OF THE FORMER HIGH STREET BANK ?



Advertising hoardings removed and replaced with new public art adorned low walls affording views to greenery beyond and new seating

External terrace garden accessed from new food & beverage offer and Market Brae Steps

Potential new food & beverage offer in upper floors over former bank unit



anandoart / Shutterstock.com

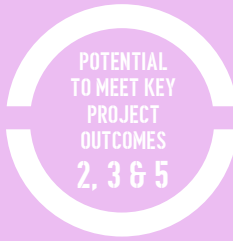


Margy Crane / Shutterstock.com



Pablo Paradiso / Shutterstock.com

OPPORTUNITY –
FALCON SQUARE
FALCON SQUARE / MILLBURN ROAD



POTENTIAL TO
IMPROVE A KEY
CIVIC SPACE

Falcon Square is the largest civic space in the centre of Inverness and is named after John Falconer who opened Falcon Foundry at Inverness Rail Terminus in 1858.

The listed building where Pizza Express is currently housed originally formed part of this Foundry. The building was dismantled stone by stone and rebuilt in its current position.

The monument within the square is Inverness's new mercat cross.

Designed by the artist and sculptor Gerald Laing, it is a sandstone pillar, thirty seven feet high, adorned with a unicorn and various birds which are cast in bronze.

The square contains one of the main entrances to The Eastgate Shopping Centre and an entrance to the adjacent Railway Station.

The busy Academy Street runs through the southern edge of the square and widens to 4 lanes to contain a bus stance and taxi rank.



WHAT IF?....

ANALYSIS— SITE HISTORY



Falcon Square as it exists today is a relatively recent addition to Inverness City Centre, and only took its current form from upon the completion of the extension of the Eastgate Shopping Centre in 2003.



1821



1832



1932

WHAT IF?....

ANALYSIS— EXISTING AREA & MASSING

The adjacent plan and 3D sketch highlight the current layout and surrounding massing of Falcon Square.

For a relatively large space, there is a lack of enclosure due to the scale of the surrounding buildings and the dominance of Academy Street passing through the square along its southern edge.

There is also a lack of diverse uses surrounding the space and a number of blank inactive frontages that contribute little, particularly the current M&S unit within the Eastgate that effectively turns its back on the square.

The prevalence of hard surfaces and lack of greenery creates a relatively stark environment with a lack of texture and variety.

The examples on the next pages show a number of UK and European civic spaces that are surrounded by a variety of uses that bring vibrancy, and buildings of a scale that provide a real level of enclosure. They are also designed to prioritise pedestrian movement over that of vehicular transport.

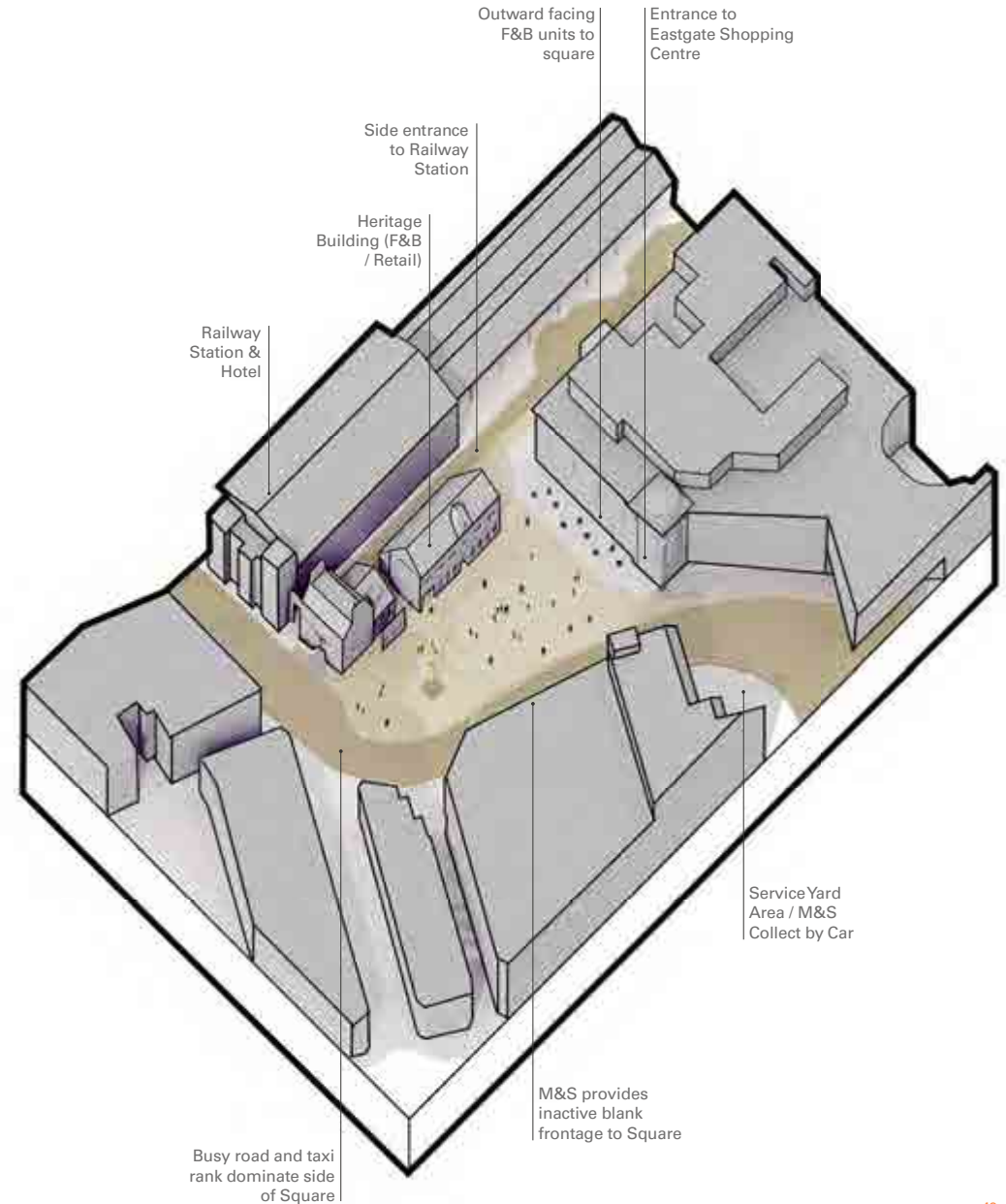
Falcon Square, Inverness



Area: **4300 sqm**

Surrounding building storey heights: **2-3**

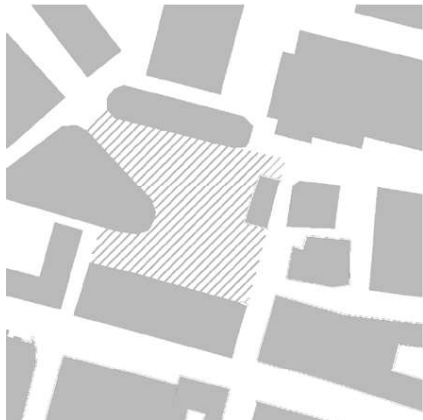
Principal surrounding uses: **Retail/F&B Commercial**



WHAT IF?....

ANALYSIS— PUBLIC SQUARE COMPARISONS

Hardman Square, Manchester



Area: 5300 sqm

Surrounding building storey heights: 6-7

Principal surrounding uses: Retail/F&B
Commercial
Residential

County Square, Paisley

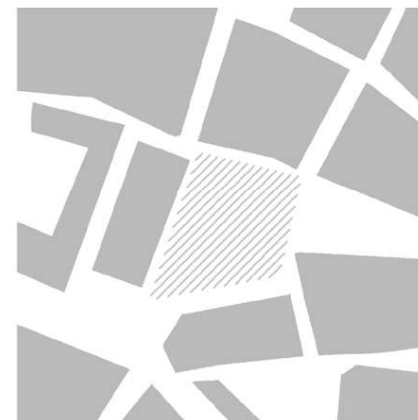


Area: 3120 sqm

Surrounding building storey heights: 2-6

Principal surrounding uses: Retail/F&B
Commercial
Residential
Transport

Grote Markt, Antwerp



Area: 3500 sqm

Surrounding building storey heights: 5-7

Principal surrounding uses: Retail/F&B
Commercial
Residential
Civic

Lilla Torg, Malmo



Area: 2750 sqm

Surrounding building storey heights: 3-6

Principal surrounding uses: Retail/F&B
Commercial
Residential
Hotel

WHAT IF?....

...WE WORK WITH THE EASTGATE CENTRE TO TRANSFORM FALCON SQUARE INTO A MORE WELCOMING, INCLUSIVE & ACTIVE CIVIC GATHERING / EVENTS SPACE?



WHAT IF?....

FALCON SQUARE: A WELCOMING, INCLUSIVE & ACTIVE CIVIC GATHERING / EVENTS SPACE





POTENTIAL TO MEET KEY PROJECT OUTCOMES 1 & 3

NEW LEASE OF LIFE REQUIRED FOR FORMER HOSTEL IN PROMINENT LOCATION

The former Eastgate Hostel was severely damaged by fire in 2013. Following this, the building was surrounded by protective hoarding that narrowed Eastgate and obscured views to Stephen's Brae for many years.

Six years later, in 2019, the rear of building was demolished and only the stone facade to Eastgate retained.

The hoarding has been removed to Eastgate, improving the appearance of this key route within the city centre.

The site remains undeveloped and is a real opportunity to provide new residential accommodation within the city centre over an active ground floor use.



OPPORTUNITY — FORMER EASTGATE HOSTEL EASTGATE

WHAT IF?....

....A NEW RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT WITH ACTIVE GROUND FLOOR UNITS BEHIND THE HISTORIC FACADE BROUGHT THIS BUILDING BACK TO LIFE?

AN ART DECO INSPIRED COMMERCIAL ASSET WITH RIVER VIEWS

Fraser House is the Headquarters Exchange for British Telecom in Inverness.

Located on Friars Lane, this art deco inspired building closes the vista at the end of Church Street and on its upper levels has commanding views over the River Ness.

It is less than 5 minutes walk from both Bus and railway stations and serviced by adjacent existing cycle routes on Douglas Row and Friar's Street.

The exchange is located on the ground and first floors with independent office spaces on the second and third floor, accessed via a central core.

The office spaces were previously occupied by HIE but are currently vacant.



POTENTIAL
TO MEET KEY
PROJECT
OUTCOME
3

OPPORTUNITY —
FRASER HOUSE
FRIARS LANE

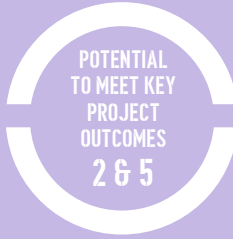
WHAT IF?....

....WE WORKED WITH THE BUILDING OWNERS
TO CREATE A CO-WORK HUB WITH ACCESS TO
AN EXTERNAL TERRACE & GREAT VIEWS?



OPPORTUNITY — CHAPEL YARD CEMETERY CHAPEL STREET

POTENTIAL TO IMPROVE ACCESS TO HISTORIC GREENSPACE



This cemetery, sometimes known as St Mary's, was probably established by the Dominican order. The earliest written evidence for the site comes from the period 1164-1171 when William the Lion gave land here 'to God and the church of St Mary's of Inverness'.

By 1371 the area now enclosed by stone walls was an open green containing a chapel that gave its name to the cemetery and to Chapel Street on which it stands.

In 1680 the area was presented to the town of Inverness by Margaret Cuthbert, part of the wealthy Cuthberts of Castlehill.

Though the burial ground has been in use since medieval times the oldest gravestone is from 1604. It marks the burial place of Hester Eliot, a descendant of Mary, Queen of Scots.

Many prominent families had their mausoleums of burial enclosures at Chapel Yard, among them the Grants, Bethunes, and Forbes families. In addition, there are graves of numerous local dignitaries including Provosts, advocates, ministers and surgeons.

There are also a small number of World War One Commonwealth War Graves Commission headstones.

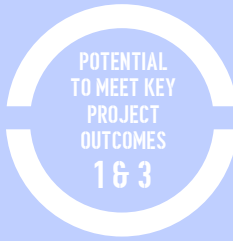
Today, the cemetery is one of the few green spaces within the city centre but is surrounded by busy roads on two sides and by the rear service yards of the Smyths / Iceland / Home Bargains block on Rose Street.

(Historic information taken from Britain Express.com / David Ross)



WHAT IF?....

.....WE IMPROVED ACCESS AND ROUTES THROUGH THIS CONTEMPLATIVE CITY CENTRE GREEN SPACE?



POTENTIAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITY WHEN COMBINED WITH 'CRAIGDON' BLOCK

The current facility, operated by High Life Highland contains a flexible theatre space with bleacher seating bank to sit 160, a conference room, dance studio, meeting rooms for hire and the Hidden Gem Coffee Shop catering for the public and spectrum users alike.

The opportunity exists to retain these uses as part of a mixed-use development that could, through the incorporation of the adjacent 'Craigdon' block and 'Domino's' site deliver a significant positive intervention within the city centre with presence not only to Farraline Park but also to Academy Street.



OPPORTUNITY — SPECTRUM CENTRE MARGARET STREET

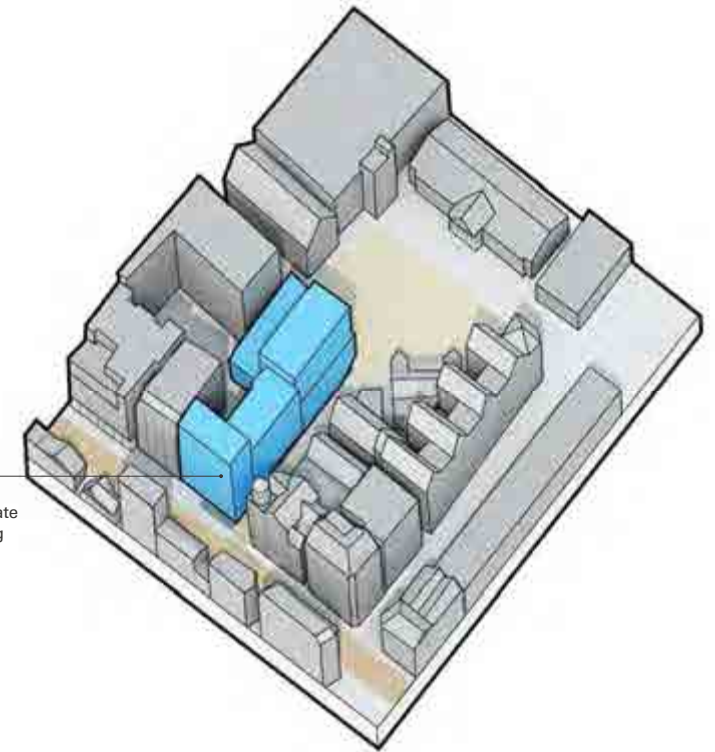
Clockwise from top right
 Shared garden courtyard on top of integrated tram depot below; Typical independent apartment interior; Communal residents lounge area; Development in its urban context; Shared kitchen of large household unit for up to 50 residents

WHAT IF?....

....WE CONSOLIDATE THE SPECTRUM CENTRE WITH ADJACENT PROPERTIES TO CREATE A MEANINGFUL MIXED USE BLOCK THAT RETAINS THIS VITAL COMMUNITY / CIVIC ANCHOR AND AUGMENTS WITH RESIDENTIAL UNITS PROVIDING NECESSARY SCALE?



■ Spectrum Centre ■ Former Craigdon Sports / Dominos ■ Potential consolidated development site

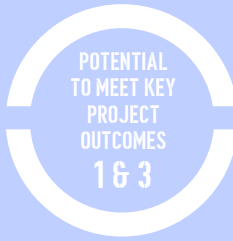


Proposed massing would define Margaret Street and create appropriate frontage to Academy Street, masking the current exposed gable of the Travelodge Hotel, creating a better sense of enclosure to this key east-west route



OPPORTUNITY — INVERNESS LIBRARY MARGARET STREET

A VITAL COMMUNITY RESOURCE & CO-WORKING HUB



Situated directly adjacent to the bus station, the former Farraline Park School, also known as Dr. Bell's Institution, is now home to Inverness Public Library.

Considered the best classical building in Inverness, this is a fine example of Greek Revival architecture with a wide central pedimented portico and Doric columns in Moray sandstone.

The building was listed at Category A in 1981.

The school was opened in 1841, and in use until 1937. It was converted in 1980 to form the Public Library.

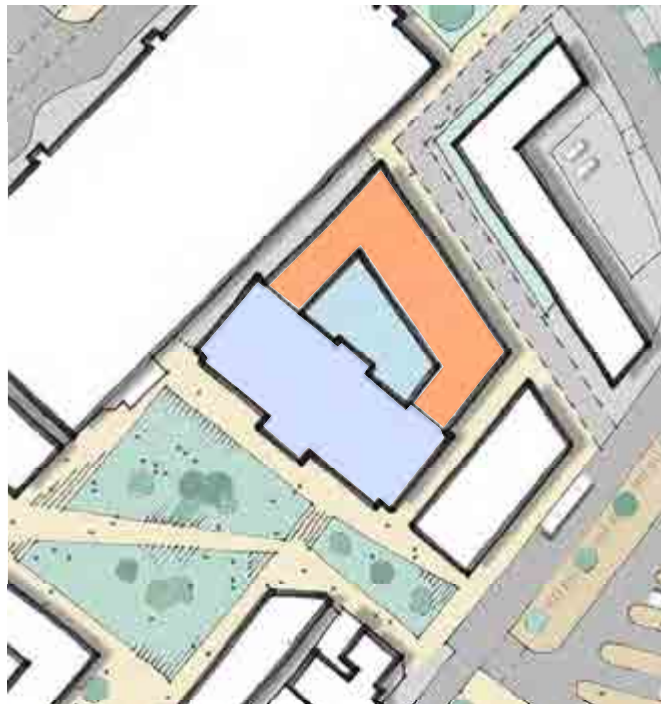
Users have access to the lending library and reference room. Under normal circumstances it hosts a series of regular activities, exhibitions and author visits.

The building is also home to a co-working hub where desks can be rented out and supported by breakout and meeting spaces.



WHAT IF?....

....WE EXTENDED THE FACILITY TO INCORPORATE COMPLEMENTARY USES, CREATING A COMMUNITY LEARNING & CULTURAL HUB AT THE HEART OF THE CITY CENTRE?

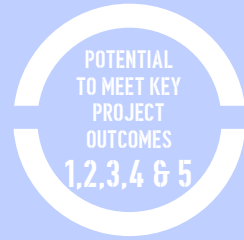


Existing Building Potential Extension Covered Courtyard



**OPPORTUNITY —
ROSE STREET CAR PARK
ROSE STREET**

**POTENTIAL TO
REDEVELOP / REPURPOSE
AT KEY ENTRY POINT TO
CITY CENTRE**



WHAT IF?....

**....WE INVESTIGATE WAYS TO PROVIDE A NEW
PARKING SOLUTION ELSEWHERE IN THE CITY
TO FREE UP THIS KEY GATEWAY SITE FOR
REDEVELOPMENT?**



OPPORTUNITY — INVERNESS RAILWAY STATION MASTERPLAN

SIGNIFICANT OPPORTUNITY TO TRANSFORM THE CITY CENTRE & IMPROVE ARRIVAL EXPERIENCE

Transport Scotland has remitted Network Rail to develop and deliver a transformational Masterplan for Inverness with a 30-year vision, putting passengers and freight at its heart, improving the station's operational functionality, and integrating with the local area and transport network to create a transport interchange.

Network Rail has already begun initial engagement with stakeholders, including The Highland Council, and HITRANS to understand the challenges and opportunities for the station and its surroundings and ensure integrated planning.

Four key themes will be explored:

1. **Urban Realm:** A station that enhances and complements its surroundings, which creates space for people and encourages them to explore Inverness.
2. **Access and connectivity:** A station which makes end to end journeys effortless by connecting people to onward transport modes and providing superb facilities.
3. **Rail Operations:** Improve station and depot facilities to provide a better service to our customers/ passengers, and give Rail Industry staff the right space and facilities to do their jobs.
4. **Freight:** Freight yards that are adaptable, and Improve opportunities for rail freight, enabling greener delivery of goods and help to take lorries off the road.



WHAT IF?....

....THE RAILWAY MASTERPLAN DELIVERED A MODERN, UPDATED STATION AS PART OF AN INTEGRATED TRANSPORT INTERCHANGE & MOBILITY HUB.... ?



....AND A VIBRANT MIXED USE QUARTER AT THE HEART OF THE CITY CENTRE ?

OPPORTUNITY — FARRALINE PARK BUS STATION

POTENTIAL FOR NEW GREENSPACE WITHIN THE CITY CENTRE

The Bus Station land is owned by The Highland Council and the station operations are managed by Stagecoach. The current terminal building was constructed in the early 2000s.

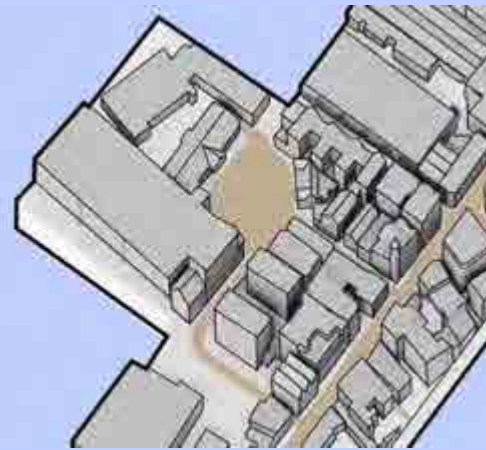
Buses operate from the station around the town, to Inverness Airport and to places as far afield as Fort William, Ullapool, Thurso and Aberdeen.

Regular services link the city to Edinburgh with connections to Glasgow at Perth.

National Express Coaches operate an overnight service from Inverness to London via Edinburgh.

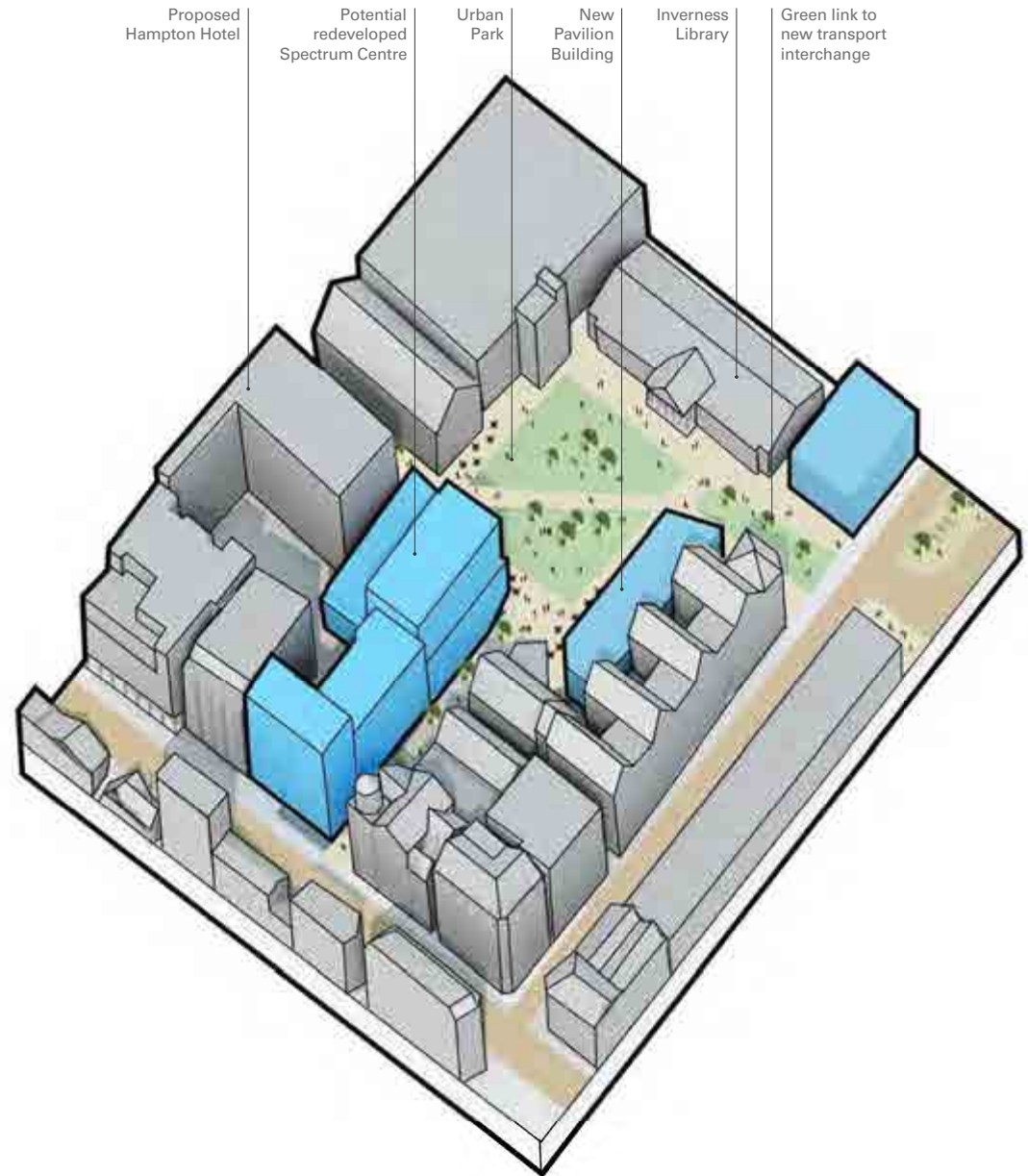
Space is currently limited due to the presence of the surrounding buildings and the station does not provide the most attractive setting for Inverness Library, one of the finest heritage assets in the city.

The potential relocation of the bus station, closer to the railway station would not only create a more efficient and joined-up approach to public transport provision but provides the opportunity to create a new urban park for the benefit of the wider community.



WHAT IF?....

....WE TRANSFORM THIS SPACE INTO AN URBAN PARK IN THE HEART OF THE CITY CENTRE?



WHAT IF?....

A CO-ORDINATED SUMMARY OF PROJECTS & POTENTIAL OPPORTUNITIES LEADING TO SIGNIFICANT REGENERATION

1. Railway Station Improvements
Creation of an improved entrance building and square from Academy Street.

2. Relocated Bus Station forming Interchange with Railway Station
A new bus station with dedicated cycle parking and facilities now located adjacent to the Railway Station. Improved rear entrance to the Railway Station for ease of movement and connectivity.

Bus services can access the A82 directly from this new facility, removing the need to incorporate Academy Street into their route.

3. Re-routed Railway Terrace
Existing road moved north onto railway land to facilitate larger potential development area to rear of Library.

4. Urban Greenspace in Farraline Park
Formation of a new greenspace for the city, providing a better setting for the Library and Spectrum Centre.

5. Pavilion Building on site of former Bus Station
New building suitable for a variety of uses (retail / F&B / Commercial / Community) to the east edge masks the rear of the Strothers Lane retail units and provides enclosure.

6. Pedestrianisation of routes to / from Farraline Park
Margaret St, Farraline Park & New link to Rose Street can be closed to traffic (with exception of managed service access) due to relocation of Bus Station.

7. Improved connection to Longman Road
Changes to Railway Terrace permit the creation of an improved vertical connection to Longman Road and the Justice Centre.

8. New Mixed-Use Block
Potential to introduce residential units over an active ground floor, including the ticket / waiting and welfare facilities of the new Bus Station.

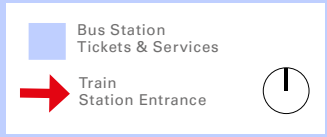
9. Tourism / Leisure Building on Post Office Site

10. Expanded Inverness Library to Civic Hub
Extended facility can accommodate a variety of complementary uses alongside an expansion of the existing facilities.

11. Residential Block forming new street on former Royal Mail Depot
Potential to introduce more city centre living and create a new pedestrian friendly 'street' that works with the extension to the library building.

12. Spectrum Centre Site
A new mixed use block that retains this vital community / civic anchor and augments with residential units providing scale, wrapping onto Academy Street.

13. New Hampton Hotel





3.
ACCESSIBILITY
& CONNECTIVITY

An aerial photograph of a city, showing a dense urban area with a river or canal winding through it. The entire image is overlaid with a semi-transparent orange color. The text is centered and written in a bold, white, sans-serif font.

**CREATING A SAFER WALKING AND
CYCLING ENVIRONMENT FOR ALL,
IN TANDEM WITH AN IMPROVED
PUBLIC TRANSPORT NETWORK
MUST BE A PRIORITY.**

ACCESSIBILITY & CONNECTIVITY

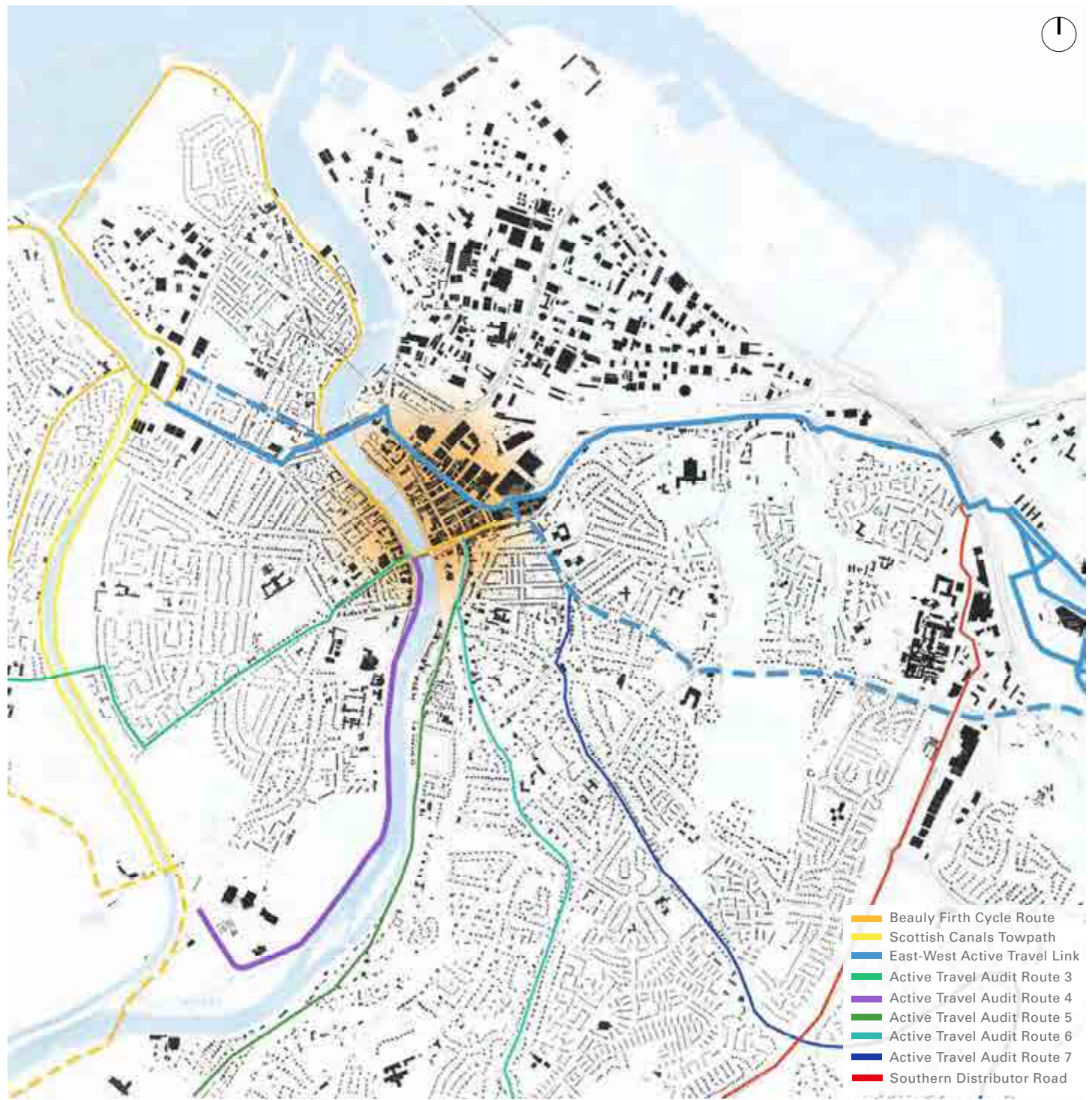
INVERNESS CITY PROPOSED ACTIVE TRAVEL NETWORK

The Inverness City Active Travel Network aims to create a connected city fit for the future, which will promote active travel, improve community health and reduce short car journeys.

This map shows the overall ambition for active travel in Inverness. The ambition is to create eight active

travel routes through and around the city which link together to create a network.

The Inverness City Active Travel Network (ICATN) programme currently has funding to deliver two of these routes, the East West Active Travel Link and the Active Travel Route 4.



ACTIVE TRAVEL NETWORK: ROUTE 4 - CONNECTING THE CITY CENTRE TO BUGHT PARK, INVERNESS LEISURE CENTRE, TORVEAN & NESS-SIDE

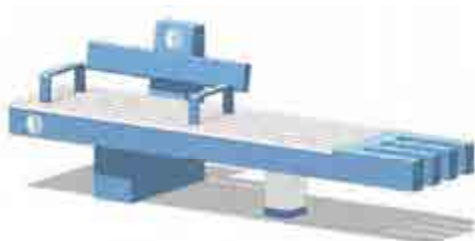


Route 4 provides a safe cycle and pedestrian route that connects the city centre with the communities in Torvean & Ness-side and the extensive sport and leisure facilities situated around Bought Park in a revitalised riverside environment.

A prominent branding and wayfinding strategy has been developed to provide a variety of distinctive markers of differing types and uses to identify the route as shown below.



Existing Condition



Landmark public artwork



Viewpoint as art



Seating as art



Mural



Art trail



Play as art



CASE STUDY: HARBOUR PROMENADE, OSLO

A walk along the harbour promenade in Oslo is an urban adventure unlike any other: Soothing nature on one hand, world-class architecture, culture and food on the other.

Only a few years ago to be able to walk along the Oslo harbour for almost 10 kilometres, with no interruptions was unimaginable.

However, shipyards, containers and heavy traffic have given way

to pedestrian walkways, parks and comfy benches, and Oslo's scenic harbour promenade is very much a reality.

The route reconnects old and new parts of the city with a variety of experiences, big and small, to be enjoyed along the way.

Orange towers show the way Information markers with a shipping container aesthetic are set up at regular intervals along the whole

promenade, to make sure you find your way.

These are decorated with art and house boards with information on nearby attractions and the historic significance of the area.

Other interventions such as coffee kiosks and bench seating creating pause points are also branded to provide a consistent language to aid navigation along the length of the route.

ACTIVE TRAVEL NETWORK: EAST / WEST ROUTE - CONNECTING THE CITY CENTRE TO MERKINCH, RAIGMORE, UHI CAMPUS & INVERNESS EAST DEVELOPMENT AREA

The proposed East-West route consists of two distinct parts:

Abban Street - connecting Merkinch and **Millburn Corridor** - connecting to Inverness East Development Area via Raigmore and the growing UHI campus.

This should transform the pedestrian and cycle experience, encouraging and improving journeys to and from the city centre for two of the key low car ownership groups of Merkinch residents and UHI students.

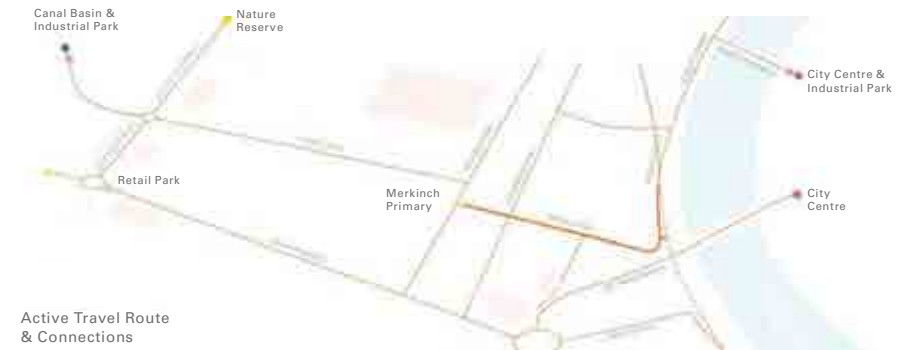
As with travel route 4, prominent branding and wayfinding will be incorporated, together with a select palette of materials and planting to give this route a unique identity that will still be appropriate for its setting.



ABBAN STREET



Existing Condition

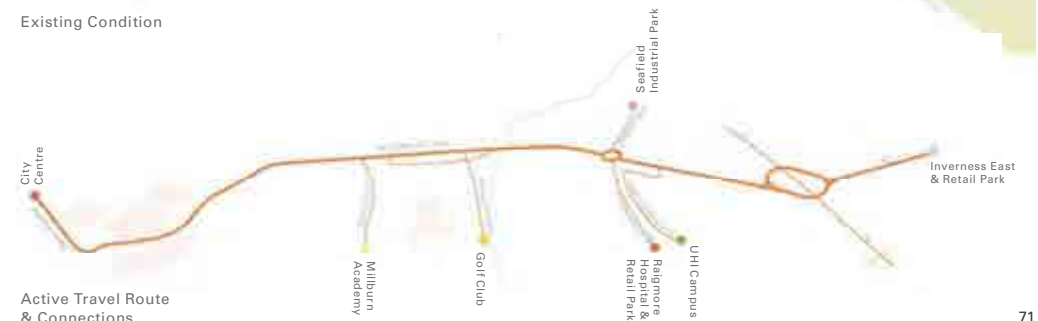


Active Travel Route & Connections

MILLBURN CORRIDOR



Existing Condition



Active Travel Route & Connections

ACCESSIBILITY & CONNECTIVITY

EXISTING NATIONAL CYCLE ROUTES & WALKABLE CONNECTIONS

National Cycle Routes (NCR)

The existing local and national cycle networks potentially extend the network and add great value.

Creating signage, waymarking and explicit gateways and links to these trails is essential.

Long Distance Routes

The Great Glen Way and the Beaulie Firth Loop potentially extend the network and promote connections to further afield and have the potential to bring in significant tourism numbers.

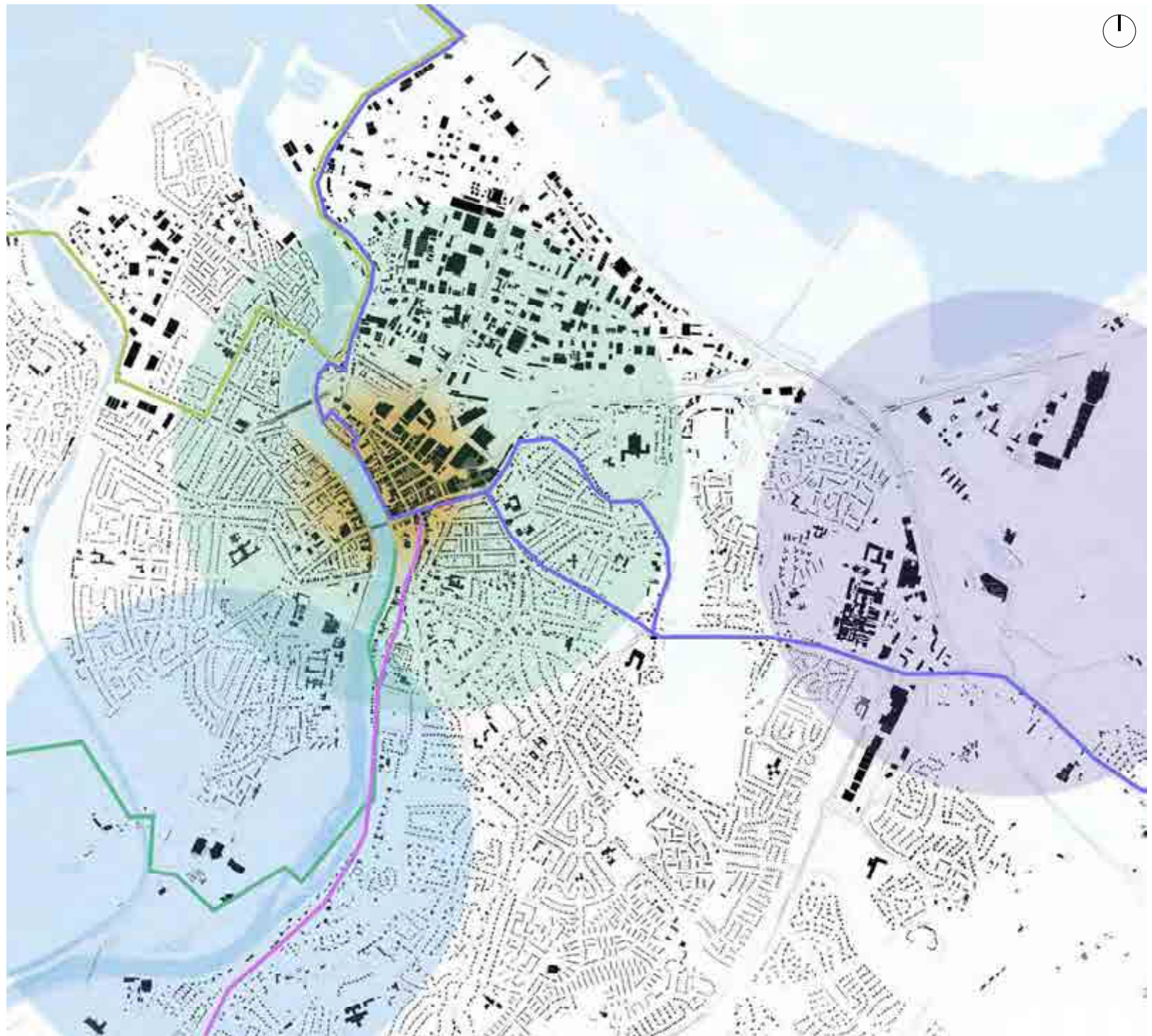
20 Minute Neighbourhoods

Places that provide easy, convenient access to most of the services and facilities that you need in your daily life.

The map demonstrates the existing 20 minute reach within the city centre and from both the UHI Campus and the Leisure 'Hub' around Bught Park.

The proposed active travel improvements will potentially extend their reach and provide easy access to even more facilities.

- Beaulie Firth Cycle Route
- NCR 1 - to Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh & London
- NCR 78 - to Tain, Dingwall, Fort William & Oban
- Great Glen Way
- City Centre - 20min. walk radius / 10min. cycle from Railway Station
- Leisure - 20min. walk radius / 10min. cycle from Leisure Centre
- University - 20min. walk radius / 10min. cycle from UHI Campus



ACCESSIBILITY & CONNECTIVITY

PRIORITISING PEOPLE OVER CARS: CAN WE MAKE KEY CITY CENTRE STREETS MORE PEDESTRIAN & CYCLE FRIENDLY?



CASE STUDY: VESTER VOLGADE, COPENHAGEN

This street in Copenhagen has been transformed into a space that is pedestrian and cycle friendly whilst also maintaining vehicular access.

The pavement has been made significantly wider on the sunny side of the street, encouraging pavement

cafes and seating areas to make the most of the good weather when available.

Street trees have been introduced to soften the environment and a dedicated cycle lane has also been introduced.

ACCESSIBILITY & CONNECTIVITY

PRIORITISING PEOPLE OVER CARS: CASTLE STREET

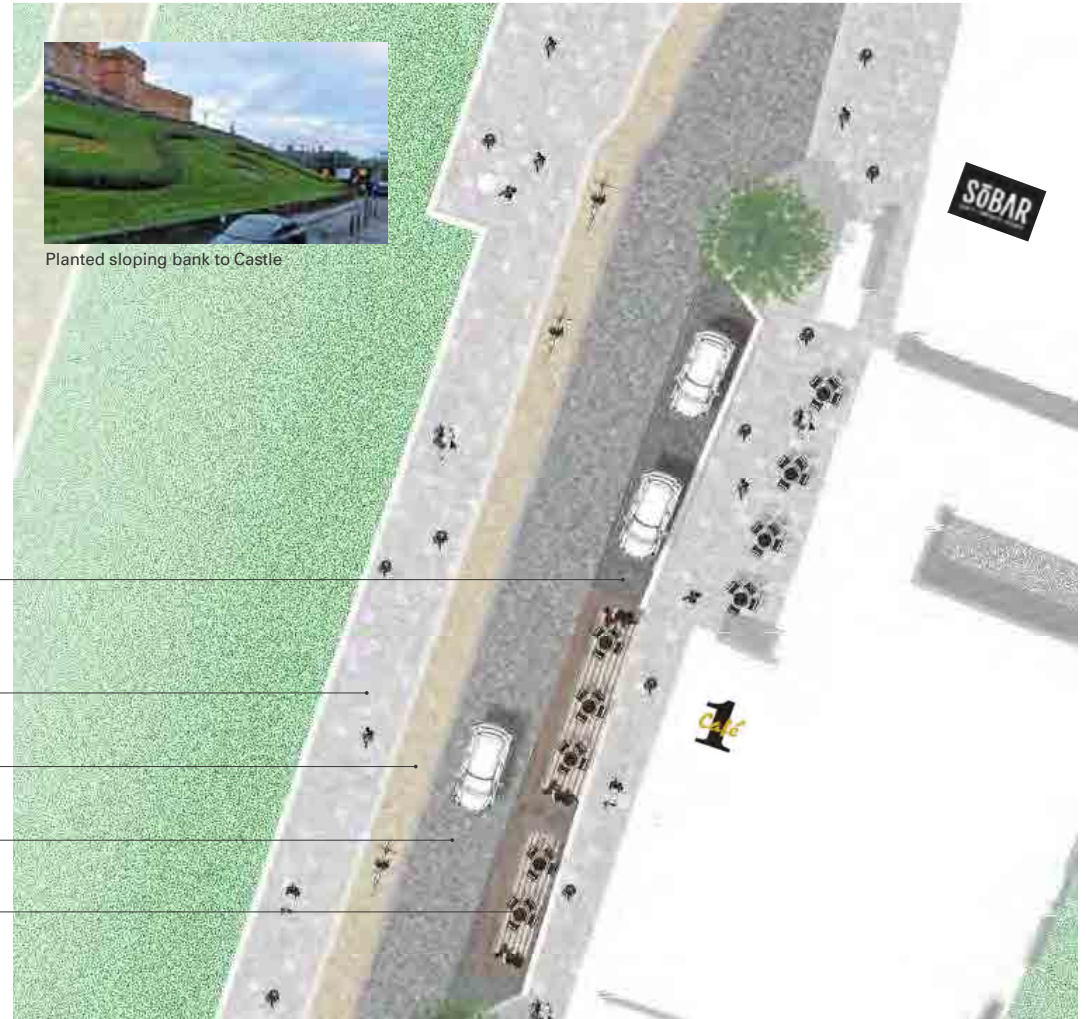


Temporary one-way vehicular route around Castle

During the Covid-19 pandemic a temporary one-way system was in operation on Castle Street (see map below) in order to provide adequate space for physical distancing on the existing narrow pavements.

This has prompted ideas about potential benefits that could arise from the street being reconfigured to improve the setting of the castle, movements for all modes of transport and footfall for businesses that operate along its length.

The graphic opposite aims to prompt ideas about what this could be like and Members have agreed for design options to be developed to inform a future consultation process.



Planted sloping bank to Castle

Parking bays

Widened pavement to Castle side

Dedicated cycle lane

Single vehicular lane

Parklet seating areas

ACCESSIBILITY & CONNECTIVITY

PRIORITISING PEOPLE OVER CARS: ACADEMY STREET



The temporary widening of pavements on Academy Street has provided the opportunity to assess the impact of this on vehicular movement.

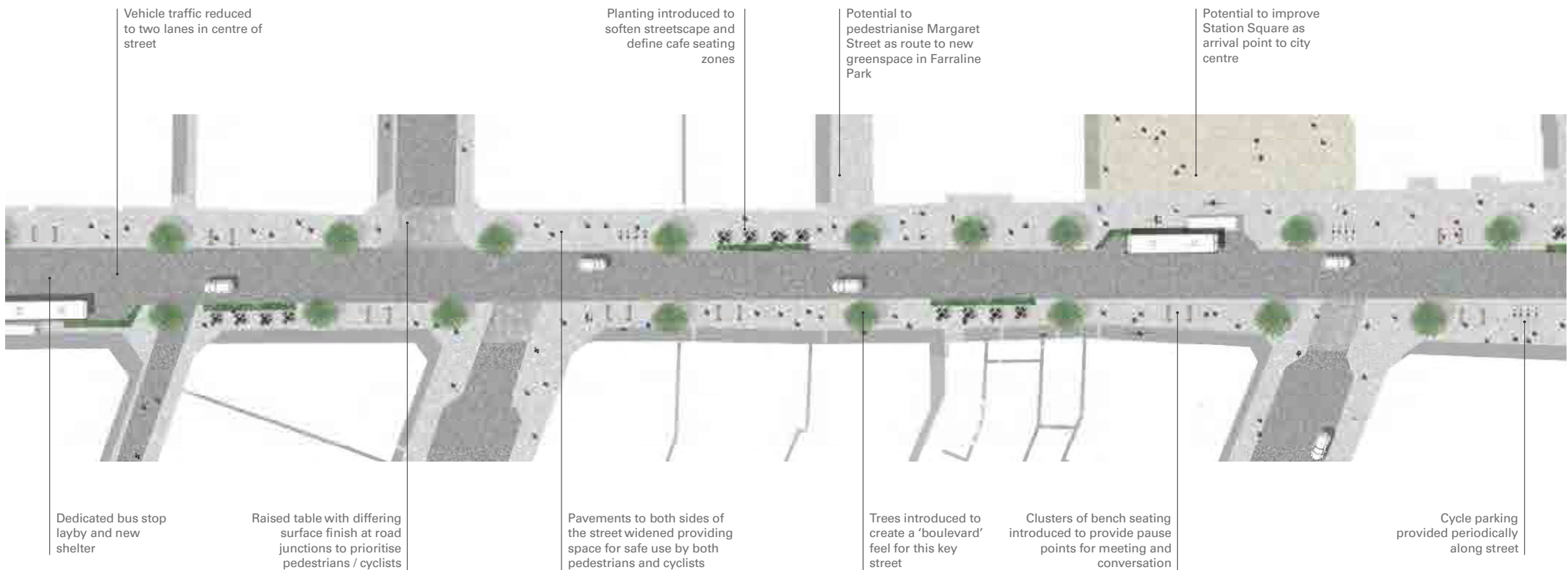
Reducing Academy Street to two lanes still permits traffic to pass through the centre of the city but gives more space to pedestrian and cycle movement.

More generous pavements could permit more seating areas for both benches and cafe tables to benefit existing food & beverage businesses and allows the

introduction of street trees and planting to soften the space and assist in improving air quality.

The pavements would be of a width sufficient to permit their safe use by both pedestrians and cyclists, negating the need for separate dedicated cycle lanes.

An out of hours servicing strategy, similar to those used in most cities prevents the need to create wide service vehicle bays that reduce available space for people movement.



ACCESSIBILITY & CONNECTIVITY

KEY CULTURE & HERITAGE ASSETS: CAN WE BETTER CONNECT THE CATHEDRAL & EDEN COURT TO THE CITY CENTRE & CASTLE?

Eden Court is the principal performance space for the Highland region, hosting a diverse range of plays, comedy, music and cinema.

This key cultural asset sits on the banks of the Ness adjacent to one of the finest buildings in the city, Inverness Cathedral.

In order to improve accessibility to the heart of the city centre, a new footbridge over the river at the head of Ardross Street would provide a direct link to the Castle and alleviate the strain on the existing Infirmary Bridge, that, when closed for maintenance or safety reasons leaves an extremely long detour to cross the river from this part of the city.

The introduction of a new pedestrian lift at the arrival point of any new bridge at the foot of the castle would connect these assets together and encourage a 'cultural' trail from the heart of the city centre.

Examples of recent pedestrian bridges and the new vertical link to Norwich Castle are shown in the adjacent images.



↔ New pedestrian / cycle bridge
 ||||| New vertical link to castle



Emmy Uehara / Shutterstock.com



Mick Harper / Shutterstock.com



Christopher Koeley / Shutterstock.com



Clockwise from top left
 Peace Bridge pedestrian link, Derry/Londonderry
 // New lift access, Norwich Castle // Arrival point
 of new bridge from Cathedral on opposite bank



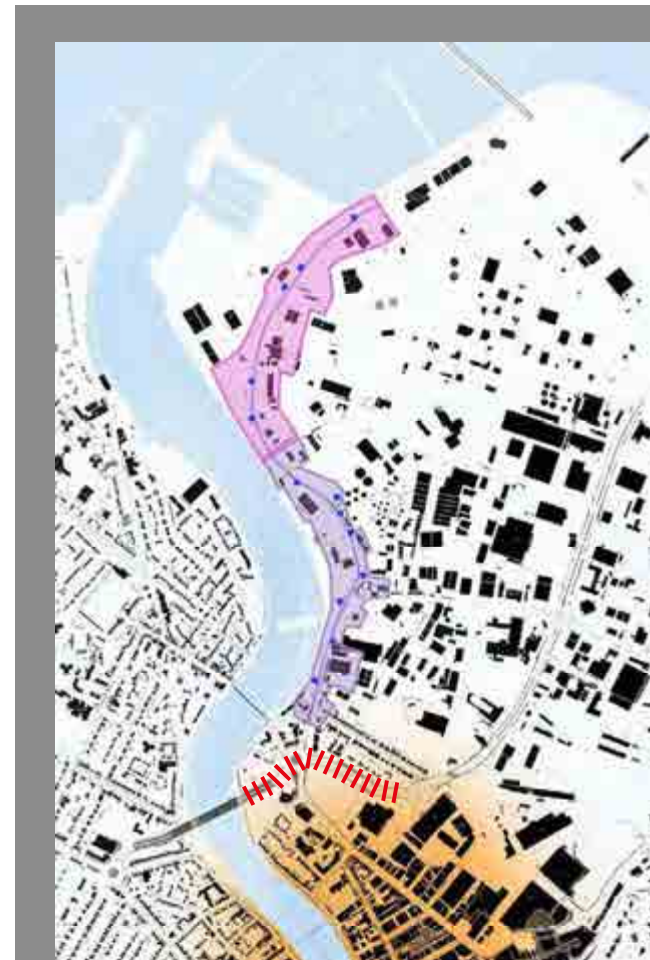
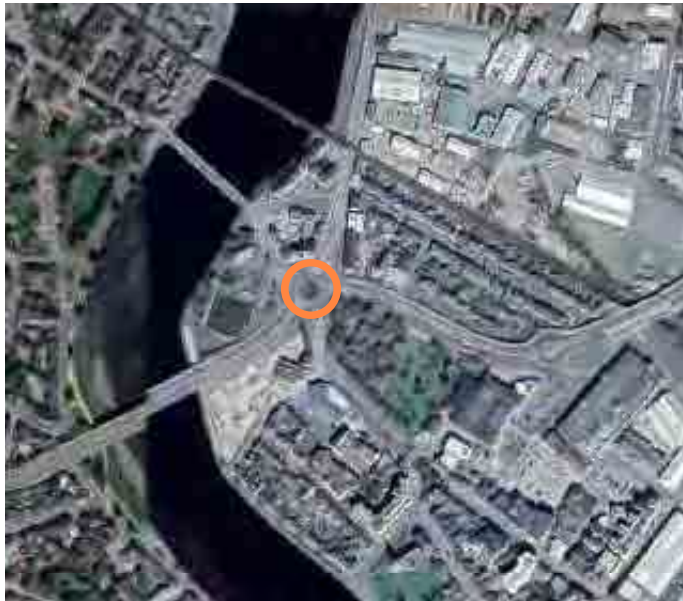
ACCESSIBILITY & CONNECTIVITY

A82 & SHORE STREET ROUNDABOUT: HOW DO WE ALLEVIATE THIS 'BARRIER' TO CONNECTIVITY?

The A82 is a major road that runs from Glasgow to Inverness via Fort William. It is an important link from the Central Belt to the Scottish Highlands and beyond.

The road crosses the River Ness and meets Chapel Street and Shore Street at a large roundabout that is very difficult to cross for pedestrians and to negotiate on bike due to the volume of car traffic and heavy goods vehicles.

As a consequence, the A82 and roundabout are very much a constraint to the aspiration to connect the harbour and surrounding area to the city centre, and to the desire for attractive active travel links.



INVERNESS MARITIME HERITAGE TRAIL

The proposed Inverness Heritage Trail aims to create a cycle and pedestrian friendly route at the Port of Inverness. It encompasses three streets- Shore Street, Cromwell Road and Longman Drive- located to the north of Inverness town centre.

The proposed route is around one mile long and there are plans to include interpretation panels highlighting the port's historical significance.

There has been a port in Inverness since the 13th century which became a major centre of trade with Europe during the Industrial Revolution.

The increasing numbers of tourists visiting the "Maritime Quarter" of the city, along with the considerable number of commuters cycling to work, has prompted the plans for a dedicated route.

Connecting this new trail to the city centre is currently compromised by the hostile nature of the A82 and Shore Street roundabout for pedestrians and cyclists.



ACCESSIBILITY & CONNECTIVITY

A82 LONGMAN ROAD

WHAT IF WE STRENGTHEN THE CONNECTION TO LONGMAN & IMPROVE THE EXISTING INNES STREET UNDERPASS?

The recent arrival of the new state of the art Justice Centre on Longman Road demonstrates the ambition to transform this route to and from the city centre into a true 'boulevard' with quality paving and landscaping that will in turn provide an appropriate setting for a number of potential significant developments along its length in the future.

In order to better connect with the city centre, the creation of an improved vertical connection at the head of Rose Street, coupled

with lighting, public realm and wayfinding improvements would better integrate this elevated road and mitigate the issues that the elevated nature of the road creates.

The connection point to Longman Road is visible from Academy Street and so anything to improve legibility and visibility along Rose Street would strengthen the connection to the heart of the city centre.

Wider stairs, perhaps with seating and pause points would be a welcome addition and the introduction of colour would add vibrancy and enhance visibility from distance.

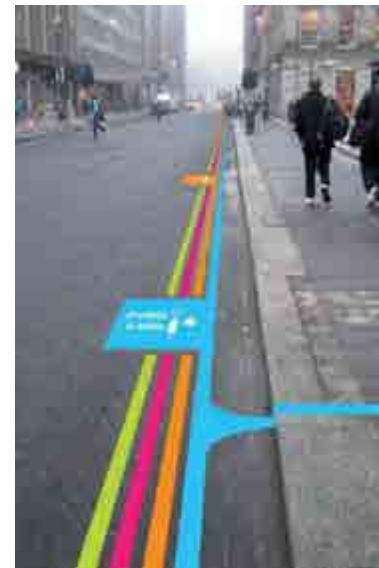
Improvements to lighting within the current underpass to Innes Street would make this connection to the residential neighbourhood to the north of the A82 safer and more attractive.



--- Underpass to Innes Street
 --- Stairs to Longman Road
 --- Visual & physical connection to Academy St



Existing connection from Rose Street



Aylata / Shutterstock.com

ACCESSIBILITY & CONNECTIVITY

CONNECTIONS TO THE RIVER: WHAT IF WE STRENGTHEN LINKS FROM THE HEART OF THE CITY CENTRE TO THE RIVER NESS?



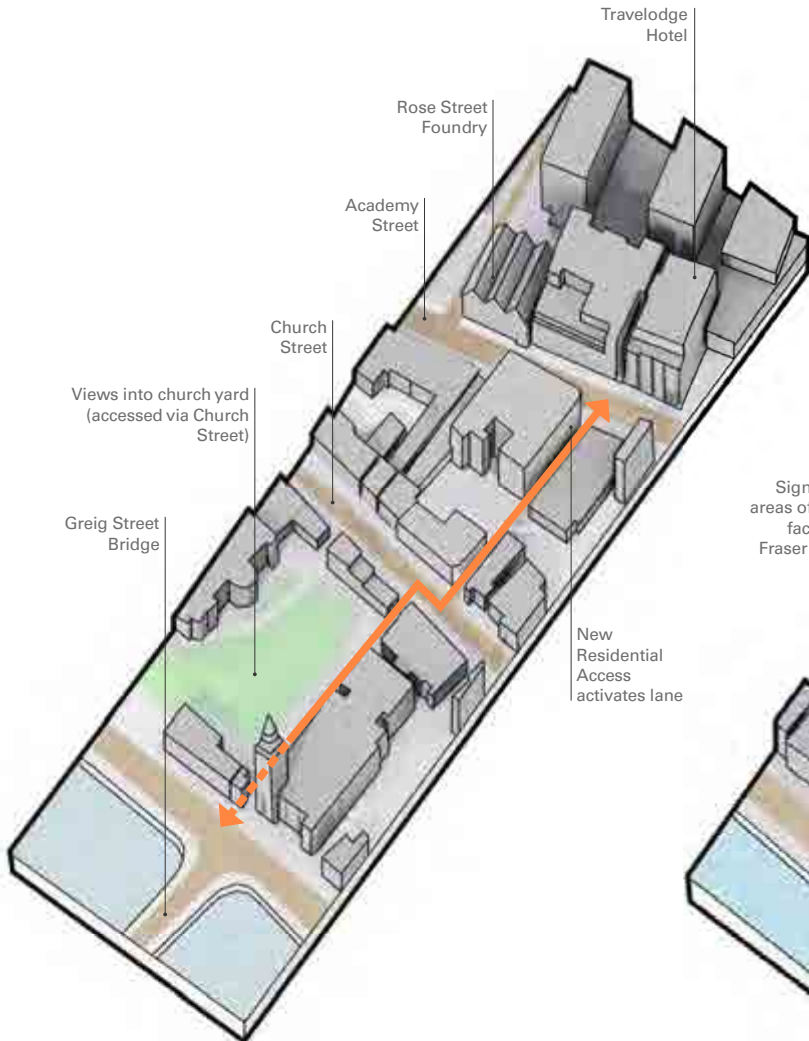
The river is a fantastic natural asset and anything that can be done to truly integrate it into the city centre should be encouraged.

The streets and lanes highlighted below link it to the heart of the city centre and to the Railway and Bus Station.

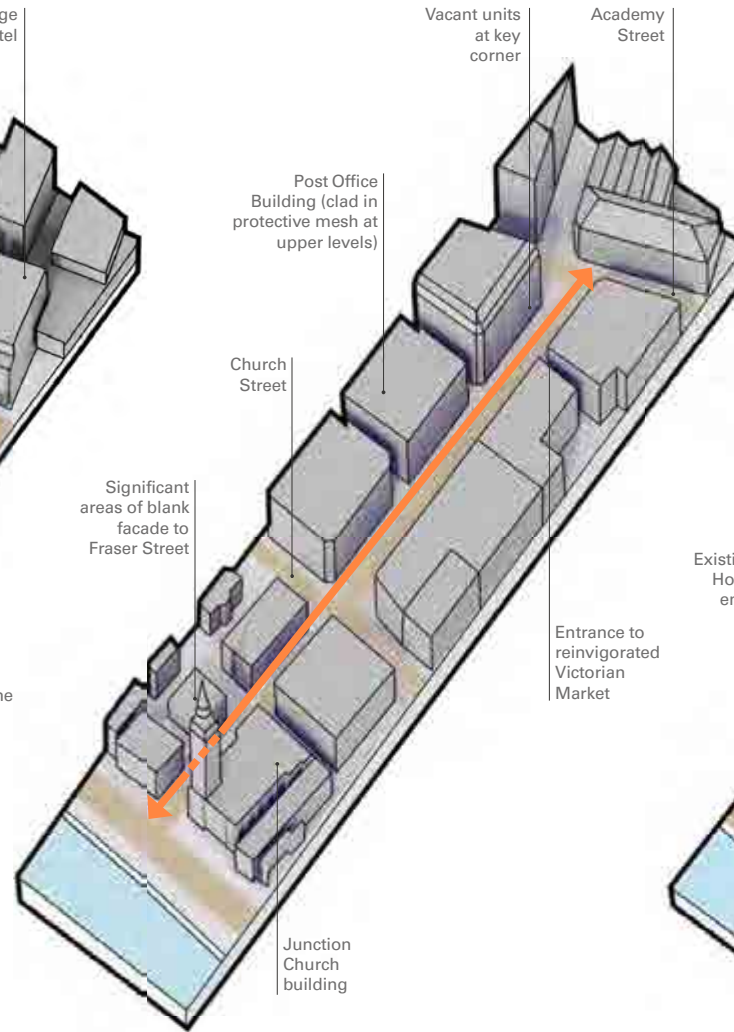
Ways to improve these vital connections should be investigated,

working with the unique character of each, from the narrow routes of Church / School Lane and Baron Taylor's Street / Bank Lane to the wider streetscape of Fraser Street / Queensgate.

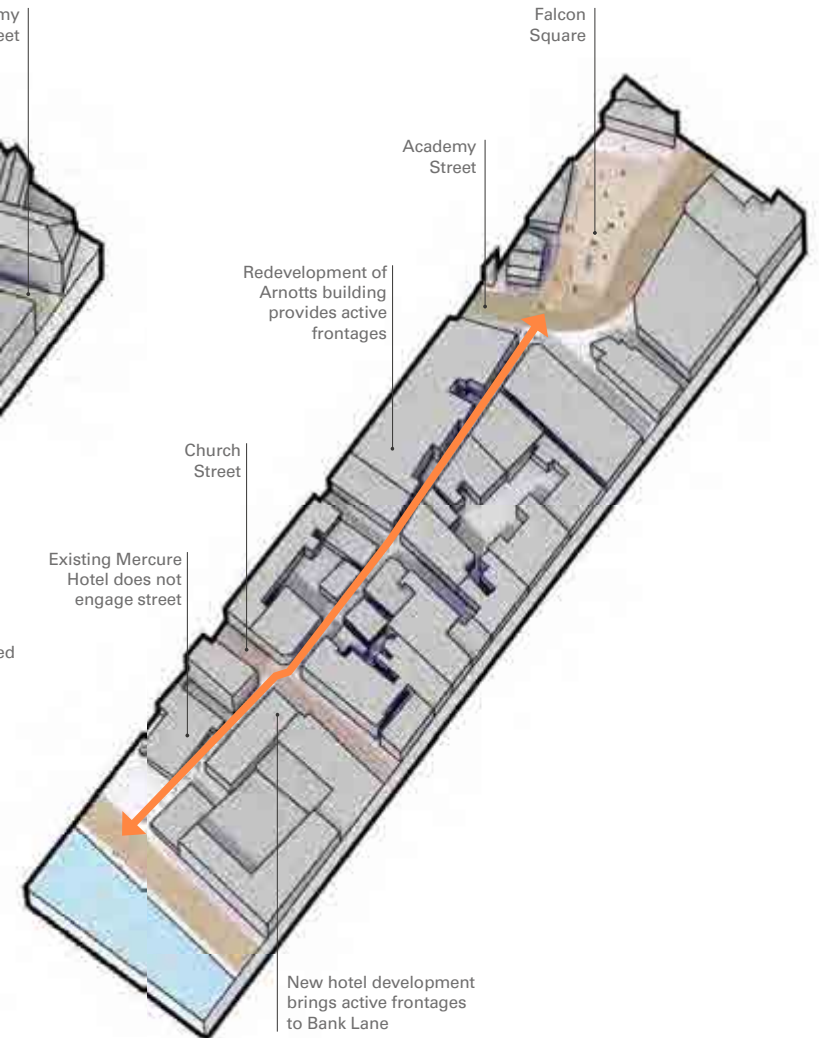
All could be improved to create dynamic and varied routes to the banks of the Ness.



Church Lane / School Lane



Fraser Street / Queensgate



Baron Taylor's Street / Bank Lane

ORIENTATION & LEGIBILITY

A NEW CITY CENTRE WAYFINDING STRATEGY

Improved signage and wayfinding will be critical to improving the experience of moving through the city centre for both the local population and tourists alike.

The Highland Council propose to transform this throughout the city centre, replacing existing signs and adding additional elements at key locations. This is outlined in detail below.

Many people work in, or travel to, the city centre in connection with their business. Inverness is also a leisure, cultural and shopping destination for visitors and residents alike. All these people spend time exploring Inverness city centre on foot or by bicycle.

The quality of their experience will be affected by the ease with which they can find their way through the urban landscape. In 2014 the Council commissioned a review of wayfinding in the centre of Inverness that analysed the effectiveness of current on-street wayfinding information.

This study concluded that it is difficult for visitors and many residents to plan journeys in advance and to fully appreciate, when navigating the streetscape, all that the city has to offer.

Shortcomings in the range and quality of wayfinding information included:

Signage that is often difficult to read due to inappropriate text sizes, unsuitable typographic formats and information overload.

An unhelpful profusion of sign types and sizes, contributing to a strong sense of visual clutter.

No evidence of an easily recognisable city-wide signage style/presentation and little evidence of city branding.



- No consistent city-wide mapping style.
- Advertising around map panels creates visual clutter.
- Poor legibility due to small text sizes.
- Map frame structures are suffering from corrosion and damage.
- No heads-up display - maps not orientated to viewing direction.
- Information overload: too many messages and crowded appearance.
- Poor legibility due to very small text size and small pictograms.
- Structures are suffering from corrosion, weather and damage.
- Unnecessary repetition of walking man symbol.

SIGNAGE PROPOSALS

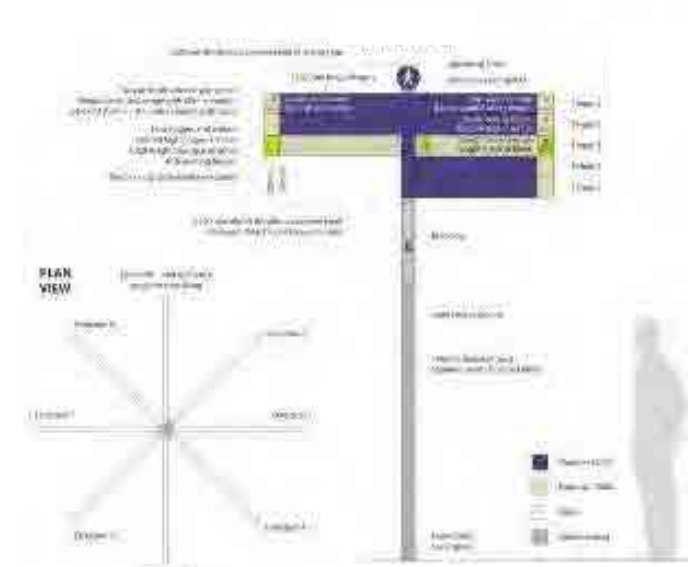


Monolith Totems
These freestanding structures deliver a combination of directional information and mapping. They will act as highly-visible totems within the streetscape that will allow visitors to understand where they are and plan their onward route.

The signs will be internally illuminated to ensure they are adequately well lit to be read. The maps provided will also be of two types:

1. "You-Are_Here" local-area walking map will show the area of the city within a 5-minute walking distance from the monolith location.

2. A "Wider City" overview map will show the entire city centre area, including cycle routes.



Fingerpost Directional Signage
Fingerpost signs deliver directional information above head height and have multiple fingers stacked typically no more than five high. The height, position and text size of each finger will allow comfortable reading from the viewers' location.

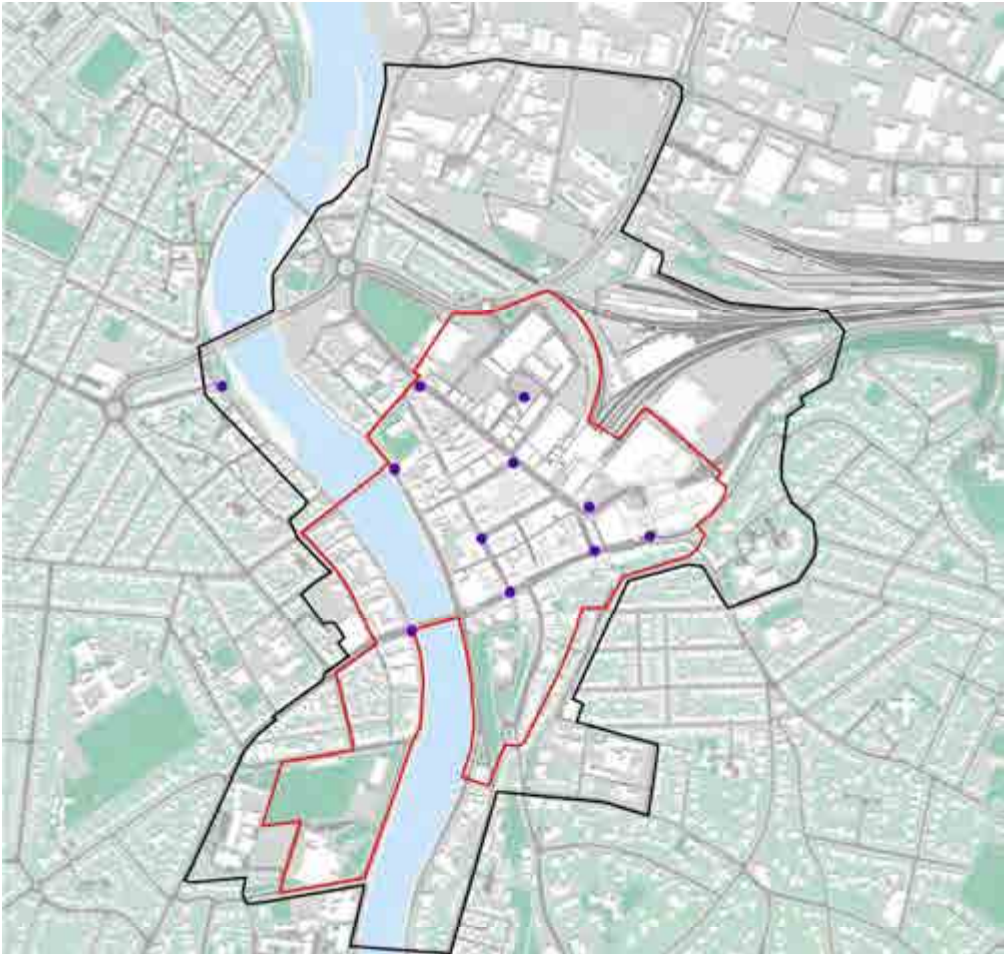
Fingerposts will convey information about destinations and attractions in Section 10.6, Box 5. Where relevant, they will also signpost:

The National Cycle Network and cycle routes identified in the Inverness City Active Travel Network;

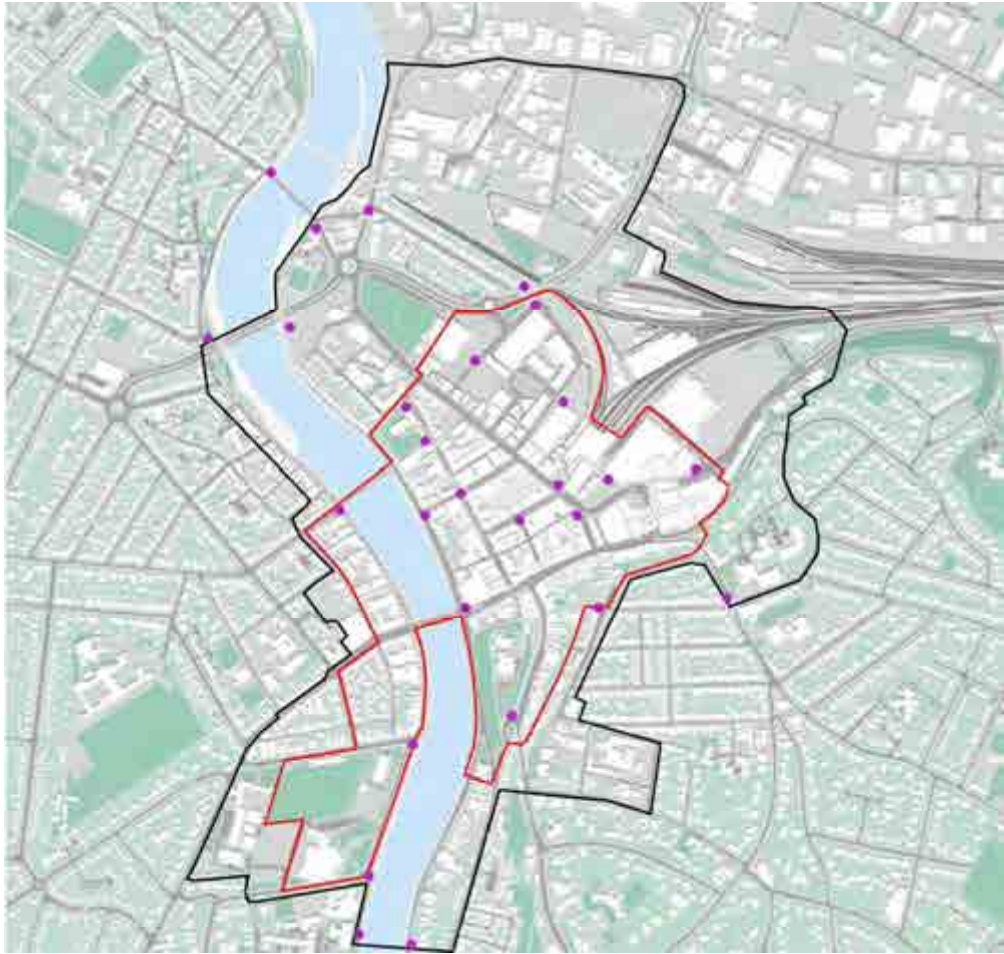
The Great Glen Way and nearby long-distance walking trails.

WAYFINDING STRATEGY
NEW SIGNAGE LOCATIONS

The maps below highlight the proposed locations for both types of improved signage throughout the city centre.



Monolith locations



Fingerpost locations



4.
NEXT STEPS

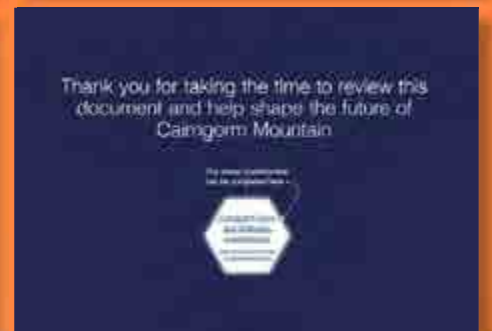
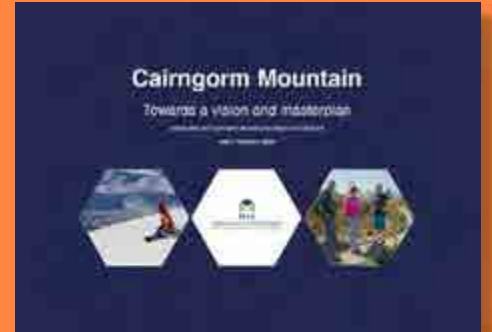
NEXT STEPS – CONSULTATION

This document forms part of a suite of research that has been prepared through the council's City Area Recovery Group and will be reported to the City of Inverness Area Committee.

Together with other key research projects, this work will be published for consultation with key stakeholders including local communities, businesses and other interested parties.



ONLINE CONSULTATION & QUESTIONNAIRE EXAMPLE: CAIRNGORM MOUNTAIN MASTERPLAN VISION





5.

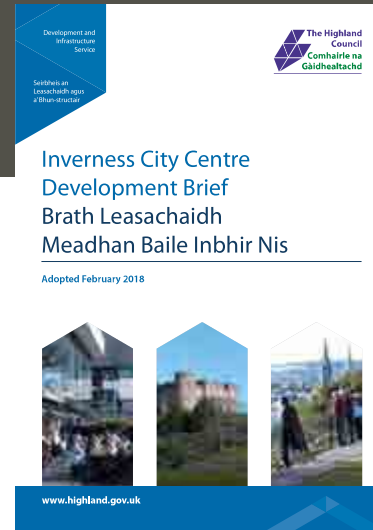
APPENDICES

- Appendix A- Key Learnings from Existing Strategies
- Appendix B- Analysis Mapping
- Appendix C- Positive Moves

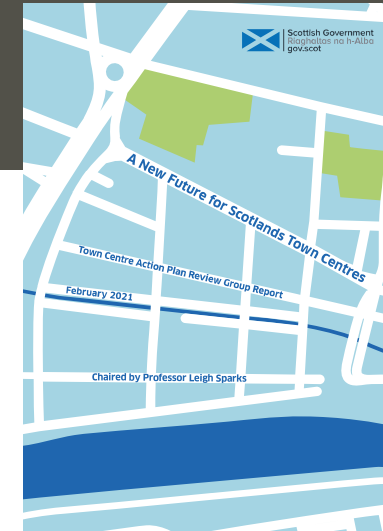
APPENDIX A – KEY LEARNINGS FROM EXISTING STRATEGIES

The Highland Council identified in their brief a number of policy and guidance documents (shown below) that were to influence the development of the recovery vision.

We have included the relevant key learnings from each within this report.



The Highland Council 'Inverness City Centre Development Brief'
- Adopted February 2018



The Scottish Government A New Future for Scotland's Town Centres
- February 2021

| Agenda Item | 7 |
|-------------|-----------|
| Report No. | CLA/18/20 |

THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: City of Inverness Area Committee

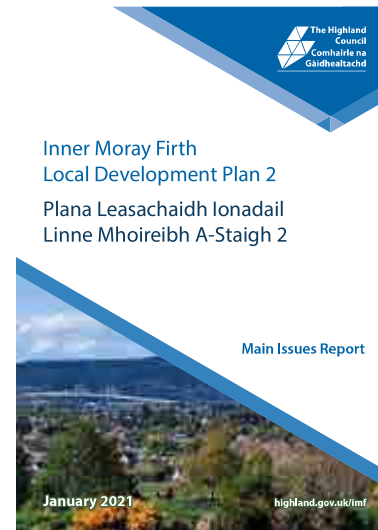
Date: 27 August 2020

Report Title: City Recovery

Report By: Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure and Environment

| 1. | Purpose/Executive Summary |
|-----|---|
| 1.1 | At the last meeting of the Inverness City Area Committee (CIAC), Members discussed the importance of identifying a range of projects and activities to aid the recovery of the City and Area. This was to include consideration how the Inverness Common Good Fund could be used to support recovery. To support this, it was agreed that a recovery workshop be held with all Inverness City Area Committee Members. |
| 1.2 | This report provides Members with an outline of the workshop discussions and highlights a range of projects that have been identified to support City Recovery and potential areas which the Common Good Fund could support. The report also provides an update on a range of other strands supporting economic recovery. |
| 2. | Recommendations |
| 2.1 | Members are asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. consider and note the summary of recovery discussions to date and the projects and areas identified, inclusive of the potential role of the Common Good Fund, as a focus for recovery of the City and Area going forward. ii. Note the City Area Recovery Action Notes as circulated. |
| 3. | Implications |
| 3.1 | Resource – £341,000 has been identified to support recovery related projects within Inverness City Area. This is as a result of covid-related changes in expenditure from within the 2019/20 Inverness Common Good Fund Budget. |

The Highland Council 'City of Inverness Area Committee, City Recovery Report'
- 27 August 2020



Inner Moray Firth Local Development Plan Main Issues Report – Extracts from Inverness & City Centre sections
- January 2021



'Highland Indicative Regional Spatial Strategy to 2050' (the Highland IRSS)
- April 2021

CITY RECOVERY REPORT – KEY LEARNINGS

Summary

This document outlines the workshop discussions and highlights a range of projects that have been identified to support City Recovery and potential areas which the Common Good Fund could support.

The report also provides an update on a range of other strands supporting economic recovery.

Resource

£341,000 has been identified to support recovery related projects within Inverness City Area. This is as a result of covid-related changes in expenditure from within the 2019/20 Inverness Common Good Fund Budget.

Community (Equality, Poverty, Rural and Island)

A core area identified by Members for future spend of the ICGF is vulnerability, with a particular focus on poverty, mental health and wellbeing and employability related activity. Important to consider not just short term projects but long-term sustainability to support the most vulnerable in our communities.

Climate Change / Carbon Clever
Addressing the Climate and Ecological Emergency is a fundamental part of the Council's recovery strategy.

Focussing on areas that help to deliver a low carbon economy will lead to better access to funding opportunities and help build more localised supply chains and access to products.

Public / Stakeholder Engagement

The need to link to the engagement framework and to listen to groups and individuals about experiences in order to identify priorities.

Targets for ICGF Resource

- Short term projects designed to support improvements in common spaces in Inverness and attract footfall to the City Centre
- Creating events to attract people into the City Centre in a covid-safe way
- Focus funding on activities to address vulnerability with a particular focus on poverty, food poverty, mental health and wellbeing and employability and training and empowering communities

Covid Related Transport Interventions

The major interventions at Academy Street, Millburn Road, Castle one way and Ness Walk have now all been introduced. All interventions are being monitored and consultation continues, this has led to changes to react to issues and concerns, and this process will continue.

The grant bid also allowed for monitoring of the in-use interventions (given their temporary nature). It does give the opportunity, through such monitoring, to see how effective they are and if they are changing people's travel habits.

This will allow consideration of whether there is an appetite for some measures to be considered for future permanent construction at a later date – as we move to encourage active travel.

Bus Infrastructure Changes

This application sought to obtain funding to deliver rapid, transformational change for bus travel in Inverness through the delivery of a bus link at Rose Street and a bus gateway at Raigmore that will maximise permeability on the transport network and make travelling by bus more attractive than by car.

Confirmation was received on the 11 August 2020 from Transport Scotland of an offer of award of £442,855. Work has now commenced with stakeholders to deliver these bus priority measures.

A list of potential recovery projects was identified and those within the agreed city centre boundary form the basis of the Masterplan study (refer to map on page 19)

| | |
|-------------|-----------|
| Agenda Item | 7 |
| Report No. | CUA/19/20 |

THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: City of Inverness Area Committee

Date: 27 August 2020

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The Highland Council 'City of Inverness Area Committee, City Recovery Report'

- 27 August 2020

THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL INVERNESS CITY CENTRE DEVELOPMENT BRIEF – KEY LEARNINGS

Introduction

The Inverness City Centre Development Brief promotes and guides opportunities for development, regeneration and enhancement of Inverness city centre.

By setting priorities and criteria for change, the Brief will guide decision-making towards the delivery of key outcomes. While it does not set out a programme of capital expenditure, the Brief will help to direct resources and investment into city centre regeneration.

Wider Context

Inverness is the administrative, educational, business and commercial centre of the Highlands and a transport hub for connections to other parts of the country and beyond. Between 1991 and 2011 the population of Inverness grew by almost 18% to over 79,000. The Council's Development Plan allocates land for over 9,000 new homes and 190 ha of employment land.

The strategy for growth focuses on strengthening the city centre, restricting urban sprawl and increasing the sustainability of existing neighbourhoods including increased opportunities for active travel and use of public transport.

Purpose, scope and structure

The purpose of this Development Brief is to assist in attracting investment to Inverness city centre by promoting opportunities and actions to regenerate, develop and enhance the built environment, while ensuring that the city centre remains open for business.

Vision for 2030

'Inverness has a vibrant, prosperous and unique city centre on the river, well connected and accessible, and valued as an attractive place to work, live and visit.'

Five Key statements sum up the aims of the development brief:

1.

A Great Place for Business

The city centre has a strong and diverse economy based on a vibrant mix of uses that includes prime business accommodation, a retail hub for the Highlands and Islands and an attractive destination for leisure and recreation.

Outcome: In 2030 the city centre has a strong and diverse economy based on a vibrant mix of uses that includes prime business accommodation, a retail hub for the Highlands and Islands and an attractive destination for leisure and recreation.

2.

A Great Place to Visit

Our internationally-acclaimed tourist destination is best known for showcasing Highland culture and hospitality with a lively retail

core and leisure and recreational activities that attract local, national and international visitors.

Outcome: In 2030 our internationally-acclaimed tourist destination is best known for showcasing Highland culture and hospitality with a lively shopping core and leisure and recreational activities that attract local, national and international visitors.

3.

A Great Place to Live

The city centre is a thriving, desirable place to live and work, supporting a diverse, socially-inclusive community that enjoys convenient access to services, public transport, green infrastructure and recreational facilities.

Outcome: In 2030 the city centre is a thriving, desirable place to live, supporting a diverse, socially-inclusive community that enjoys convenient access to services, public transport, greenspace and recreational facilities.

4.

Accessible, Easy and Safe to Move Around

A network of safe, attractive routes gives clear priority to walking, cycling and use of public transport, enabling people of all-abilities to move comfortably while ensuring efficient access for vehicles, including parking.

Outcome: In 2030 A network of safe, attractive routes gives clear priority to walking, cycling and use of public transport, enabling people of all-abilities to move comfortably while ensuring efficient access for vehicles, including parking.

5.

Distinctive and Attractive

Inverness takes pride in being a high quality city centre that celebrates and safeguards its unique combination of natural, cultural and built heritage, in particular its historic river setting.

Outcome: In 2030 Inverness takes pride in being a high quality city centre that celebrates and safeguards its unique combination of natural, cultural and built heritage, in particular its historic river setting.

Approach to Development

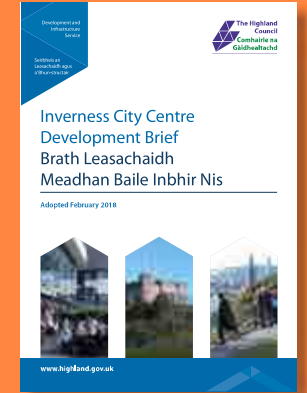
Our approach to development is to create and promote a vibrant, high density mix of uses that:

- Enables more people to live and work in the city centre;
- Showcases and expands the range of visitor, leisure and cultural attractions;
- Maximises the role of the River Ness as an important open space corridor and civic asset;
- Brings vacant or underutilised space back to active use;
- Makes it convenient and attractive to access city centre destinations on foot or by

bicycle or public transport, improving air quality where required;

- Incentivises alternatives to car use/ownership by improving active travel infrastructure, offering flexible levels of on-site parking, and facilitating use of public transport;
- Delivers high quality development, including an attractive public realm.
- Energy efficiency and low carbon heat technologies will be encouraged, particularly (but not exclusively) in larger scale developments.

'Inverness has a vibrant, prosperous and unique city centre on the river, well connected and accessible, and valued as an attractive place to work, live and visit.'



The Highland Council
'Inverness City Centre
Development Brief

- Adopted February 2018

A NEW FUTURE FOR SCOTLAND'S TOWN CENTRES – KEY LEARNINGS

Summary

Town centres are fighting for their future. Covid-19, which altered the world as we knew it amplified existing, and produced further, inequalities.

In July 2020 the Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Local Government, set up a Review Group, chaired by Professor Leigh Sparks at the University of Stirling to review the Town Centre Action Plan and to consider how we can make our towns and town centres greener, healthier and more equitable and inclusive places and to come forward with a revised plan for action for towns and town centres.

The Review Group adopted a vision for towns and town centres:

“Towns and town centres are for the wellbeing of people, planet and the economy. Towns are for everyone and everyone has a role to play in making their own town and town centre successful”.

The best of our town centres and our most successful towns offer a sustainable, local economy and society with diverse and mixed uses attracting and meeting the needs and desires of their local communities.

Place-based investment is being prioritised, often where local authorities have adopted Town Centre First and placed an emphasis on their town centres.

The Place Principle and town centre planning and visioning has been shown to help generate investment and build a sense of place.

Concepts such as Community Wealth Building including community asset ownership are gaining ground.

Local engagement and focus on the community as the driver of change is really important.

Towns and town centres are unique places and have their individual specific localities and communities to consider.

The aim is to strengthen the position of town centres overall and ensure a local embeddedness and focus on working with all of the local community.

Three Key Recommendations:

1: Strengthen the formal positioning of towns and town centres in National Planning including requirements to produce town and town centre plans, co-produced with communities and enhance data collection and use at the town and town centre level

a: Towns and town centres to be included and prioritised in National Planning Framework

b: Town Centre Plans need to be developed and implemented with the local community and

with a focus and commitment on the wellbeing of people, the planet and the economy

c: Develop a revised and enhanced focus on measurement and data for towns and town centres

2: Scottish Government should review the current tax, funding and development systems to ensure that wellbeing, economy and climate outcomes, fairness and equality are at their heart. Potential suggestions for actions include

a: Amendments to Non Domestic Rates (NDR)

b: Amendments to VAT

c: Introduce a digital tax

d: Introduce an Out-of-Town Car Parking Space Levy

e: Introduce a Moratorium on Out-Of-Town Development

3: Expanded and Aligned Funding of Demonstration Projects in Towns and Town Centres. We have an overall request that the Scottish Government continues to seek to expand and ensure further alignment of the funding available. Funding for town centre activities has to be substantial, multi-year and cover revenue and capital spend. We recommend that projects should be focused around themes of

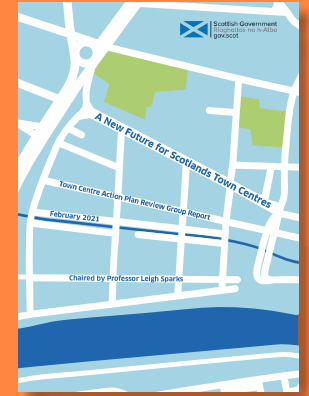
a: Town Centre Living Expansion – housing sector incentivisation in town centres

b: Digital Skills and Use in Towns – skills development for businesses and enterprises and extended uses of various technologies to understand and change behaviours in town centres

c: Enterprising Communities – Strategic Acquisition Fund to alter ownership, development and use patterns in town centres to encourage local small business, community enterprises and entrepreneurship around local and circular economies

d: Climate Change Response – building on existing programmes in Climate Action Towns, micro-generation, retrofitting of town centres buildings and the alteration of space in town centres for active travel, pedestrian movement, green space and social settings, with a view to enhancing the resilience of town centres against climate change.

Towns and town centres can be organised to be more resilient, healthier for our population and communities and deliver enhanced wellbeing for all citizens.



The Scottish Government
A New Future for Scotland's
Town Centres

- February 2021

A NEW FUTURE FOR SCOTLAND'S TOWN CENTRES – KEY LEARNINGS (CONT'D)

Place based Investment

This will link and align place-based funding initiatives, shaped by the needs and aspirations of local communities. This programme will impact through four specific overlapping and inter-connected areas:

1. Community Wealth Building:

Places where community can shape their own future. Where interventions and investments support local businesses, and decisions are taken for the benefit of the whole community.

2. Community Led Regeneration:

Places where communities take coordinated action to respond to local challenges and opportunities. Places that are physically changing to reflect the concerns and aspirations of the people who live there.

3. 20-Minute Neighbourhoods:

Places that provide easy, convenient access to most of the services and facilities that you need in your daily life. Being able to live and work locally, pursuing opportunities, learning and wellbeing in your own neighbourhood. With local infrastructures, active travel networks, and the connections which make it possible to bring together essential activities from across the sectors, located at the heart of communities.

4. Town Centre Action:

Healthier, greener and more sustainable urban and rural centres, where social renewal and economic recovery is evident on the ground. Town centres which are lived in and enjoyed by the whole community.

The Scottish National Investment Bank is focused around driving the move to net zero emissions and promoting inclusive growth.

Use our physical land resources better: a new Vacant and Derelict Land Investment Programme will be available in 2021 as part of the Climate Change Plan update.

Improving and integrating transport and increasing public and active travel are parts of the National Transport Strategy. Carbon conscious places have linked many of these strands together into a new way of thinking about development.

Greenspace generally, but specifically in towns, has become a focus of improving the environment for people.

Smart towns and cities providing appropriate digital connectivity, access and take-up for businesses, organisations and individuals have become increasingly important (Connecting Scotland).

Town centres should be delivering better outcomes for people through access to opportunities, goods, services, facilities, social-cultural-, creative- and green-spaces. They should be the heart of a local, resilient, entrepreneurial economy, increasingly enabled digitally, which reduces inequalities and promotes inclusivity and enriches the wellbeing of all in the community. Town centres should be accessible places people want to go to for a variety of reasons, opportunities and interactions.

Conclusions

Town centres are a core part of Scottish life. They vary considerably in form, character, function and performance.

Town centres are a sustainable heart of a community providing opportunities to live, work and enjoy on a more equitable and socially fair basis, enhancing wellbeing and a sense of community and place.

The last decade has seen a sharpening of National Priorities, the recognition of a climate emergency, legislation enhancing community empowerment and a focus on health and wellbeing.

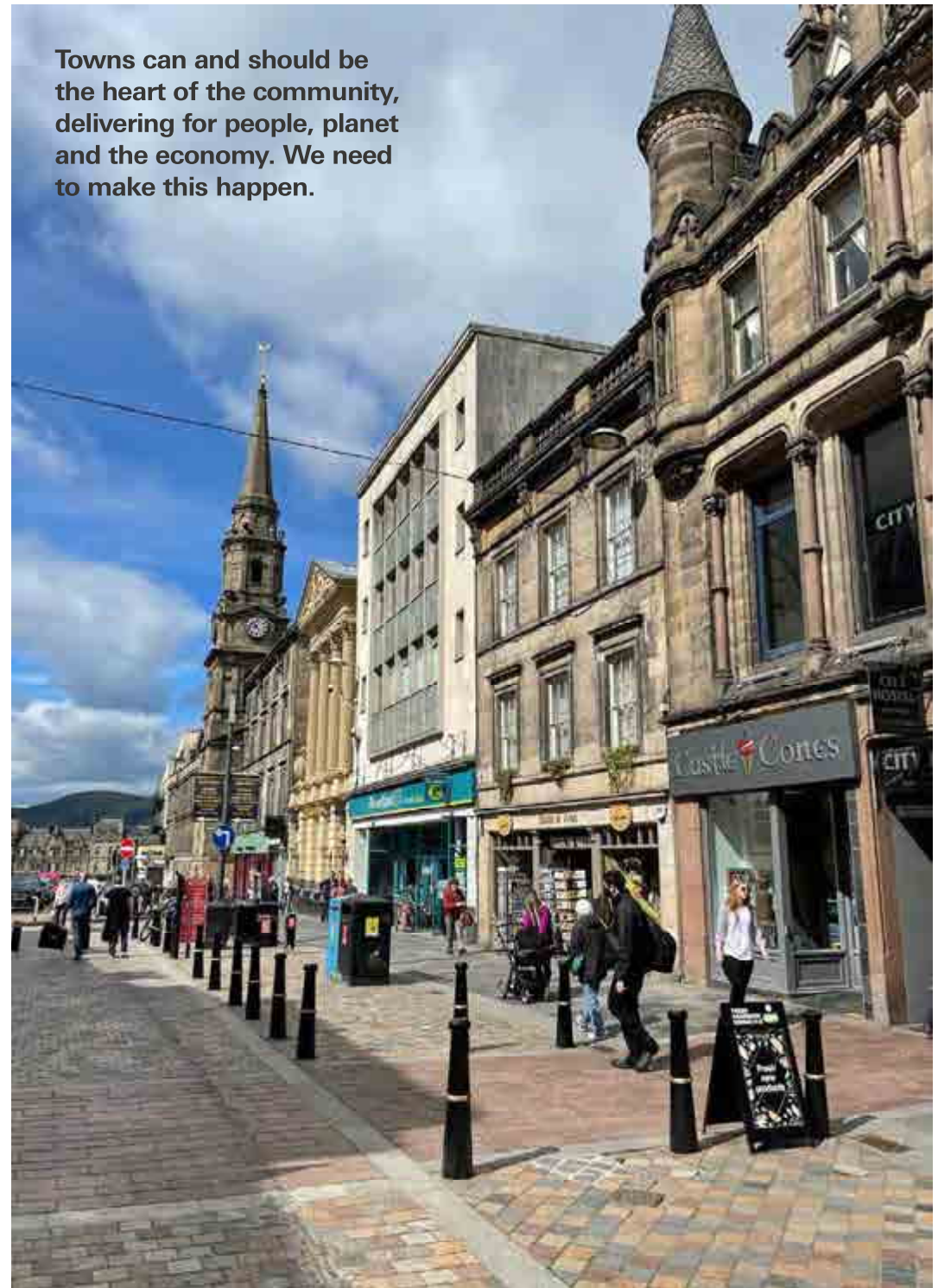
Town centres can help deliver on these priorities. They can also be a key contributor to social and economic renewal from COVID-19 and help build a fairer and more resilient society in a post-Brexit world.

The current narrative is too often about the decline or death of the town centre. This is not the case in many of our towns but we can do more and better for all towns and all in their communities.

Many town centres are providing valuable functions and people and communities value and identify with them.

We have to allow towns to achieve their full potential to deliver a modern, sustainable, equitable, inclusive, fairer, healthier and greener Scotland. This requires hard choices and a high level of commitment from communities, local and national governments and from our business, third sector and community organisations. Above all it requires people to collaborate and work together for their town and town centre.

Towns can and should be the heart of the community, delivering for people, planet and the economy. We need to make this happen.



INNER MORAY FIRTH LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN – KEY LEARNINGS

Status

In Progress, to be published early 2022

City-wide Placemaking Priorities

- Support the regeneration of Inverness City Centre by directing footfall-generating uses there first and limit further out of town retail development.
- Celebrate the City centre as a core of living, working and leisure destinations for the Highland region.
- Deliver the City's housing needs in strategic expansion areas so that services and infrastructure can be effectively planned and delivered.
- Focus housing development within places that reduce the need to travel and where it is easy to walk, wheel, cycle or use public transport to reverse the trend of car-dependent suburban housing development.
- Bolster existing neighbourhood service centres and employment destinations by ensuring new development is conveniently located and well connected with them.
- Prioritise transport improvements that get more people walking, cycling and using public transport.
- Safeguard & enhance the green networks that run through the City and those that surround it.

Central Inverness

Significant focus continues on the revitalisation of the city centre as a vibrant multi-functioning place to live, work and visit.

During the lifetime of the last plan key regeneration sites have been the focus of development activity:

- Midmills Campus residential development and artists studios,
- Demolition of Longman College and construction of the new Justice Centre nearby,
- Commencement of development of a hotel on the site of the open two-storey car park on Rose Street
- Commencement of the redevelopment of the former swimming pool site at Glebe Street into a hotel;
- Planned regeneration of Inverness Rail Station, the Victorian Market and various other public realm and travel improvement projects.

Central to the city centre strategy for tourism, a cornerstone of the Highland economy, is the creation of a major new tourist attraction at Inverness Castle. The relocation of the Scottish Courts Service to the new Longman Justice Centre has opened up the opportunity to create a modern facility that complements other city centre attractions and draws in visitors.

Temporary COVID-19 measures have demonstrated that the transport network can continue to function, whilst more space can be shared for people walking, wheeling and cycling in these major footfall-attracting areas.

A range of other key opportunities are either planned or have been realised in recent years that aim to get people living back in the city centre.

Such an approach contributes to improving the district's vibrancy and vitality and provides opportunities for sustainable living, working and leisure. This theme remains a key priority and as such land is identified to support city centre living, employment uses and diversity of other uses and attractions on offer in the heart of the Highland capital, a key component of which will be establishing new, and enhancing existing connections with the city's coastline from the River Ness downstream to the Moray Firth.

Key regeneration opportunities are also identified at the prison, the former landfill site and the harbour, which may be constrained by the coastal and river environment it is located within.

These strategic projects and vision for the city centre are reflected in the Placemaking Priorities and site preferences which will help to deliver the overarching spatial strategy for the city.

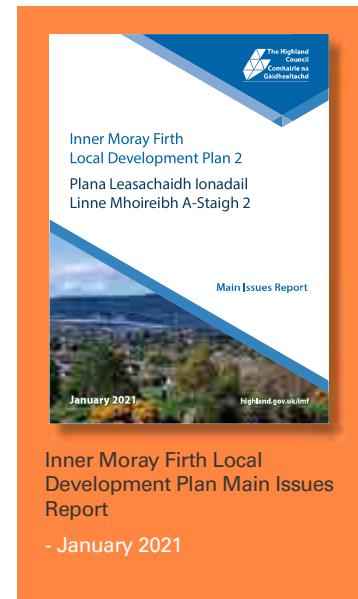
Placemaking Priorities

- Consolidate the city centre and prioritise urban living through strategic expansion of residential-led mixed use development to the north (Longman Phase 1) and reuse/repurposing of existing buildings (e.g. empty and under utilised floorspace above retail units), while safeguarding retail, food and drink and business opportunities.
- Increase employment opportunities by supporting redevelopment of existing buildings for office, business, healthcare and community uses.
- Support diversification of the economy, including the creation of new and unique visitor and leisure attractions, including Inverness Harbour expansion, which make best use of existing assets and improve the urban environment.
- Embed walking and cycling as the logical choice and easiest way to make every journey, including delivering active travel and public realm improvements across the city centre.
- Meet regional and local industrial land supply needs at the former Longman landfill site.
- Harness the district's built and cultural heritage assets to ensure the area is distinctive and attractive.

Identified Sites

- IN66: Diriebught Depot: Housing
- IN67 Porterfield Prison: Mixed Use (Housing, Tourism)
- IN68: Inverness Central: Mixed Use (Housing, Business, Retail, Community)
- IN69 Inverness Castle & Bridge Street: Mixed Use (Housing, Business, Retail, Community, Tourism)
- IN70: Glebe Street: Expansion: Mixed Use (Hotel, Business, Leisure)
- IN71: Shore Street City Centre Expansion: Mixed Use (Housing, Business, Retail, Industry, Community)
- IN72: Harbour Gate: Mixed Use (Port, Marine, Commercial, Cultural, Tourism)
- IN73: Former Longman Landfill: Mixed Use (Business, Industry, Temporary Stop Site for Travelling People)
- IN74: Former Longman Landfill East: Industry
- IN75: Stadium Road West: Mixed Use (Office, Business, Industry)
- IN76: Stadium Road East: Mixed Use (Business, Industry)

Significant focus continues on the revitalisation of the city centre as a vibrant multi-functioning place to live, work and visit.



All of the preferred sites are previously developed or involve reclamation and therefore represent an efficient use of "brownfield" land.

In most cases the list of supported uses are more viable and/or more needed than the current use(s) of the land or buildings and will help central Inverness regenerate and revitalise.

Coastal and fluvial flood risk issues may affect the suggested expansion at the harbour and this will need to be assessed and debated through the Plan process in partnership with SEPA and SNH as more definitive development proposals emerge.

HIGHLAND INDICATIVE REGIONAL SPATIAL STRATEGY TO 2050 – KEY LEARNINGS

Introduction

This Indicative Regional Spatial Strategy (IRSS) showcases the unique set of assets and resources that the Highlands will contribute to the national setting and how Highland Council will collaborate with the Scottish Government and partner agencies at a national and local level to deliver on strategic national development priorities, national outcomes and delivery mechanisms to achieve a long-term sustainable vision for Highland in the period to 2050.

Highland and particularly Inverness City are considered to offer a vital role across Scotland in relation to their function as a regional hub for a multitude of island and remote communities. It is imperative that Highland's significant assets and services are recognised for their wider regional and national importance and, as such, that they are well maintained, modern and fit for purpose.

Vision & Spatial Strategy
By 2050, Highland will be an exemplar carbon action region by optimising its unique, rich and diverse assets to lead national emissions reduction targets. Our unmatched land, coast and water environment and natural, built and cultural heritage – which define the character of Highland – will be safeguarded, enhanced and internationally celebrated.

Highland will have transitioned to a green, circular economy which maximises the value of existing core industries, helps attract new and emerging sectors and diversifies jobs and skills. This will maintain and enhance Highland's role as a global

centre of excellence for renewable energy innovation and generation and one of the most attractive sustainable leisure, recreation and tourism destinations in the world.

Highland communities will function as networks of locally resilient and self-supporting places with equality of access to housing, education, healthcare, work, food, energy, transport, culture, recreation, leisure and virtual connections. Optimising how our existing infrastructure supports and sustains the Highland population and the wider Highlands and Islands region will be an ongoing priority.

In delivering this vision, we will collaborate with our communities and partner agencies, recognising the need for a just transition which is fair and equal.

Climate Change: What development will we need to address climate change?
Highland Council fully acknowledges the impacts of the changing climate and is already proactively responding to it by changing the way it operates. In May 2019 the Council declared a

Climate and Ecological Emergency which commits the Highland Council to becoming a net zero carbon region by 2025. This declaration has redefined the Council approach to future planning and is now embedded at the heart of all services; as even reaching the target in the declaration, the Council accepts the climate is going to change and they must prepare to adapt to this evolving situation.

It is envisaged that Highland will transition to become an exemplar carbon action region. Highland will continue to play a disproportionately significant role in delivering the national requirements for climate change due to the area's natural assets, renewables generation capacity and the qualities and characteristics that uniquely define the region.

It is hoped that a more robust national policy context for renewables can be provided to assist Highland in refining its strategy for this regionally important industry and the contribution this makes to a broad range of national outcomes.

The development of a hydrogen economy is expected to be crucial to decarbonisation and there is a key opportunity for Highland to play a major role in achieving this for the nation.

Quality of life, health and wellbeing: How can planning best support our quality of life, health and wellbeing in the future?

In recent years across Highland, like the rest of Scotland, there has been significant expansion in urban living across our towns and city, and a gradual but persistent decline in the population of the rural areas. This population change has been driven by changing lifestyles and social attitudes, with more people seeking to live in closer proximity to retail, services, employment and education as well as leisure, culture and healthcare facilities, which in turn allows them to spend less time travelling and more time with family and friends.

Currently, alongside a network of towns which provide key local services, **a number of strategic services and facilities are located within Inverness city which acts as an important regional hub for**

the wider Highlands and Islands region.

Meanwhile, virtual connections are growing increasingly important for modernising access to services and facilities, and, with the distances between many Highland communities, the opportunities and potential benefits are significant.

Highland has a substantial existing building stock across both the urban and rural setting, the appropriate use and reuse of which will also help to advance the area's net zero ambition, alongside significant improvements to its quality and energy efficiency.

Resilient economy: What does planning need to do to enable development and investment in our economy so that it benefits everyone?

With its internationally renowned natural and heritage resources, Highland will become increasingly pivotal in Scotland's transition to an environmentally sustainable economy.

Highland region will aim to capitalise on opportunities to

further diversify the economy and support it with a high-performing digital network. This will reinforce stability and productivity, giving rise to a culture of innovation, research and development linked with academia and training. The profile of Highland will contribute to increased international trade and attract inward investment.

Highland's capability to generate vast amounts of renewable energy will form a basis for the transition to a green, circular economy which maximises the value of Highland's core and emerging industries and minimises the environmental footprint of the area's transport, waste and energy usage.

The Highlands is one of the most recognisable and reputable tourism destinations in the world and attracts an increasing number of domestic and international visitors.

To ensure the highest possible experience, value and longevity of sustainable tourism for the region and Scotland, a coordinated national approach backed up by



'Highland Indicative Regional Spatial Strategy to 2050' (the Highland IRSS)

- April 2021

HIGHLAND INDICATIVE REGIONAL SPACIAL STRATEGY TO 2050 – KEY LEARNINGS (CONT'D)

campaigns and investment are required for managing, educating and supporting the sector in the most sustainable way.

The challenge is to support innovative infrastructure improvements which will support the continual growth in sustainable leisure, recreation and tourism and provide high-quality year-round employment opportunities.

Special character:
How can planning improve, protect and strengthen the special character of our places?

Highland provides a unique and unparalleled opportunity to provide an environment which can be celebrated nationally in terms of its special character and its ability to offer resources for the delivery of carbon reduction in support of wider national interests. It has a myriad of unmatched land, coast and water environment and natural, built and cultural heritage assets.

The special character of Highland will continue to support places and communities and it will play a key role in delivering the Place Principle, making our communities places where people want to live and ensuring the long-term economic development of Highland.

It is vital therefore that the Highland Council and the Scottish Government work in collaboration with all relevant partners to ensure that our communities feel engaged in shaping their future and are empowered to benefit from the opportunities provided by the unique special character of Highland.

Infrastructure:
What infrastructure do we need to plan and build to realise our long-term aspirations?

Effective infrastructure is fundamental for a thriving economy, for communities, and to address climate change. Highland partners understand the need to be proactive and innovative in addressing these issues primarily by making optimum use of our existing infrastructure and assets while supporting careful and essential investment in new infrastructure.

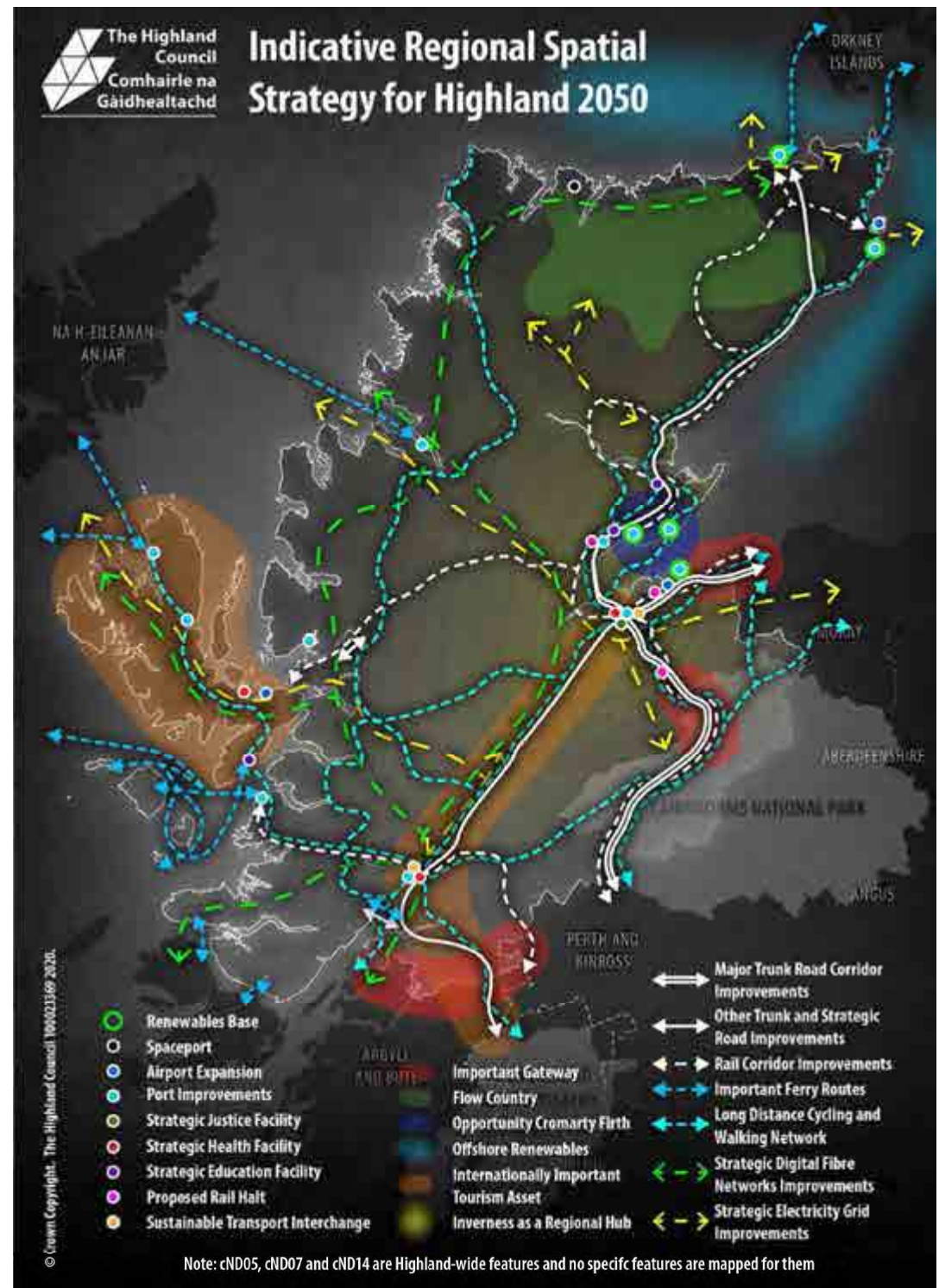
The unique character and scale of the Highlands and Islands region provides significant challenges for the delivery and maintenance of infrastructure, particularly transport. But this also means ongoing investment in lifeline connections is essential for equality of access to services and rural repopulation.

The Council strongly recognises the value of improving the entire transport system to accommodate a modal shift to a **fully integrated sustainable travel network** serving all communities, regions and traveller type.

One of the key candidate national developments for infrastructure is for our communities to function as locally resilient and self-supporting networks. **Along with identifying and prioritising opportunities for vacant and derelict sites in terms of a 'brownfield first approach' and increasing the density of housing developments**, these combined measures will enable the Council and partner agencies to better cluster facilities and services and improve ease of access.

Alongside, the IRSS promotes a high-performing digital and virtual network as a modern standard utility, both to reduce the need to travel, and to enable equality of access to services and business opportunities.

Infrastructure considerations need to reflect more than just the typical focus in the past of road and rail assets, to also include blue and green infrastructure, active travel and digital. In Highland's instance, Inverness has been developed as a principal hub and economic driver of the region.

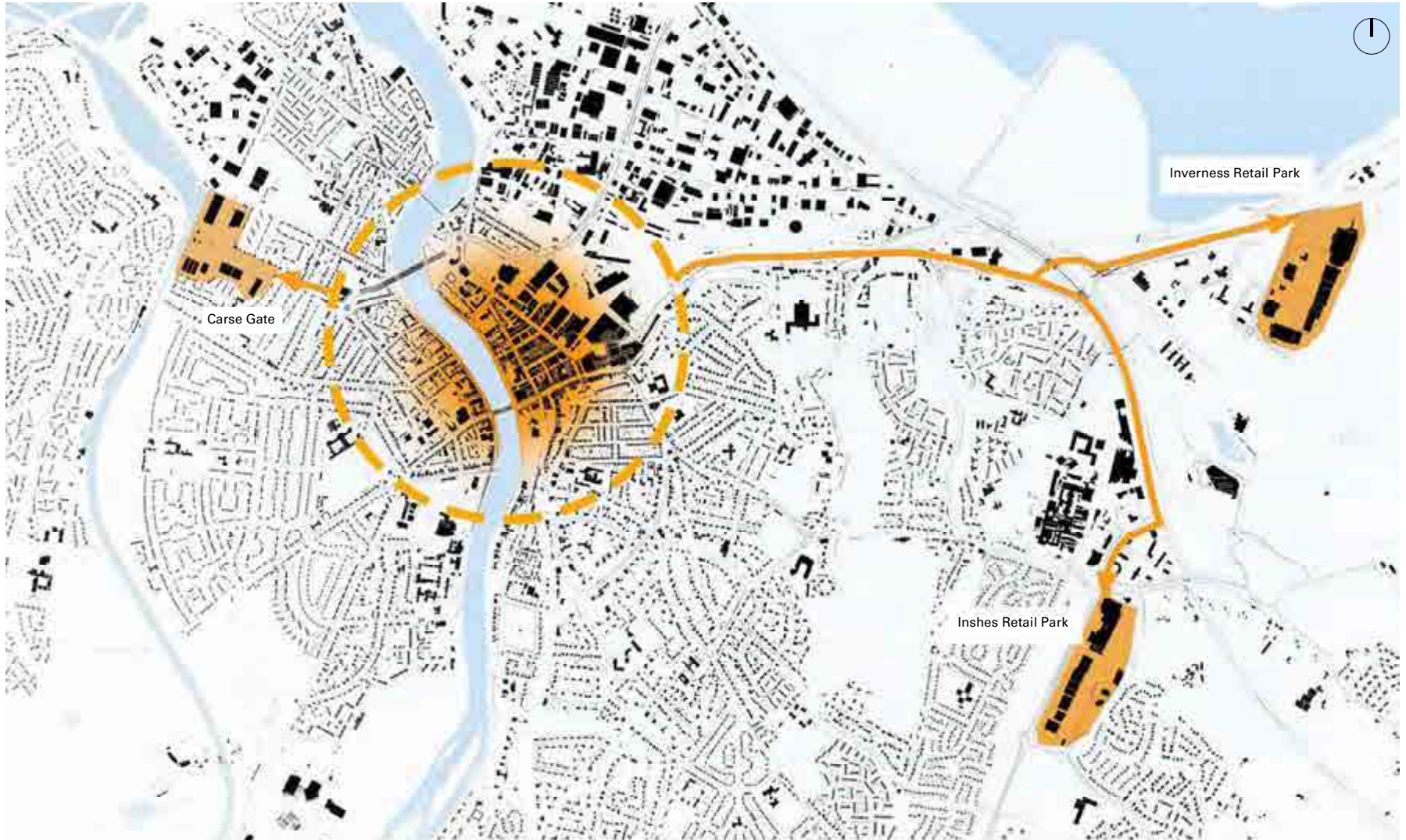


COMPETING RETAIL OFFERS

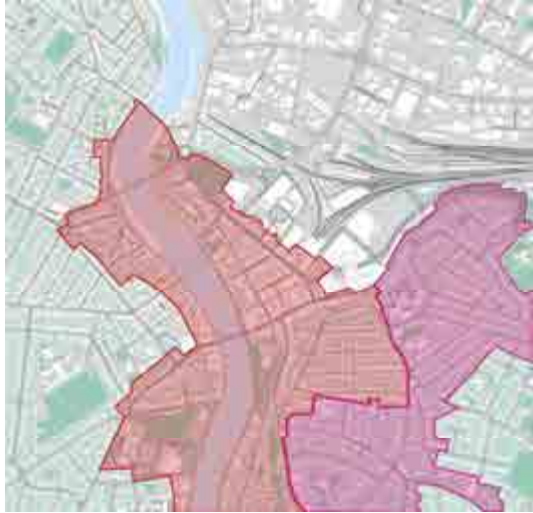
Inverness, like most of our towns and cities has an over reliance of retail at its core, and has seen a decline in demand for this type of space.

Changing habits such as the expansion of online shopping, exacerbated by the current pandemic have contributed to this along with the proliferation of 'out of town' retail parks that offer convenience for car users but limit access to low car ownership groups. In the case of Inverness, there are three such developments that together draw people from the city centre or allow them to bypass it altogether.

In order to revitalise the city centre, a more diverse series of uses need to be introduced to reverse the over reliance on an ever declining retail market.




ANALYSIS — HERITAGE ASSETS

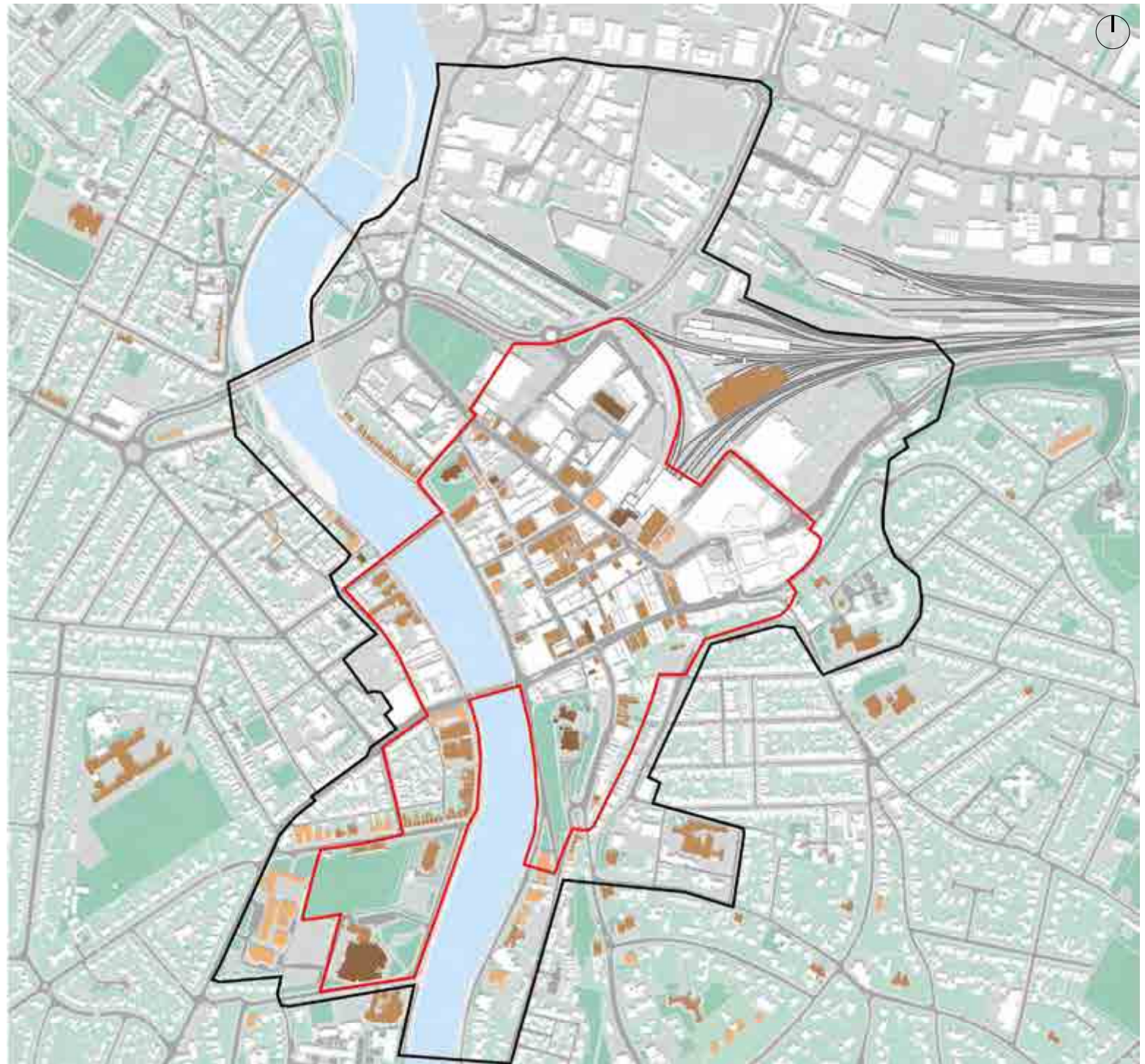


Inverness City Conservation Areas

Inverness benefits from a proliferation of heritage assets that provide an attractive backdrop to city life and demonstrate a level of ambition that any new development should aim to match.

The majority of the study area falls within the two conservation areas (OldTown and The Crown) as shown above.

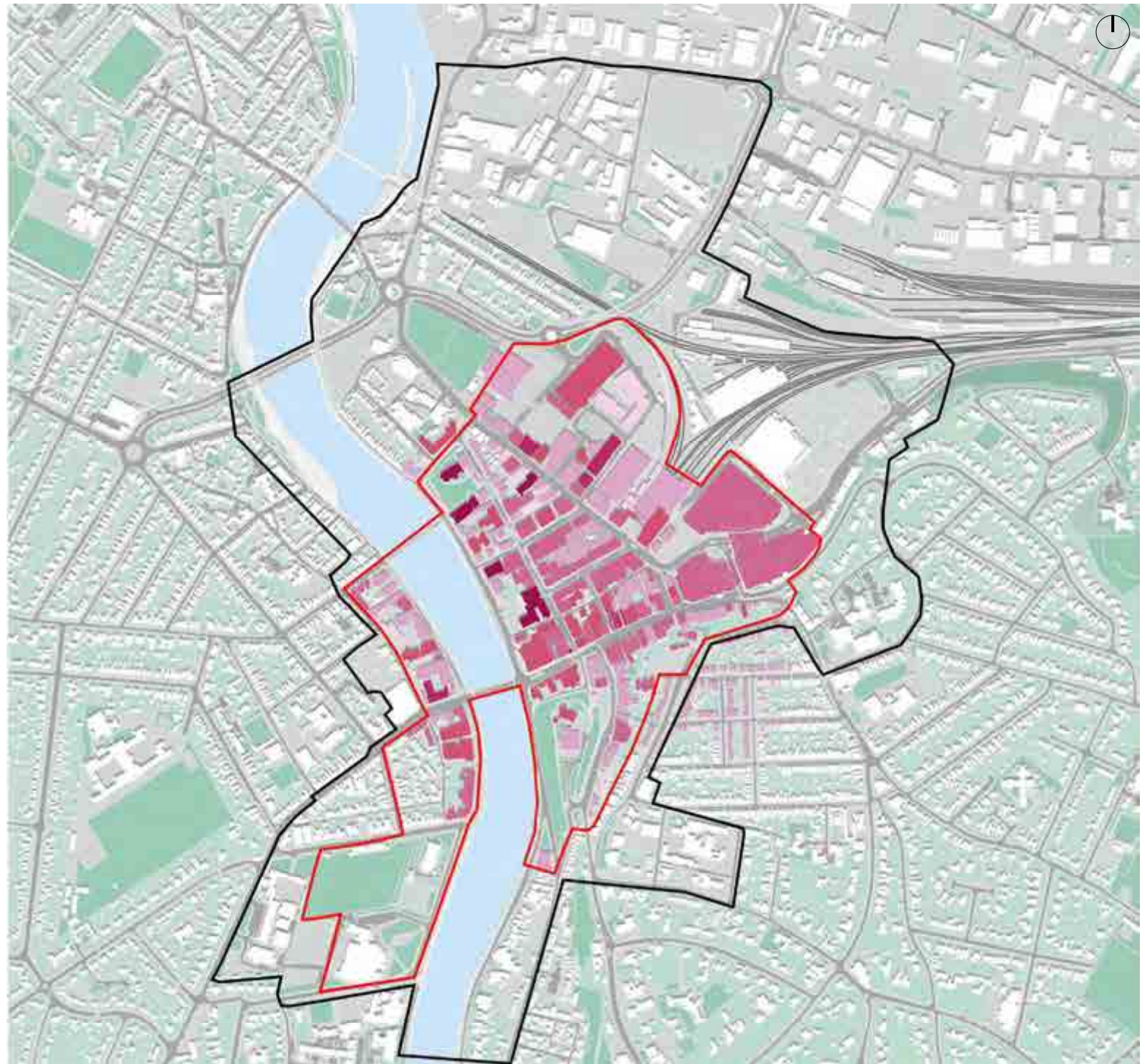
-  Grade A Listed
-  Grade B Listed
-  Grade C Listed
-  Old Town Conservation Area
-  The Crown Conservation Area



ANALYSIS — BUILDING HEIGHTS

The majority of the city centre from the river to Academy Street is between 3 and 4 storeys in height, with the occasional building reaching 6 storeys.

This analysis highlights opportunities to perhaps add height where appropriate to bring greater levels of urban living to Inverness.



ANALYSIS — EXISTING USES



The adjacent maps demonstrate the current distribution of key uses throughout Inverness city centre.



Retail



Leisure / Food & Beverage



Culture / Government



Hotel / B&B



Commercial



Residential (at ground floor)

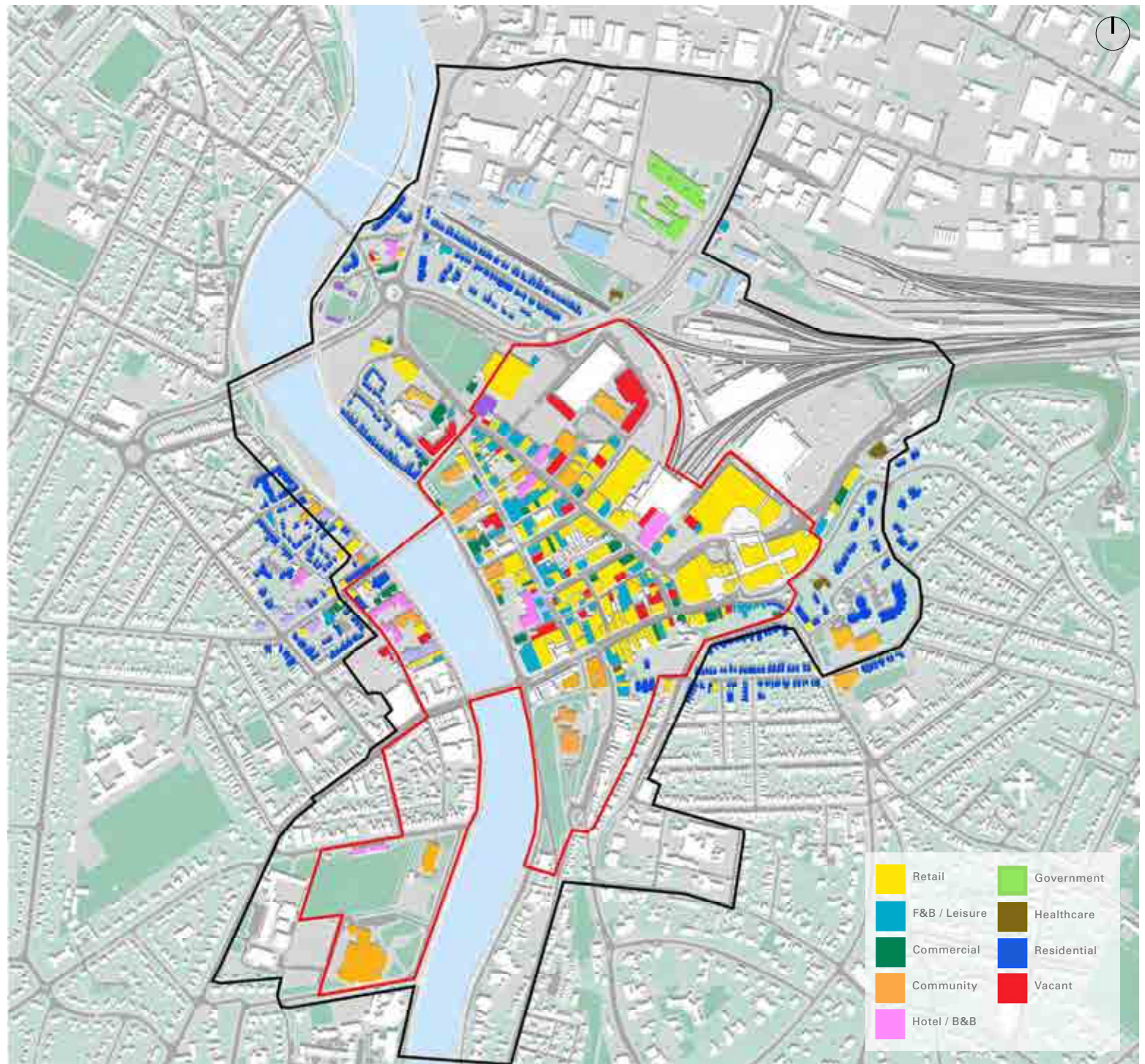
ANALYSIS — COMBINED USES



Vacant Properties

The combined uses map demonstrates that, while there are a number of varied uses in the city centre, there is a dominance of retail space and a lack of city centre living, essential to repopulate, bring vibrancy and support the ambition for an improved evening economy.

Increased levels of residential accommodation would also support the recommendations of the recent Scottish Government publication 'A New Future for Scotland's Town Centres' that calls for the creation of **20 minute neighbourhoods**, allowing people to most of the services and facilities that they need in their daily life, all of which are present in or around Inverness city centre.



ANALYSIS — PUBLIC TRANSPORT

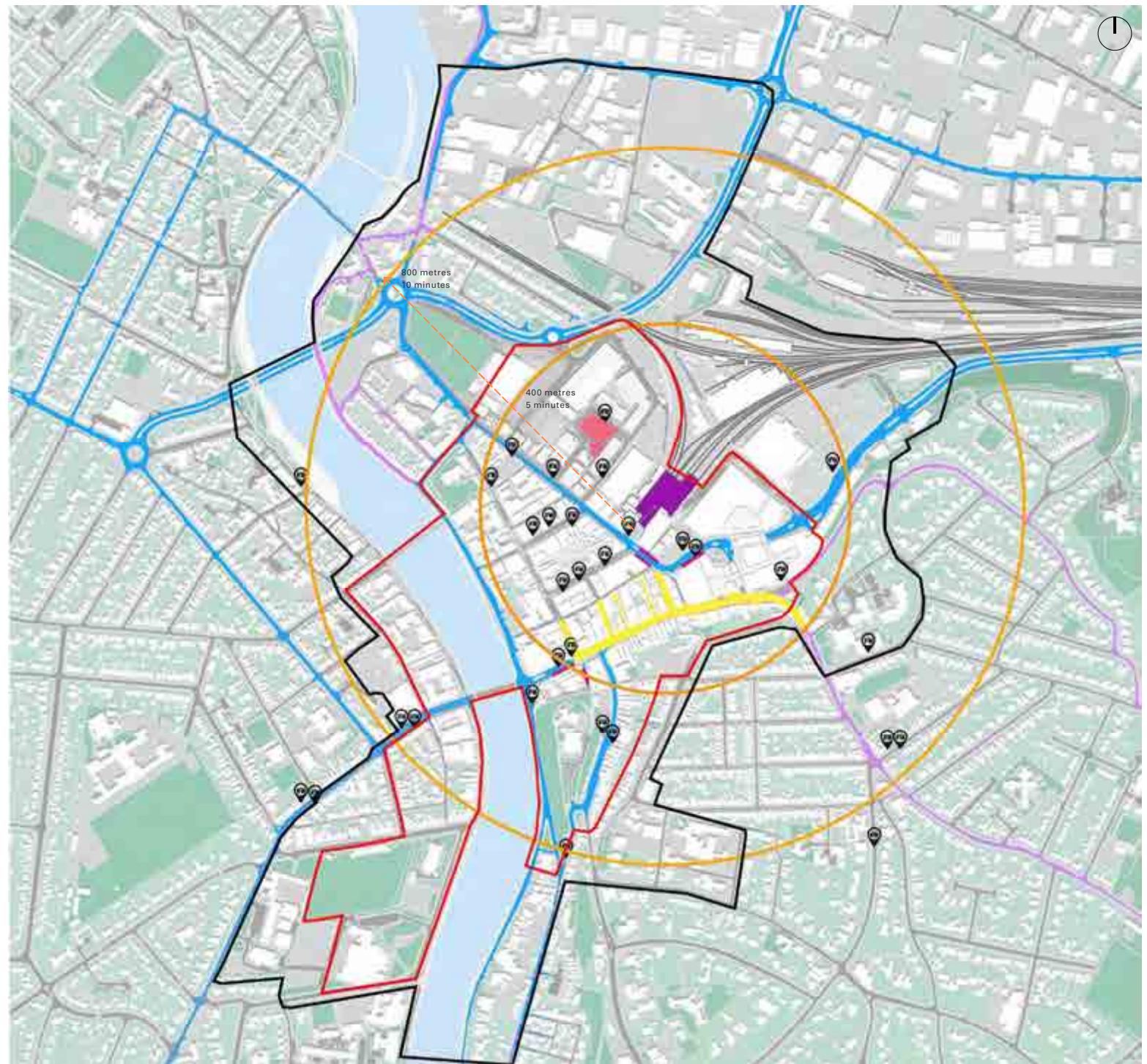
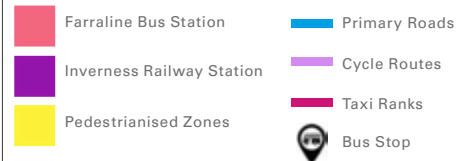
Inverness city centre has a number of public transport options;

Train-
Connects to Wick and Thurso to the North, Kyle of Lochalsh to the West, Aberdeen to the East and Dundee, Edinburgh, Glasgow and beyond to the south, including the Caledonian Sleeper service to London.

Bus-
Local services connect to outlying neighbourhoods, villages and towns and national services, centred on Farraline Bus Station cover the majority of Scottish cities and beyond to London.

The access to and from the bus station leads to increased congestion at peak travel times within the city centre. This will be partly alleviated by the new dedicated bus link from the station to Rose Street, facilitated by the new hotel development.

Owing to the rural nature of the surrounding areas, there is still a dependence on the car for travel to and from the city centre. An improved public transport network would perhaps reduce this and make the city more accessible to low car ownership groups.



ANALYSIS — CAR PARKING PROVISION

Inverness city centre is very well served for car parking as can be seen in the figures below:
(denotes distance / walking time from train station)

North (A82):

| | |
|--|--------------|
| Rose street Multi-storey: (300m, 4 min) | 1,016 spaces |
| Rose street Retail: (340m, 5 min) | 172 spaces |
| Train Station: | 60 spaces |
| TK Maxx: | 58 spaces |

TOTAL: 1,306 spaces
(within 5 minutes of the train station)

East (Millburn Road):

| | |
|---|------------|
| Eastgate MSCP: (300m, 4 min) | 650 spaces |
| Eastgate Falcon Gallery: (215m, 3 min) | 700 spaces |
| Morrisons (400m, 5 min) | 516 spaces |

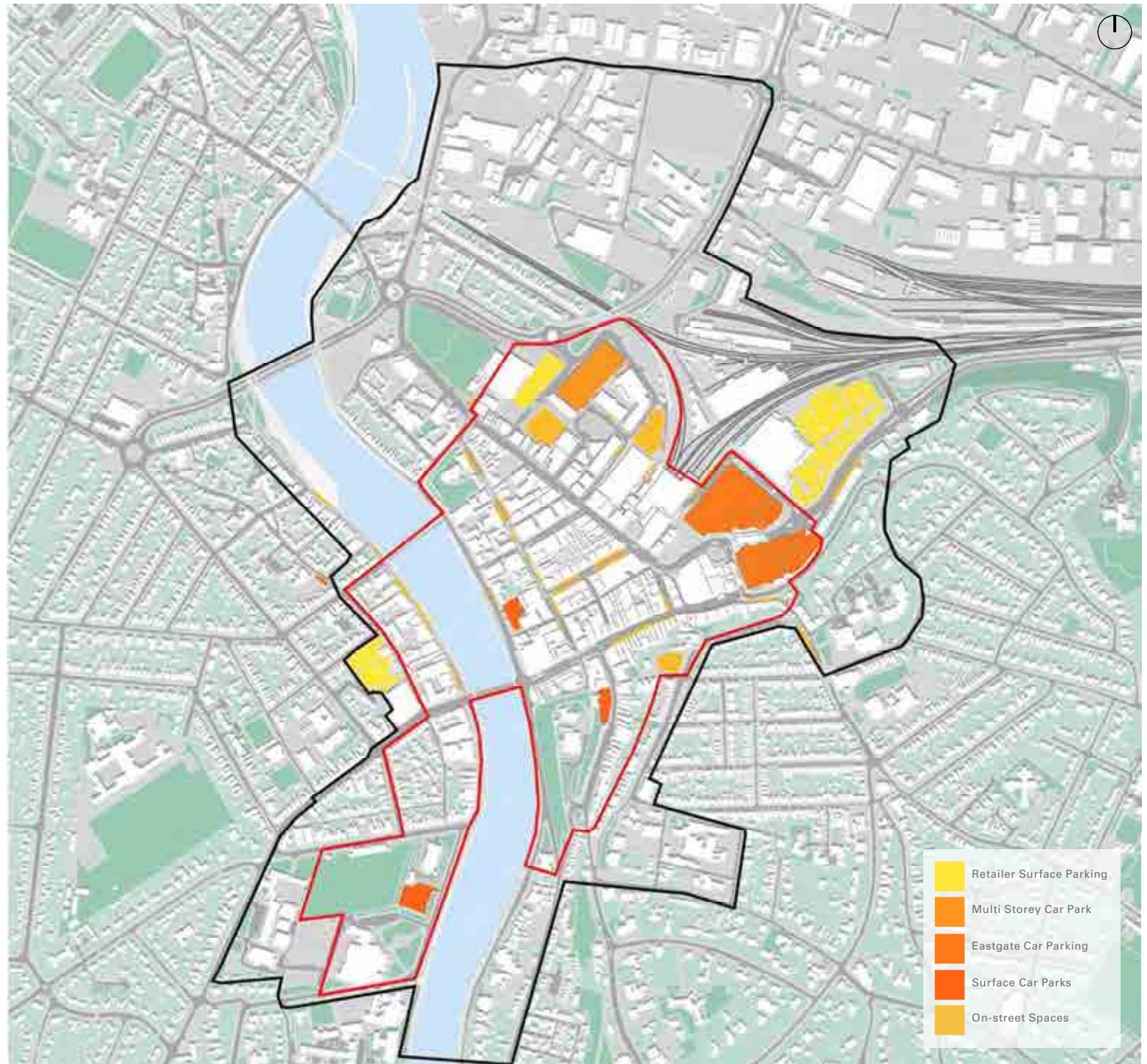
TOTAL: 1,780 spaces
(within 5 minutes of the train station)

Southwest (Ness Bridge):

| | |
|---------------------------------|-----------|
| Townhouse (370m, 5 min) | 53 spaces |
| Raining stairs (300m, 4 min) | 43 spaces |

TOTAL: 96 spaces
(within 5 minutes of the train station)

GRAND TOTAL: 3,182 spaces



ANALYSIS — URBAN REALM: ROUTES & SPACES

Inverness city centre is compact and the majority can be reached on foot within a 10 minute radius.

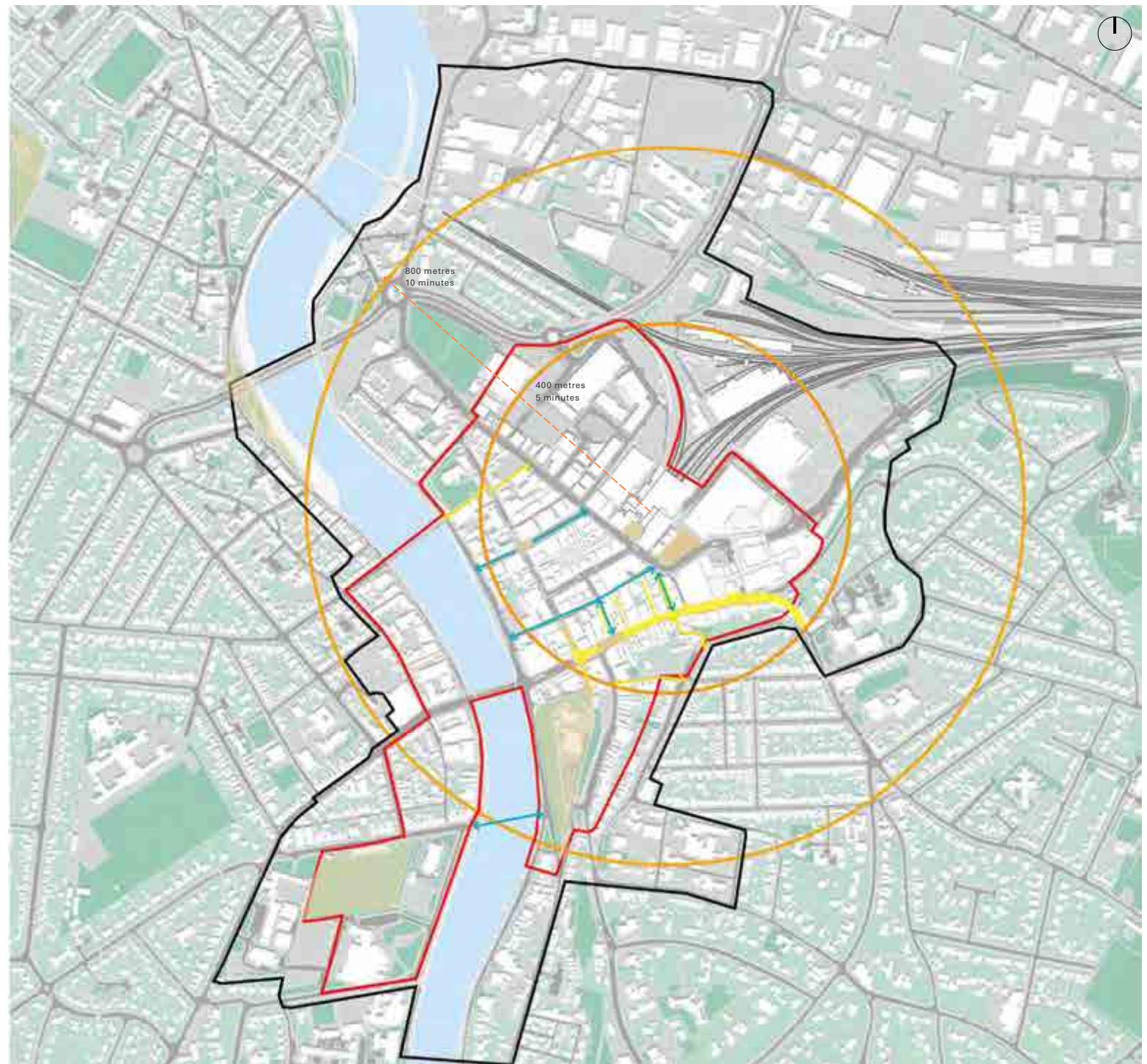
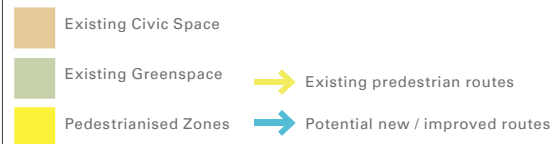
The majority of the High Street is pedestrianised, together with Inglis Street and the first section of Church Street.

Academy Street is the key east-west route through the city centre and connects from the A82 via the train station to the eastgate Shopping Centre.

The current links from this main artery to the river (Baron Taylor's Street / Bank Lane, Fraser Street / Queensgate and Church Lane / School Lane) could be improved and strengthen connectivity to one of the city centre's greatest assets.

There is a lack of civic and greenspace generally within the city centre. Falcon Square could provide much more than it currently offers if the impact of the existing traffic lanes could be mitigated along with interventions to provide enclosure and activity.

The largest greenspaces are the two graveyards and so the potential to introduce some new greenspace that could incorporate seating and play areas would be a welcome addition.



ANALYSIS — URBAN GRAIN



Mapping the development of Inverness city centre.

Historically, High Street, Academy Street, Church Street and Castle Street have been the principal thoroughfares within the city centre as can be seen in the adjacent map of 1821.

The following century saw considerable development around these streets, where new routes to the river were formed and the city expanded on the opposite bank of the river, as can be seen in the 1932 map.

Today, this layout still forms the backbone of the city centre, but the large scale development of the Eastgate has been added, along with the only large scale civic space, Falcon Square.

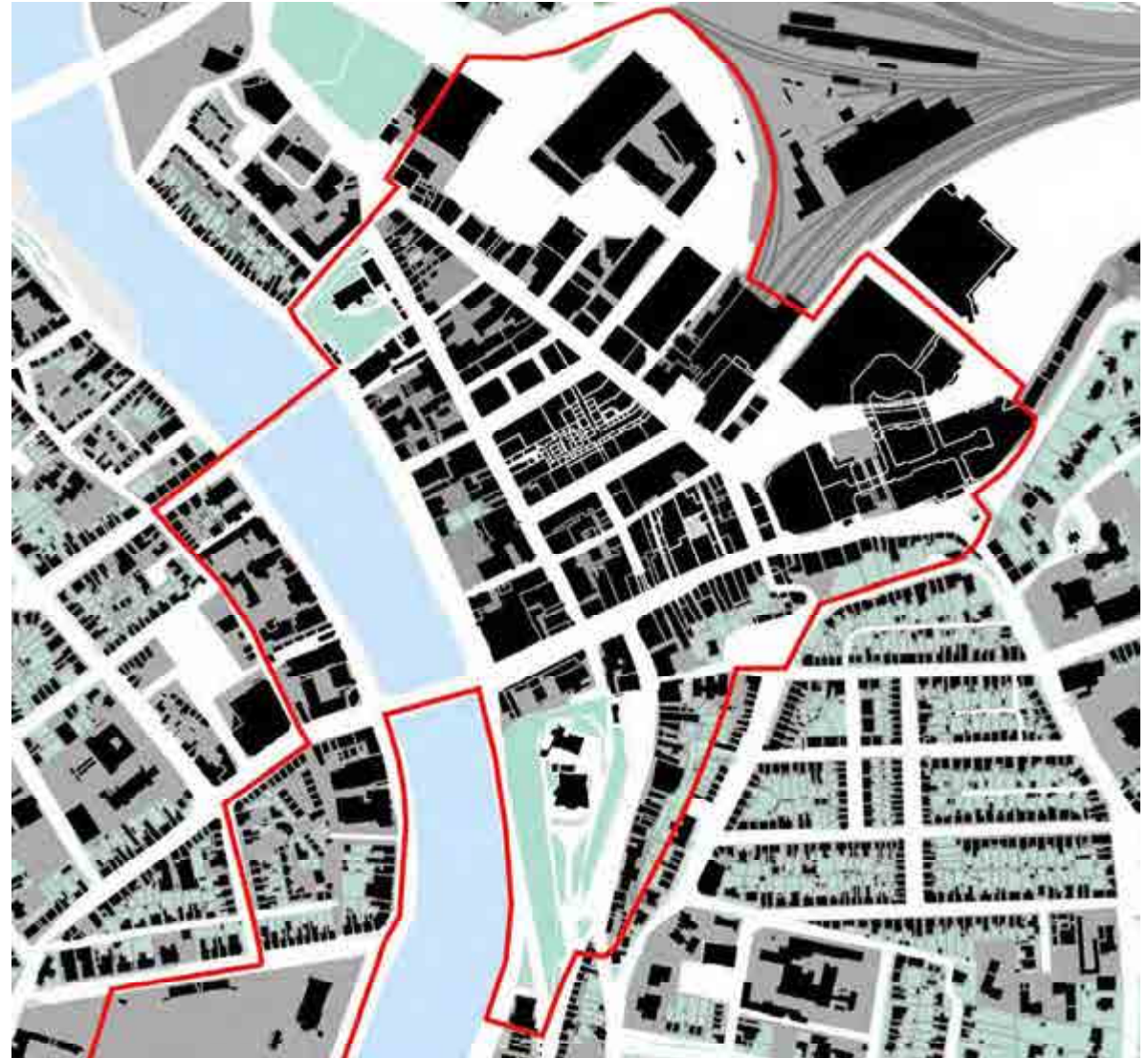
The buildings that framed Castle Street on the left hand side, present in both the 1821 and 1932 maps have been replaced with a landscaped bank, leaving the street one sided but opening up views to the Castle in its elevated position.



1821



1932

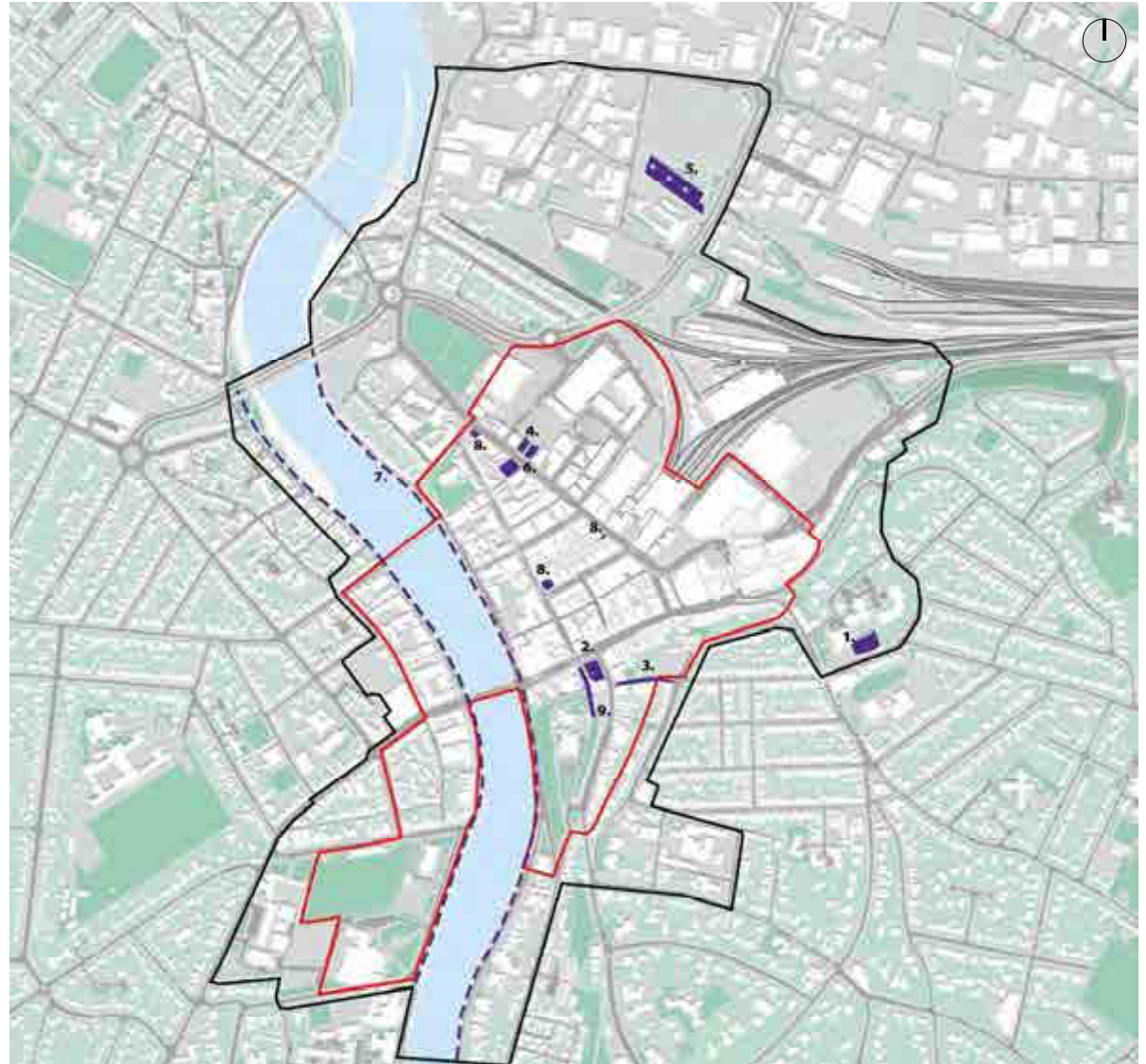


2021

APPENDIX C - POSITIVE MOVES

As part of this study, it is important to acknowledge that a number of recent developments from infrastructure improvements and refurbishments of heritage assets to the establishment of successful new local businesses have made a significant contribution to the life of the city centre. The key examples of these are listed below and illustrated in the following pages.

1. **Wasps Creative Academy**
2. **The Town House**
3. **Raining's Stairs**
4. **Rose Street Foundry**
5. **Inverness Justice Centre**
6. **92 Academy St & Wyvern House**
7. **River Ness Flood Defences**
8. **Recent Food & Beverage Offers**
9. **Castle Brae Steps**





POSITIVE MOVES
WASPS CREATIVE
ACADEMY
MIDMILLS BUILDING,
STEPHEN'S STREET

Inverness Creative Academy is a £5.7m project that transforms two B-listed former school buildings on the old Inverness Royal Academy site in the Crown area of the city into the largest creative facility for artists, designers, makers, creative industries, cultural social enterprises and the community in the Scottish Highlands.

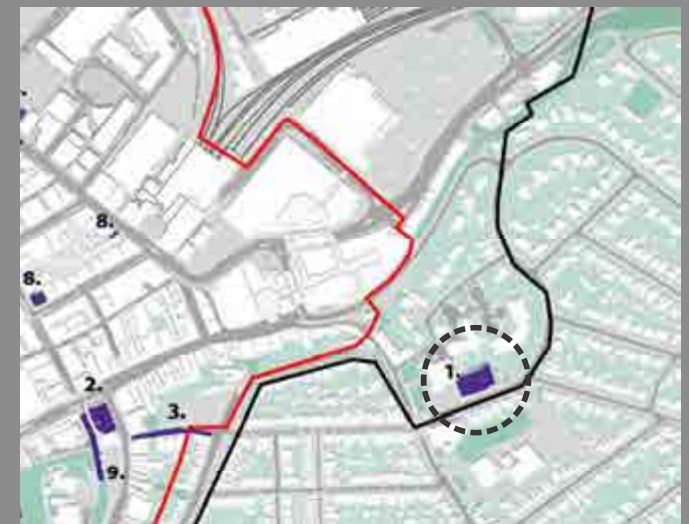
This is the largest creative hub in the Highlands, providing space for artists, designers, makers, creative industries, arts organisations and cultural social enterprises.

The two buildings currently provide 3,200 m2 in floor area and therefore have the capacity to make a considerable contribution

to local heritage regeneration and to the growth of the wider creative economy in the Highlands.

This project is being led by Wasps, Scotland's largest provider of creative workspace. Wasps is home to the largest creative community in Scotland including 900 visual artists, 25 arts charities and 33 creative businesses at 19 sites from the Scottish borders to the Shetland Islands.

A new public café within the restored former assembly hall is due to open in Autumn 2021.





POSITIVE MOVES THE TOWN HOUSE HIGH STREET

The Victorian Grade A-listed town house, located in the heart of the city centre, built in 1882, has been fully refurbished and restored to its former glory following a significant renovation project by Highland Council.

It was originally opened by the second son of Queen Victoria, Alfred as a civic centre and made its mark on history by hosting the first cabinet meeting of Prime Minister Lloyd George's British government ever held outside London in 1921.

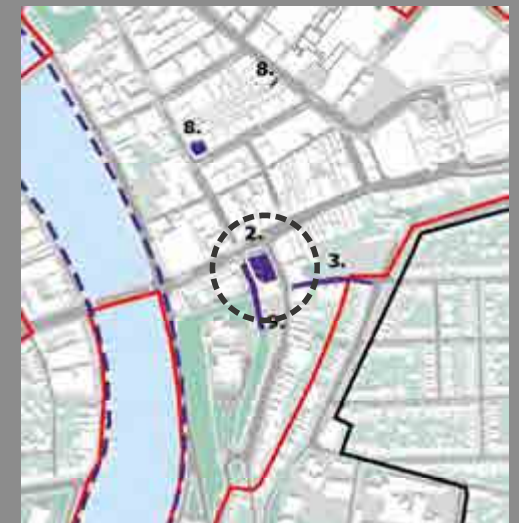
During the initial two phases of the works, more than £4million was spent renovating both the west wing and the main façade.

The stained glass windows throughout the building were replaced as repairs were conducted on the buildings stonework and roof.

The interior staircase, chamber and main hall also underwent an extensive facelift, recreating the colour palette used when the building first opened.

Conservation workers also spent several weeks hand washing and polishing the chandeliers scattered through the building and several works of art.

The works were finally completed in May of 2021, following a delay caused by the Covid-19 pandemic.



"Phase three of the works has shown what a beautiful sandstone building we have in Castle Street. The red sandstone building has quite a spectacular roof line... It's a joy to see this project completed and for this building to stand for generations to come."

Cllr. Helen Carmichael, Provost of Inverness



POSITIVE MOVES RAINING'S STAIRS CASTLE STREET

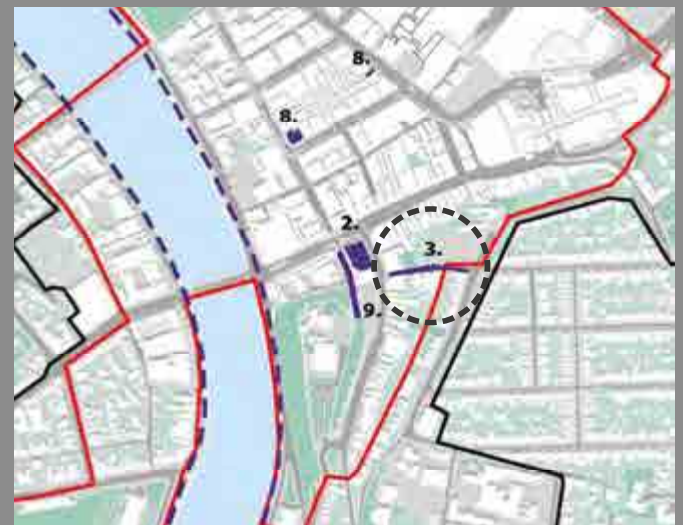
The recent Raining's Stairs development provides 16 flats and one commercial unit split over individual blocks which are designed to suit the challenging topography of the city centre site.

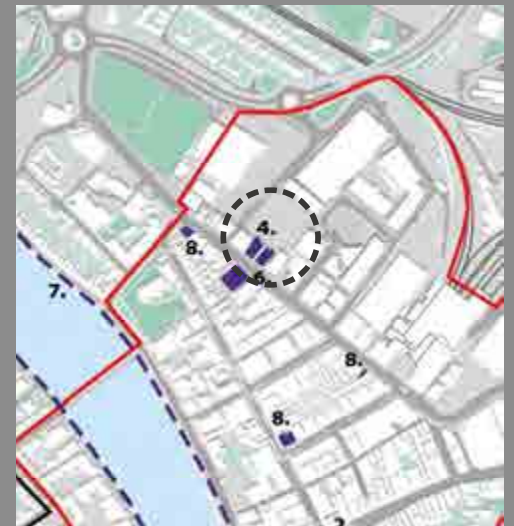
With the use of contemporary materials of steel wall and roof cladding along side natural materials of stone and timber the development is a modern version of the traditional, the pitched roof forms, tones and colours of the proposals reflect that of the local vernacular and emulate the surrounding buildings.

The topography of the site and existing stairs have been used to provide access to the development whilst also improving and defining the public route, strengthening connections between the city centre and the Crown.

The unique location of the site has created a very special environment and presents an exemplar for modern living in the centre of the city.

Clockwise from top left
View of transformed route from the Crown looking down to Castle Street // New residential accommodation now provides passive surveillance over this key pedestrian link // View of residential block with commercial unit at ground floor // View of development from Inverness Castle grounds demonstrating the buildings stepping down the slope





POSITIVE MOVES ROSE STREET FOUNDRY ACADEMY STREET

This Category B listed building is one of the most historic on Academy Street and was left unoccupied until being acquired by Cairngorm Taverns with support from Inverness Townscape Heritage Project (ITHP).

The ITHP grant of over £1 million was a significant contribution towards the total cost of renovations, which included the restoration and reinstatement of decorative mosaics to the outside of the building.

Inverness Townscape Heritage Project includes funding from the Highland Council, the National Lottery Heritage Fund and Historic Environment Scotland (HES) via the Inverness City Heritage Trust (ICHT). Built during 1893-95, the building has been sympathetically restored, with décor paying tribute to its industrial past.

The ground floor is now operating as a popular bar / restaurant, helping to revitalise the evening economy within the city centre area.



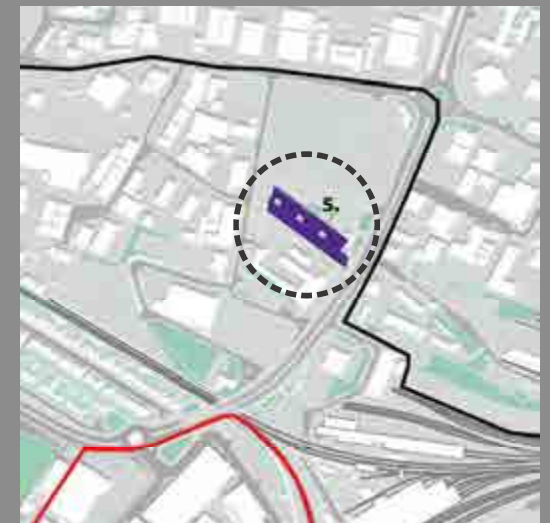
POSITIVE MOVES
INVERNESS JUSTICE
CENTRE
LONGMAN ROAD

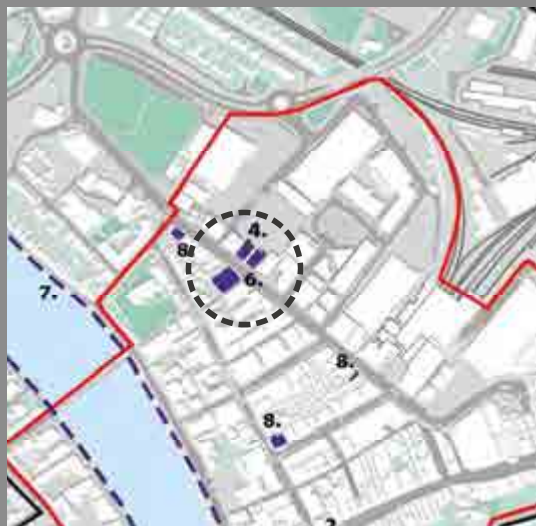
This is one of the first purpose-built Justice Centres in Scotland and opened in March 2020.

The £23 million landmark building on Longman Road houses six new court rooms and a tribunals hearing room.

Criminal proceedings are dealt with on the first floor, while civil courts and tribunals are held on the ground floor.

Construction began in 2017, bringing together integrated justice services under one roof to support victims, witnesses, litigants and other users, with specially designed facilities for children and vulnerable witnesses.





POSITIVE MOVES 92 ACADEMY STREET & WYVERN HOUSE /

92 Academy Street

Built on the site of 2 listed villas, the 5 storey building, complete with colonnade provides 31 residential units for affordable rent over two retail / F&B units. The project was completed in 2016.

Wyvern House

Located on the old Farmfoods site, Wyvern House has been redeveloped by HHA and THC and provides 37 new apartments and three commercial units.

14 of the homes will be for mid-market renters through HHA and 23 apartments available to rent through the Highland Council.

The completion of the development marks the continued regeneration of Inverness city centre and adds a boost to the availability of housing in the Highlands.

Wyvern House is a collaboration between HHA, Scottish Government, The Highland Council and City Region Deal.



POSITIVE MOVES RIVER NESS FLOOD DEFENCES

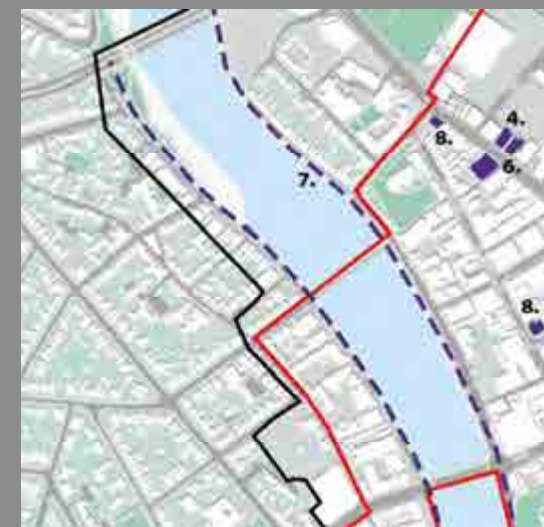
This £22m flood defence scheme by The Highland Council was designed to protect the city centre from stormwater and tidal flooding along the banks of the River Ness.

It included a £3.3M project to enhance 3km of riverside streetscape along the River Ness.

This major flood defence scheme was designed to protect 795 residential and 188 non-residential properties from the threat of tidal flooding through the installation of 4km of walls and embankments along both sides of the river bank.

The upper part of the scheme passes through the central business district of Inverness and with tourism being a major source of income for the city, the aesthetics of the scheme are particularly significant.

The design included the realignment of major utilities on both sides of the river and the introduction of complementary landscaping.



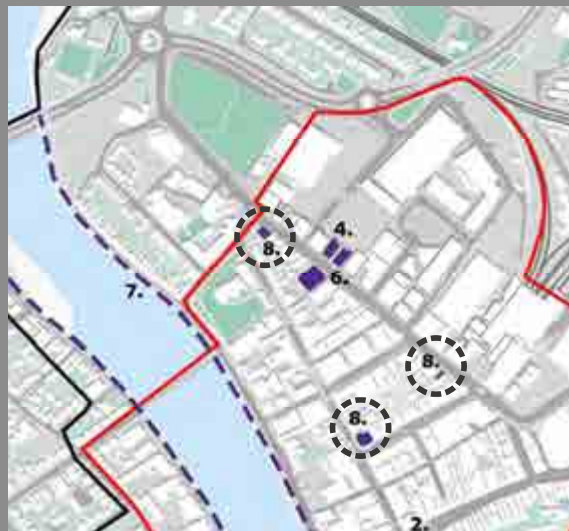


POSITIVE MOVES RECENT FOOD & BEVERAGE OFFERS

In recent years, a number of independent food and beverage offers have opened in the city centre and have diversified the offer away from the 'clone town' national chains so prevalent in other high streets.

These have been very successful and become popular with both the local population and tourists alike.

They contribute to the vibrancy of the city centre and encourage an evening economy.



Clockwise from top left
Black Isle Bar & Rooms, Church Street // Coyote
Coffee, Academy Street // McGregors Bar, Academy
Street



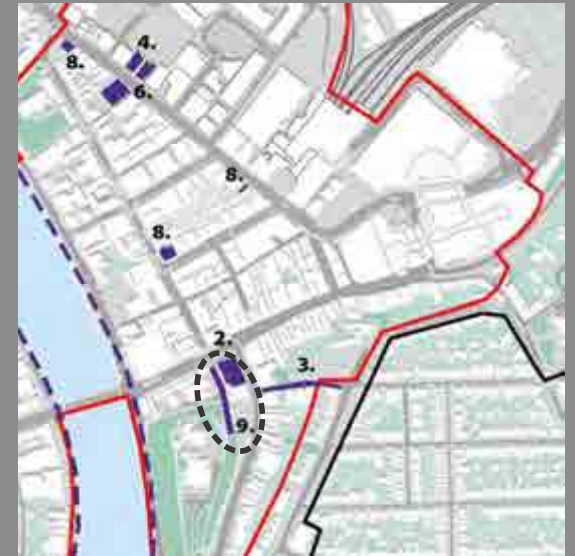
POSITIVE MOVES CASTLE BRAE STEPS CASTLE

Streetscape improvement works have been carried out to provide a more pedestrian-friendly environment leading up to Inverness Castle and Inverness Museum and Art Gallery.

The project, which involved work on Castle Wynd itself as well as the two sets of steps leading to the castle from the River Ness and from Castle Wynd, was funded by the Inverness and Highland City-Region Deal which is a joint initiative supported by up to £315 million investment from the UK and Scottish governments, the Highland Council, HIE and University of the Highland and Islands, aimed at stimulating sustainable regional economic growth.

The streetscape works have included the partial reconstruction of the existing road using natural stone sett paving, Caithness flag stone and granite kerbing. The steps to the Castle have been replaced with granite step units on one side and a ramp on the other, ensuring accessibility for all.

The steps down to Castle Road have had new granite step units installed, the landing areas have been paved with Caithness flagstones and new handrails have also been installed.



CITY REPOSITIONING STRATEGY REPORT

RETHINKING
INVERNESS

CONTENTS

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October 2021

BRIEF & METHOD

In January 2021 The Highland Council appointed Kevin Murray Associates to undertake research into the market brand position of Inverness, with the aim of developing a positioning strategy. Initially, this focused around the city centre and its prospective recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic, but as the research developed the scope grew.

The agreed methodology was to interview a sample from across a sector of tourism, retail, property and heritage sectors, particularly those able to communicate representation from their wider membership, customers and market sector. In this way, a broad perspective of perceptions could be built up and cross-referenced.

As the research progressed, two issues became much clearer:

1. Most perceptions of Inverness city related to a wider catchment than the city centre, both by tourists and other visitors and users of the city,
2. Other reasons to visit, work in, or live in Inverness are as important as tourism, for instance to ensure an adequate supply of experienced workers in a range of sectors.

As a result the interviews were broadened to cover sectors such as education, health, government and culture. The full list of interviewees is listed at Appendix A and includes people who live inside the city, including 'returners', some who live outside but work in the city, and others who are more occasional visitors.

The findings from the research were reviewed and tested at a series of workshops, to cross check their validity. The findings are explained in Section 2.

From this stage a proposition of approach was developed. This involved Repositioning Inverness in a wider sense than simply its visitor market and economic function, particularly in relation to its key role with respect to the wider Highlands and Islands.

This in turn was developed into a series of co-ordinated actions, many of which were already in train, but not necessarily aligned with each other. These are shown in Section 4.

What became apparent from the research was that

- Many important projects are already happening in Inverness – from the city centre masterplan, transport strategy, to Castle, Victorian market, Port and University.
- The main projects were not necessarily all part of a purposely aligned strategy, image and message.
- There is enormous potential for Inverness to bounce back from Covid, partly because of the pipeline of initiatives already in train, and the more open, outdoor nature of the city and its hinterland.
- There is also a greater opportunity to enhance the role the city plays within and for

the Highlands and Islands by joining up the various strategies to create a stronger, more confident and compelling place

The repositioning strategy was therefore worked up and, after testing, expressed as an ambitious combination of Step up, Shape up, Join up and the Beating heart of the highlands in Section 4. The focus is on raising the game of the city, for the benefit of the wider Highland communities in general, as well as to improve its own performance.

The delivery of this strategy, known as Rethinking Inverness, would be undertaken by a series of workstream projects, shown under four thematic headings in Section 5. These workstreams, and certainly many projects and relationships, are already established. The idea of a co-ordinating Steering Group is presented in Section 6, as a means of coordinating plans and bids, and minimising risk of duplication or competition.

Following the review of this strategy, if supported, the next steps would be

- Confirm the direction, content and purpose of the strategy.
- Invite the various agencies and organisations to participate in Rethinking Inverness.
- Prepare strategies, agendas and meeting dates for each workstream
- Establish membership and convenorship of Steering Group
- Raise wider public and business awareness through media and forms of engagement
- Use the Rethinking Inverness branding in publicity and as co-ordinating branding for wide range of relevant projects.
- Monitor and review progress annually.



INTERVIEW FINDINGS

2

The sequence of interviews was conducted as online video interviews because they were all undertaken during the period of Covid lockdown. There was a recurring structure for each, with series of questions about perceptions of the city, its strengths and weaknesses, its challenges and opportunities for improvement.

From the vast amount of data and insight generated, the main findings are presented below as a distinction between the physical PLACE, the experience as a DESTINATION, the nature of the ECONOMY when raised, and reference to ORGANISATION including bodies and sectors and how they relate to each other in Inverness.

INTERVIEW PART 1: PERCEPTIONS AND IDEAS

The first part of the interviews was around the perception of Inverness and how it has shifted over the last 5 to 10 years, with an opportunity provided to suggest future opportunities and ideas for the city's progression. The following points are the aggregate summary of perceptions.

1.1 Perceptions about PLACE

Inverness was seen by most as a fast-growing small city with an important regional impact that serves the locals, the Highlands and visitors. While the city is quite well connected by train, road and airport service, this contributes to Inverness feeling more like a hub that almost everyone passes through, and which needs to work harder to attract more people to stay and spend their time in it.

The city offers a good balance between environment, nature and heritage. It has lots of assets, such as the Castle, Market, Cathedral, the river, and nearby Loch Ness. Although some areas such the riverfront are seen as charming and beautiful, others are considered more run down, with a noted heavy car presence creating an unsafe feeling, making it more difficult to cycle or walk.

1.2 Perceptions about DESTINATION

As a visitor destination, it was felt there is work to do. Some interviewees felt that there is not a lot of tradition left in the city, and that although tourist shops exist, they are deemed a little tacky offering only limited quality. Some advised that there is a lack of evening/night-time offering for tourists, with limited options after 6pm (when some return from wider coach tours). Some part of the city centre present a run-down feeling with litter and worn out shopfronts, shops closing early and a sense of a dead, empty high street. Finally, the city and its centre, were considered to lack a 'holding point' for visitors.

1.3 Perceptions about ECONOMY

Beyond tourism per se, the importance of the wider economy was noted by several respondents who observed the rapid growth of the city in the last 5 years, which has created more pressures on the existing infrastructure, on schools and GP practices. Interviewees also noted a limited offering of new commercial development within the city centre, but with anticipated more to come in the pipeline.

1.4 Perceptions about ORGANISATIONS

There was a mixed perception of organisations and any collaborative working, some expressing content, but most considering much more needs to be done, and that Inverness may be lacking in ambition at a national level. The combined view was that stronger collaboration, including between public, private and voluntary sectors, could achieve more. There exists a basis for doing this, made easier than some places because of the smaller networks and established relationships.



INTERVIEW PART 2: STRENGTHS AND ASSETS

The second part of each interview was structured around the strengths and assets of Inverness. The key findings are summarised below.

2.1 Strengths and assets of PLACE

From a place perspective, respondents saw the city as safe and easy to get around. In terms of scale and legibility, people can get a feel for it in a day. It is welcoming to visitors and offers a unique experience that translates to a sharable moment. Its scenery can contribute to the wider marketing the Highlands and Islands.

2.2 Strengths and assets as DESTINATION

As a destination, it combines both the distinctive Highland Capital role and serves as a gateway to the wider Highlands, such as the North Coast 500. It benefits enormously as a destination by virtue of its proximity to Loch Ness, as well as Culloden and Fort George. However, it has several key city attractions such as: the castle, theatre, the Victorian market, the botanic gardens and the cathedral. It is also the main shopping destination for the highlands, while the river walks and banks were now seen as an attraction that offers al fresco dining.

2.3 Strengths and assets ECONOMY

In terms of comments made on economy, several expressed that there is a growing confidence in Inverness with its potentially string offering as more projects are delivered. It has quality guides and taxi drivers that can cater to higher end tourism (eg from cruises). It is also becoming more oriented towards outdoor activities and green/eco tourism.

INTERVIEW PART 3: ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

In the third part of the interviews, each respondent was asked for an honest view on the issues and challenges that are facing Inverness in their respective sector.

3.1 Issues and challenges for PLACE

In terms of place, some felt that Inverness is not as attractive as other competing Scottish cities such as Edinburgh, the main visitor benchmark. Some felt that the new housing developments have led to a peripheral sprawl, while the city centre 'lets itself down' with its public realm and shops. It was felt to be excessively car dominated, with a lack of signage for tourists, insufficient trees and planting, and public toilets. Some felt that the streets at night can be hostile, or at least perceived to be so. Not having a focal point for Inverness was seen as an issue for visitors particularly. Finally, the weather in winter is viewed as negative by some incomers, and this might hinder some people wishing to move to the city.

3.2 Issues and challenges as a DESTINATION

In terms of destination, the northerly location of Inverness in the UK was seen by some as being 'too far ...it takes so long to reach it' affecting those who might wish to visit, but perhaps more so those looking to transfer to live in the city. The retail offering was seen as a challenge for visitors and locals alike, seen to be both dying/declining and underwhelming, without much

variety. From a tourist perspective, there is a lack of traditional Scottish items to buy as quality souvenirs.

The accommodation is considered expensive compared to other major cities, including Edinburgh and even London, which might prevent some tourist of visiting the city, and wider area. Transport link options were raised by some, especially from Invergordon, which is heavily reliant of car and taxi. Finally, in summer (and not just recently post Covid) there is a great pressure on the tourism infrastructure.

3.3 Issues and challenges relating to ECONOMY

In terms of the economy and performance, the offering of Inverness as a city does not yet match the expectation of the brand 'Capital of the Highlands' for either locals or tourists. Several felt that there is not a lot to offer, such as leisure activities and events for teenagers, while the evening/night-time economy was lacking in the city. These affect who may wish to move to and stay in the city, as well as inducing visitors to spending more time and money.

3.4 Issues and challenges linked to ORGANISATIONS

In terms of organisations, the message given was of an inconsistency in the branding of the city, as separate organisations market the city in different ways for their own legitimate purposes. This is felt to be due to a lack of collaboration between the diverse stakeholders across private, public and third sectors. Therefore, not having a fully joined-up approach to city and its positioning and promotion was deemed as one of its major challenges.

INTERVIEW PART 4: OPPORTUNITIES AND IDEAS

The final part of the interview was around future opportunities and ideas for Inverness, which are summarised here.

4.1 Opportunities and ideas about PLACE

There was a broad aspiration for Inverness to become a vibrant, lively city with a wide range of activities that cater for both its residents and visitors of all age groups. There was broad agreement of the need to create a more walkable/cyclable city with a better quality of public realm. At the same time there was recognition that city centre needs to be more accessible to and from the hinterland, which creates tension.

Most contributors already saw Inverness as an opportunity for external investors, yet it was felt that it still has a huge, underplayed potential. The suggestion was that the city could (and should) aim to compete with national/international cities and attract more quality development and cultural offerings, such as fostering the important role within the Gaelic community. One of the keys ideas offered was developing a cultural lung/spine from the Castle, river, Eden Court, Bught Park, rugby pitches, islands and canal.

4.2 Opportunities and ideas about DESTINATION

Various ideas were suggested to remedy the destination qualities, including attracting more people to live and visit the centre to create a vibrant core, potentially with a 24/7 offering of

activities. Creating a city that is generally more family-oriented, with safe streets and activities for children and teenagers is a key aspiration, as is a more bespoke, higher quality, up-market, more independent shops. Diversification of the retail offering to cater for the growing Asian market was suggested, alongside development of the genealogy and heritage dimension to cater for the American market, many of whom are interested in searching for their Scottish heritage. Food and drink were viewed as a significant attraction that could be exploited more within the Inverness catchment. Wildlife and eco-tourism was another theme to be promoted, as the location of Inverness is ideal for outdoor activities, especially Post Covid (though this might require additional camper van parking). Finally, embedding the heritage, culture and history of the city strongly within the storytelling narratives of Scotland and the Highlands should attract more tourists to the city.

4.3 Opportunities and ideas about ECONOMY

There was broad agreement that city has to grow its services and leisure offer, beyond tourism, in order to ensure resilience. It was considered important to capitalise on the post-Covid opportunity, whereby many people are moving away from larger cities and working remotely from home. This can and is being achieved through investing in high-speed digital connectivity and by growing the service and leisure offering of the city for the locals. This will help to attract more graduates and experts to stay and live within the city, assisting the balance of skills and the economy. There is a need to exploit the connectivity of Inverness to become increasingly outward facing, drawing new innovation and development, as has recently been happening in the biosciences sector, for instance.

4.4 Opportunities and ideas about ORGANISATIONS

When it comes to raising the profile of Inverness, interviewees proposed studying and learning from other places, particularly to appreciate how they have evolved and kept the identity of their place. Benchmark comparators ranged from Cambridge to several large Irish towns.

It was felt Inverness needs to be promoted to the 'right people' and to do so it must have a better exposure in the UK and abroad. There was a strong consensus on aiming higher in the performance and reputation of the city, to help grow a service and leisure city brand beyond tourism. In addition to the Council, Chamber of Commerce and BIDS, HIE and the University were seen as key organisational players in the city who potentially needs to be used more, alongside the important roles of Visit Scotland and the Gaelic community.

Interviewees considered there is a need to have a stronger collaboration between all the different initiatives and projects happening in the city, to have cumulative impact. This is not just a public policy approach. They believed that by making the process smoother for investors this will attract more companies and people. Finally, most considered the whole process cannot be achieved without some strong co-ordinating steering group, with partners committed to guide the change.

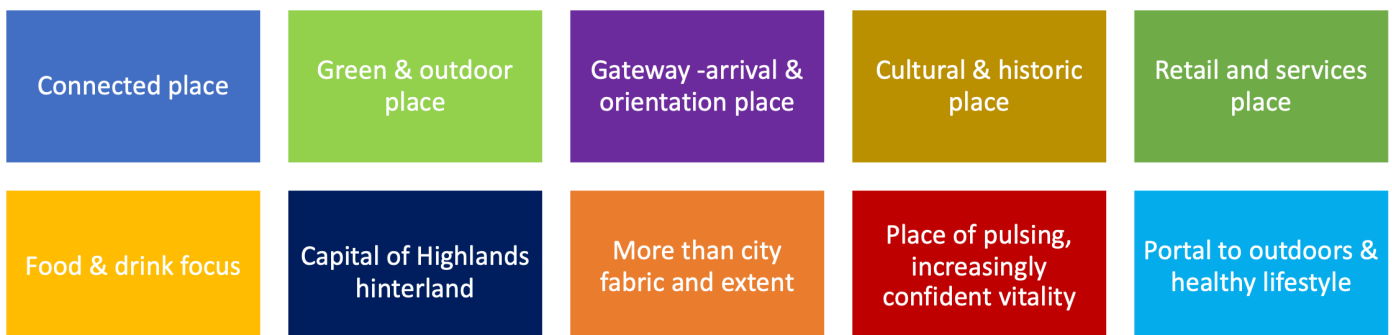
STRATEGY APPROACH

3

What became apparent from the research findings from a cross section of informed and connected participants was that

- Many important projects are already happening in Inverness – from the city centre masterplan, transport strategy, to Castle, Victorian market, Port and University.
- There already was some collaboration, as with the BIDS and tourism promotion, though not all projects were necessarily part of a purposely aligned strategy, image and message. (This could have been exacerbated by remote working during Covid lockdown).
- Inverness and its organisations and sectors are therefore not yet performing at their fullest potential.
- There is enormous scope for Inverness to bounce back from Covid, partly because of the pipeline of initiatives already in train, and the more open, outdoor nature of the city and its hinterland.
- There is also a greater opportunity to enhance the role the city plays within and for the Highlands and Islands, by joining up the various strategies to create a stronger, more confident compelling place that performs at a higher national level.

Some of the many roles that Inverness currently plays are shown below. This gives a sense of the complexity of formulating and presenting any singular strategy, position or brand message. Inverness already plays so many roles for different people and organisations – residents, workers, visitors, businesses and community bodies. Of particular importance is its role supporting wider Highland communities and in supporting the tourism offer of Scotland, and arguably the UK.



Core strategy message and goals

To address the combination of opportunity and challenge within a changing city context – both internally within the city, but also nationally and internationally, the following three-part strategy has been identified to help position Inverness, in the minds of locals and visitors, businesses and community organisations, service providers and policymakers.

- 1 Step up Raise city aspirations, performance and contribution
- 2 Shape up Strengthen distinctive place quality, offer and experience
- 3 Join up Enhance collaboration and support, promotion and celebration

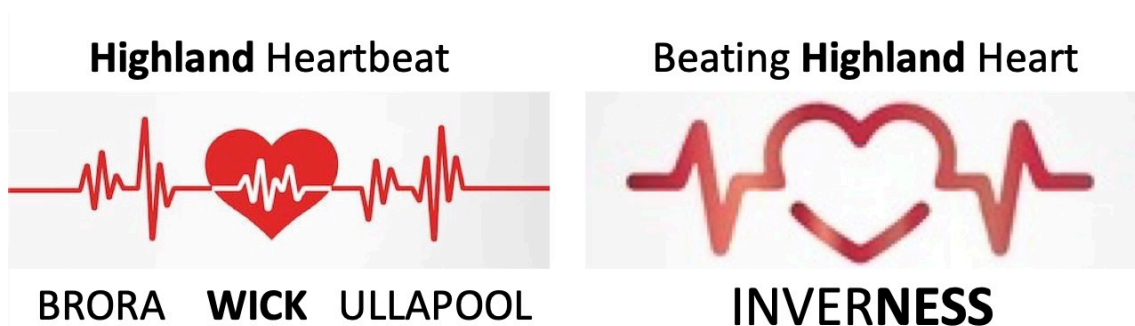
This simple Step up, Shape up, Join up strategy builds on the many initiatives and transformative changes and seeks to co-ordinate them around improving performance, for the benefit of the local population and economy, for visitors and in service of the wider communities across the Highlands.

Concept

A key part of the role of Inverness is addressing the complex service, visitor, transport and administrative role that the city performs. Like many cities across Scotland and elsewhere, notably Ireland, Inverness is functionally connected to a vast hinterland of communities, many also linked culturally, socially, and economically. If we conceptualise, and even promote, these diverse communities as having a 'Highland heartbeat', then we may view Inverness as a supporting organ, providing a 'beating Highland heart'. To play such a role well, on behalf of the larger entity, the heart needs to be fit and healthy, performing well.

The researchers and interviewees found this metaphor useful because it connects Inverness to other places (including the green outdoor 'lungs' of countryside and lochs if one extends the idea), builds on the notion of Inverness as a pulsing place that 'everyone flows through', and stresses the notion of a healthy place, building beyond the 'capital of the Highlands' notion.

When tested, it was found it played well across themes and sectors such as retail and hospitality, culture and arts, education and health, provided it was explained this does not imply any exclusive priority or controlling role within the many Highland communities. It is simply a way of connecting the many diverse roles that Inverness can and should perform well, and recognising the crucial relationship with the wider Highland communities.



What these two components of *Step up, Shape up, Join up* and *Beating Highland Heart* provide is an aspirational platform that builds upon the existing direction of travel, in terms of plans, strategies and partnerships. It seeks to aim higher, join up to become even more impactful, as new initiatives like the Victorian Market and Castle are delivered.

What this represents is much more than a narrow logo-brand type positioning statement. Rather it is a bigger Rethinking Inverness strategy, whereby the city sees itself as aspirational for economic and cultural investment, enterprise and skills, and new services and facilities for locals and visitors alike. Some have also explained it as Inverness 'growing up' as a city, moving from youth towards confident maturity.

In the course of the research and workshop discussions, it was identified that there are four themes through which the Rethinking Inverness strategy could be pursued and delivered. All are already present in some form in plans, strategies and projects, as are the key actors who are working together with different degrees of co-ordination. So the key next steps is around co-ordination and delivery, including for resourcing the next cycle of initiatives.



The four themes are

1. A compact, liveable 'green' city – building on inherent strengths, minimising sprawl and supporting a low carbon future
2. Providing a leading visitor destination experience – international quality in heritage, attractions, service and facility
3. Ensuring a thriving, inclusive economy – that extend the range of business and employment, ensuring resilience beyond tourism
4. Aiming for inter/national leader status – marking progress through recognition/validation for the shift in status and quality

A range of indicative projects under these four themes, with a key aims and actors, is provided in the following section.



WORKSTREAM ACTIVITY

4

THEME 1: COMPACT, LIVEABLE GREEN CITY

Inverness is a compact city, allowing it to create a unique urban offer within Scotland. The city is of a size that the majority of the population is living within reasonably close proximity to the city centre or to other neighbourhood services. Many of the routes that would be used as active travel corridors to the city centre are either already green or have the potential to be green. This combination of compact scale and green links create an increasingly attractive proposition for a liveable city for residents, business, investment and visitors.

Inverness should be benchmarking against key northern European comparator cities that have similar traits. This would help to set direction for projects needed to enhance the compact, liveable green city, and provide a measure to judge the progress that Inverness is making in this regard. These traits show up on 'liveability' indices, and other research has demonstrated the value of them in energising a city.

Workstreams

1. Attractive, clean and safe city centre
2. Stronger public realm and activities
3. Network of walking & cycling routes
4. More living in and around city core
5. Enabling outdoor healthy lifestyles

Why is this important?

Inverness has the traits to enable this type of liveable city. Using them to accelerate change would support the goal of being a leading northern European city, and attracting the dynamic growth associated with this. Sustainability would be a key part of this theme – both for residents, business and visitors. The compact, green city has sustainable options for transport and lifestyle as the most appealing option, overcoming many of the current cultural and practical barriers to urban sustainability.

Alignment

- Regional Spatial Strategy
- Inverness City Centre Masterplan
- Inverness City Development Plan
- Active travel routes

WORKSTREAM 1.1: ATTRACTIVE, CLEAN AND SAFE CITY CENTRE PUBLIC SPACES

Objective

An essential baseline for any quality city centre is the attractiveness and cleanliness of it. Establishing this supports much of the other activity that follows in creating a vibrant and desirable city centre. As well as protecting investment in the city centre, this approach improves the experience for all city users. This place quality allows Inverness to establish itself as a competitive place when it comes to attracting investment, visitors, business and residents.

“Public space is essential to urban prosperity. It increases and sustains not only the economic productivity of urban areas, but it facilitates social cohesion and inclusion, and can be an expression of identity, all of which enhances the quality of life for the city’s inhabitants.”
(Productive Places: SCDI, 2017)

Actions

- Clean streets
- Shopfront regeneration and signing
- Market regeneration and role
- Bins and litter clearing
- Rapid response to graffiti

Actors

- Highland Council
- Federation of Small Businesses
- Inverness BID
- Private sector owners/operators



WORKSTREAM 1.2: STRONGER PUBLIC REALM AND ACTIVITIES

Objective

Moving beyond the baseline established through workstream 1.1 is developing a stronger public realm by increasing the space committed to this and to the programming of events and activating this space.

As noted in the SCDI report, these types of spaces enhance the capability of the city to attract and hold people, as both visitors and locals, and support other policy area outcomes such as:

| | |
|---------------------------|--|
| Economic | e.g. micro and small business opportunities integrating with public realm and green infrastructure |
| Environmental & transport | e.g. reduced carbon through active travel being more desirable |
| Social | e.g. creating meeting places |
| Health | e.g. increased physical activity through walking, events etc. |
| Cultural | e.g. creating a setting for event |
| Educational | e.g. key locations for learning places such as schools, libraries, museums. |

In addition to the hard infrastructure, city centre places should be supported with soft infrastructure and animation – lighting, moveable seating, buskers and street entertainment. Building up the city programme that draws together all major and significant events and activities – identify gaps or unique positions – adds further value to the image, brand and experience of the place.

Action

- Increased public space
- Greenery/landscape – inc. flood management
- Amenity lighting and floodlighting
- Outdoor seating areas
- Street programme: markets, events

Actors

- Sustrans
- Highland Council
- HiTrans
- NHS
- Inverness BID
- HIE

WORKSTREAM 1.3: NETWORK OF WALKING AND CYCLING ROUTES

Objectives

To support the compact city, ease of access by active travel is required both into the city centre and connecting to other surrounding areas. This should support active travel as far as possible by all abilities. This can act as an attractor for the green tourism sector, tying sustainable urban breaks with wider tourism opportunities in the Highlands. It is also important for attracting millennial/post-millennial workforce to the city, as they look for alternative means of travel that ties environmental credentials with a healthy, active lifestyle. These desires are by no means exclusive to that generation, but do have broader appeal within that group.

Actions

- Connecting paths into city wide network
- Develop tourist routes
- Safe school routes
- Safe active travel to work routes

Actors

- Sustrans
- Tourism networks
- HiTrans
- Castle
- Scottish Canals
- Port
- Highland Council
- NHS
- HIE



WORKSTREAM 1.4 MORE LIVING IN AND AROUND CITY CORE

Objectives

Increasing residential density in and around the city centre ensures that new homes are within sustainable locations with access to facilities and can contribute to the compact, liveable city, supporting vitality and diverse activity within the city centre core. Residential populations provide a broader base of users to support city life, such as more need for food shops and non-seasonal use of restaurants and bars – supporting the city by broadening its base of users (beyond just visitors) for using local shops and services through the day and year. Identifying housing provision gaps, site (re)development opportunities and related initiatives that support quality of place, would support further residential living in and around the city core.

Actions

- Identifying housing provision gaps that could be provided for
- Identify sites for denser housing
- Identify opportunities for different delivery models (e.g., co-housing)
- Flats above shops – or other empty property strategies

Actors

- Highland Council
- Housing Associations
- Private sector developer/investors



WORKSTREAM 1.5: ENABLING HEALTHY OUTDOOR LIFESTYLES

Objective

Inverness has outdoor activity and exercise opportunities in abundance within the city, its immediate surroundings and as an entry point to the wider Highland region. As such it is highly attractive as a location with the opportunity for a more outdoor, healthy lifestyle. There is an added impetus to this following Covid-19 and the recognition of outdoor access and space. This should not be viewed as something that is only appealing to an active group, but across the full range of Inverness residents and visitors. The variety of spaces the city has to offer means there can be a range of accessibility, activity and challenge, creating an inclusive outdoor lifestyle.

Action

- Promotion of proximity to outdoor access – within and outside Inverness
- Public space anchors in key locations (canal, riverside, etc)
- Connection with active travel networks
- Accessibility of outdoor space – review provision.

Actors

- Eden Court
- Sustrans
- Highland Council
- Castle
- Highlife Highland
- Visit Inverness and Loch Ness
- HIE



THEME 2: LEADING VISITOR DESTINATION EXPERIENCE

Develop a high-quality visitor experience that stands both as a distinct visit choice to the city, as well as a high-quality gateway to the rest of the Highlands and Islands. The Highlands of Scotland sit as a leading global destination, featuring in multiple travel publications “best” lists over the last few years. Feedback from tourism bodies and providers is that Inverness is not carrying the same level of desirability as the rest of the Highlands, it is a place that is considered a stopping off point, or place to pass through, but not as a high quality destination in and of itself. Inverness has enough to offer to elevate its status, drawing all of these elements together will help position the city as a leading visitor destination.

1. Broaden narrative – attracting a wider range of visitors and extended season
2. Enhancing offer of city attractions
3. Build on strong food and drink reputation
4. Raise media profile further – across different media
5. Develop Gàidhealtachd role

Why is this important?

Developing Inverness as a destination will help support extended duration and spend from tourist visits. This can act as a driver for sustaining the city centre and further developing it as a well-rounded, high quality place for tourists, residents and businesses.

Developing a stronger economic baseline across sectors is needed to support the city and region. The gains that have been identified in tourism will in turn support the growth of the other economic functions of the city

Alignments

National/regional tourism strategies

Gàidhealtachd cultural development strategy

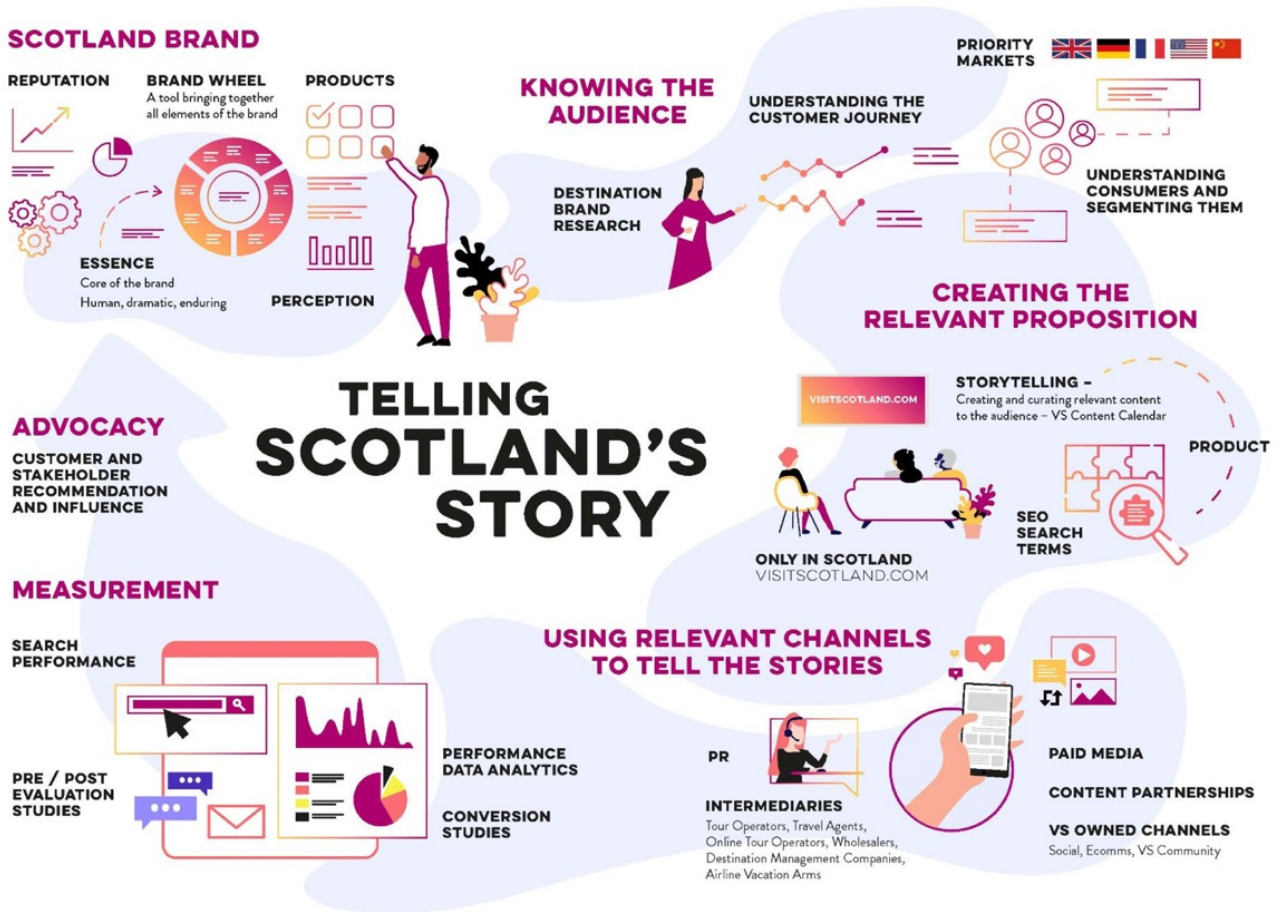
WORKSTREAM 2.1: BROADENING THE INVERNESS NARRATIVE - STORIES, VISITORS AND SEASON

Objective

¹Inverness is well known as the Capital of the Highlands. This is of benefit to the city, in a particular way. Inverness has a much broader narrative as a city, uniquely located in northern United Kingdom and Europe. Making this broader narrative known through different media, Inverness can diversify its tourism and economic base, creating wider market opportunities.

For example, Visit Scotland’s *Only in Scotland* approach has a lot of value on broadening and creating a more sustainable tourism base, including building narratives around different types of break characterised as *escapism, rest & relaxation, satisfaction, appreciation and connection*.

¹<https://www.visitscotland.org/about-us/what-we-do/marketing/only-in-scotland-strategy>



Action

- Diverse messages using different media
- Place to live and work, as well as to visit
- Encourage new businesses, attractions
- Broaden types of visitor
- Joint strategy on events

Actors

- Highland Council
- Visit Scotland
- Hotels Association
- Cruise ship operators
- Eden Court
- Castle Project
- Visit Inverness and Loch Ness
- HIE

WORKSTREAM 2.2: ENHANCING OFFER OF CITY ATTRACTIONS

Objective

Accompanying workstream 2.1 is ensuring that the reasons to come to Inverness specifically are multiple and of quality. Developing more reasons to visit and spend time in the city – e.g. Victorian Market, Old Town, Inverness Castle – will create more experiential reasons for people to visit, dwell, spend and support the city.

Action

- Victorian Market regeneration
- Castle project implementation and promotion
- Old Town regeneration
- Eden Court – attracting headlining tours, etc
- Make more of 'highland' cathedral

Actors

- Highland Council
- Visit Scotland
- Eden Court
- Castle Project
- Inverness BID
- HIE
- Federation of Small Businesses



WORKSTREAM 2.3: BUILD ON STRONG FOOD AND DRINK REPUTATION

Objective

Food and drink is becoming an increasingly important part of the visitor experience, with this being a growing area in which visitors are displaying discernment, in addition to accounting for 20% of tourist spend (next largest following travel and accommodation). Inverness has the opportunity to function as major outlet and showcase for regional Highland food and drink. Availability of local food, drink and produce is an area in which visitor surveys have shown there is scope for improvement², therefore acting as a hub for this supports tourist experiences, local producers and outlets. In addition to this, there is a large retail opportunity around regional food and drink, with 25% of visitors (40% of long haul) purchasing food and drink to take home (source as below).

² <https://www.visitscotland.org/binaries/content/assets/dot-org/pdf/research-papers/insights-food-and-drink-2017.pdf>

Action

- Develop more bases in the city that sell and promote Highland produce (e.g. Victorian Market)
- Pursue and attract recognised Highland food brands to locate within Market and other city venues
- Promote themed tours to food and drink destinations – and encourage links between these

Actors

- Visit Scotland
- Hotels association
- HIE
- Combined BIDS
- Highland food and drink innovation network



WORKSTREAM 2.4: RAISE MEDIA PROFILE/REPUTATION FURTHER

Objective

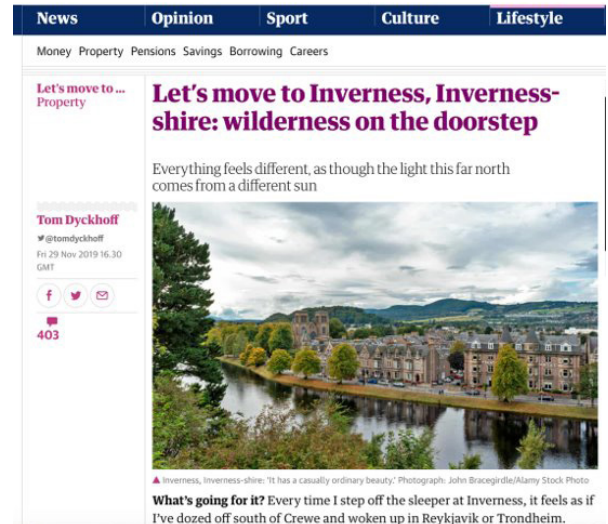
As part of broadening the city's narrative and capturing new audiences, a specific workstream is identified on media profiles for the city. The objective is to enhance visibility and recognition of Inverness across new markets and segments through different types of media.

Action

- Develop strong city proposition as film and tv location with Highlands
- Media approach to raises the profile of the city as a serious northern European destination
- Social media campaigns to target younger market segments
- Media campaigns promoting the city as residential and visitor destination, as well as gateway to Highlands and Islands.
- Film tourism

Actors

- Highland Council
- Visit Scotland
- Eden Court
- Castle Project
- Inverness BID
- HIE
- Federation of Small Businesses
- Cruise ship operator
- Hotels association
- Highlife Highland
- Creative Scotland
- Scottish Green Links



WORKSTREAM 2.5: DEVELOP DISTINCTIVE GÀIDHEALTACHD ROLE

Objective

Scotland's Gàidhealtachd is the area across the Highlands and Islands in which the Gaelic language is still spoken, and still plays a strong role in shaping the culture and identity of communities in these places. Inverness can further develop itself as a hub of positive development of this critical cultural asset – linking language, culture, and place. For example, mythology connected to the Gàidhealtachd and its stories are shaped by landscapes, wildlife and historic figures. Much more can be made of such rich cultural legacy.

Action

- Promote Gaelic culture, events, participation, learning in Inverness
- Development of accessible start points to understanding heritage and culture – e.g. signing
- Role of the Castle project in providing interpretation of heritage

Actors

- Bòrd na Gàidhlig
- Highland Council
- Visit Scotland



THEME 3: THRIVING AND INCLUSIVE ECONOMY

Inverness plays a crucial role both as a city and as the anchor for the Highland region. The city has a huge opportunity to position itself as a location for areas of inclusive economic growth around green/renewable energy and life sciences. Acting as a northern cluster, the location should not be viewed as isolated, but in relationship to its proximity and access to the natural capital required for these industries, and to potential trading partners in these fields.

In addition to these growth areas, Inverness has a role to play in supporting the wider Highland economy as a location in which clusters around industry can develop – food and drink, aquaculture, sustainable forestry and agriculture and tourism as some examples. Combined this would drive a diverse economic base in the city that provides more work for all, attracts inward investment and creates opportunities for start-ups and business growth.

Project/Action Streams

- Networks of business, retail, tourism
- High speed broadband connectivity
- City centre placemaking
- Rethinking business space

Why is this important?

This is important nationally, as Scotland and the UK transition towards green energy and net zero carbon by 2050. Planning for the growth around this needs to consider how it will be inclusive and a just transition from hydrocarbon focused industries. Resilience of the city and the Highlands can be grown through both a broadening and deepening of the economic base, beyond current key economic drivers such as tourism. These areas can and should be supported, but not the sole focus. An enhanced economic base benefits the city and region with inward investment, jobs growth and reduced dependence on certain industries or casual labour.

Alignments:

- National and regional economic strategies
- National and regional tourism strategy
- LDP
- RSS



WORKSTREAM 3.1: NETWORKS OF BUSINESS, RETAIL, TOURISM

Objective

Inverness already has good sectoral networks, with organisations joining together to strengthen propositions in tourism, business and retail. For the city to continue on its trajectory, strong internal and outward-facing networks that are cross-sectoral and combine strategy and promotion are needed. Identifying areas of mutual benefit, synergies and working in the same strategic direction, these networks can target the right investment for the city, to support growing markets.

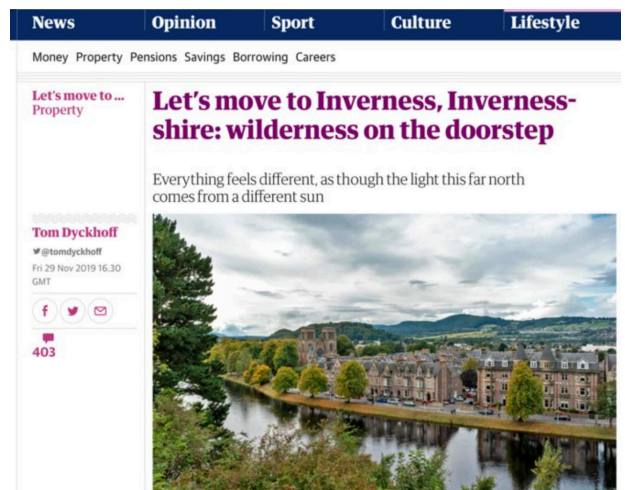
These networks, accompanied by good place-making, can ensure that the social, cultural and economic capital of the city and its surrounds can be utilised in the most effective manner.

Action

- Share knowledge and aspiration of diverse retail, tourism and other sectors
- Use of recovery committees to rebuild confidence, promote joint approaches
- Use 'trade mission' approaches to advocate Inverness and Highland investment

Actors

- Highland Council
- Visit Scotland
- Inverness BID
- HIE
- Federation of Small Businesses
- Cruise ship operator
- Hotels association
- Investors, developers, retailers



WORKSTREAM 3.2: HIGH SPEED DIGITAL CONNECTIVITY (BROADBAND/5G)

Objective

Digital connectivity now sits across nearly all aspects of daily life whether at home, in education, at work or travelling for business and leisure. High speed connectivity integrated into the city is essential component of business development, tourism promotion and learning/skills development. This includes understanding needs, and looking to the best technology to fit that need including future-proof considerations.

Action

- Develop robust understanding of digital connectivity needs
- Match needs with future-proofed next steps (e.g. high speed 1 gig broadband and 5G)

Actors

- Highland Council
- HIE
- Network operators
- University
- Developers
- Start-ups

WORKSTREAM 3.3: RE-THINKING BUSINESS SPACE

Objective

City centres play a significant role in any economic ecosystem, with the provision of spaces for work, meetings and collaboration playing a further role in determining the health of different sectors and scales within that ecosystem. Supporting start-up, spin-offs, micro and community-led business requires a different scale of workspace infrastructure – something that is more accessible in terms of cost, that develops networks and positions businesses around other support services. For Inverness this flexibility of space for work, should include retail, food/drink, studios and mixed-use activity.

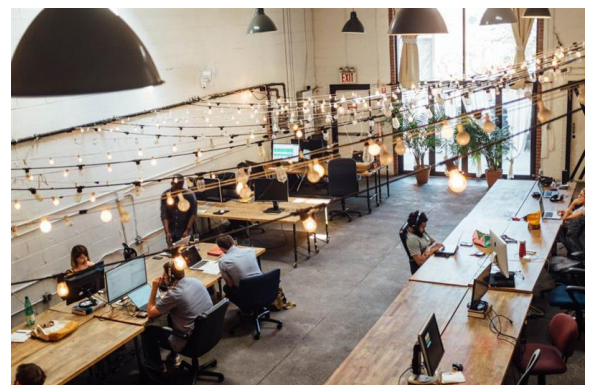
Covid-19 has also shifted the way in which people and businesses work. While working from home has been the primary mode that people have changed to, the future looks like a more blended approach to work location. Flexible workspaces can support ease of remote working in Inverness, either for people based in local businesses, or further afield.

Actions

- Develop robust understanding of current and future business space needs
- Identify opportunity sites for flexible workspace – including food businesses, retail businesses, design and logistics.

Actors

- Highland Council
- Inverness BID
- Federation of Small Businesses
- HIE
- UHI



THEME 4: AIM FOR INTER/NATIONAL LEADER STATUS

Elevate recognition and status of Inverness through projects and events that put the city 'on the map'. This is a process that has been used for city regeneration projects throughout the UK and Europe, often through an approach that involves an application, successful otherwise, to a high-profile arts or culture designation. Glasgow's successful transformation has often been credited to its status as 1990 European Capital for Culture. For Inverness this building of status is of benefit for visits, building business confidence and investment, and growing student population and relocations.

Project/Action Streams

1. Build momentum and reputation around Castle re-opening
2. Build recognisable place identity
3. Develop a centre of innovation/excellence
4. Greater role for university

Why is this important?

Inverness has much to build on. Identifying existing projects around which to create momentum towards leading status will be key to success in this area. For example, build on acknowledged green and outdoors, culture and heritage, food and drink strengths and association.

Alignments

- National, regional, city 'Recovery' plans
- National and regional tourism strategies
- NPF4, RSS and LDP planning strategies
- HIE and UHI strategies

WORKSTREAM 4.1: BUILD MOMENTUM AROUND CASTLE RE-OPENING

Objectives

The Castle Project launch will be a big moment for Inverness and the Highlands. The development of a cultural facility of this scale is an exciting prospect and has the inherent energy to be a catalyst for change. Whether this could be compared with the Bilbao-type effect, the northern Spanish city's fortunes transformed by the opening of the Guggenheim museum – or the 'Dundee effect' with the city's destination status highly elevated by the opening of the V&A³, Inverness must use the moment to foster a 'must visit' reputation from the launch of a core cultural anchor attraction.

As with Bilbao and Dundee, there will be a spread of visitors and benefits around the wider city and beyond.

³ <https://www.newstatesman.com/culture/art-design/2018/10/how-new-va-museum-transforming-dundee>



Action

- Implementation of Castle project and promotional strategy
- Link to wider trails/routes/stories
- Make awards entries – to raise profile/recognition at national and international levels

Actors

- Highland Council
- Castle Project
- Visit Scotland
- Hotel network
- Eden Court
- Cruise operators
- Port
- BIDS
- HIE

WORKSTREAM 4.2: BUILD UP RECOGNISABLE PLACE IDENTITY

Objective

An integrated approach to the identity of the place as understood by its residents, the institutions and organisations of the city and perceptions of the city from visitors, potential resident etc is needed to ensure there is an authentic approach to the city. This includes making memorable iconographic impact from anchor places such as Castle, River, but also considering the wider identity and ownership of this.

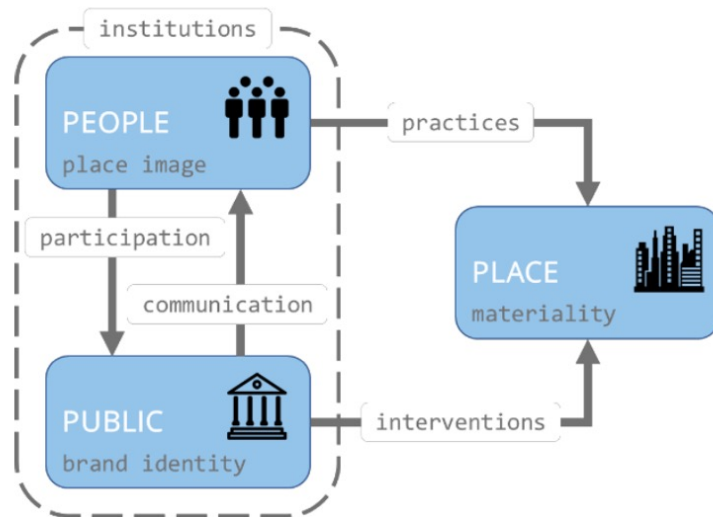


Figure 1. Interplay of people, public and place

Action

- Design of quality city merchandise connected to anchor places - Led by high profile art or design individual with connection to city.
- High quality city promotional imagery for use by the city venues and individual businesses.
- Co-promote Inverness identity material in Edinburgh, Stirling, Dundee, Glasgow.

Actors

- Highland Council
- Castle Project
- Visit Scotland
- Eden Court
- Scottish Canals
- BIDS
- WASPS
- Artists/photographers



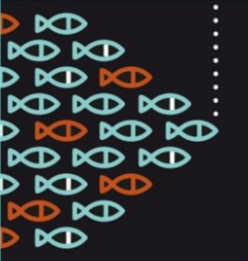

⁴ Neils, W, "Relationship between city image and brand identity..." TU Delft, <https://repository.tudelft.nl/islandora/object/uuid:02674ae1-a1d7-460d-81c5-5939eb4ec8d7/datastream/OBJ1/download>

WORKSTREAM 4.3: DEVELOP A CENTRE OF INNOVATION/EXCELLENCE

Objective

Development of a distinctive 'fresh' hook that is distinct from established tourism/culture brand – eg around low carbon, green industry, life sciences. The approach to and purpose of innovation hubs or centres in Scotland is: *"to help businesses large and small increase the pace of innovation – and, in turn, help both our economy and our people to flourish and prosper."*⁵

Identifying the sector that would work best for Inverness and the wider Highland region would be key to this, including where there are current gaps in innovation centres in Scotland.

| | |
|--|---|
| DHI (Digital Health & Care Innovation Centre)  <p>DHI's focus is innovation in digital health and care to help the people of Scotland live longer, healthier lives, while providing sustainable and inclusive growth for our economy. We collaborate, co-design and transform great ideas into real solutions that have benefits to the system and our citizens. We provide engagement; facilitation; project management; and service, business, technical innovation to increase individual and organisation readiness to harness digital innovation for impactful results.</p> <p>More about Digital Health & Care Innovation Centre ></p> | IBioIC (Industrial Biotechnology Innovation Centre)  <p>IBioIC bridges the gap between education and industry and is at the hub of a growing network where industry freely interacts with academics and other business leaders to generate new business ideas.</p> <p>More about Industrial Biotechnology Innovation Centre ></p> |
| SAIC (Scottish Aquaculture Innovation Centre)  <p>Industry success through research partnerships. That, in a nutshell, is what SAIC delivers. We connect industry with academia, supporting collaboration on key sector issues and opportunities, and helping drive growth towards 2030.</p> <p>More about Scottish Aquaculture Innovation Centre ></p> | PMS-IC (Precision Medicine Innovation Centre)  <p>PMS-IC creates a unique and sustainable capability to serve the health needs of the Scottish population. PMS-IC aims to improve the treatment of acute and chronic disease in patients and provide new tools to enable health care providers to diagnose and treat, by supporting the development of new and better.</p> <p>More about Precision Medicine Innovation Centre ></p> |

Actions

- Support expansion of existing sectors through accelerator/innovation hub processes
- Attract new sectors to the city on strength of growing current sectors and university reputation

Actors

- University of Highlands and Islands
- Scottish Land Commission
- Highland Council
- Scottish Enterprise
- Scottish Funding Council
- HIE
- SEPA

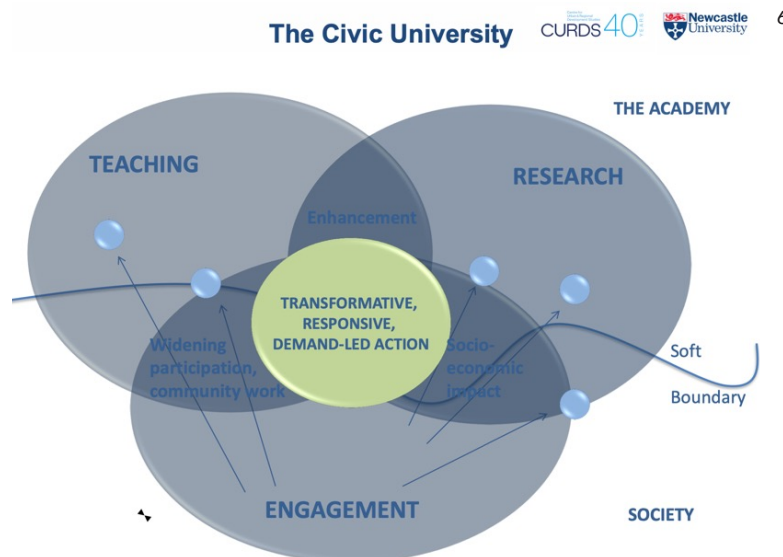
⁵ <https://www.innovationcentres.scot>

WORKSTREAM 4.4: GREATER ROLE FOR UNIVERSITY

Objective

Universities can play significant roles as 'anchor institutions' in cities – locally embedded but large enough to have a significant economic and community benefit to its location. The University of the Highlands and Islands Inverness campus plays this role bringing within its own institution and those in its network by being a local point of contact for global knowledge and economic exchange, particularly in unique subject matters.

For Inverness the function of a university is beyond being just a knowledge producer or educator. It does the normal expected role of adding value to the city and region through innovation in unique subjects, attracting quality research, teaching and students to the Inverness area. This brings cultural benefit to the city as well, with an increasingly diverse population. It also can and will continue to develop adding value to economic networks, including business innovation and wider engagement with the community of Inverness. This adds much value to both the university and the city/region.



Actions

- Innovate courses and modules
- Build distinctive reputation
- Attract and hold knowledge, talent
- Grow economic role
- Strengthen links to city and centre

Actors

- University of Highlands and Islands
- Highland Council
- Nature Scot
- Visit Scotland
- HIE

⁶ Prof John Goddard, Regional Development, Newcastle University: <https://policyscotland.gla.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/PSTheCivicUniversityAndTheCityPresentation.pdf>

IMPLEMENTATION

5

The implementation of Rethinking Inverness as a proactive repositioning strategy may initially appear complex because of the range of themes, actors and alignment required (as shown in Appendices 2 and 3).

However, despite the constraints of Covid many of the working relationships and plans are in place, and several of the projects already in the pipeline. More will follow as the work progresses, for instance on the city centre public realm and green transport planning.

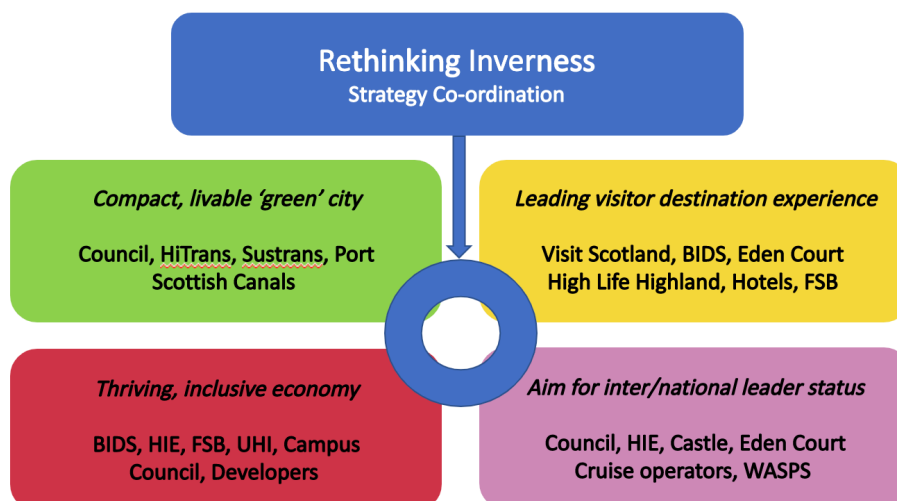
Co-ordinating vehicle

Although some of the liaison is already provisionally in place, there is a need to expand upon these existing workstreams to ensure

- All relevant themes and projects are included
- The Rethinking Inverness ambition and 'badging' is used to support bids for various projects – whether public, private, voluntary sector, or some combination.
- Each workstream builds on existing relationships and therefore simply needs a review of membership and objectives.

Each workstream would have 6-10 individuals representing the key partners – not all partners need to be directly involved. Ideally public, private and third sectors would be represented. Some provisional suggestions are made in the diagram below. They would meet monthly or bi-monthly, depending on current experience and effectiveness.

To maintain alignment between themes we recommend a co-ordinating Rethinking Inverness Steering Group which meets every 3-4 months to ensure alignment of goals, commitment to strategy progress, co-ordination of any bids and publicity, and avoidance of duplication or internal competition. They would review progress annually.



Next steps

The next steps are proposed to be

1. Consider the direction, content and purpose of the strategy.
2. Invite the various agencies and organisations to participate in Rethinking Inverness.
3. Prepare agendas and meeting dates for each workstream
4. Establish membership and convenorship of Steering Group
5. Raise wider public and business awareness through media and forms of engagement?
6. Use the Rethinking Inverness branding in publicity and as co-ordinating branding for wide range of relevant projects.



Kevin Murray Associates
October 2021

APPENDIX A: LIST OF CONSULTEES

| | | |
|-----|------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. | Bord na Gaidhlig | David Boag |
| 2. | Caledonian Sleeper | Peter Strachan |
| 3. | Cruise Manager Invergordon | Alison MacGuire |
| 4. | Eden Court | Adam Coleman |
| 5. | Eden Court | James Mackenzie-Blackman |
| 6. | FSB | David Richardson |
| 7. | FSB | David Richardson |
| 8. | Graham & Sibbald | John MacBean |
| 9. | HIE | James Gibb |
| 10. | HIE | Rhona Fraser |
| 11. | HIE | Ruaridh MacNeil |
| 12. | Highland Council | Andy McCann |
| 13. | Highland Council | Clare Piggot |
| 14. | Highland Council | Colin Simpson |
| 15. | Highland Council | David Haas |
| 16. | Highland Council | Malcolm MacLeod |
| 17. | Highland Council | Scott Dalgarno |
| 18. | Highland Council | Alan Webster |
| 19. | Highland Council | Craig Baxter |
| 20. | Highlands and Islands Airports Ltd | Graeme Bell |
| 21. | Highlife Highland | Alison Bell |
| 22. | Hotel Association | Chair - Emmanuel Moine |
| 23. | Inverness BID | Mike Smith |
| 24. | Inverness Castle Project | Fiona Hampton |
| 25. | NHS Scotland | Gavin Sell |
| 26. | Port of Inverness | Sinclair Browne |
| 27. | Scottish Land Commission | David Stewart |
| 28. | Taxi Drivers Association | Andrew MacDonald |
| 29. | UHI | Katie Masheter |
| 30. | Victorian Market | Jo Murray |
| 31. | Visit Loch Ness BID | Michael Golding |
| 32. | Visit Scotland | Chris Taylor |
| 33. | Visit Scotland | Anne Roels |

APPENDIX B: LIST OF ACTORS

- Artists/photographers
- BIDS
- Bòrd na Gàidhlig
- Castle Project
- Combined BIDS
- Creative Scotland
- Cruise ship operators
- Developers
- Eden Court
- Federation of Small Businesses
- HIE
- Highland Council
- Highland food and drink innovation network
- Highlife Highland
- HiTrans
- Hotel network
- Hotels association
- Housing Associations
- Inverness BID
- Investors, developers, retailers
- Nature Scot
- Network operators
- NHS
- Port of Inverness
- Private sector developer/investors
- Private sector owners/operators
- Scottish Canals
- Scottish Enterprise
- Scottish Funding Council
- Scottish Green Links
- Scottish Land Commission
- SEPA
- Start-ups
- Sustrans
- Tourism networks
- University of Highlands and Islands
- Visit Inverness and Loch Ness
- Visit Scotland
- WASPS

APPENDIX C: DOCUMENTS FOR ALIGNMENT

Travel plans and strategies

- Inverness Active Travel Network
- HITRANS Active Travel Strategy

Culture and Education

- Plana Gaidhlig 2017 – 2022 – HIE and Bord na Gaidhlig
- Daring to be Different: Strategic Plan 2021 – 2025 – University of the Highlands and Islands

Spatial Plans

- Inverness City Centre Masterplan
- Inverness City Development Plan
- Highlands Local Development Plan
- National Planning Framework 4
- Regional Spatial Strategy

National and regional economic strategies

- Transforming the Highland Economy – City Deal Plan
- Highlands and Islands Enterprise – 2019 – 2022 Strategy
- Ambitious Highland – Health and Prosperity Strategy, June 2021

National and regional tourism strategies

- Visit Inverness Loch Ness
- Scotland Outlook 2030: responsible tourism for a sustainable future - Visit Scotland

National, regional, city 'Recovery' plans

- Highland Council Recovery Action Plan
- International Recovery Plan for Scottish Tourism – Visit Scotland
- Economic Recovery Implementation Plan 2020 – Scottish Government



Kevin
Murray
Associates