



**Fraserburgh  
Shopfront Design**

Planning advice  
**PA2023-06**

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## Fraserburgh Shopfront Design Guidance

The appearance of the streetscape is an important element in the character of a town-centre street. Good design of shop fronts that can give a very strong message to customers about the pride they have in the area and its heritage, increasing the attractiveness of the centre to potential customers and the viability of businesses.

To promote good shopfront design, Fraserburgh Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme/Townscape Heritage (CARS/TH) was commissioned to develop guidance, specifically for Fraserburgh. However, the principles that the Fraserburgh Design Guidance promotes are universal to most traditional shopping streets in Aberdeenshire and therefore, the Fraserburgh Shop Front Guide was adopted by the Council in 2018 as Planning Advice. It remains as valid today as on the day it was written.

The Fraserburgh Shop Front Guide has been successful in persuading owners to retain important features of their shop fronts during any renovations or alteration. Since the adoption of this Planning Advice, it has helped to deliver vibrant and aesthetic facades, which have in turn enriched the whole “feel” of Fraserburgh town centre. Use of this advice in other locations could deliver similar benefits and ensure that the traditional shop fronts and their unique features are safeguarded.

In Fraserburgh, the roll-out of this advice has not been entirely straightforward, and lessons have been learned. While some works to shop fronts may fall under “permitted development”, major parts of Fraserburgh Town Centre falls within Fraserburgh Conservation Area, or the buildings themselves may be listed as of historic interest. This means that various external works and advertisements may require necessary planning consent. Early discussion with Planning Officers will identify the planning status of works that shop owners may wish to undertake and all appropriate consents should be acquired prior to commencement of the development. Following the advice within the Fraserburgh Shopfront Design Guidance will make sure that proposals will have an easy path through that process.

From mountain to sea

# Fraserburgh Shopfront Design Guidance



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This guidance document was commissioned as an objective of the Fraserburgh CARS/TH scheme Fraserburgh 2021, active for five years from 2016 until 2021. Funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, Historic Environment Scotland, the Scottish Government and Aberdeenshire Council, the scheme sees £5.8m invested into Fraserburgh Town Centre Conservation Area through restoring and enhancing Fraserburgh's built heritage making the town centre a more vibrant and attractive place for residents and local businesses. This is the best way to ensure that our historic environment is preserved and reinvigorated for future generations.

Although this guide is focussed on Fraserburgh Town Centre, the principles and design guidance featured are relevant to other towns, conservation areas and individual shops across Aberdeenshire. It is important to retain the individuality of different town centres in Aberdeenshire through the retention and careful repair & maintenance of historic shopfronts. Owners of traditional buildings with low-quality and inappropriate modern uPVC or aluminium shopfronts are encouraged to consider a carefully designed and traditionally styled replacement. It is worth contacting Aberdeenshire Council to find out if there is any grant funding available in your town for this purpose.





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# Introduction

Like many towns, Fraserburgh has a range of shopfronts of varying dates, from a simple domestic style to purpose-built premises. Traditional shops survive, along with later, modern shopfronts and there are other commercial premises such as banks, hotels and public houses. The town centre is therefore varied, with a mixture of new and old.

Traditional shopfronts reflect earlier craft traditions, local materials and have a connection with businesses in the area. Some family businesses can have a long association with a place and the social connection is as important as the architectural history.

Retail premises are a vital part of a local economy. In Fraserburgh, shops provide a service and jobs for people in the town. Having attractive, well-maintained premises helps to encourage residents to shop there and visitors to come to the town centre.

This Design Guidance aims to help shop owners in Fraserburgh to identify traditional elements which are worth retaining and conserving. It also provides advice on tackling alterations and repairs and where to go to for additional advice.



**Fig 2: Broad Street, Fraserburgh in 1930s**

# Features of a Traditional Shopfront

The features present and materials used will depend on the age of the shopfront. Rarely do shops have just a single period of development; layers of historic fabric contribute to the appearance of the shop. Understanding the materials present and the different periods of construction helps in adopting a suitable approach to repair and conservation.

## Elements of a Shopfront



Fig 3 ©Mackay CAD Services Ltd

- |                     |                                   |
|---------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1 - Cornice         | 7 - Glazed door in recessed lobby |
| 2 - Fascia board    | 8 - Stallriser                    |
| 3 - Console bracket | 9 - Stallriser vent               |
| 4 - Fanlight        | 10 - Lead cap to cornice          |
| 5 - Pilaster        | 11 - Clerestory                   |
| 6 - Plinth          | 12 - Blind mechanism              |

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## Cornice

The cornice of the shopfront sits above the fascia and forms the uppermost section of the shopfront. If it projects out from the wall and is constructed of timber a lead capping is essential to protect it from weathering. Sometimes the lead is replaced with mineral felt but this has a much shorter life and has a poorer appearance.

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## Fascia board

The fascia board is usually of timber and is used for the lettering and signage. It may be flat or angled.



**Fig 4 and Fig 5 Console brackets in Fraserburgh**  
©Lindsay Lennie

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## Console brackets

Console brackets are a very important element in shopfront design. They mark the end of the fascia and can be simple or highly decorative depending on the age of the shopfront. Many were individually made by local craftsmen and are unique. They offer a distinctive element to shopfront design. Most are made of timber and need to be maintained by regular painting. If damaged they can usually be repaired.



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## Pilasters

Pilasters are used to frame the shopfront. These vertical panels can be plain or decorated and can be in a variety of materials including stone, timber or cast iron. Fluting is a common detail in Victorian shops but roundels, panels and decorative carvings are all found.

At the base of the pilaster is the plinth. Being so close to the pavement they can deteriorate due to weathering if not well maintained especially if constructed of timber.



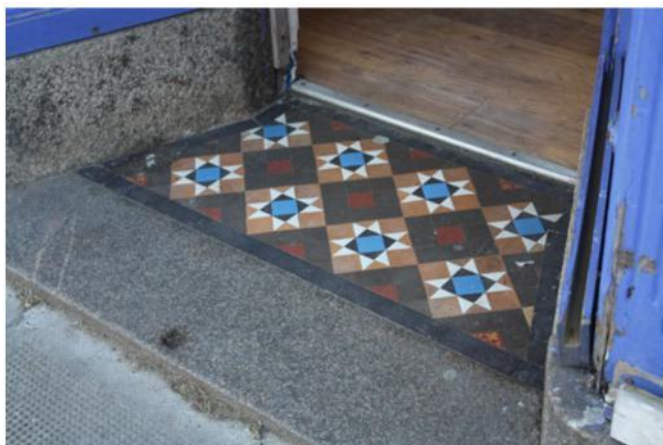
## Lobby Floors

Many shops in Fraserburgh have attractive and historic tiled entrances. These contribute to the interest of the shopping street and should be retained and conserved where present.

The earliest examples have encaustic or geometric tiles and date to the end of the 19th century. The combination of different colours and shapes of tiles creates an enticing entrance. There is usually a marble or stone step which gives protection to the edge of the tiles.

Historic tiles are remarkably hard wearing although abrasive cleaning products should be avoided as these may cause damage. If broken, cracked or missing, it may be possible to source suitable matching tiles from specialist heritage tile manufacturers.

Other shop entrances may use marble, terrazzo or mosaic. Modern tiles should be avoided as the glaze and finish of these is rarely of the quality appropriate for traditional shops. Modern terrazzo however, is a good option as it is hardwearing and attractive.



**Fig 6: Encaustic tiled threshold with granite step**  
©Lindsay Lennie



**Fig 7: Modern tiles can have a poor appearance and are easily damaged as they lack the robustness of traditional tiles**  
©Lindsay Lennie



**Fig 8: A modern terrazzo floor provides an attractive entrance to a shop**  
©Crown Copyright Historic Environment Scotland

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## Glazing

The glass used in a shopfront is an integral part of the overall design. Glass may be curved, etched, stained, opaque or plain. Stained glass is associated with the early 20th century whereas opaque will usually date to the 1930s.

Traditional glazing patterns make an important contribution to the appearance of a shopfront and should be retained. Repairs may require specialist advice.



**Fig 9 A stained glass clerestory will usually date to around 1900 ©Lindsay Lennie**



**Fig 10 Opaque or etched glazing is typically used in 1930s or 1950s shopfronts ©Lindsay Lennie**



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## Window Frames and Doors

Joinery is an important element of shopfronts. Window frames were traditionally made of good quality timber. In the 1930s, bronze and chrome were used for their smooth and reflective appearance. During the second half of the 20th century, new materials emerged including powder-coated aluminium and upvc. These products have heavy sections and lack the finer details associated with traditional joinery.

Shop doors are glazed to improve visibility into the premises. Victorian doors are normally half glazed but interwar shops often have margin panes around a large glazed panel.

The advantage of timber is that it is easy to repair whereas aluminium and plastic frames usually involve wholesale replacement if there is any damage. Paint colours can also be easily changed.

**Fig 11 A good quality early 20th century traditional door ©Lindsay Lennie**

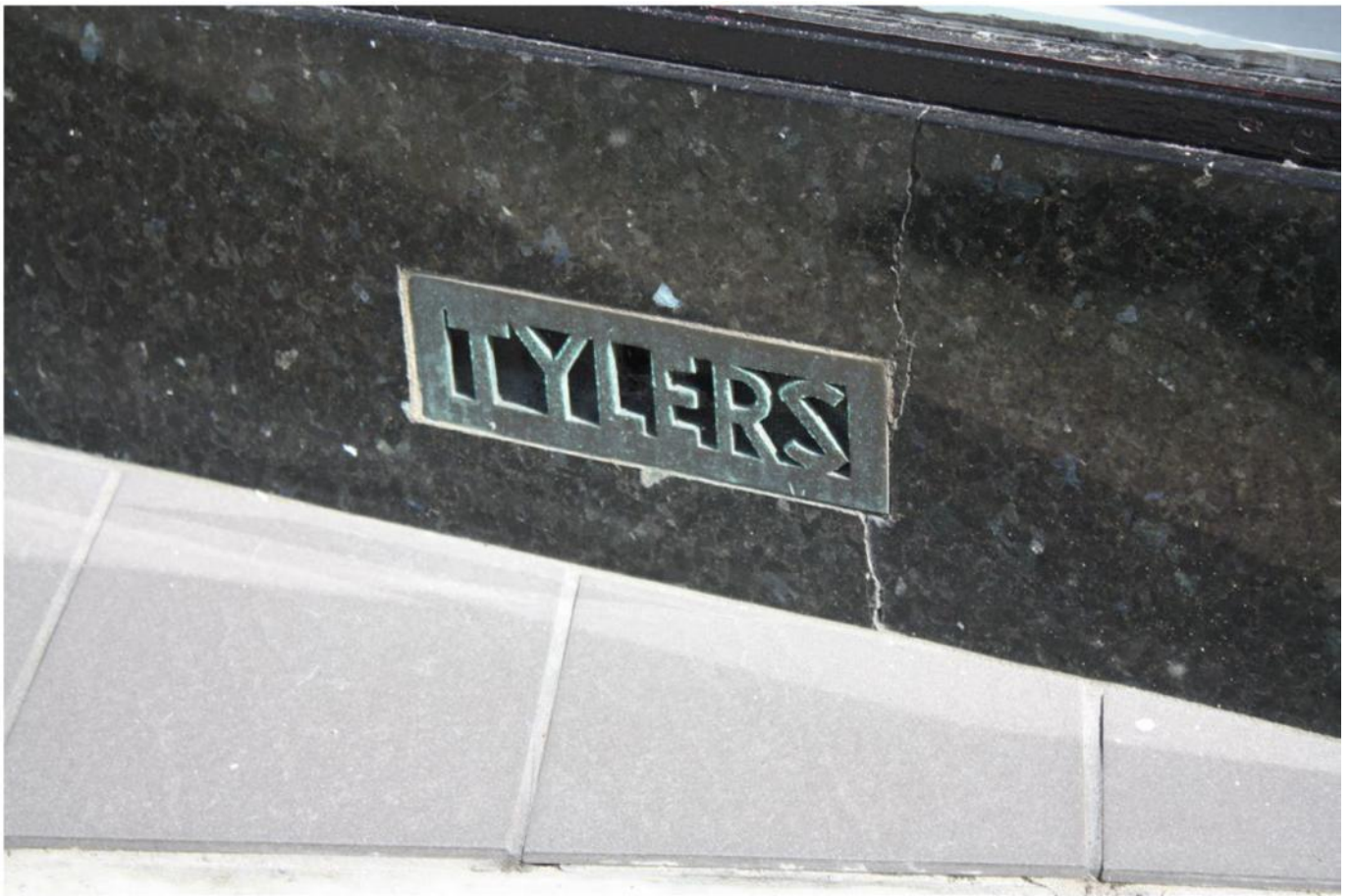


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## Stallriser

The stallriser is the area between the window and the pavement. The height will vary depending on the type of shop and the goods being sold. Larger items like furniture require a taller window so the stallriser will be low but, where smaller goods are sold such as a jeweller, the stallriser will be higher.

Stallrisers need to be hardwearing as they will be subject to damage from weather, road salt and impact from people and goods going to and from the premises. They are usually constructed of stone or brick but may be tiled, rendered or have a timber finish. Often a vent is incorporated into the design to ensure a flow of air into the shop.



**Fig 12 Decorative bronze stallriser vent set into a polished granite stallriser**  
©Lindsay Lennie







# Improving Your Shopfront

## Improving Your Shopfront: Signs and Advertising

Well designed signage is an asset to a retail business. Signs which are creative and thoughtful add interest to the street and can help to attract customers. The styles and materials available are extensive but consideration should always be given to the style of the shop and what would be most appropriate.

### Fascia Signs

Hand-painted signs on a fascia are cost-effective and offer opportunities to be imaginative. Individual letters can also be attractive but may require more maintenance to ensure letters are not lost.



Fig 13 Hand-painted shadow lettering  
©Crown Copyright Historic Environment Scotland



Fig 14 Creative signage reflecting the retail business adds interest to a shopfront ©Crown Copyright Historic Environment Scotland



Fig 15 Individual applied letters and numbers are simple but effective ©Crown Copyright Historic Environment Scotland

Fig 16 Poor signage which is back-lit, overly deep and blocking the clerestory. There are also excessive fixed and illuminated wall signs.  
©Crown Copyright Historic Environment Scotland



## Hanging Signs

Where a shop has a limited fascia, a hanging sign can be a useful addition. However, there are limitations on the size, height and illumination and it is advisable to seek advice from the local planning authority to check the regulations. Planning consents may be needed.



Fig 17 A good quality hanging sign can help to attract customers ©Lindsay Lennie



Fig 18 Hanging signs can add interest to the street but should be restricted to one per shop to avoid creating clutter ©Lindsay Lennie

### Advice on developing effective signage:

Consider the age and style of the shopfront. The lettering should be sympathetic to the design. Art Deco lettering is not suitable for a Victorian shopfront.

- If the original fascia exists, this will usually be the best location for lettering.
- Avoid lowering the fascia and covering historic details and the clerestory.
- Hanging signs should be limited to one per shop and should meet local regulations on their size and position.
- Take into account the colour of the shop, the parent building and the retail brand to determine which colours are suitable for signage.
- Hand-painted lettering is cost-effective, attractive and can be easily updated. It is very appropriate for traditional shopfronts.
- Applied lettering may be suitable for some fascias as an alternative to painted letters.
- Consider how the sign will be maintained.
- The best signage is well thought out, creative and stylish.
- Consult the local planning authority for advice before proceeding with new signs.





**Fig 19** If not maintained, hanging signs can become damaged and dirty and present a poor image of the business ©Lindsay Lennie

## Improving Your Shopfront: Paint Colours

Well painted shopfronts with thoughtful use of colour can significantly enhance a shopping street.

The colour of a shopfront will often reflect the retail branding. It is important that the colour is sympathetic to the building and to the wider townscape. Darker colours may be more successful than bright modern colours and careful combinations are effective for highlighting architectural detail. Varnish can be more difficult to maintain and should only be used on very high quality timber such as hardwoods. Lower quality and composite timbers should always be painted.

Changing the colour of the shopfront may require planning consent and advice should be sought from the local planning authority if the intention is to repaint in a different colour.



**Fig 20 Careful choice of colour combinations can make for a very attractive shopfront**  
©Crown Copyright Historic Environment Scotland

### Advice on paint colours:

- Choose colours carefully depending on the building and retail branding.
- Contrasting colours can highlight architectural detail.
- Avoid varnish or stained finishes.
- Paint regularly to keep the shopfront looking attractive.



**Fig 21 Bright, modern colours are inappropriate for traditional townscapes** ©Lindsay Lennie



## Improving Your Shopfront: Lighting

Shop owners may want to use lighting to highlight their shopfront, particularly for those open in the evening, such as restaurants. However, wiring can be unsightly and the fixings for lighting can be detrimental to historic fabric. Internally illuminated box signs and excessive use of swan neck lights on fascias are particularly unsightly. For most locations, street lighting will be sufficient. Careful use of lighting in window displays can also help to enhance the shopfront and promote the business.



Fig 22 Use of internal lighting displays make shop windows attractive even when the shop is closed. Additional lighting is rarely needed. ©Lindsay Lennie

### Advice on lighting shopfronts:

- Backlit, illuminated signs should not be used on traditional shopfronts or in Conservation Areas.
- The number of light fittings should be kept to a minimum or avoided.
- Clever use of window and internal lighting can create an attractive appearance after dark so external lighting is not needed.
- It is preferable not to illuminate hanging signs.



## Improving Your Shopfront: Blinds and Awnings

Historic images of Fraserburgh show that awnings were widely used. They are a practical addition to a shop, protecting the goods from excessive sun which can damage stock displayed in the windows.

Traditional awnings have a number of arrangements depending on the style of the shopfront. The blinds may be either integral to the design or retro-fitted and situated above the cornice or below the fascia or occasionally fitted within window openings.



Fig 23 Traditional blinds were widely used until the 1950s©

### Advice on fitting a traditional awning

#### Where a blind box already exists:

- Seek advice from a contractor who repairs traditional awnings as the existing mechanism may be repaired and a new awning fitted.
- The blind box may need repaired to ensure it is weather proof.
- Awning fabrics should have a matt finish and be of a colour which fits with the shopfront and townscape.
- Lettering on the blind cloth may be permitted but can limit the life of the awning of the shop changes hands.

#### Where there is no blind box:

- Consider the position and size carefully having regard to the style of the shopfront.
- The awning fabric should be of a matt finish and of an appropriate colour for the shopfront.
- Planning or Listed Building Consent may be required so ask the local planning authority for advice.



Fig 24 and 25 Traditional awnings can be extended to varying positions depending on the location of the sun ©Lindsay Lennie



Fig 26 Modern, 'Dutch' blinds hide historic detail and should be avoided. The shiny plastic material also has a short life. ©Lindsay Lennie



## Improving Your Shopfront: Security Measures

Protecting retail premises is essential to all retailers. Glazing, entrances and the goods inside the shop are all potentially vulnerable. Most shopkeepers use a variety of methods from alarms to shutters to protect their premises. These will depend on the shop, its location and the goods being sold. The type of security used should be proportional to the risk.

While modern approaches such as roller shutters can be very intrusive, alternatives such as shop gates, laminated glazing and discreetly positioned alarm boxes can all combine to help reduce vandalism and theft.

Permissions may be required for some alterations and the local planning authority should be consulted to ensure that proposals meet with planning requirements.



**Fig 27 Alarm boxes should not be placed on the fascia. ©Lindsay Lennie**



**Fig 28 Roller shutters create a dead frontage and are inappropriate for traditional buildings and Conservation Areas ©Lindsay Lennie**



### Making security improvements

- Consider the level of security which is required and ensure it is proportional to the risk.
- For recessed entrances consider a shop gate to protect the lobby.
- Security glass is a suitable option if glazing is vulnerable.
- Avoid externally mounted roller shutters-replace with internal mesh versions if they are essential.
- An alarm system, improved locks and internal lighting can deter thieves and vandalism.

**Fig 29 A traditional timber shop gate can help to protect the lobby ©Lindsay Lennie**



## Improving Your Shopfront: Tackling Alterations

Shopfronts may need alterations or improvements. For major alterations it is advisable to seek advice from a professional such as an architect who can give guidance on design, planning, materials and costs. They can also manage your project.

### Poor quality shopfronts

The removal of original shopfronts and replacement with modern, unsympathetic frontages is detrimental to the appearance of historic town centres.



**Fig 30 Modern shopfront with large signage, flush doors and aluminium frames together with window film creates a very poor appearance**  
©Lindsay Lennie



**Fig 31 and 32 Stripping back later alterations can reveal the original details as in this example. The Victorian shopfront was uncovered and sympathetic details reinstated.** ©Lindsay Lennie

### Good modern design

Good design using sympathetic materials which respects the parent building can create a quality shopfront which is an asset to a retail business. Employing the services of an architect who is experienced with shop design is a good starting point. Evidence such as historic photographs or archive drawings, where they exist, can also help to inform the new design.



**Fig 33 and 34 New shopfront in a traditional design which fits successfully with the parent building and has creative signage** ©Lindsay Lennie

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## Planning and statutory consents

Alterations to shopfronts may require statutory consent such as planning permission. These consents are in place to help protect historic buildings and townscapes. Conservation Areas are designated to protect the special character of historic townscapes. Fraserburgh Conservation Area covers much of the retail area of the town centre and permissions are likely to be required for shopfront alterations.

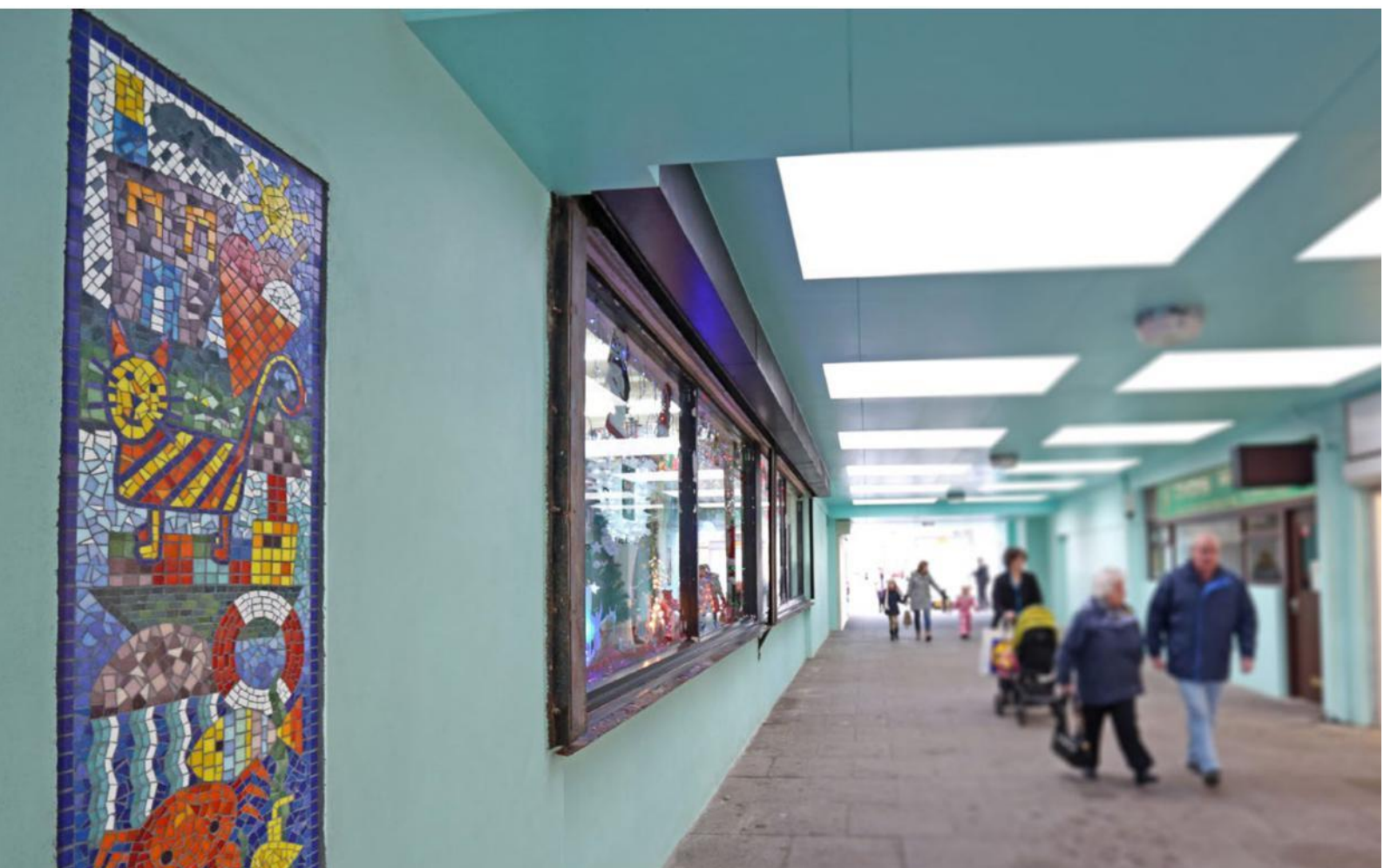
If the shop forms part of a listed building any alteration which will change the character may require Listed Building Consent. This is applicable to the interior as well as the exterior and regardless of the Category of listing, A, B or C. Within a Conservation Area, permission may be needed for external alterations including changing of paint colour.

There are also advertising regulations which cover outdoor signs including fascia signs and hanging signs on shopfronts and whether illumination is permitted.

When considering alterations it is advisable to consult with the local planning authority in the first instance to ensure that appropriate permissions are sought in advance of undertaking works. A professional adviser such as an architect can help you with applications.

### Approaching alterations to your shopfront

- If proposing major alterations, appoint a professional who can provide suitable design advice.
- Consult with the local planning authority about your proposals at the earliest opportunity to ensure they comply with national and local policy.
- When considering changes ensure you know what features are of historic value and should be retained. Seek expert advice if you are unsure about the impact of your alterations.





# Looking After Your Shopfront: Maintenance and Repair

For shop owners and tenants, a shop is a major investment. Regular maintenance will help to ensure that the building does not deteriorate. Tackling small issues can help to prevent major and potentially costly problems arising in the future. It is important to regularly paint timber, to maintain elements such as signage and to ensure historic details such as tiles or glazing are not deteriorating.

Many of the materials have a long life if regularly maintained. Traditional materials like timber can also be repaired, unlike modern plastics such as upvc. The Historic Environment Scotland Inform Guide series can help with advice on how to care for different materials such as masonry, timber and cast iron.

Advice should be sought from tradesmen experienced in traditional repairs. Some materials may require specialist knowledge and expertise. For larger projects, a conservation professional such as a conservation accredited architect, should be considered.

## Maintenance of your shopfront

Regular checking will prevent disrepair, will ensure the shopfront always has a good appearance and will be a positive advert for your business. A well-maintained shopping street is much more attractive to visitors and helps to increase footfall.

- Regularly check over the shopfront for areas of disrepair including timber rot, loose cladding or damaged entrance floors. Tackle small repairs before they become larger.
- Paint the frontage regularly with high quality exterior paint. A shop situated in full sun will require to be painted more often.
- Check accessories such as gates, signs and awnings regularly to make sure they are in good working order and are not a hazard to pedestrians.

**Fig 35** Plinths at the base of pilasters are particularly vulnerable to rot and require regular maintenance, particularly if constructed of timber. ©Lindsay Lennie







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HOTEL

FREE HOUSE

# Further Information

## SOURCES

**Aberdeenshire Council 2014**

*Fraserburgh: Proposed Town Centre Conservation Area Appraisal.*

**Historic Environment Scotland. 2017.**

*Short Guide: Scottish Traditional Shopfronts. Edinburgh.*

**Lennie, L 2010** *Scotland's Shops. Edinburgh: Historic Scotland.*

**McKean, Charles.1990.**

*Banff and Buchan: An Illustrated Architectural Guide. Edinburgh: RIAS*

## USEFUL LINKS

[http://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/media/6364/listed\\_application2.pdf](http://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/media/6364/listed_application2.pdf)

[http://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/media/6360/listed\\_guidance.pdf](http://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/media/6360/listed_guidance.pdf)

<http://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/environment/built-heritage/Listed-Buildings/>

<http://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/environment/built-heritage/what-is-a-conservation-area/>

<http://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/media/12862/fraserburghtowncentre.pdf>

<http://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/media/6341/fraserburghconservationareamap.pdf>

<http://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/media/6346/historicenvironmentstrategy.pdf>

<http://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/planning/planning-applications/>

<https://www.engineshed.scot/publications/publication/?publicationId=7d8bf9b6-40f3-4f4e-90e3-a75900c6f49d>

<https://www.engineshed.scot/publications/publication/?publicationId=2d527106-f23e-4465-a2a3-a60b009db916>

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