

PEOPLE, PLACES & PROSPERITY

A FOCUSED REGENERATION STRATEGY FOR ABERDEENSHIRE

2013 – 2018

April 2013

Aberdeenshire
COUNCIL



OUR VISION

We are committed to an Aberdeenshire where people and places achieve their potential and that, through regeneration, we work together to achieve transformational change using projects of scale and impact.

FOREWORD

Aberdeenshire is a large and diverse area and the needs of communities vary from place to place. The needs of rural communities are different from those in urban areas. Towns continue to hold the balance of population and provide 'market town' services to rural areas suggesting that investment in the towns benefits all. Rural areas present specific issues especially transport & connectivity, public amenities and access to services such as leisure and health.

Almost all parts of Aberdeenshire would benefit from some form of regeneration whether social, economic or physical. However, with finance and other resources difficult to come by it makes sense to use them as carefully as possible. Having assessed what has been achieved and what is required we are now looking to focus on one place at a time.

We need to prioritise resources towards that place and develop any cultural changes which are needed to overcome barriers. We want to look forward to opportunities in the future not backward to the past and we aim to do so in a way that can be affordably sustained by the community both economically and environmentally.

**Cllr Peter Argyle
Chair Infrastructure Service Committee**

INTRODUCTION

Regeneration: What it Means in Aberdeenshire

Aberdeenshire Council and its partners are committed to regeneration to ensure that the people and places of Aberdeenshire fulfil their potential. Regeneration means different things to different people. It can mean communities coming together to solve local problems, it can mean caring for our built and natural heritage, replacing old business and industries with new ones or avoiding the decline of our town centres. In fact, all these are good examples of regeneration along

with many more. They can typically be divided into People, Places and Prosperity. Aberdeenshire Council define regeneration as:

“Reversing the decline of a place can only happen by everyone working together to tackle the whole problem whether it involves social, economic, cultural or environmental issues”

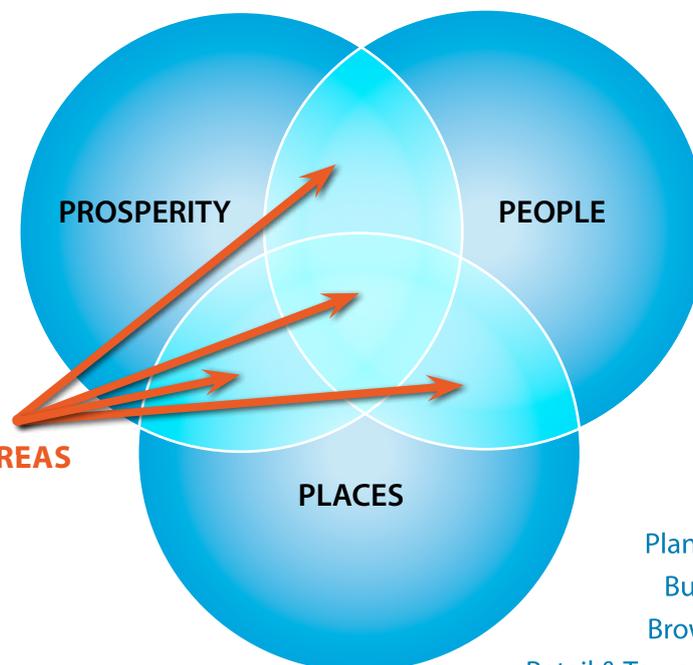
What Regeneration means in Aberdeenshire

PROSPERITY

Diversification
Remedial Assistance
PACE
Inward Investment
Town centre improvements
Business Initiatives
SME engagement
Local Initiatives
Business Associations

PEOPLE

Capacity Building
Community Learning & Development,
Community Planning
Deprivation and Poverty
Health Inequalities
Employability



CROSS-CUTTING AREAS

Art & Culture
Housing
Health
Employability
Community Economic
Development
Skills & Education
Design
Leisure
Environment

PLACES

Employment land
Planning & Development
Built & Natural Heritage
Brownfield Regeneration
Retail & Town Centre Development
Change of Use
Housing Regeneration
Community Facilities
Public Realm & Public Art

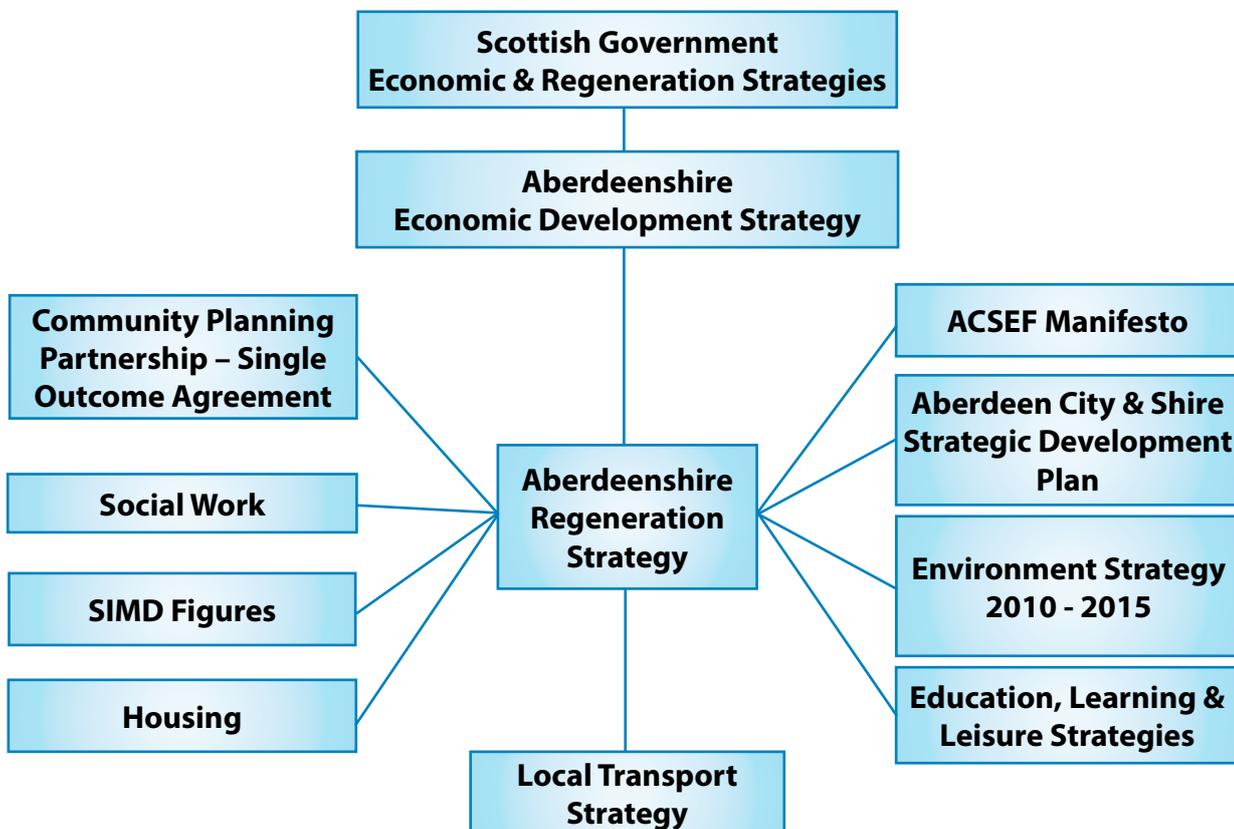
STRATEGIC CONTEXT

Regeneration: The Objective

The Scottish Government, in its own strategy “Achieving a Sustainable Future 2011” and preceding documents, identified a number of key themes to which this Strategy is aligned:

- ✓ a clear direction and vision is required for regeneration policy
- ✓ a co-ordinated approach at local level & across public services is required to tackle area-based disadvantage
- ✓ the importance of community led regeneration
- ✓ the requirement for grant support and innovative funding
- ✓ supporting town centres as a central part of community life
- ✓ the need for place-making to support successful communities

Aberdeenshire’s Strategy is also aligned with many other strategies and action plans. These include the Council’s Economic Development Strategy and the objectives of the Community Planning Partnership and the Single Outcome Agreement as well as the Aberdeenshire Council Historic Environment Strategy and many others. Aberdeenshire Council recognises and acknowledges the links between its policies and those of its partners. The Council looks to minimise exclusion and develop a collegiate atmosphere between individuals, agencies and community groups in order to achieve collaborative gain. achieve collaborative gain.



STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

Regeneration: Achieving the Objective

To achieve transformational change will require not only a compelling vision but also financial and human resources. Past work shows that success is dependent on community cohesion and poor cohesion requires greater resources to compensate. A satisfactory outcome is a community better connected and engaged, with the confidence and leadership to proactively pursue improvements with reliance on self-sustaining income rather than grant dependency.

The Council will therefore work within communities and with our Community Planning Partners to understand the needs and deliver the necessary changes. Every community has willing individuals and community champions with whom the Council can work to enhance community cohesion. Every community also has assets which can be identified and developed to bring economic prosperity as well as a safer and healthier place. Core funding will be used to lever additional finance whenever it is available with a target ratio of 1:2, i.e. bring in two additional pounds for every one pound invested by Aberdeenshire Council.

It is important to build on key infrastructure developments such as the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route and improved digital connectivity alongside investment in education and housing. These major projects will bring opportunity and stimulus as well as being catalysts for change.

The prospect of continuing Council funding provides the opportunity for a more strategic view of what can be achieved through to 2025, including where it is required and how long it may take. Regeneration, by definition, takes many years to effect change so the Council is also committed to focusing on an area for the required number of years to achieve the vision for it.

Progress will be incremental in that it will be represented by lots of small changes instead of one or two large ones. It is also necessary to slow and then stop a spiral of decay before it can be reversed. However, positive change will be introduced as soon as possible through early actions and investment-ready projects.

Key Outcomes

- ✓ Reduce Dereliction by the conservancy of our built and natural heritage, along with environmental improvements and bringing brownfield sites back into use.
- ✓ Increase Enterprise Activity including new enterprises, the growth and diversification of indigenous businesses and remove barriers to inward investment.
- ✓ Increase Development Activity by identifying potential places for housing and commercial development in line with the Local Development Plan.
- ✓ Increase Prosperity through skills and education and the provision of permanent employment at Living Wage pay levels that reduce reliance on benefits and tackle poverty and inequalities.
- ✓ Improve Town Centres by increasing footfall and activity, minimising the impact of void units and encouraging retailers to adapt to sustainable models such as online trading or Click & Collect.
- ✓ Provide People with a healthy, safe, pleasant, interesting and active community and environment whether they are resident or visitors.

These will be achieved through the development of an Action Plan based on Action Themes (see Appendix 1) relevant to the Focus Area.



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THE PLACE

Where is the Focus Area?

The Focus Area will initially be the town of Fraserburgh. There is a need for regeneration in many places, especially across North Aberdeenshire, however evidence such as the Scottish Indices of Multiple Deprivation (2012) indicates that Fraserburgh struggles to improve. The town centre has suffered more than most and there is a continued need to develop and diversify the economy. The timing is also right for focusing on Fraserburgh. There is a renewed sense of optimism from the opening of the new swimming pool and community champions have expressed their commitment to new ideas and opportunities. This initial choice will be reviewed during the expected lifetime of the strategy and as part of a regular process of monitoring and evaluation.

What About Places Outside the Focus Area?

Many communities are engaged in regeneration work on their own account and have been doing so successfully for a number of years. Through the Council's support for Rural Partnerships, Development Trusts and the Voluntary sector they have engaged in improvements to their built and natural heritage, developed eye-catching events for visitors and residents and sought funding from the Scottish Government, the EU and Big Lottery so that communities can help themselves.

It is intended that this work should continue with the Council providing expertise and advice on best practise through Council officers and from toolkits developed from the knowledge gained in other projects. There may still be funding opportunities from Service budgets, Area Top-Funds or Planning Gain. There will also be a separate Town Centres Review and Action Plan to examine all options for our town centres including Business Improvement Districts.

Some locations have also benefited from initiatives using the former Fairer Scotland Fund and these will continue. Aberdeenshire also greatly benefits from specialist funding for Built & Natural Heritage particularly in Conservation Areas. Townscape Heritage Initiatives and Conservation Area Regeneration Schemes have been or are operating in Banff, Peterhead and Portsoy, helping to bring new uses into old buildings and preserving the important architectural detail. The Council remains committed to this approach to regeneration in historic towns and will continue to promote and support similar applications for funding where appropriate as a key component of the Strategy for Regeneration. Aberdeenshire Council's Historic Environment Strategy suggests that the focus for such work will continue to be within the Regeneration Priority Areas defined in the Aberdeen City and Shire Structure Plan.

Focusing on an area of most need is meant to bring new attention and resources to that area and is not intended to devalue or displace the importance of continuing work in other towns.

IMPLEMENTATION

Working with Others

Aberdeenshire Council is not capable of achieving regeneration on its own. Nor does it wish to impose change on communities without their involvement. By working together a Local Action Group will be developed that uses local insight and aspirations and blends it with the best knowledge and experience the Council and our partners can bring together. This group will typically consist of the Area Manager, Economic Development and Regeneration specialists along with representatives from Community Planning and Community Learning & Development. They will be augmented as and when required by individuals, organisations and partners involved in project delivery.

Many organisations and individuals have expressed support for a Focused Regeneration Strategy for Aberdeenshire and to deliver the necessary changes. They include other public sector organisations like Community Planning Partners, local groups like Development Trusts, charitable interests like Registered Social Landlords as well as private sector businesses.

Where the Funding Will Come From

Aberdeenshire intends to commit its entire local regeneration budget to focus on a single place and will do so for a minimum of 3-5 years or longer, as defined by review. This currently amounts to £400,000 per annum, so over a 5 year period £2 million pounds could be available. Achieving the goal of leveraging additional finance could bring in a further £4 million making £6m in total.

Sources of additional funding may include existing Council Service budgets, Community Planning Partners, the EU, Scottish Government regeneration and other funds, along with perhaps Big Lottery.



Examples of Regeneration Activities

Regeneration activities can be wide and varied and those listed below are only a few of many examples. They will be co-ordinated with other public sector initiatives and follow an integrated approach with other Council services and resources. Whole-life costs will be built in so assets and standards are maintained and do not return to a cycle of decline.

Social Regeneration (People)

Tackle poverty & inequalities	Pursue health improvements
Encourage home and travel safety	Develop community capacity
Tackle rural isolation through transport	Improve rural access to services
Support improved employability	Support improved skills & education
Encourage art & culture	Foster community ownership
Make visitors welcome	Acknowledge demographic change

Physical Regeneration (Places)

Identify potential step-change projects	Improve public places
Develop gap Sites	Conserve built & natural heritage
More green spaces	Enhance streetscaping
Use Wellbeing Powers when necessary	Provide sufficient employment land
Encourage good design & architecture	Improve housing quality and quantity
Develop safe, attractive communities	Develop active leisure opportunities
Support change in town centres	Encourage quality developments
Provide facilities for visitors	Environmental improvements
Develop Action Areas	Support Placemaking

Economic Regeneration (Prosperity)

Diversify products, markets & services	Develop sustainable, quality retailers
Grow indigenous businesses	Remove barriers to inward investment
Invest in innovation & technology	Maximise online trading
Encourage the voluntary sector	Signpost firms to available support
Support social enterprise	Encourage new businesses
Develop key sector opportunities	Add value to primary industries
Look to new industries like renewables	Maximise tourism opportunities
Encourage business associations	Foster clusters & strong supply chains

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

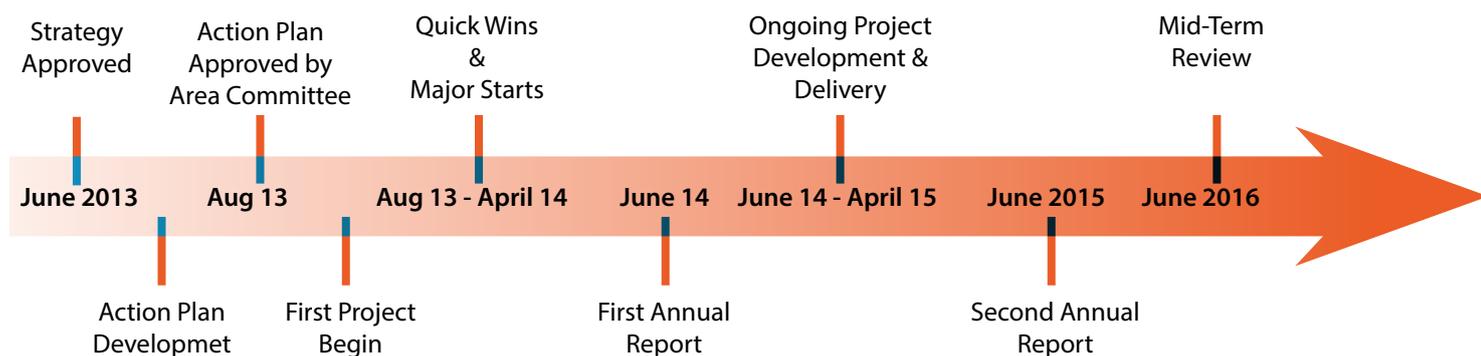
How Progress Will be Measured

Information and reports on performance against Key Outcomes (see above) will be maintained and presented in an Annual Report. The Scottish Indices of Multiple Deprivation (published every three years) along with other measurements and benchmarking data will be used to identify improvements that are needed or have taken place. Information from community planning partners and others will be acted upon and regular monitoring and evaluation of projects and initiatives will be undertaken. It is also important to listen to the community and pay attention to anecdotal evidence and make adjustments where necessary. Work and progress will also be communicated through existing media channels such as websites, news releases at least every quarter, etc.

Performance criteria will be set against the Action Plan and the Local Action Group will be responsible to the Strategic Regeneration Group within the Council as well as reporting to the Area Committee and Community Planning Partnership on a six-monthly basis.

From Strategy to Action

The next stage in the process is to translate the Strategy into an Action Plan for the Focus Area. This will be done by identifying Action Themes which group actions together that match the needs identified from community consultation and engagement. Appendix 1 of the Strategy shows the first of these for Fraserburgh, our initial Focus Area. A timeline for doing so is below:



STRATEGY APPENDIX 1

DEVELOPING THE ACTION PLAN FOR FRASERBURGH

Within every town, settlement or community there are opportunities and assets waiting to be developed and Fraserburgh is no different. Some actions will be small and short while others are much larger, more aspirational or take longer. They can all be grouped under themes which are aimed at achieving a common objective.

Fraserburgh Action Themes

Active Fraserburgh – The £9m+ recently invested in a new swimming pool is already paying dividends through the enthusiasm of individuals and the interest of visitors from outside the town. It has also highlighted the potential for developing other active pursuits making use of the natural heritage assets of the area. The town has traditional surfing or kite surfing, football, bowling, martial arts or the many hundreds in the town with a passion for running. Active Fraserburgh could have the potential to change internal and external perceptions, contribute to combating health inequalities and maybe encourage visitors.

Improving Enterprise – More can be done to encourage young and not-so-young entrepreneurs to start new businesses by reducing the barriers to entry. This might be flexible, low cost office or retail space or easy access to advice. Existing businesses can be encouraged to develop new products and markets and to add value to existing ones.

Creating Development Opportunities – Fraserburgh has a number of areas suitable for development and the private sector can be encouraged to translate interest into action.

Environmental Improvements – A review of Fraserburgh's historic buildings is underway. The project looks to demonstrate how underused historic buildings can be found viable new uses and in doing so restore and make improvements to the townscape. Aberdeenshire Council will support applications for funding for projects which support this aim. Shorter term

improvements may include deep cleaning pavements and property repair schemes to encourage proper maintenance for example to gutters and downpipes.

Skills & Education – Fraserburgh schools, along with Banff and Buchan College, are valued assets for the area and contribute not just to the education of our young people but also to the sense of place. The College, in particular, has the capability to assist business and industry through tailored training and specialist facilities. There are many other organisations who can be mobilised to provide assistance from Seafood Scotland to Skills Development Scotland for retail as well as industry.

Developing Key Industries – The Food and Drink industry is important to Fraserburgh, especially the seafood sector. There is interest in developing this further by adding value to the primary products and hosting a quality seafood restaurant as part of a campaign to establish the town as a Seafood Centre of Excellence.

Retail & the Town Centre – While there will be a separate Town Centres Action Plan developed by Aberdeenshire Council, early action can be taken to attract people into the centre through events, marketing initiatives and ensure it is a welcoming place.

Health & Wellbeing – Fraserburgh is acknowledged as having some of the most profound health issues in Aberdeenshire but a series of initiatives being undertaken by Community Health partners are aimed at bringing measurable improvements and will be joined by other wellbeing benefits.



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