



Banff and Macduff

Town Centre
Regeneration Report
2015/16



Introduction

In spring 2014, consultants from HRI delivered their 4 Towns Report, which looked at the challenges facing Banff and Macduff town centres and explored key themes which could regenerate and reinvigorate the twin towns. The report and a subsequent public consultation formed the basis for an ambitious Town Centre Action Plan. This outlined not only what Aberdeenshire Council could do, but also the key role which the communities of both towns would play in shaping their own futures. The people of both Banff and Macduff rose to the challenge, and while there is some way to go before the Action Plan's targets are fully met, this is an appropriate time to pause and consider what has been achieved so far.

The projects in this report demonstrate the power of partnership working to bring life back to areas which have become run down, and clearly show the pride and affection that local people have for their historic towns. Some involve working with national organisations such as Historic Scotland to breath life back into neglected buildings and find new and exciting uses that will bring long-term benefit and prosperity to the whole community. Others show what grass-roots community groups can achieve to nurture talent and celebrate local culture. There have been initiatives to improve the strength and competitiveness of local businesses. Perhaps most encouragingly of all, new groups have come together to tackle issues and improve the environment.

Some projects are still at a very early stage – it will be some time before the Master Plans for the harbours come to fruition, but the benefits they will deliver will be vital to the future economic prosperity of the area. There are exciting times ahead. It is beyond doubt that there will also be significant challenges, and obstacles which will have to be overcome. However, projects delivered so far show what can be achieved by partnerships between community groups and local government, and indicate a growing confidence for the future of the twin towns.

Banff and Macduff both have long histories, founded on the industry and commitment of their communities. Regeneration work is at an early stage, but there is already optimism for change and growing empowerment to enable both the community and Aberdeenshire Council to build on old strengths and new ideas. This is a time to pause, take stock and draw inspiration. The next steps on the regeneration journey are already underway.



Cllr Martin Kitts-Hayes,
Co Leader Aberdeenshire Council



Cllr Richard Thomson,
Co Leader Aberdeenshire Council

“There is already optimism for change and growing empowerment to enable both the community and Aberdeenshire Council to build on old strengths and new ideas.”

THE FIVE OBJECTIVES OF THE BANFF AND MACDUFF TOWN CENTRE ACTION PLAN

Objective 1: Secure the regeneration or reuse of high profile sites and buildings	Develop partnerships to find uses for priority sites identified by the HRI report
	Bridge Street Conservation Area Renewal Scheme (CARS)
	Support and stimulate business and community innovation
	Town centre first approach
	Community empowerment
Objective 2: To offer a memorable, high quality experience, and an interesting and diverse range of shops for locals and discerning visitors	Investigate specific retail and food service gaps and promote opportunities
	Encourage new, independent businesses
	Promote a better appreciation of the independent retail sector in the two towns
	Support retailers to develop their online presence
	Create work experience opportunities for young people
	Promote the retail and food sectors as a career of choice
	One to one mentoring for existing businesses
Objective 3: To celebrate the towns rich history, heritage and culture	Community events
	Test cultural demand
	Improve facilities for walkers and cyclists in and around Banff and Macduff
Objective 4: Build on the Success of Macduff's working harbour	Create a master plan for Macduff Harbour
	Create a business plan for Banff Harbour connecting it with the town centre
	Investigate marine related uses along Shore Street
Objective 5: Town Centre Living	Encourage more people to live in the town centres by improving housing quality and choice
	Continue to work with organisations such as the North East Preservation Trust in the identification of suitable buildings that are developable for housing
	Work with developers and partners to identify suitable properties for conversion of existing buildings

Do you have an idea that fits with these themes?

Email the Town Team at: banffandmacdufftownteam@aberdeenshire.gov.uk

Banff Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme (CARs)

Half a million pounds was approved by Historic Environmental Scotland to deliver a conservation led regeneration scheme on Bridge Street. The main objective is to bring derelict and vacant property back into use. It is also hoped that environmental improvements can be carried out to enhance the quality of the streetscape.

BRIDGE STREET, BANFF

A consultation with the residents of Bridge Street sought views on street lighting, parking and road surface and invited suggestions for improvements and changes. During the development of the scheme it has become apparent that the potential of flooding will restrict further residential use of properties. A comprehensive review on the future development opportunities is now being carried out.

Three small grants have been awarded to the two owners of a 'C' Listed corner property on Bridge Street. The building requires extensive repairs to the roof, windows and doors and the grants will help secure its future.



Bridge Street, Banff

CARMELITE STREET

The redevelopment of the gap site at Carmelite Street has played a key role in the wider regeneration of Banff town centre. A partnership approach initiated through the CARs scheme to secure the site has seen the successful delivery of 3 x 1 bed flats to provide much needed affordable housing in Banff whilst also aligning with the Banff and Buchan Priorities 2013 – 2016 Single Outcome Agreement, specifically with respect to supporting regeneration and improving neighbourhoods. This site within the Conservation Area of Banff had been derelict for around 25 years and presented a number of challenges including ownership issues, conservation implications, remediation and constructions costs and economies of scale due to the small number of units. Approval was given by Banff and Buchan Area Committee in January 2013 to proceed with the proposals to construct 3 x 1 bedroom flats for social rent through the Council's New Build Programme. This development was supported and funded by Regeneration Funding, Housing Revenue Account Funding, Developer Obligations Funding and enhanced Scottish Government Funding – a total investment of £436,000.



Carmelite Street – Housing Regeneration Project

A Revival of Banff Silversmithing?

The Meal House is a 'B' Listed structure and is on Scotland's Building at Risk Register. An asset of Banff and Macduff Common Good Fund, it is located at the east end of Bridge Street. In May 2015, initial work to make the building safe and stop further decay was completed.

A feasibility study lead by Banff Preservation & Heritage Society reached the exciting conclusion that it would be possible to revive the trade of the silversmith in Banff. Currently in the development stage, plans are to restore the historic Meal House as an incubator for recent graduates in Silversmithing and related metalworking techniques. Universities from Glasgow, Edinburgh and Dundee are interested and partnerships are being created with the Incorporation of Goldsmiths and the Bishop Educational Trust. This would attract visitors, raise the profile of the town and build on the existing assets of Banff Museum and Duff House. The Coast organisation already brings art exhibits to the area and showcases local talent.

Banff museum has a valuable historic collection of silver made in the town and stamped with 'B' for Banff. In partnership with the museum and Duff House, a fully equipped workshop could be provided in the Meal House, where silversmiths could practice their craft and revive the 'B' for Banff hallmark to stamp their work. With tutoring and business advice, design skills can be turned into sustainable businesses, reviving the history for the benefit of the town today. Graduates will be attracted into the area, and will be encouraged to work with students from Banff Academy and to offer courses for visitors and residents.

A successful application has been approved by the Scottish Government's Regeneration Capital Grant Fund (RCGF) to complete construction work to the Meal House and for improvements to Banff Museum including better access, signage, security, heating and insulation, and to bring two rooms back into use. A decision on this funding is expected in February 2016.



Meal House (Smiddy), Old Market Place, (prior to Phase One)



Banff Museum, High Street



Silver teaspoon by John Keith, Banff, c 1768

TURF (Twin Towns United Regeneration Forum)

About TURF

In July 2014, Banff and Macduff Community Council coordinated a meeting with community organisations based in Banff and Macduff to take practical action to promote regeneration in both towns. This resulted in the formation of TURF, a constituted not-for-profit group which now has well-attended and productive monthly meetings.

In January 2015 the members agreed a Working Plan which includes three projects, all of which are currently proceeding to schedule.

Projects

TURF arranged for improvements to the appearance of the hoardings that mask the site of the former Highland Haven on Shore Street, Macduff. They invited local photographers, including the Deveron Camera Club, to provide high quality photographs of nearby tourist attractions, suitable to be converted to large format prints. A map was drawn up to help tourists and local people find and visit the chosen sites. Volunteers painted the hoardings a bright colour and mounted the photos. The public reaction has been positive, and the boards now draw attention away from the demolition site behind.

TURF highlights the many regeneration activities happening in Banff and Macduff to local people through fortnightly articles in the Banffshire Journal, while on Facebook they share a Community page with the Community Council. Articles are summarised in a periodic hard-copy Newsletter which goes to locations such as Care Homes. Feedback from the articles and the first Newsletter has been positive.

A key project, carried out in collaboration with Aberdeenshire Council is aimed at bringing disused buildings in the centre of Macduff back to use. A comprehensive dossier was compiled from local and public knowledge, a number of owners were contacted. To-date, two owners have responded to discuss options for the future of their buildings.

Summary

In summary, TURF has progressed from an initial idea to being a visible and active community organisation that is cutting its teeth on relatively small projects. However, the group has discussed ambitions to consider larger regeneration projects when opportunities arise.

Contact Details oorturf@gmail.com



WRITING FESTIVAL

DAFT (Deveron Arts & Folklore Together) Writing Group celebrates the literary heritage of the north east while encouraging and supporting new writers in the area. Over the last three years, the group has met fortnightly and in 2015 they launched two projects to promote their aims. The "Write Fest", a festival of creative writing, provides the opportunity for writers of all levels and genres to participate in bi-monthly workshops lead by Scottish authors or authors who have made Scotland their home. The festival culminated in November with a reading event to coincide with the Scottish Book Week.

September was the deadline for submissions to the Write Fest Anthology, "New Writing Banff: In Byron's Wake". There were enough entries to allow the self-publishing project to go ahead and the book will be launched at the 2016 COAST Festival.

In August 2015, DAFT launched the W.A.R. club (Writing And Reading). Aimed at children under 12, WAR meets fortnightly to read Scottish Children's fiction and learn to write reviews.

The Workshops

- Poetry and prose with emphasis on setting in time and place, led by Dr Wayne Price. Dr Price is co-ordinator of the Creative Writing course at University of Aberdeen and has won awards for his poetry and short stories.
- Narrative non-fiction, exploring the idea of home. This was led by Malachy Tallack, who has written two narrative non-fiction books and won the Scottish Book Trust new writing in 2014.
- Historical fiction exploring place and time led by Shona MacLean. Shona is a former resident of Banff who has published four very successful historical crime books and has been short listed for national crime fiction awards.



Wayne Price's Workshop

Marketing

The workshops were advertised through the group's social media networks and website as well as posters locally and adverts in the Banffshire Journal group and Turriff Advertiser group. Wayne Price's workshop in March was sold out, as was Malachy Tallack's for May.



Malachy Tallack

November & December Events

Banff celebrated the Scottish Book Week with a storytelling event in the Kelpie at Banff Castle, which was advertised through the Banffshire Journal, social media and to Banff Castle's members. In December, international award winning fantasy fiction author, Camilla Voiez, worked with the group and members of the public.

DAFT are now looking forward to the culmination of Write Fest, which will take place early in 2016. A group of published post graduate students and lecturers from Aberdeen University's Master of Literature Creative Writing course will celebrate local writing, past and present by giving readings of their work, followed by a talk on Writers of the North East. The event will conclude with an open mic session to encourage audience participation.

Contact Details

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Facebook search 'Daft writing Group'

RETAIL PLUS

The best and most original ideas for regeneration often come from within the community. Such projects are more likely to succeed because of their grass roots support, and Aberdeenshire Council's role is to create the conditions and funding to allow the ideas to flourish. The Retail Plus scheme is a prime example, which provided support to retail businesses of Banff and Macduff in two ways. Firstly, in providing expert advice from a specialist Retail Consultant on a one-to-one basis for independent businesses in the town. To allow businesses to take full advantage of the expert advice received, an improvement grant of up to £2,000 per business was offered. The scheme proved more popular than initially anticipated, with twenty town centre businesses applying to join. Over the autumn, the work and investment of the various businesses became visible as improvements were completed.



Tuleni: "Taking part in the scheme has really helped to bring home the fact that all retailers need to work together to ensure that Banff and Macduff are offering the shopping experience that people are seeking".



The Banff Pet Shop: "Financial help was a big advantage, without it our improvements couldn't be done. Workshops and support were very good. We have received positive feedback from our customers".



"I found the scheme very helpful and it gave us incentive to do the alterations"

Marie
The Garret Ltd



“Very much appreciated the Grant for the window painting, which has brightened up the outside of the shop”.



Converted from a redundant fish sales office in Shore Street Macduff the Seafront Café opened on the 29th June. Funding from both the Town Centre Regeneration Funds and a grant from the European Fishery fund allowed the redundant office to be converted. The Café caters for the needs of the harbour and is a perfect stop for tourists, walkers and locals.

“It is a bit early to advise of its success but we are building up a loyal and regular customer base.”

Marilyn Paterson owner of The Seafront café.



Smarts Newsagents: “The Grant was helpful for updating the front of the shop, otherwise this would be expensive. Would recommend for other businesses”.



Strachan's Pharmacy: “I found the experience very much worthwhile. Gaining expertise from the consultants was extremely valuable. The grant match funding was appreciated”.



“We would recommend being part of the Retail Plus scheme. We were able to benefit our customers by purchasing a new brochure wrack, monitors, chairs and a telephone system”. Ritchie Travel

Supporting Town Centre Vitality Through Employment

Imagine at Twentyseven operates as a trust managed by a board of trustees to benefit people with disabilities. Since opening the shop at 27 Low Street Banff a number of people including members of the public and local traders have commented upon the enhanced view, look and feel of Low Street. It has been noticeable that since occupying 27 Low Street a further four empty shop units have now been occupied. This has led to a 'creative' hub emerging in the town centre with complimentary shops and services attracting greater footfall to the Low Street area.

Whilst it is clear that the main customer base to the shop is from the Banff and Macduff area, it is apparent that customers are increasingly travelling from out of town destinations especially the coastal fringe including Fraserburgh, Portsoy, Cullen and Buckie.

All of the art, craft and gift items sold in the shop are either made in house or handcrafted by local crafters and artists. This leads to the items on sale being unique and not generally available elsewhere. In turn this strengthens the retail offerings in Low Street and Banff town centre.



Imagine at Twentyseven promotes and supports 120 local crafters and artists in providing an economical, all year base from which to market and sell their materials. This helps increase local business. Income generated from sales and paid to local artists and crafters who retail through the shop, remains in the area helping boost the local economy.

As the 'creative hub' develops in the town centre this enhances the reputation of Banff to be the place to shop for vintage items, upcycled furniture, arts and crafts.

The benefits to the Day Service

Imagine at Twentyseven provides a number of benefits to the day service. This includes the increased opportunities for people with disabilities to train and work in a retail environment. Being based at the heart of the community people with disabilities have natural opportunities to network and integrate with members of the public. This has been seen to promote positive attitudes towards people with disabilities and help breakdown stigma and discrimination.



Future Plans

Imagine at Twentyseven are working to increase and offer to members of the public a range of workshops. This will include tuition and training in sewing, embroidery, painting, knitting, crochet and drawing. By inviting members of the public to participate in workshops this will both increase the creative talent in the area and provide further opportunities for people with disabilities to work alongside members of the public.

The Imagine project would like to install a lift to the premises to provide wheelchair access to the first and second floors of the shop which would allow for the development of new training opportunities in retail and project development.

Imagine at Twentyseven are also working to increase and raise public awareness of the shop over a larger geographic area which they hope will increase their customer base to not only the shop



The shop has provided a real time environment in which to work and train in a range of vocational skills. This includes craft skills, customer service, counter service, window dressing, stock ordering and rotation, office and administration skills.

Services provided by the local authority to people with disabilities operate in an increasingly tight financial environment. Through working in partnership with the Imagine at Twentyseven Trust, the unit cost of day service provision is reduced. This innovative business model has led to benefits for the local community, people with disabilities and local authority.

Skills and Outcomes

Twenty five people with disabilities currently participate in the Imagine at Twentyseven shop. Since opening there have been clear indications of personal growth, increased self-esteem, independence, confidence and development of vocational skills and feelings of being valued as a team member.

In conjunction with increased skills and personal qualities this has helped to promote a valued service to the public who comment on the high quality and attention to detail.

An idea of what is being made and sold

The team at Imagine at Twentyseven have been busy upcycling and producing shabby chic furniture this has proved very popular with customers, particularly in the lead up to Christmas. A range of handmade cards, gift boxes, draft excluders, doorstops, personalised bags, cushions and soft furnishings, embroidery, needle felt, crochet and knitted items are produced. The shop sells a wide range of craft and art from external artists and crafters including, wood turning and sculpture, paintings, jewellery, glassware, pottery, leather work, books and Scottish music.

For further information about this project please contact Mark McDermott on telephone 01261 818281.

Banff Town House

An office rationalisation programme was undertaken within Banff in order to reduce the number of offices occupied by Aberdeenshire Council staff. The aim was to free up leased properties and to allow for the disposal and sale of some council properties thereby generating an additional asset to the council while at the same time providing better work space environments for staff.

A programme for the regeneration of four council owned properties began in late July 2014 with the refurbishment of 2 Carmelite Street, a former disused shop unit, in order to relocate the Registrar from Seafield House. The budget for this work was £60,000 and was completed in late August 2014.

Following on from the completion of 2 Carmelite Street, the contractor, Morrison Construction, undertook the complete refurbishment, internally and externally, of Seafield House. The work here was completed in January 2015 at a cost of £658,000 and is now home to Social Work and NHS staff as part of the collaborative working initiative.

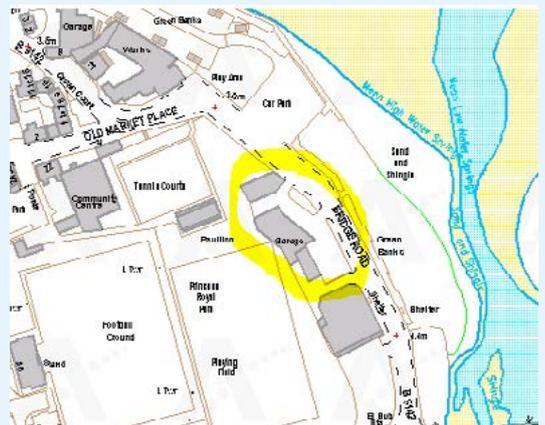
The next building to be included in the regeneration programme was the Town House, a grade A listed building. Work here started in mid January 2015 and was completed in early July 2015 to a budget of £735,000. The building now houses the one stop shop Service Point for Aberdeenshire Council and for Job Centre Plus, in a convenient town centre location and close to bus services, along with Housing and the Area Manager's team. The building layout has been returned to a much more spacious environment and many of the historical features have been retained.

The recently completed former finance and housing building at 32 Low Street was another full refurbishment to a budget of £288,000. And will shortly be home to the Banff Education team and recruitment teams presently housed within St.Leonards. St.Leonards is currently the focus of a feasibility study into whether it should be retained for council staff or otherwise disposed of.



Former Crown Motors and Glazier Buildings

As part of the larger developments comprising the Banff and Macduff Community & Sports projects, the former Crown Motors and Glazier buildings have now been demolished. The site is now being transferred to Council ownership. Work to form 14 car and 2 bus parking spaces along with a landscape area is expected to start in April 16. Completion will be approx. 8 weeks after the site start. Also included in the plans is an electric vehicle charging point. Further works to the Canal Park pavilion have yet to be finalised.



The Harvest Centre

The Harvest Centre provides key community facilities and support for the towns and have fully restored the Old Trinity and Alvah Church. In order to finish the project the Harvest Centre received a contribution from the Banff and Macduff Town Centre Action Plan towards the upgrade of the car park, driveway and the bell tower which was causing safety concerns.

To help the Harvest Centre complex blend into the surrounding area, a local building firm advised that the driveway upgrade be completed using the same material as the pavement. This allows for a seamless continuation between pavement and driveway

The upgrade has also provided disabled parking spaces and gives a more even surface for people who find it difficult to walk or who require a wheelchair, changing the aesthetics of the high street with such a prominent building

With work to the Trinity and Alvah Church also completed, the car park is busier than ever.

The facilities have regular users including the Guides, Pilates, a Cardiac Rehab Class, Exercise Classes, Aberdeenshire Voluntary Action and the Deveron Running Club.

One-off bookings have included the Dutch Youth Orchestra, The Deveron singers, The Northumbrian Ranters Youth Orchestra with Gareth Davies-Jones and a Fashion Show.

Trinity and Alvah Church also plays host to the Banff Cinema which draws in 150-200 people every month. Banff cinema provides the opportunity for local people to view some of the latest films without having to travel to Aberdeen or Elgin.



The Harvest Centre is progressing towards seeing their plans fulfilled and the project completed. The team behind the Harvest Centre care passionately about Banff and Macduff and want to leave a legacy that can be enjoyed by generations to come.

Contact Details for the Groups: 01261 815791 or e-mail: OfficeAdmin@harvestministries.org.uk, Facebook: [Riverside Network Churches](#)



Macduff Harbour Master Plan & Banff Harbour Business Plan.

Macduff Harbour and Banff Marina were identified by all as being key assets, around which the towns could develop. This required strategic plans and Fisher Associates were appointed as consultants to draw up a Business Plan for Banff Marina and a Master plan for Macduff Harbour.

The Consultation took place over several weeks and involved group workshops at each harbour; one to one consultations with individual and group stakeholders; and follow up telephone consultations with other stakeholders. Council officers were involved in the consultations as required, either in gathering information, or as consultees.

The final plans were published on the Aberdeenshire Council website. Considerable interest has been shown by the community, adjacent Authorities, and Council Officers.

The cost of developing harbour assets are considerable and long term commitment is required. Shorter term projects have been started, such as the beach shower and officers are reviewing multiple funding streams to take forward some of these capital funding ideas.

<http://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/roads-and-travel/harbours/Business-and-Master-Plans/s>



New Harbour Slip Way

The Town Centre Regeneration monies have allowed improvement to the slipway in the west basin of Macduff harbour. The old antiquated wooden slipway which could only take small wooden vessels has been removed and replaced with a full concrete rampway which will allow any vessel to enter the shipyard. This will improve the long term viability in the west basin.



Town Centre Regeneration Financial Summary

The table below illustrates commitments from the £280,000 Town Centre Regeneration Budget.

PROJECT TITLE/ PURCHASE	Monies Committed	Total Project
Macduff harbour slipway (match fund to Aberdeenshire European Fisheries Fund, AEFF)	£60,000	£279,000
Macduff Seafood Restaurant	£22,650	£90,600
Retail Plus	£59,800	£50,300
Trinity and Alvah streetscape improvements	£5,325	£250,000
Silversmith project – Meal house	£10,700	£340,000
Highland Haven boards	£2,318	£2,318
Writing Festival	£1,500	£3,200
Harbour Master Plan	£15,000	£20,000
Museum Project	£11,730	£126,730
Feasibility Study 18-20 Low Street/49-53 Bridge Street	£15,000	£15,000
Totals	£204,023	£1,163,848



Looking Forward

To date this work has focussed on Town Centres but we are moving to consider the wider town of Banff and Macduff and would welcome feedback and input to this process. We will continue to work with our partners in facilitating any activity that contributes to the economic and social development of towns.

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