



**Aberdeenshire**  
COUNCIL



# TOWN CENTRE HEALTH CHECK SEPTEMBER 2022

HUNTLY, ABERDEENSHIRE



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# INTRODUCTION

## INTRODUCTION

Town centre health checks are a way of analysing the factors that contribute to successful town centres and indicate good standards of vitality and viability. The vitality of a centre is a measure of how lively and busy it is, whilst viability is a measure of its centre's capacity to attract ongoing investment.

Town Centre Health Checks have been completed in Aberdeenshire since 2003. However, in 2021 a new methodology was introduced to showcase a fresh and updated approach for Aberdeenshire.

Aberdeenshire is an extremely attractive area with a variety of coastal and rural environments, commuter towns, high levels of employment, and there is considerable new housing and employment land planned for the near future. Maintaining town centres' attractiveness, activeness, and accessibility is vital for the region to be able to continue to thrive.

## BACKGROUND

The importance of town centres is widely acknowledged. Town centres are at the heart of communities, providing a sustainable focus for shopping, business, leisure, services and community life, and shaping their sense of place. The planning system has an important role to play in supporting successful town centres, through influencing the form and type of future development. In order to assess how a centre should be supported, evidence of its current performance is required.

NPF4 notes that policies should 'encourage, promote and facilitate development in our city and town centres, recognising they are a national asset' (NPF4, page 81).

Town centres with a vibrant retail scene, a wide variety of services, attractive buildings and open space create economic growth, attract more people to the region, and promote a sense of well-being and identity.

## PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to present the results of the Town Centre Health Check 2022 for Huntly. The results are presented to enable an understanding of the vitality and viability of the town centre. The results are not to be considered definitive of the well-being of a town centre, but rather they are intended to provide an evidence-based comparative perspective on this matter and assist in identifying actions that could be undertaken to improve and maintain their status.

### WHY COMPLETE A HEALTH CHECK?

Health checks contribute to the planning system's efforts to support successful town centres through giving an overview of their current performance. They provide an analysis of the infrastructure and viability of the town centre which can be used to inform the Local Development Plan and decisions on planning applications. The findings are also utilised to create help a stronger "town centre first principle" policy.



# METHODOLOGY

## TOWN CENTRE HEALTH CHECKS SHOULD:

- Support implementation of the Local Development Plan
- Add value by collecting data on a wider set of indicators that provide insight into economic, social and environmental factors that play a part in the vitality of a town centre
- Have a clear, easy to follow and accessible format and methodology
- Work collaboratively both within the Council and externally with businesses and the community to collect and share baseline data
- Provide the foundation for other town strategies and plans and any subsequent funding applications

To achieve these results, the following methods of data collection and presentation were utilised:

## DESK TOP RESEARCH

Desk top research was completed to provide the critical first step of gathering information for the town centre. Background information on the current situation of the town centre was then analysed further when out on site. Data was gathered from within the Council and from external partners.

## COMMUNITY SURVEY

For the principal town centres, the surveys are being conducted every two years as it is considered this would reduce the risk of consultation fatigue and allow for monitoring of any changes within town centres which have occurred in that period. The community survey was designed to gain an understanding of the views of both the residents and visitors of the town centre. The survey was available on Engage HQ in 2021, shared via a press release, advertised on the Council's Social Media and emailed to relevant groups to advertise further. The survey asked questions on several different topics and provided respondents the opportunity to identify what improvements they would like to see to the town centre. The survey was open for three weeks and received 195 responses. A summary of the responses received can be seen on page 45.



**Look out for: Quote Boxes.** Comments were asked for in both the community and business surveys and a selection have been included in the report to give a flavour of the different responses received.



# METHODOLOGY (CONTINUED)

## **BUSINESS SURVEY**

For the principal town centres, the surveys are being conducted every two years as it is considered this would reduce the risk of consultation fatigue and allow for more effective monitoring of any changes within town centres which have occurred in that period. The survey was available on Engage HQ in 2021 and was shared via relevant groups for completion. Several topics were questioned, including the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on businesses. The survey also gave an opportunity to comment on improvements that businesses would like to see to the town centre. The survey was open for three weeks and received 20 responses. A summary of the responses received can be seen on page 45.

## **FOOTFALL AND TRAFFIC COUNTS**

The footfall count was completed at two locations throughout the town centre to gain information on the vitality at different times of the day. Four time slots were selected to gain information of the vibrancy in the morning, afternoon and evening. The counts were completed for 15-minute periods on a weekday and weekend to try and gain an insight into the number of people moving around the town centre. These footfall counts were a team effort and carried out by Aberdeenshire Council Officers and members of the community. In response to feedback received following the Town Centre Health Checks in 2021, traffic counts were also added to the methodology for all towns. Where possible, traffic counts were carried out at the same location as the pedestrian counts and for the same length of time following completion of the footfall counts. Where traffic counts could not be carried at the same location at the footfall counts, these were done at the closest viable point in order to gain information on the number of vehicles using the town centre.

## **SITE SURVEY**

This work was completed on a clear day and provided up to date information on the vitality and viability of the town centre. Several recording methods were used including maps, photographs and written analysis. The Place Standard themes were used to analyse the town centre and allowed for different themes to be analysed on an individual basis but also as a collective.

## **ACCESSIBILITY AUDIT**

During the 2021 survey, supported by Community Learning and Development officers we worked with members of the local community with lived experience to undertake an assessment of the town centre, assessing footway surfaces and obstructions, facilities and signage, maintenance and enforcement, personal security, crossing points and access to buildings. The survey took place on a dry but cold day over two hours. The results from the 2021 accessibility audit were reviewed as part of the survey this year and relevant points updated as necessary. The merits in revisiting the accessibility audit for the principal town centres will be considered in the future to determine the frequency in which they are carried out as part of the Town Centre Health Checks.

How a place looks, its history and what other people think of a place can affect how we feel. A strong local identity can help us feel pride in our place, our community and in ourselves as a result.

**Observations:** Results from the 2021 community and business surveys show those who use the town centre felt negatively towards it. This was demonstrated by the comments received, where the recent decline was felt strongly by many people who knew the town of old. The word 'sad' was often used to describe the town. However, it is recognised that there is an extensive network of community organisations, working together to begin the process of regeneration which will hopefully have an impact in coming years. Refurbishment of buildings within the town centre was evident during the site visit.

**The growth of Huntly:** The town grew up around the original castle known as the Peel of Strathbogie, built in the **1180s**. Huntly was historically known as Milton of Strathbogie until **1506**, when Alexander, the third Earl of Huntly was granted a charter to change it to the name we know today. In **1769** the Duke of Gordon established a planned town. By **1799** Huntly had 3,000 inhabitants and a range of industries were based here, with textiles playing a significant part. The railway arrived in **1854** and the town was by-passed in the **1970's**, providing faster connections to Aberdeen and Inverness. The clock tower was built in **1890** and is one of a number of buildings in the town centre largely constructed of an impressive grey stone. The town today is primarily a local service centre with agricultural trades and food processing.

Sources: Understanding Scotland's Places and Undiscovered Scotland.

## IDENTITY & BELONGING



### How Do You Feel About Huntly Town Centre?



17% Community

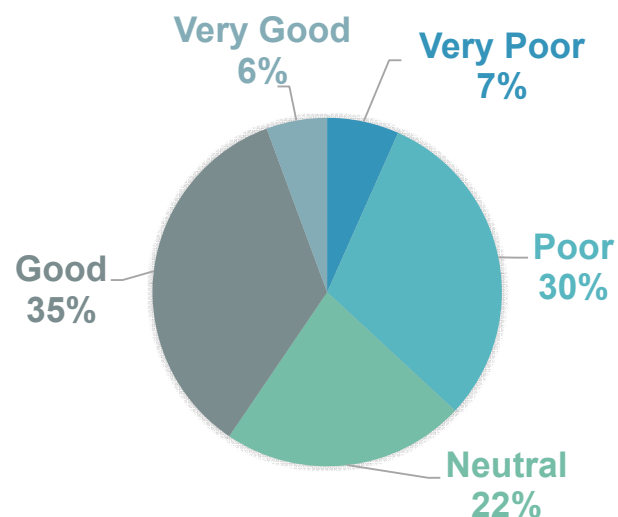
10% Businesses



83% Community

90% Businesses

### IN YOUR OPINION, COMMUNITY SPIRIT IN THE TOWN CENTRE IS?



*"There has been a slow, but steady decline in the town centre over the past 10-15 years."*

*"What used to be a thriving town looks depressing, uncared for and soulless. With Asda and Tesco it's become just another generic town with no social or business heart."*

*"No life to the town centre whenever I visit these days. After growing up in Huntly and knowing how bustling the Square/ Duke Street area used to be, it's very sad to see."*

*"The town is untidy, unkempt, failing and forgotten."*

*"There are few shops, no bank facilities, and the town feels deserted. Such a sad little town now, compared to 10 years ago."*

*"The town has changed a lot over the recent years but there are a lot of positive changes taking place."*

*"Historically it was a lovely town centre. I guess I'd rate it positive because of some loyalty to that history and some of the businesses there."*

*"I know the community are doing a lot to try and revitalise the centre of Huntly, which makes me feel positive about it."*

Business and Community Survey, September 2021

Feeling safe in and around the places that we spend time in can have a significant impact on people's activities and on their health and wellbeing. Through their design and maintenance, good places should feel safe and secure for all, and help to minimise crime and antisocial behaviour.

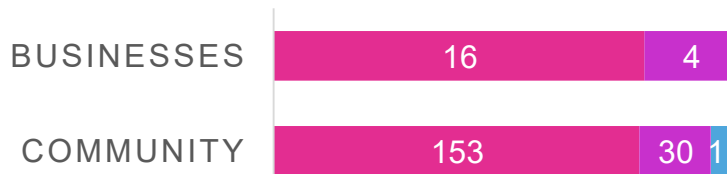
# FEELING SAFE



**Observations:** Safety during the day was the most positive rated category by both businesses and visitors to the town in the surveys in 2021, which is reflected in the crime statistics. Safety during the evening was less positive, with many more neutral and poor responses. Comments given seemed to relate to the increase in unsatisfactory responses to antisocial behaviour. CCTV was suggested by a number of respondents. During the site visits to the town it was noted that some lighting columns were needing maintenance.

## HOW WOULD YOU RATE: SAFETY DURING THE DAY?

■ Good ■ Neutral ■ Poor



Images (Clockwise from Top Left): Some maintenance required; Standard LED lighting, Duke Street; Mixture of traditional lighting styles in the Square.

*"CCTV to stop unruly behaviour."*

*"A greater police presence at night who take positive action in cutting down the noise and anti social behaviour of both car racers and drunken behaviour from pubs, especially at the weekends."*

*"It's friendly, feels safe and clean."*

*"We definitely need CCTV in the Square."*

*"Traffic on the top end of Duke Street is an issue with illegal parking requiring passing vehicles to drive into areas designated for pedestrians."*

*Business and Community Survey, September 2021*

### Key Safety Features:

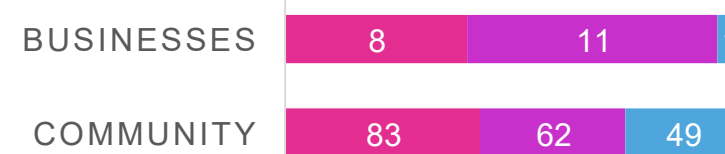
- Lighting was well distributed across the town but some of the columns were poorly maintained
- No central CCTV system in place

*"There's been no money spent in Huntly for years - the square and surrounding area's are in a bad state street lights are broken and got sandbags covering where they should be and they're needing painted."*

*Business and Community Survey, September 2021*

## HOW WOULD YOU RATE: SAFETY DURING THE EVENING?

■ Good ■ Neutral ■ Poor



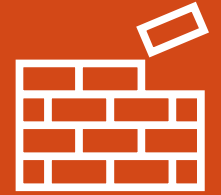
44

Incidences of crime reported  
1<sup>st</sup> September 2021 – 31<sup>st</sup> July 2022  
Police Scotland

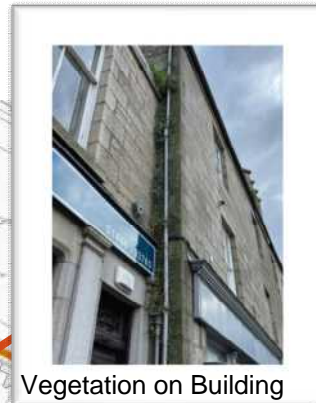


Places that are well cared for can make us feel better about a place, while those that are neglected can have the opposite effect. Proper maintenance arrangements allow people to feel supported and more positive about where they live.

# CARE & MAINTENANCE



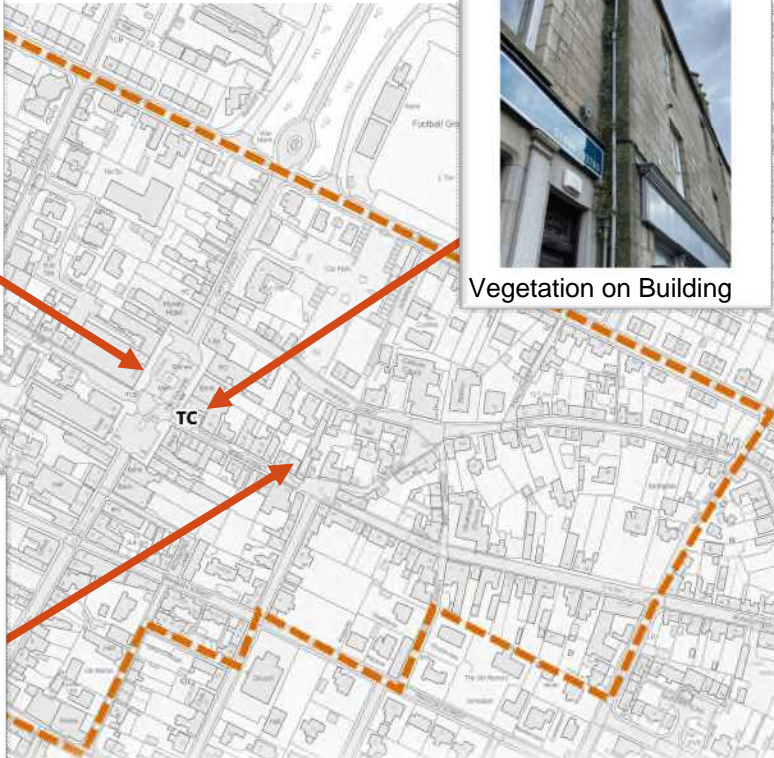
Old Cruickshanks building



Vegetation on Building



Weeds growing out of gutters



**Observations:** There were a large number of comments received through the 2021 surveys in terms of the upkeep of buildings. Most of the comments noted that there needs to be better maintenance to ensure that they help to improve the look of the town centre and to improve the safety of the buildings. Care and maintenance of buildings was rated within the bottom five topics through both the 2021 community and business surveys.

It should be noted that through the 2022 site visit maintenance work was underway on two different buildings within the Square. One of which is the old Cruickshanks building which will have a positive impact once regeneration work is complete.

The images (left) give an impression of the town centre environment.

## HOW WOULD YOU RATE: CARE & MAINTENANCE OF BUILDINGS?

■ Good ■ Neutral ■ Poor

BUSINESSES	2	3	15
COMMUNITY	8	53	130

*“Maintenance would be a good start. Danger of being hit by falling masonry is a real risk!”*

*“Need to improve the buildings - maintenance is poor.”*

*“Weeding and general maintenance in The Square is required.”*

*“Building owners should be made to maintain their buildings.”*

People's views about their local area should be heard. Having a voice in decision making and feeling able to make changes can help to build stronger communities and better places. Having a sense of control can make people feel positive about their lives.

## INFLUENCE & SENSE OF CONTROL



**Observations:** Huntly Town Centre is well represented with a number of different organisations working together to ensure the best outcomes for residents and businesses alike. The Huntly Town Team provides the mechanism for this. Awareness of the groups in the wider community is good.

Town Centre Groups	Huntly & District Development Trust (HDDT)	Huntly Business Association (HBA)	Huntly Community Council	Deveron Projects
Legal Status	Registered Scottish Charity (SC043353)	Constituted Group	Community Council	Registered Scottish Charity (SC024261)
Membership	Volunteer Board; 500+ community and business members	Businesses from the Huntly and District area.	The community; 8 Councillors*	Volunteer Board
Responsibilities	HDDT work with others to build a resilient, inclusive, enterprising community capable of dealing with ongoing change. Projects include Huntly Travel Hub, Greenmyres, town centre regeneration, sports, leisure and wellbeing, heritage and energy. Currently the team are transforming the old Cruickshank building into a multi-purpose venue at The Square and have recently acquired a vacant unit to renovate into the home for the Huntly Travel Hub.	HBA support all businesses large and small in Huntly and the surrounding areas. They aim to provide a united voice for their Business Members as well as support and networking opportunities. They promote local projects and support such as FiverFest and HuntlyE3Hub	Community Councils (CC) are the most local tier of statutory representation in Scotland, bridging the gap between local authorities and communities. Key tasks: Representing CCs on other organisations; Campaigning on local issues; Conducting local surveys; Organising public meetings on major development proposals or the Local Development Plan; Statutory Body for public consultation on Planning and Licensing; Representing and providing a platform for public views. Meet every 3 <sup>rd</sup> Thursday in person or via Zoom.	Deveron Projects connects artists, communities and places through creative research and engagement. The group work to the <i>town is the venue</i> framework to contribute to the social wellbeing of the town. They inhabit, explore, map and activate the place through artist driven projects. Current projects include The Square Deal, The Gathering Table, White Wood and The World is Ours, In Spite of All.
Contact	<a href="#">Huntly &amp; District Development Trust</a>	<a href="#">Huntly Business Association</a>	<a href="#">Huntly Community Council</a>	<a href="#">Deveron Projects</a>

\*Correct at time of survey.

**59%** of community survey respondents were aware of groups that support the town centre.

The word cloud (right) shows all responses given, when asked to name groups involved with the town centre. HDDT (58), Deveron Projects (29) and the Community Council (12) received the most mentions.  
*Business and Community Survey, September 2021*





Walking and cycling are beneficial for both our health and the environment. Good places can support and encourage people to walk and cycle by providing quality routes and a pleasant and safe experience.

# MOVING AROUND



**Observations:** The town centre is a shared space between vehicles and pedestrians. Getting around the town centre was rated well by both community and visitors in the 2021 surveys. However, Huntly Town Centre is very poorly served by infrastructure to support getting around. There is no pedestrian signage, no maps and only one cycle rack for parking. There are no dedicated cycle paths. Huntly is defined as an Integrated Travel Town and a five-year [Masterplan](#) was published in 2018.



*“Improvement - Make walking and cycling more attractive...introduce landmark lighting, improve interpretation and signage.”*

*“Improved smart signage.”*

*“More signage and celebration of Huntly.”*

*“Bike paths would be a great idea too....it's not the greatest to go on your bike from the square to Asda on your bike. It is a more difficult route with busier roads especially with young children still building up confidence on their bikes.”*

*“Improvement - Bicycle parking.”*  
Business and Community Survey, September 2021

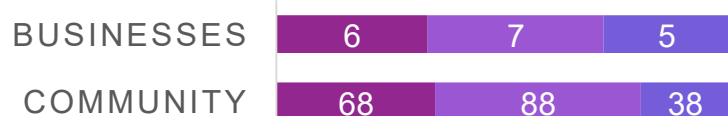
## HOW WOULD YOU RATE: GETTING AROUND THE TOWN CENTRE?

■ Good ■ Neutral ■ Poor



## HOW WOULD YOU RATE: SIGNAGE?

■ Good ■ Neutral ■ Poor



## HOW WOULD YOU RATE: CYCLE PARKING?

■ Good ■ Neutral ■ Poor

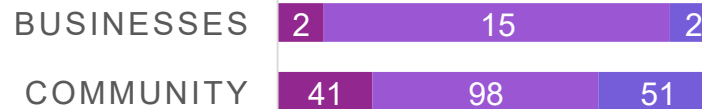




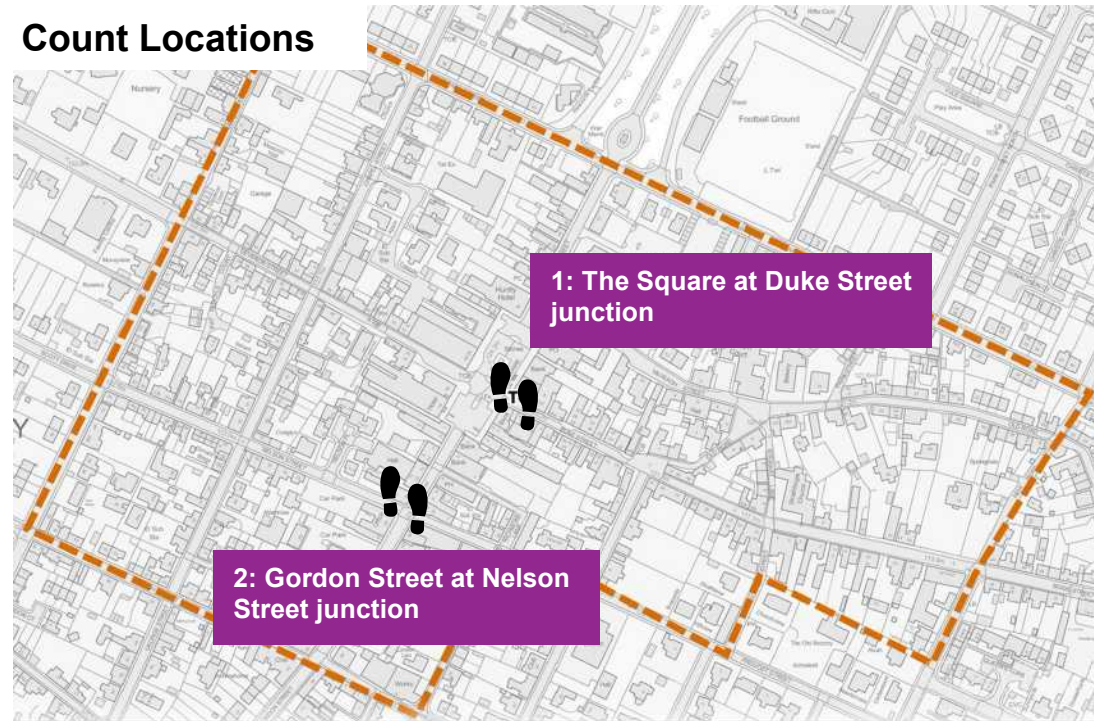
Image: Covered cycle racks at Nelson Street carpark.



# MOVING AROUND: FOOTFALL SURVEY

Day	Time	Location 1	Location 2	Hourly Total	Overall Total
<b>Monday</b> 	09:30	57	33	90	<b>324</b>
	11:30	59	38	97	
	14:30	28	49	77	
	18:00	27	33	60	
<b>Saturday</b> 	09:30	94	33	127	<b>517</b>
	11:30	86	88	174	
	14:30	85	70	155	
	18:00	35	26	61	
<b>Totals</b>		<b>471</b>	<b>370</b>	<b>841</b>	

## Count Locations



Footfall is a measure of the vitality of the town centre and can be directly linked to economic activity.

Pedestrian counts were undertaken on Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> and Monday 26<sup>th</sup> September 2022 for a duration of 15 minutes, four times a day, in two locations.

## HEADLINES

**Busiest Location:** The Square  
**Busiest Time:** 09:30  
**Busiest Day:** Saturday

**Quietest Location:** Gordon Street  
**Quietest Time:** 18:00  
**Quietest Day:** Saturday

**Observations:** The pedestrian count findings showed the highest footfall count was recorded in the Square on Saturday morning (94 people). It was also the busiest count point in general over the course of the footfall survey, reflecting the same trend as last years results. Overall, Saturday was a generally on par with last years numbers for the same day, and the weekday count was slightly lower.

# MOVING AROUND: ACCESSIBILITY AUDIT 2021



Participants were recruited from the local community to undertake a survey to identify the effect of roads, pavements and the general streetscape on people who use the town centre in order to identify barriers to moving around and enhancement opportunities to improve connectivity, attractiveness and safety.

Volunteers reviewed the following elements, and their comments are noted on the next page:

- Footway surfaces and obstructions;
- Facilities and signage;
- Maintenance and enforcement;
- Personal security;
- Crossing points;
- Access to buildings.

The survey took place on Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2021, 13:00 – 15:00. The weather was wet but mild.



# ACCESSIBILITY AUDIT 2021:

**Observations:** Participants identified a number of consistent themes during the audit:

- Yellow and white lines are very poorly maintained across the town centre.
- Poorly maintained tactile pavements and road surfaces.
- Some pavements are difficult to navigate due to being narrow or shared space with vehicles. This is exacerbated by large delivery vehicles and buses, which was witnessed in Deveron Street. However, wide pavements around The Square are good.
- Sense of safety - The town centre feels safe and roads are generally easy to cross.
- Overall the town centre streets and public areas have a run-down, uninviting feel.



*“Narrow roads and pavements are dangerous for pedestrians.”*



*“This (left photograph) is a disabled parking space but markings and yellow lines around The Square are very faded.”*



*“Empty buildings are a hazard as sometimes bits fall off.”*



*“Duke Street feels unsafe when walking with my young kids because of the lack of definition between the road and the pavement, especially when big vehicles come down.”*



*“Gordon Street – Yellow and white lines faded and the pedestrian crossing is badly faded too.”*



*“Badly damaged road/ crossing at the top of Duke Street.”*



*“There is damaged tactile paving across the town centre.”*



*“Narrow corners are difficult to navigate.”*



*“These damaged pavements are a trip hazard.”*

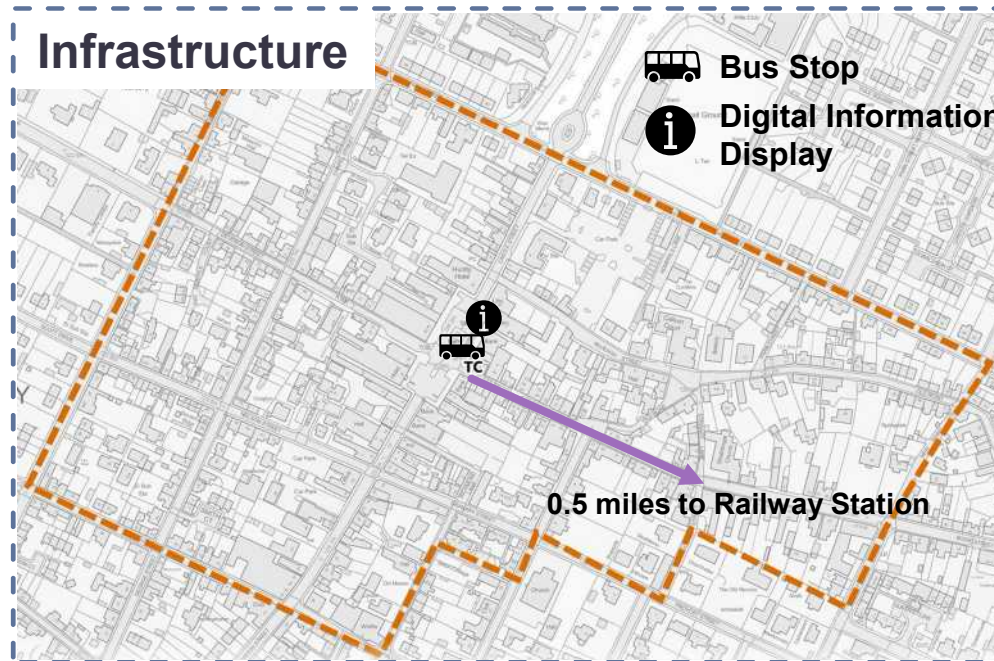


Access to an affordable, reliable and well-connected public transport service is important for all communities. Good public transport encourages people to get around in ways that are better for the environment.

# PUBLIC TRANSPORT



**Observations:** Huntly has good links east and west via bus and rail (the railway station being 0.5 miles from the town centre) to Inverurie, Aberdeen and Inverness. Access to settlements not on the A96 is limited, particularly in the evening. However, there is an A2B door-to-door service. There is one bus stop in The Square where real time information can be accessed. The majority of survey respondents in 2021 seemed happy with public transport, however 27% of community respondents rated it poor and this was reflected in some of the comments received. There has been a slight increase in price of buses since last year.



*“I have no bus service to get to Huntly, I have to have a car.”*

*“Not enough bus or trains running to help attract outwith town.”*

*“We have good links both north and south between major cities!”*

*“Not terribly easy to get to Huntly by public transport or active travel even though I only stay in Forgue.”*

*“Bus links from Rhynie do not coincide with rail services and are extremely limited.”*

*“Public transport is good to larger towns but trying to get to work by bus from smaller towns is difficult.”*

*“More buses and trains, more taxis (two taxi companies for whole town, impossible to get one in the morning or afternoon as they do school runs).”*

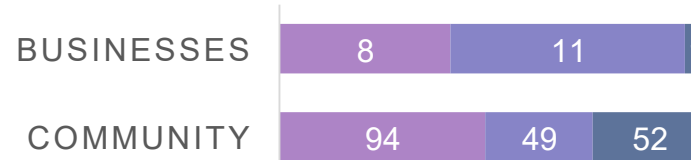
*Business and Community Survey, September 2021*



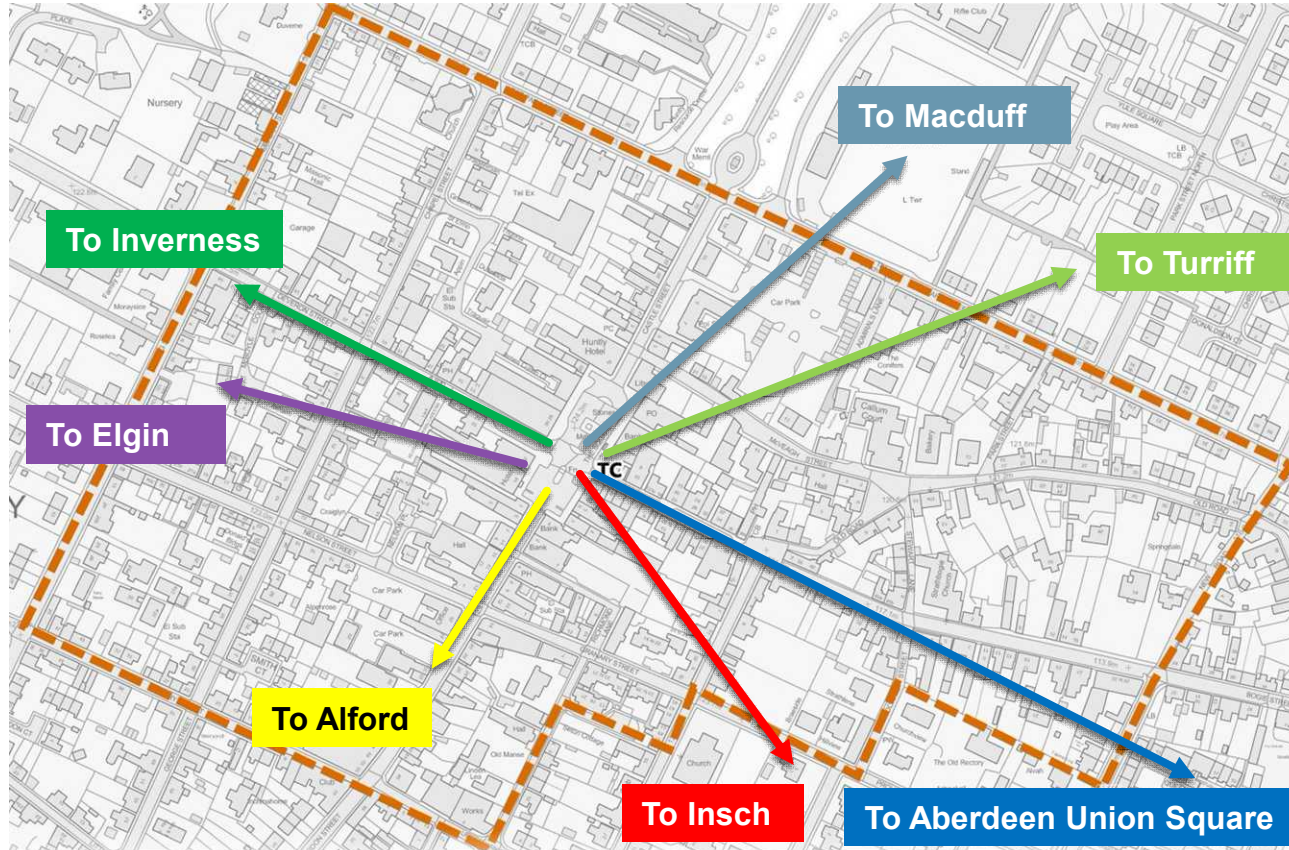
Images (Top to Bottom): The main bus interchange in The Square; Real time digital information display.

## HOW WOULD YOU RATE: PUBLIC TRANSPORT?




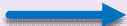



■ Good ■ Neutral ■ Poor



# PUBLIC TRANSPORT ROUTES



## Key:

	Bus Route 10/10B		Bus Route 10C		Bus Route 231
	Bus Route 10/10B		Bus Route 303		
	Bus Route 10/10B		Bus Route 301		

Route* (from The Square)	Frequency (per week day)	Fastest Journey Time	Earliest Travel Time	Latest Travel Time	Cost (Single Standard Ticket)
Bus to Aberdeen (10/B)	15	1hr 24mins	05:39	22:05	£11.50
Bus to Inverness (10/B)	10	2hrs 33mins	07:32	18:09	£11.50
Bus to Elgin (10/B)	16	47mins	07:32	00:00	£9.00
Bus to Insch (10C)	1	30mins	08:49	-	£6.30
Bus to Macduff (301)	4	58mins	10:10	17:40	£6.80
Bus to Turriff (303)	2	42mins	08:35	12:20	£5.70
Bus to Alford (231)	1	44mins	15:55	-	£4.20

\* Correct at time of survey

An [A2B dial-a-bus](#), pre-booked minibus service is available in Huntly. In most cases a door-to-door service is provided, operating during weekdays. The service is free to use.



Too much traffic can cause problems for people who live and work in town centres as well as visitors. Traffic and parking arrangements that allow people to move around safely can help people to get the most out of a place.

# TRAFFIC & PARKING

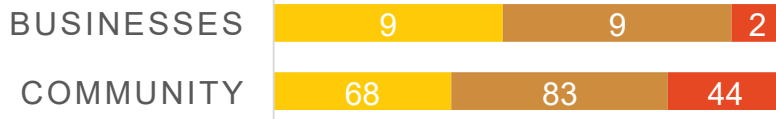
## TRAFFIC



Image: The Square.

### HOW WOULD YOU RATE: TRAFFIC FLOW?

■ Good ■ Neutral ■ Poor



*“Traffic issues on Duke Street need to be dealt with.”*

*“Pedestrianisation of all/part of the Square.”*

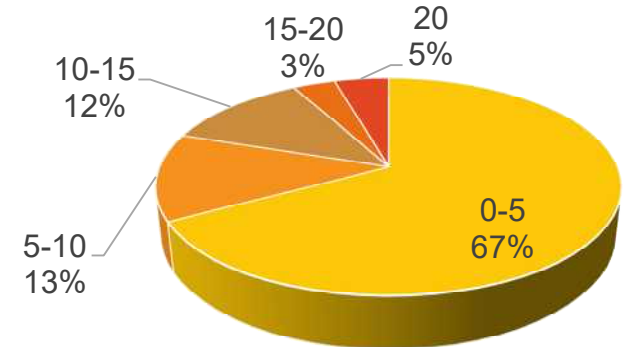
*“There should maybe be some times that there should be no traffic allowed in the town centre.”*

*“Traffic management is poor, cars should be diverted away from the square which could be attractively pedestrianised to make moor of a gathering space.”*

*“Remove traffic and make it easier for people to move around the town centre.”*

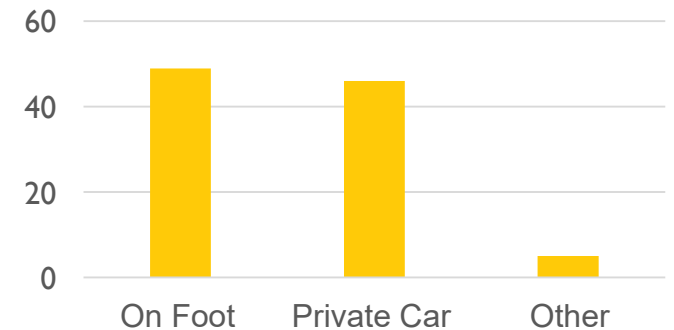
*Community and Business Survey, September 2021*

### Distance Travelled to Use the Town Centre (Miles)



*Source: Community Survey September 2021*

### How would you generally travel to the town centre:



*Source: Community Survey September 2021*

**Observations:** A number of comments were received through the 2021 survey in relation to removing traffic from the town centre all together, with a few noting that it would then be easier for pedestrians to move around. A few comments were also received noting the misuse of parking on Duke Street and the request for this to be monitored. The majority of users of Huntly Town Centre through the 2021 survey come from less than 5 miles and just under 50% of users to the town centre come on foot.

# MOVING AROUND: TRAFFIC SURVEY

Day		9:45am-10:00am		11:45am-12noon		2:15:2:30pm		5:45pm-6:00pm		Total number of Vehicles
Monday	Location 1	Car	55	Car	59	Car	57	Car	74	299
		Buses	3	Buses	1	Buses	1	Buses	2	
		Lorries	1	Lorries	1	Lorries	1	Lorries	0	
		Vans	14	Vans	10	Vans	9	Vans	6	
		Taxis	0	Taxis	0	Taxis	0	Taxis	0	
		Bicycles	1	Bicycles	1	Bicycles	0	Bicycles	0	
		Other	0	Other	0	Other	2	Other	1	
	Location 2	Car	46	Car	62	Car	54	Car	76	285
		Buses	1	Buses	1	Buses	1	Buses	3	
		Lorries	0	Lorries	3	Lorries	1	Lorries	0	
		Vans	6	Vans	8	Vans	5	Vans	12	
		Taxis	0	Taxis	0	Taxis	2	Taxis	0	
		Bicycles	0	Bicycles	0	Bicycles	2	Bicycles	1	
		Other	0	Other	0	Other	1	Other	0	
Hourly Totals (all traffic):		127		146		136		175		584

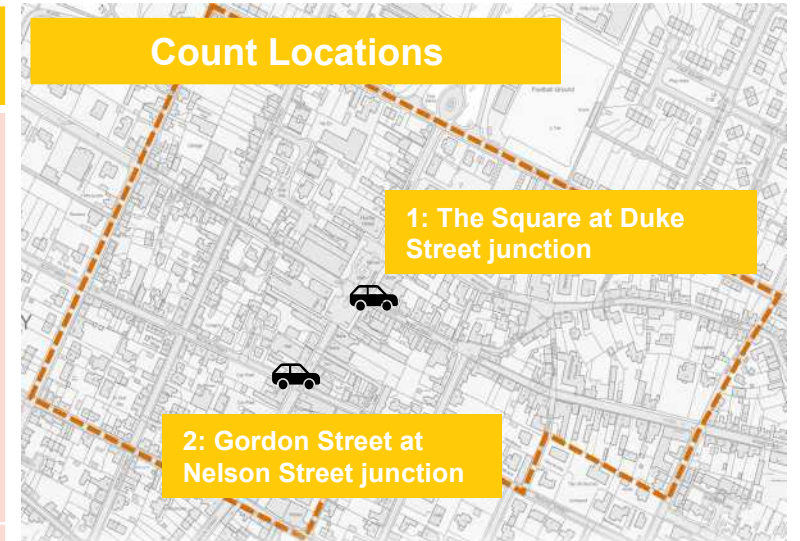


Image: The Square.



# MOVING AROUND: TRAFFIC SURVEY

Day		9:45am-10:00am		11:45am-12noon		2:15:2:30pm		5:45pm-6:00pm		Total number of Vehicles
Saturday	Location 1	Car	79	Car	100	Car	73	Car	54	358
		Buses	1	Buses	1	Buses	0	Buses	2	
		Lorries	1	Lorries	0	Lorries	0	Lorries	0	
		Vans	5	Vans	13	Vans	8	Vans	6	
		Taxis	2	Taxis	0	Taxis	0	Taxis	1	
		Bicycles	0	Bicycles	4	Bicycles	1	Bicycles	3	
		Other	0	Other	2	Other	2	Other	0	
	Location 2	Car	92	Car	85	Car	67	Car	59	346
		Buses	0	Buses	0	Buses	0	Buses	3	
		Lorries	0	Lorries	0	Lorries	0	Lorries	0	
		Vans	9	Vans	10	Vans	8	Vans	3	
		Taxis	1	Taxis	1	Taxis	1	Taxis	3	
		Bicycles	0	Bicycles	1	Bicycles	1	Bicycles	1	
		Other	0	Other	0	Other	1	Other	0	
Hourly Totals (all traffic):		190		217		162		135		704

## HEADLINES

**Busiest Location:** Gordon St at Nelson St  
**Busiest Time:** 09:45  
**Busiest Day:** Thursday

**Quietest Location:** The Square  
**Quietest Time:** 11:45  
**Quietest Day:** Thursday

**Observations:** Vehicle counts were undertaken on Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> and Monday 26<sup>th</sup> September 2022 for a duration of 15 minutes, four times a day, in two locations. These give information on the number of cars that are passing through the town centre. It cannot be confirmed whether these cars have all contributed to the local economy but were in the town centre at the time of the count.

The vehicle count findings showed the vehicle numbers were fairly consistent between the two count locations within the town but location one, The Square at Duke Street junction was generally just slightly higher than location 2, Gordon Street at Nelson Street.

# TRAFFIC & PARKING

## CAR PARKING AFFORDABILITY

### Parking Costs

**£0.50**

Average hourly rate  
September 2022

### HOW WOULD YOU RATE: PARKING AFFORDABILITY?

■ Good ■ Neutral ■ Poor



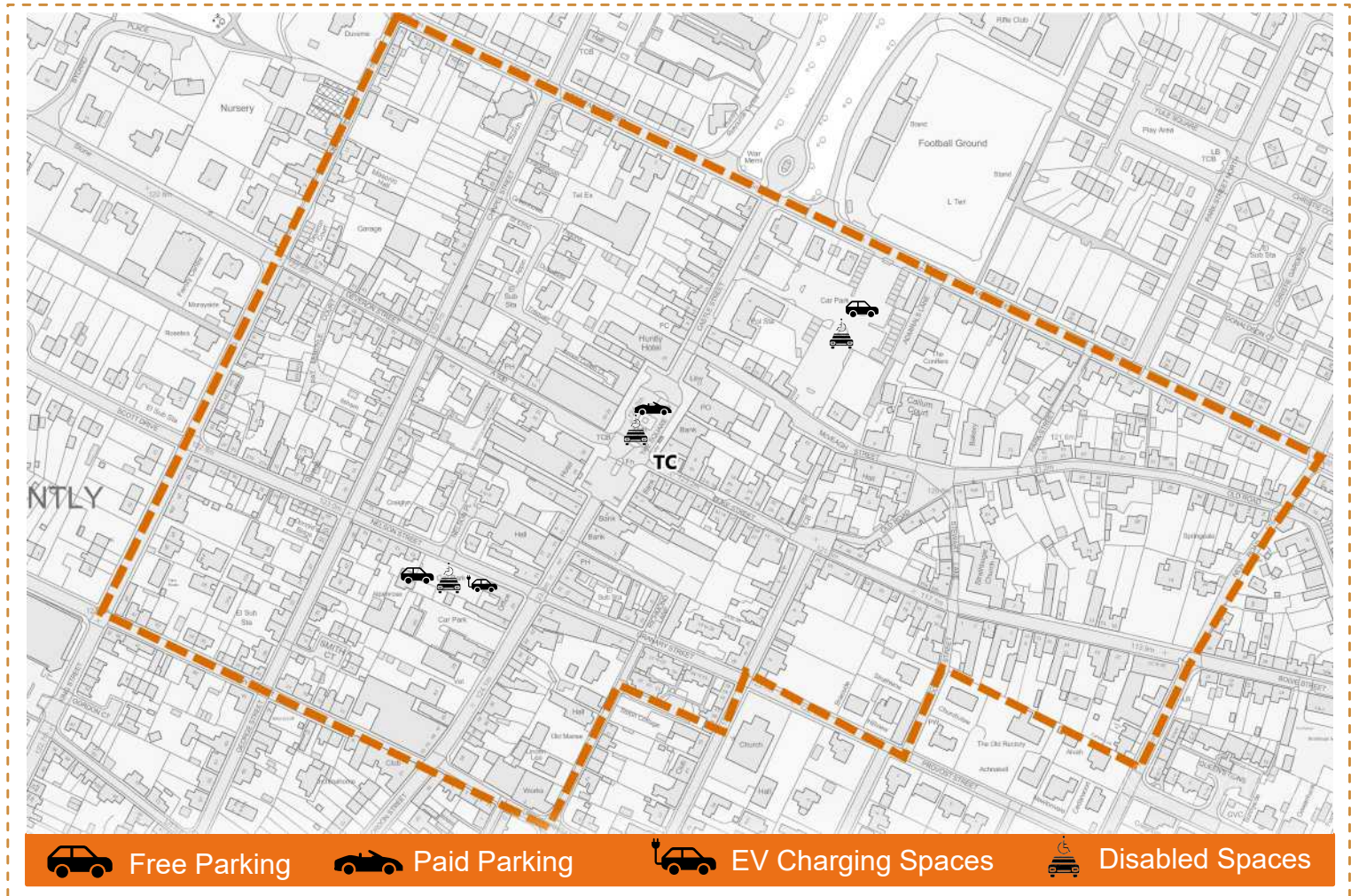
*“There is too much emphasis on paid parking.”*

*“Offer free parking in the town centre.”*

*“More free parking spaces.”*

*“Make spaces free in The Square so that people can pop into shops.”*

Community and Business Survey, September 2021



# TRAFFIC & PARKING

## CAR PARKING AVAILABILITY



Images: The Square Car Park.

*“Traffic wardens should be there occasionally to ensure that people are aware of the regulations.”*

*“There needs to be better quality parking.”*

*“Parking should be reduced or removed from the town centre.”*

*“Get rid of the parking in the square and create a lovely eating/meeting area.”*

### HOW WOULD YOU RATE: PARKING AVAILABILITY?

■ Good ■ Neutral ■ Poor

BUSINESSES	10	10	
COMMUNITY	96	62	37

### Spaces

105

No. of Free Spaces

31

No. of Paid Spaces

9

No. of Disabled Spaces

2

No. of EV Charging Spaces

**Observations:** There were mixed responses received through the 2021 surveys relating to both parking availability and affordability.

Respondents to the community survey indicated that they would like to see more free parking within The Square Car Park as this would help local businesses, by bringing more people into the town centre.

The main theme that came through the survey for parking availability was that there needs to be better monitoring better by wardens. Additionally, a number of comments were received about this topic and traffic flow, noting some community aspirations to see the parking and traffic removed from The Square to allow for a meeting space to be installed instead for the local community.



# TRAFFIC & PARKING

## EV CHARGING POINTS

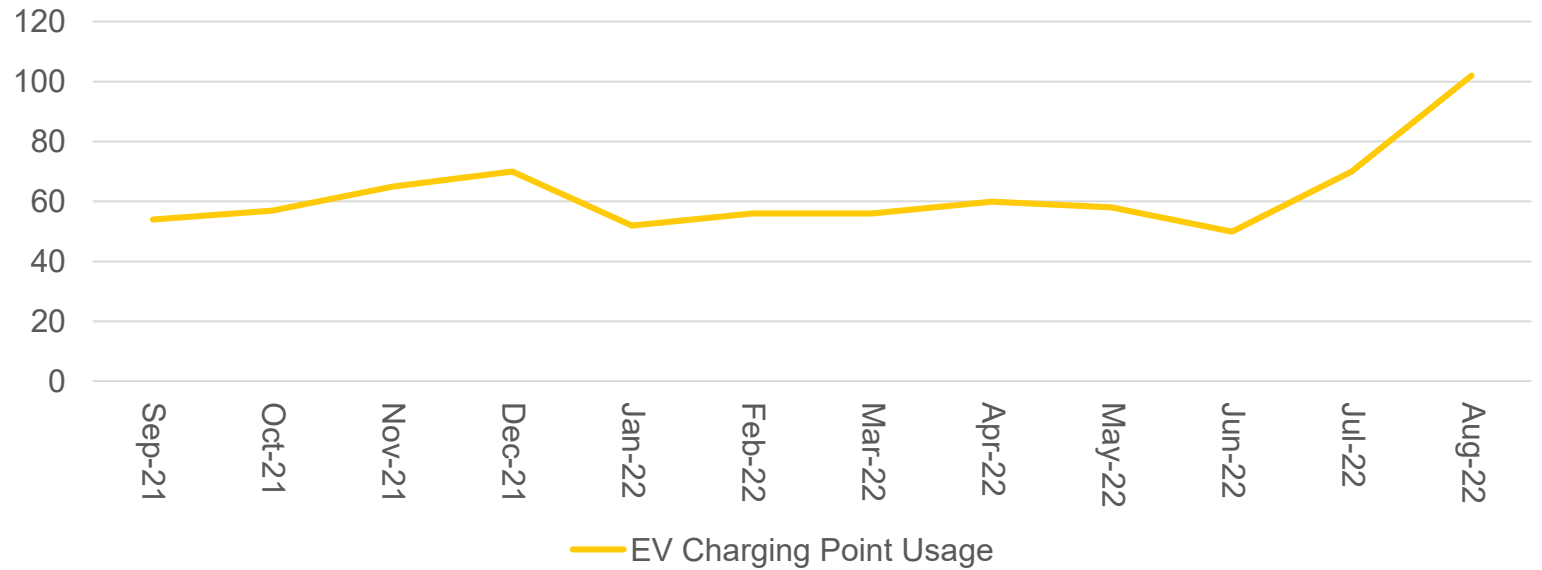
### EV Charging Points

**2** No. of 50kW charging spaces



Image: Nelson Street Car Park.

### EV Charging Point Usage



### EV Charging Points

**August 2022**

Highest monthly usage of the charging points in Burn Lane

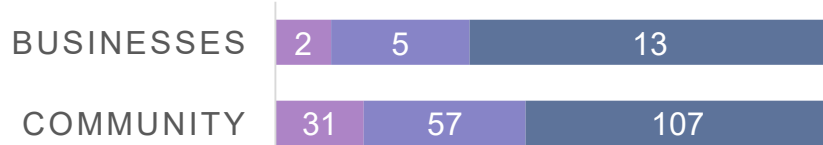


**Observations:** There are two spaces for electric vehicles in the town centre and are both located within the Nelson Street Car Park. At time of the site visit none of the spaces were in use. The usage of the EV charging points have been very consistent over the months from September 2021 until June 2022 where it has steadily increased through July 2022 reaching nearly double most other months in August 2022.

Buildings, landmarks, greenery, views and natural landscape can all help to create an attractive, distinctive place that people enjoy. These features can also help people to find their way around.

### HOW WOULD YOU RATE: ATTRACTIVENESS OF TOWN?

■ Good ■ Neutral ■ Poor



**Observations:** There are a number of architecturally significant buildings within Huntly Town Centre which make for an attractive setting. A number of comments were received through the 2021 business and community surveys noting that the volunteers who plant the planters located around the town centre help to brighten up the area and these make for an attractive setting.

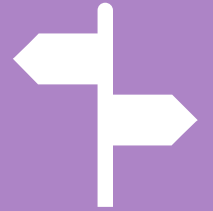
However, there are a number of buildings that are impacting on the attractiveness of the town centre due to the lack of maintenance, this is particularly in relation to the vacant units within the town centre.

*“Make The Square more attractive with planters and more places to sit.”*

*“Regular maintenance of street furniture is required within the town centre.”*

# STREETS & SPACES

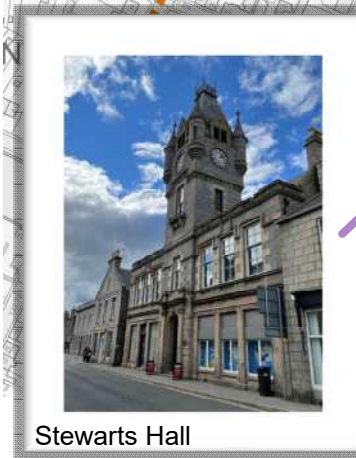
## ATTRACTIVENESS OF TOWN CENTRE



Planters in The Square



Huntly Hotel Building



Stewarts Hall



Duke Street



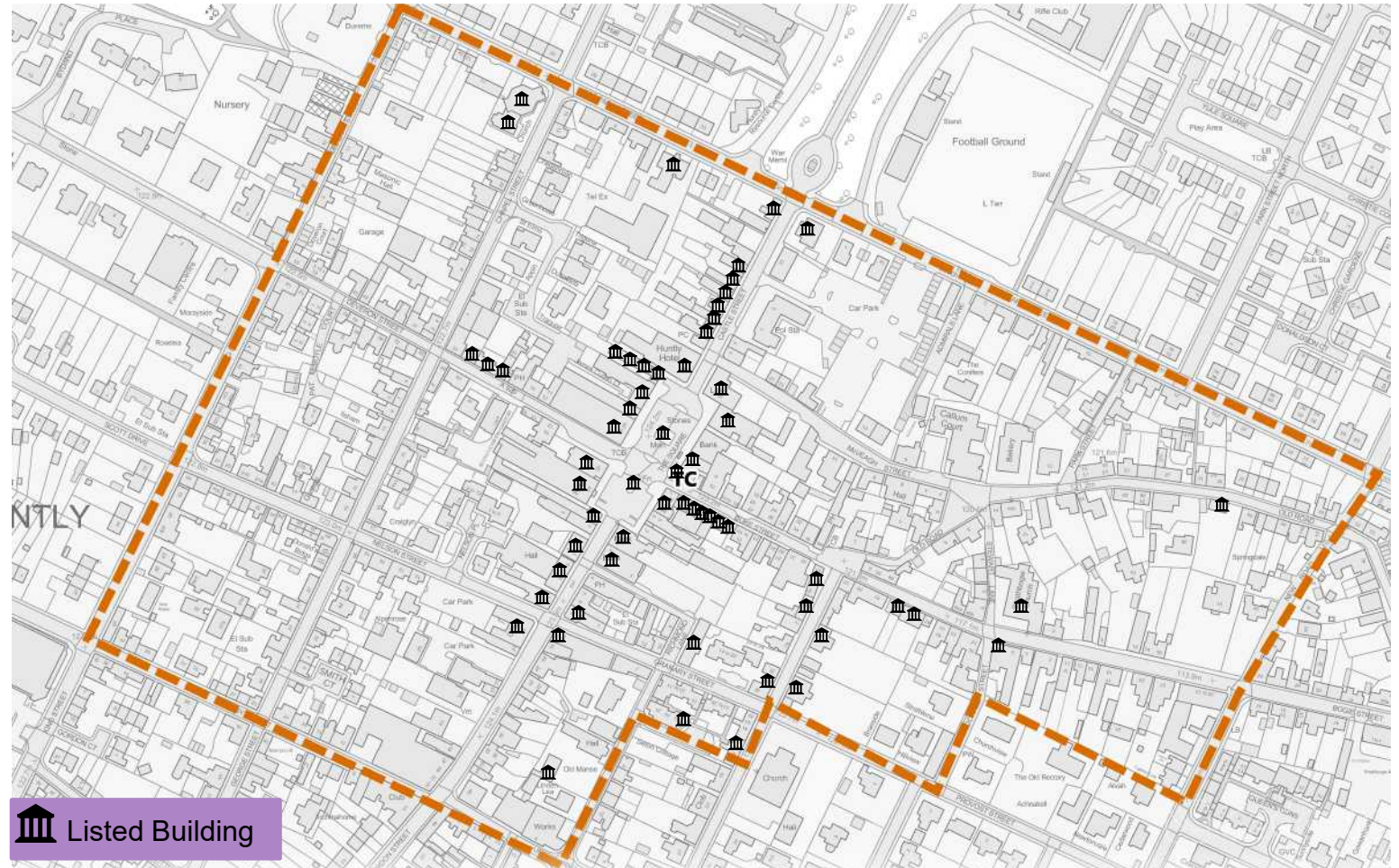


**Observations:** There are 58 listed buildings within Huntly Town Centre covering all listing categories. There are 34 Category C listed, 22 Category B listed and 2 Category A listed building. The A listed buildings are both associated with the St Margaret's Roman Catholic Church on Chapel Street. The listed buildings within the town centre are generally in very good condition. There are no buildings on the Buildings at Risk Scotland register.



Image: Listed Buildings, The Square.

## STREETS & SPACES: HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT



 Listed Building



# STREETS & SPACES: SEATING



## HOW WOULD YOU RATE: SEATING/ AREAS TO CONGREGATE

■ Good ■ Neutral ■ Poor

BUSINESSES	2	13	4
COMMUNITY	26	68	100

*“More seating areas would be an improvement.”*

*“Get rid of the parking and create a lovely seating area in The Square.”*

*“More seating.”*

*“More outside seating and not more cold stone benches.”*

*“Some of the seats within the town centre need painted.”*

*Business and Community Survey,  
September 2021*

**Observations:** The available seating was in relatively good condition, with all of the seating being located within The Square and was well utilised during the site visit. The seating outside the Library has been designed differently than the rest of the benches within the Square and is engraved with information.

A large number of comments were received to the 2021 survey noting the desire to see additional seating within the town centre.



**Observations:** There is limited public art within the town centre with the only art located within The Square outside of the Library on the benches. These benches are decorative and engraved with wording. It should be noted that these are a focal point and are in relatively good condition although a deep clean around the bottom of the benches would further enhance this public art.



## STREETS & SPACES: PUBLIC ART

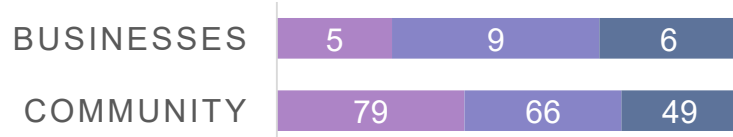


Images (Top Left and Clockwise): Benches outside the Library The Square and Empty Windows in former Cruickshanks building, The Square.

# STREETS & SPACES: PAVEMENTS

## HOW WOULD YOU RATE: PAVEMENT CLEANLINESS?

■ Good ■ Neutral ■ Poor



*“Pavements are not maintained well and are often dirty with food, rubbish (high school pupils quite often the reason for this) but also so many cigarette ends in the square and dog mess a frequent problem throughout the town.”*

*“The pavements need tidied.”*

*“Need cleaner pavements.”*

*“Pavements are dirty.”*

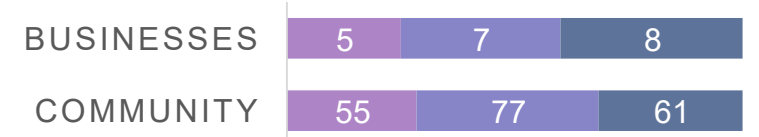
*Business and Community Survey, September 2021*

**Observations:** In general the condition of the pavements over the town centre was good however there were areas where the pavements were dirty or where potential trip hazards were noted. This is something that was also highlighted through the comments of the 2021 community and business surveys. One of the main themes coming through the surveys was the need for the pavements to be maintained in terms of the level and the cleanliness of them.



## HOW WOULD YOU RATE: PAVEMENT QUALITY?

■ Good ■ Neutral ■ Poor



*“Pavements need to be accessible for disabled people.”*

*“Improved pavements and signage - making it more useful to the disabled and blind.”*

*“Pavements need to be upgraded.”*

*“People need to stop parking on pavements as it damages the pavements.”*

*“The pavements are uneven and easy to trip up on and very slippery when wet, they would be better tarred. The cobbles on Duke street are a disgrace too, uneven and looks terrible.”*

*Business and Community Survey, September 2021*



*“There needs to be regeneration of vacant units.”*

*“Utilise the empty buildings.”*

*“Fill the empty retail units.”*

*“Empty shops need to need to be kept tidy, our town square is starting to look scruffy.”*

*Business and Community Survey, September 2021*

# STREETS & SPACES: VACANT RETAIL UNITS

**Observations:** The vacancy rate within the town centre at the time of survey was 25% which is relatively high and is something that will require to be monitored. The vacancy rate is also substantially higher than the Scottish average at the time of the survey, Q3 2022, which is 15.7% (Local Data Company).

The vacancy rate is something that was highly commented through the 2021 surveys and there is a real community desire to see the vacant units being brought back into use. The need to tidy the vacant units was also commented on through the surveys. It should be noted that during the 2022 site visit there were three vacant units within The Square that were undergoing regeneration work to bring the units back into use which will be a positive for the town once complete.



Images (Top to Bottom) Bogie Street and The Square, building under regeneration work.



Vacant Retail Units:

**23**

Vacant Units in the town centre

**25%**

Vacancy Rate at time of survey



Natural space includes parks and woodlands, fields, streams and rivers, green space alongside paths and roads, and tree-lined streets. These can be good for wildlife, improve air quality and benefit our health and wellbeing.

# NATURAL SPACE



**Observations:** There is no public green space within the town centre, however this element scored in the top five best features of the town in both business and community surveys in 2021. This is perhaps due to the centre's close proximity to large open green spaces by the River Deveron. The Square is home to a variety of different freestanding planters that create an attractive display. In surrounding streets some shops and businesses have small planter displays, however overall there is little to no greenery present outwith The Square.

Huntly Floral Fund Group are a small group of volunteers who look after the planters in The Square and around Huntly.



On the edge of the town centre the War Memorial marks the start of Huntly's expansive green areas, which include parks, sports facilities and the River Deveron

## HOW WOULD YOU RATE: PARKS & GREEN SPACES?

■ Good ■ Neutral ■ Poor

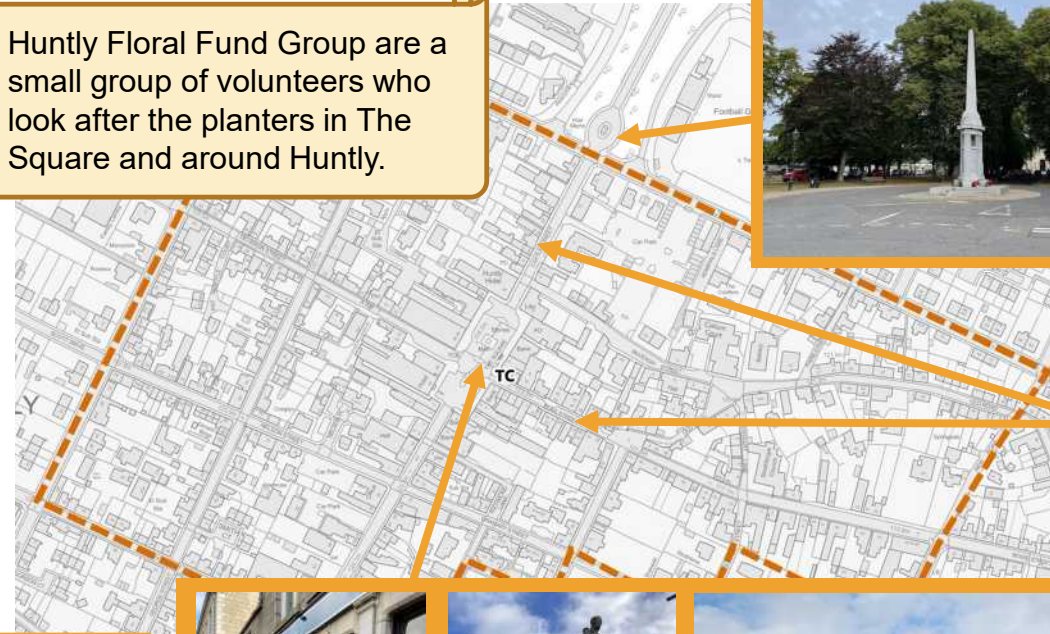
BUSINESSES	12	5	3
COMMUNITY	106	58	29

*"There are plenty of green spaces around the town, but nothing in the centre."*

*"The volunteers who attend to the flowers in the square are fantastic and brightens the place up."*

*"Green space in the square would be wonderful."*

*"It's very dull, grey, there is a stark lack of greenery or life in the town centre." Business and Community Survey, September 2021*



The Square, at the heart of the town centre, has a variety of freestanding planters to soften the hard landscaping



Small green displays outside shops (Duke Street and Castle Street)

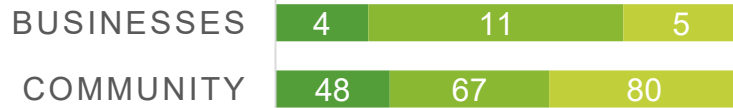
Good public places and facilities encourage children to play and allow adults to enjoy leisure and sporting activities. Opportunities for play and recreation can improve the quality of our lives and our health.

# PLAY & RECREATION



## HOW WOULD YOU RATE: LEISURE AND PLAY FACILITIES?

■ Good ■ Neutral ■ Poor



**Observations:** There are no play and recreation sites within Huntly Town Centre itself, and this is reflected in the 2021 survey responses. Comments focused on a lack of opportunities for young people and a desire to see more play facilities in the town centre were common. Additionally, there are a number of play/leisure facilities within one mile of the town centre.

*“It would be great to see a soft play or a role play café in one of the empty buildings.”*

*“There should be leisure activities in the town centre to bring people into the centre.”*

*“It would be great to see locations that could entertain families, for example soft play, ten pin bowling etc.”*

*Business and Community Survey, September 2021*

To Nordic Ski Centre  
0.6 mile

To Huntly Swimming and  
Football Grounds Pool 0.3 mile

To River  
Deveron  
0.6 mile



To  
Battlehill  
1.8 mile

Playing Fields 0.4 mile





# FACILITIES & AMENITIES: RETAILER REPRESENTATION

## Retailer Representation

**45%** of businesses in the town centre are independent retailers

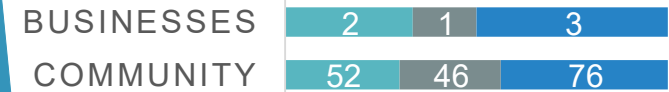
**44%** of businesses in the town centre are Class 1: Shops

**16%** of businesses in the town centre are Class 2: Financial, Professional and other services



## HOW WOULD YOU RATE: VARIETY OF SHOPS?

■ Good ■ Neutral ■ Poor



## HOW WOULD YOU RATE: QUALITY OF SHOPS?

■ Good ■ Neutral ■ Poor



*“Town needs more variety of shops.”*

*“A better variety of shops would be an improvement for the town.”*

*“There is not enough variety of shops to encourage people to shop local.”*

*“Very little variety of shops.”*

*“Would be nice to see some more independent shops and some variety.”*



**Observations:** There is a good distribution between independent and multiple (chain) retailers within the town centre. However, a large proportion of the comments received through the 2021 surveys related to the lack of variety within the town centre and the topic actually ranked within the 5 lowest ranked topics through the surveys. Comments were received about trying to bring new businesses into the town centre to fill the vacant units but also to increase the variety available.

Image (Top to Bottom: The Square and Gordon Street.

# FACILITIES & AMENITIES: CAFÉ AND RESTAURANTS

**Observations:** The choice of cafés and restaurants is something that was rated as poor by the majority of respondents through the 2021 community and business surveys and the desire for more cafés and restaurants was strongly commented on. This was reflected in the fact that café/ restaurant choice was rated amongst the bottom five topics from both the community and business surveys. Since 2021, an additional restaurant has opened within the town centre providing more choice.



*“Poor café choice.”*

*“Lack of cafés and restaurants.”*

*“There are no cafés or restaurants to draw people into the town centre.”*

*“Need more cafés like other towns such as Inverurie.”*

*“Need more inviting and reasonable priced cafés.”*

*“Need some good quality cafés and restaurants.”*

*Business and Community Survey, September 2021*

## HOW WOULD YOU RATE: CAFÉ/ RESTAURANT CHOICE?

■ Good ■ Neutral ■ Poor



## HOW WOULD YOU RATE: CAFÉ/ RESTAURANT QUALITY?

■ Good ■ Neutral ■ Poor





# FACILITIES & AMENITIES: CULTURAL AND LEISURE OUTLETS, AND PUBLIC SERVICES

**Observations:** There are a selection of different cultural, leisure and public services within the town centre. There are a range of uses from the Police Station, Churches, the Library and a Pilates studio. A lack of leisure facilities within the town centre was highly commented on through the community survey in terms of the desire for more places to open to encourage people of all ages into the town centre.

 Cultural Outlets

 Leisure Outlets

 Public Services

Images (Left to Right): St Margaret's Roman Catholic Church, Police Station, Strathbogie Drumblade Parish Church and Lengthen Pilates.

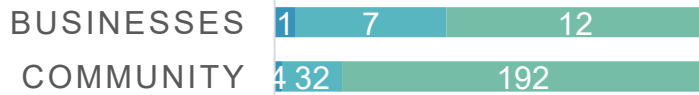




# FACILITIES & AMENITIES: EVENING ECONOMY

## HOW WOULD YOU RATE: THE VIBRANCY IN THE EVENING :

■ Good ■ Neutral ■ Poor



*“No more takeaways are needed.”*

*There needs to be more places to go for a meal in the evenings.”*

*“The evening life needs a bit of a makeover. There is nothing for anyone who doesn’t want to go drink in a pub.”*

*“Would be better to use the empty buildings for another pub or takeaway than for them to sit empty.”*

*“There is nowhere to go out in the evenings.”*

*Business and Community, September 2021*

**Observations:** There were a large number of comments received through the 2021 surveys relating to the lack of anything to do within the town centre and there was a strong desire from the community to see more places to go in the evening including places to eat.

A few comments were also received relating to using some of the vacant buildings for either a restaurant or a pub to bring more life to the town centre.

Additionally, this topic scored within the bottom five topics within the 2021 community survey.



The Royal Oak

☾★ Units open in evening



# FACILITIES & AMENITIES: COMMUNITY AND VISITOR SATISFACTION

## HOW WOULD YOU RATE: VALUE FOR MONEY?

■ Good ■ Neutral ■ Poor



*“The businesses that are within the town centre are really great with friendly and helpful service.”*

*“There is not enough choice but the shops that are there give an excellent service.”*

*“Huntly needs more affordable type shops.”*

*Business and Community Survey, September 2021*



Image: The Square.

## Town Centre Offer:

**10%** of the community agree that it offers all services expected (retail, café, pubs etc)

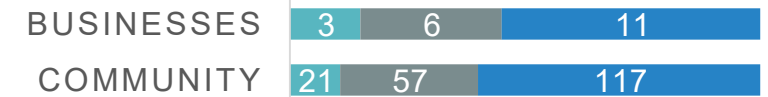
*Business and Community Survey, September 2021*

**Observations:** The standard of service in shops rated within the top five of the topics surveyed in both the 2021 community and the visitor surveys. A number of comments were received noting the friendly service received within the shops.

However, the variety of goods and value for money were not looked at as positively by the respondents with over 100 respondents noting the variety of goods available as poor.

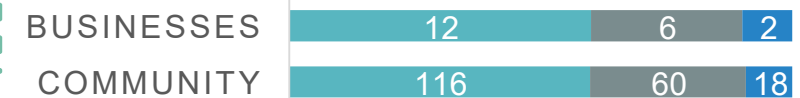
## HOW WOULD YOU RATE: VARIETY OF GOODS AVAILABLE?

■ Good ■ Neutral ■ Poor



## HOW WOULD YOU RATE: STANDARD OF SERVICE IN SHOPS?

■ Good ■ Neutral ■ Poor



**Tourism:** Data provided by VisitAberdeenshire shows the number of page views received for Huntly in the ‘Towns and Villages’ section of their website:

**2,007** Jan-Dec 2019

**2,053** Jan-Dec 2020

**2,612** Jan-Dec 2021

# FACILITIES & AMENITIES: MARKET

*“More markets would be good within the town.”*

*“Would be good to see more frequent farmers markets.”*

*“Farmers market days are a joy as they create a vibe within the town centre.”*

*“I find the farmer’s market has steadily deteriorated in that they are now mainly non local stalls selling very expensive snacks rather than local farmers.”*

*“The farmers market is a real plus!”*

*“Apart from the Farmers Market, there is nothing to attract people into the town centre anymore, to spend their money in the few shops are left.”*

*“The market is good but is small.”*

*“The farmers market is good.”*

*Business and Community Survey, September 2021*

**Observations:** Huntly’s Farmers Market takes place on the 1<sup>st</sup> Saturday of the month from 09:00-13:00. There are a range of stallholders who attend the events.

The Farmers Market was rated within the top 5 topics in both the 2021 community and the business surveys. A number of comments were received through the survey noting that the farmers market provides an atmosphere within the town centre. Although a few comments were also received noting that the market should be bigger, use more local stallholders and happen more frequently.



## HOW WOULD YOU RATE: THE MARKET?

■ Good ■ Neutral ■ Poor

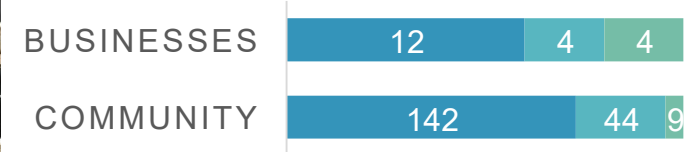


Image: The Square.



# FACILITIES & AMENITIES: ONLINE SHOPPING

## Online Offering

**65%** of businesses surveyed have online presence

**54%** of businesses surveyed sell online

**83%** of the businesses surveyed that sell online make 25% or less of their income from this

**60%** of the community surveyed said they are more likely to shop online rather than going into the town centre for the same item

**68%** of the community survey noted that their attitude towards online shopping had changed because of the COVID-19 pandemic

**76%** of the community survey noted that their usage of the town centre had decreased because of the COVID-19 pandemic

*Business and Community Survey, September 2021*

**Observations:** Within the 2021 survey there was a mix of responses to the questions about shopping online. A number of respondents noted that they would rather shop local than buying online. Whilst others noted that convenience, pricing and variety of goods were the main reasons for online shopping.

*"I try and shop locally where I can but it is just not always possible."*

*"Better choice online."*

*"Not enough choice in Huntly and cost of travel and parking makes it uneconomical even if the item cost is similar."*

*"Better choice and cheaper online."*

*"No variety and limited choice within the town centre."*

*"Online availability is much better."*

*Business and Community Survey, September 2021*



Image: Gordon Street.

# FACILITIES & AMENITIES: CONNECTIVITY







**Observations:** Mobile coverage within Huntly Town Centre is very strong with all of the top networks being able to be connected to at a 4G level and there is currently no coverage of 5G within the town centre.

Broadband coverage is also strong with fibre and superfast broadband being available within the town.



There is no free public WIFI available within the town centre.



## Broadband Coverage in Huntly Town Centre:

	FTTH/FTTP	✗
	Ultrafast Broadband (>=100 Mbps)	✗
	Superfast Broadband (>24 Mbps)	✓
	Fibre (FTTC or FTTH or Cable or G.Fast)	✓
	Wireless	✗
	LLU	✓
<b>A+</b>	ADSL2+	✓
<b>A</b>	ADSL	✓

## Internet Speed in Huntly Town Centre:

	Download:	11.4 Mbps
	Upload:	0.6 Mbps

## Mobile Coverage in Huntly Town Centre:

		Voice	3G	4G	5G
Three	Indoor	✓	✓	✓	✗
	Outdoor	✓	✓	✓	
O2	Indoor	✓	✓	✓	✗
	Outdoor	✓	✓	✓	
EE	Indoor	✓	✓	✓	✗
	Outdoor	✓	✓	✓	
Vodafone	Indoor	✓	✓	✓	✗
	Outdoor	✓	✓	✓	

 Good coverage
  You may experience problems
  No coverage



# FACILITIES & AMENITIES: OTHER SERVICES

**Observations:** There is one ATM machine within Huntly Town Centre, however it is located within a shop unit within The Square. This means that the machine is only able to be used during shop opening hours. Additionally, there is a defibrillator unit within the town centre on the side of the Police Station which can be used by anyone within the town centre should the need arise.



Image: Defib, Castle Street.



Good quality work offers important benefits through income, activity, social contact, sense of identity and job satisfaction. A thriving local economy can provide work opportunities and help create lively places where people want to spend time.

**Observations:** The employment and income picture is as would be expected in a small town with a high proportion of retail and hospitality jobs. This is exceeded by a significant percentage of public sector employment. The claimant count rate increased sharply prior to the COVID-19 pandemic but is now dropping back slightly, although still higher than the wider area. This is supported by the deprivation level and median household income level for the town centre.

**Settlement Type:**  
**Remote Small Town**

(Settlements of 3,000 to 9,999 people, and with a drive time of over 30 minutes but less than or equal to 60 minutes to a Settlement of 10,000 or more)  
**Scottish Government's Urban Rural Classification, 8-fold**

**Median Household Income 2021**  
**Town Centre Data Zone\***  
**£20,428**



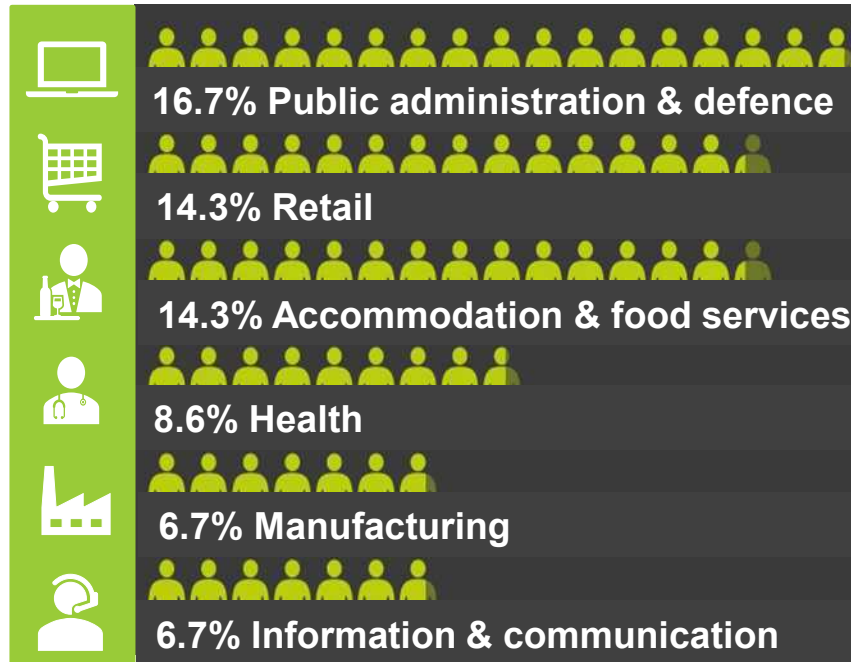
£40,207 Marr; £36,889 Aberdeenshire

Source: © CACI Limited 1996 - 2021 This report shall be used solely for academic, personal and/or non-commercial purposes.

# WORK & LOCAL ECONOMY

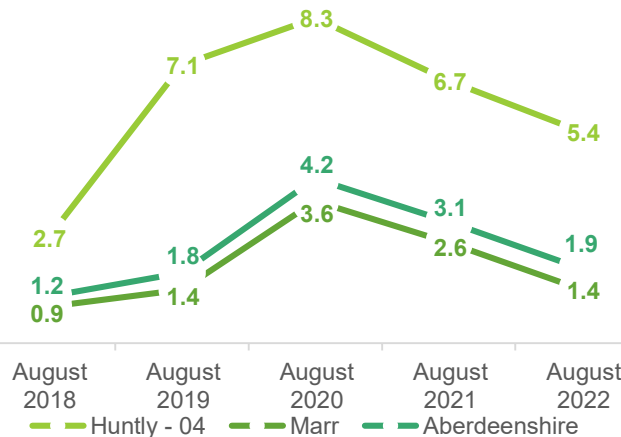


## Top 6 Employment Sectors 2021 Huntly Town Centre Data Zone\*



Source: Business Register and Employment Survey 2021

## CLAIMANT COUNT RATE^ (%)



^Includes people claiming Universal Credit or Jobseekers Allowance  
Source: ONS Crown Copyright Reserved

## Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation 2020

Town Centre Data Zone\*:

**25-30%**

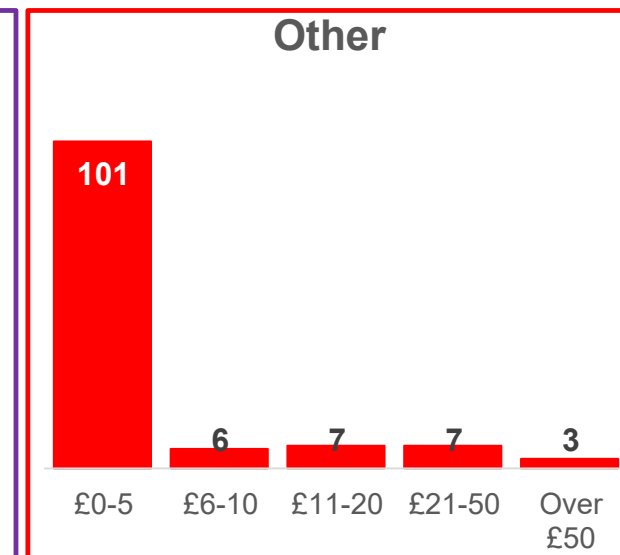
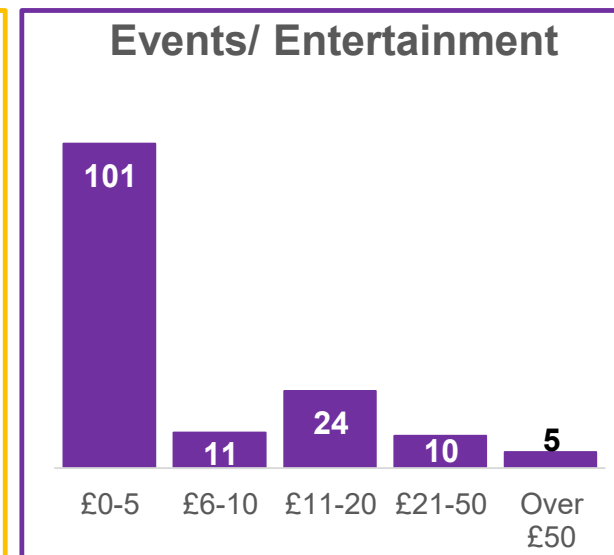
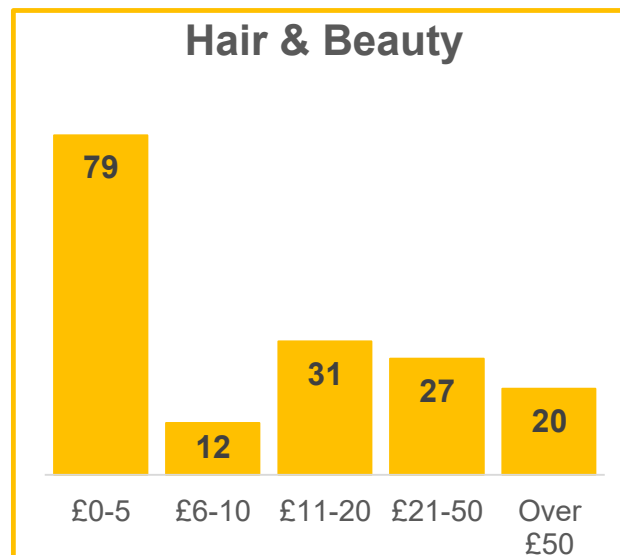
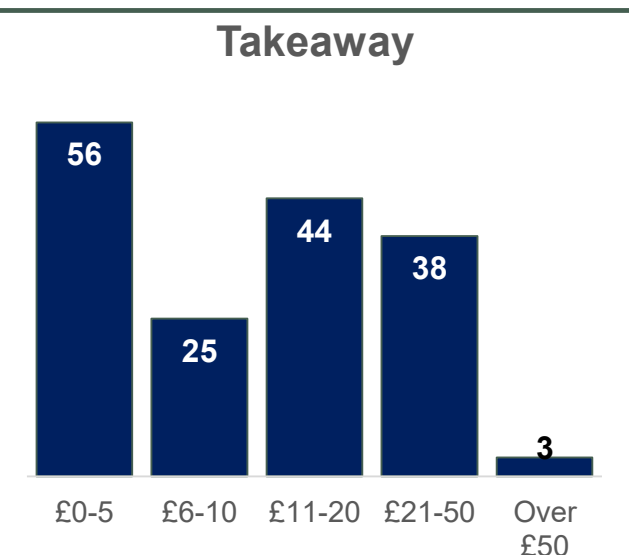
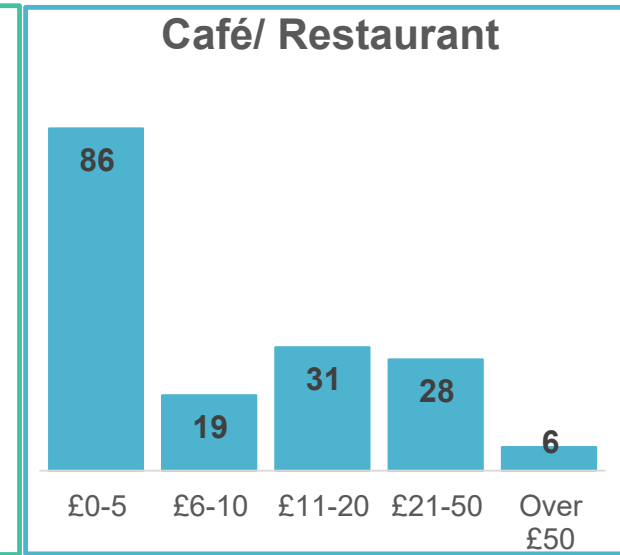
Most deprived in Scotland

\* The data zone (S01007011) that includes the majority of the town centre.



# WORK & LOCAL ECONOMY: AVERAGE CONSUMER SPEND 2021

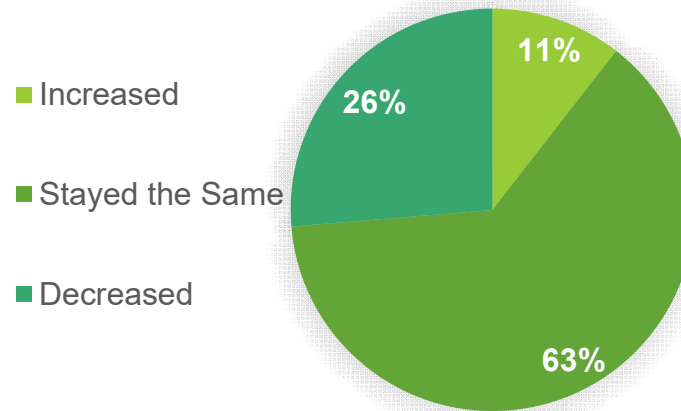
**Observations:** The graphs show the results from the 2021 survey and highlight that the majority of expenditure across the different sectors was at low levels with Food Shopping accounting for the vast majority of larger purchases. Takeaways were at mid-range levels, with Other Shopping accounting for more but lower levels of spend. Hair and Beauty was used less overall but tended to be towards higher values. Caf / Restaurants and Events/ Entertainment had limited spending which reflects the lack of provision in this area. With the exception of food shopping, all areas offer potential for increased spend in the town centre.



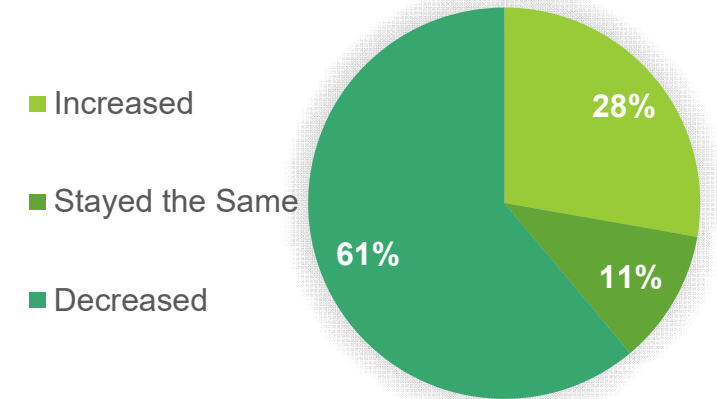
# WORK & LOCAL ECONOMY: BUSINESS SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS 2021

**Observations:** 20 businesses responded to the survey in 2021 and provided a mixed outlook for the town, with over half of business respondents reporting a fall in turnover in the past five years and a static or declining picture for employment. 10% of respondents were looking to sell or retire but this was balanced by 10% who were new start-up businesses. In addition, the greater proportion of respondents were unconfident about their future business performance in Huntly and this translated into low planned growth or expansion plans. This could have been in response to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic but could have been related to longer term declining trends. If the refurbishment works are completed on some of the buildings by next year, this could set in motion new trends and business confidence in the town centre. Businesses were making good use of Facebook and websites but there was scope to further explore other online marketing options.

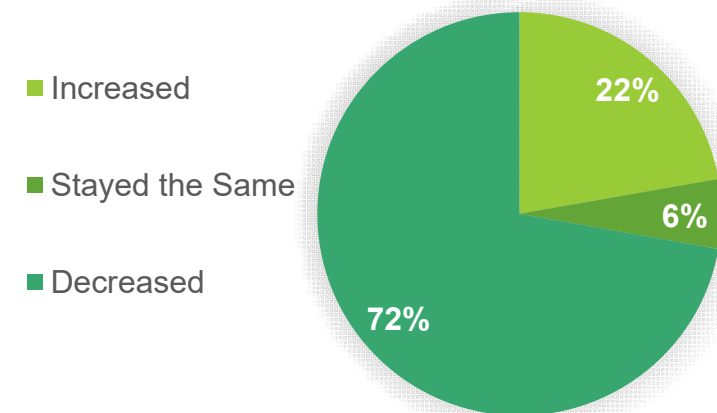
Has employment at your premises changed in the past five years?



How has turnover at your premises changed in the past five years?



What difference have the COVID-19 restrictions had on turnover during the period March 2020 to April 2021?



80%

of business owners surveyed were **established** businesses in the town centre. 10% were ready to sell/retire; 10% were start-ups

95%

of business owners surveyed were **independent** businesses

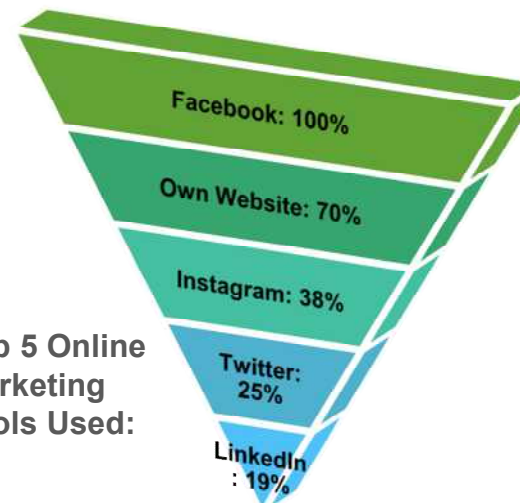
40%

of business owners surveyed were **extremely** or **somewhat confident** about future business performance in Huntly; 15% were **neutral** and 45% **extremely** or **somewhat unconfident**

10%

of business owners surveyed were looking to **grow** or **expand** in the next year, with a further 15% in the next five years. 40% are **unsure** and 35% were **not** currently considering growth or expansion

Top 5 Online Marketing Tools Used:





## WORK & LOCAL ECONOMY: PROPERTY

**Observations:** Huntly has several vacant premises, many of which are large, empty, older-style, listed buildings which is having a negative effect on the town centre. Local groups such as the Huntly Development Trust are working to secure the future of some of these through purchase and refurbishment which is evident this year as the works are underway. This regeneration was recognised in the survey responses but there is the sense that there is more still to do. There is a high percentage of premises ownership but 80% of business owners are unsure or had no plans for investment. Existing businesses would like to see schemes to encourage new start-up enterprises such as pop-up spaces.

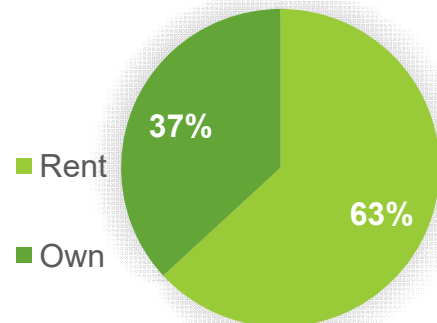


Images (Left to Right): Building under renovation, The Square; Vacant Huntly Hotel, The Square.



**5%** of business respondents said they would invest in their premises in the next year with **15%** within the next 5 years. **50%** were unsure of their investment plans and **30%** had no plans for investment.

### Do you rent or own your premises?



*“Having been here for a number of years now, if I could rewrite time I wouldn’t have bought a shop in Huntly.”*

*“Rents are too high, that’s why I put my business now on wheels.”*

*“Sad to see so many empty shops, town centre needs some regeneration.”*

*“I know the community are doing a lot to try and revitalise the centre of Huntly, which makes me feel positive about it.”*

*“Would love to see some more small businesses encouraged to open in the centre.”*

*“Etsy like shops attracting new fresh talent at reasonable rental rates.”*

*“Lower rates to encourage new businesses to open.”*

*Business and Community Survey, September 2021*

### Planning Applications:

Within the town centre fourteen planning applications were approved between August 2021 and August 2022. Due to the extent of the town centre boundary and Conservation Area designation, a large proportion of applications received are householder applications. Of note were:

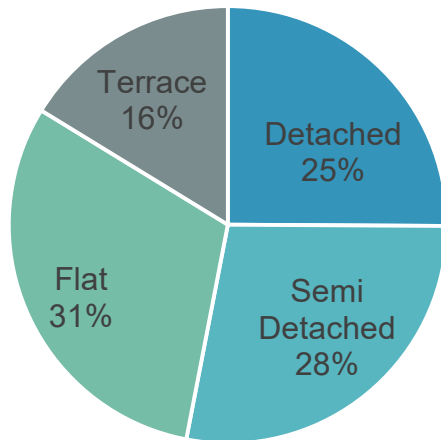
- Alterations including Change of Use of Shop (Class 1) to Community Workshop (Class 10) and Café (Class 3) and Conversion of Existing Outbuilding to a Dwellinghouse (Class 9);
- Substantial Demolition of Existing Shop and Change of Use of Shop (Class 1) to Dwellinghouse (Class 9);
- Alterations and refurbishment of Shop (Class 1);
- Change of Use from Shop (Class 1) to Flat (Sui Generis);
- Internal and external alterations to Royal Mail Delivery Office.

Housing is central to people's lives and helps to shape the appearance and character of places. Good places provide a mix of housing that supports a socially balanced community and meets people's needs throughout life.

# HOUSING & COMMUNITY



## Dwelling Type



The mix of dwelling types within the town centre is shown above. The largest proportion of the dwellings within the town centre are flats. Due to the size of the town centre boundary there are more residential properties than commercial properties within the boundary.

Of these dwelling types within the town centre the main tenure is properties either owned outright or with a mortgage.

## Housing Profile and Population

The overall population total for Huntly in 2020 was 4,550 and it is estimated that approximately 516 people live within the town centre.

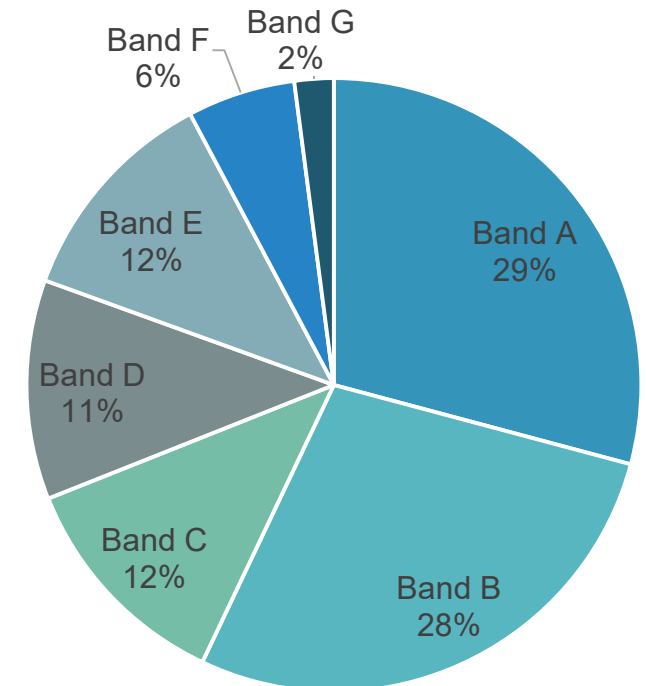
The average house price for dwellings within the town centre boundary in 2018 was £120,287 compared with the average house price in Aberdeenshire of £230,038.



Image: King Street.

In terms of Council Tax Bands (2021), Huntly Town Centre has dwellings in Bands A-G on the scale of the Council Tax Bands. The majority, over are located within the first two bands, Band A and B.

## Council Tax Band



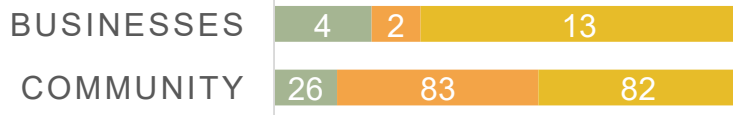


Feeling isolated can be damaging to our health and wellbeing. Good places provide a variety of spaces to meet and spend time with others.

**Observations:** Range of events was scored relatively poorly in both of the 2021 surveys but this could have been influenced by the COVID-19 restrictions at the time of the survey. Social contact was ranked within the bottom five of all topics in the business survey. There are a number of venues that are available for social interaction in the town centre but there is a community desire to see The Square being used for more events and also to see more events in general for all age groups.

### HOW WOULD YOU RATE: RANGE OF EVENTS?

■ Good ■ Neutral ■ Poor



### Town Centre Events\*^



The following events are planned over the next year:

#### Farmer's Market

1<sup>st</sup> Saturday of every month (09:00-13:00)

#### Huntly Hairst

September 2023

\*Not an exhaustive list ^Correct at time of survey

# SOCIAL CONTACT



Venue	Indoor / Outdoor	Opening Times
Library	Indoor	Tues 12:00-17:00 Wed 10:00-13:00 Thurs 13:30-18:00 Fri 09:30-14:00 Sat 10:00-13:00
Stewarts Hall	Indoor	Currently closed at time of survey
Strathbogie Drumblade Parish Church	Indoor	Sun 10:30
St Margaret's Roman Catholic Church	Indoor	Sun 09:00 and 12:00 Tues, Thurs and Sat 10:00

*"More heritage and cultural events would be an improvement."*

*"More events to create a sense of community."*

*"Bring back the Music in the Square event."*

*"We need events to bring people into the town centre."*

*"More events open to everyone would be good."*

*"More events that are not sports based for kids."*

*"Years ago there used to be events such like "music in the square" which was great. Having events like that in the square again would be great, it has so much potential."*

*"Events are a great idea. Family events are an even better."*

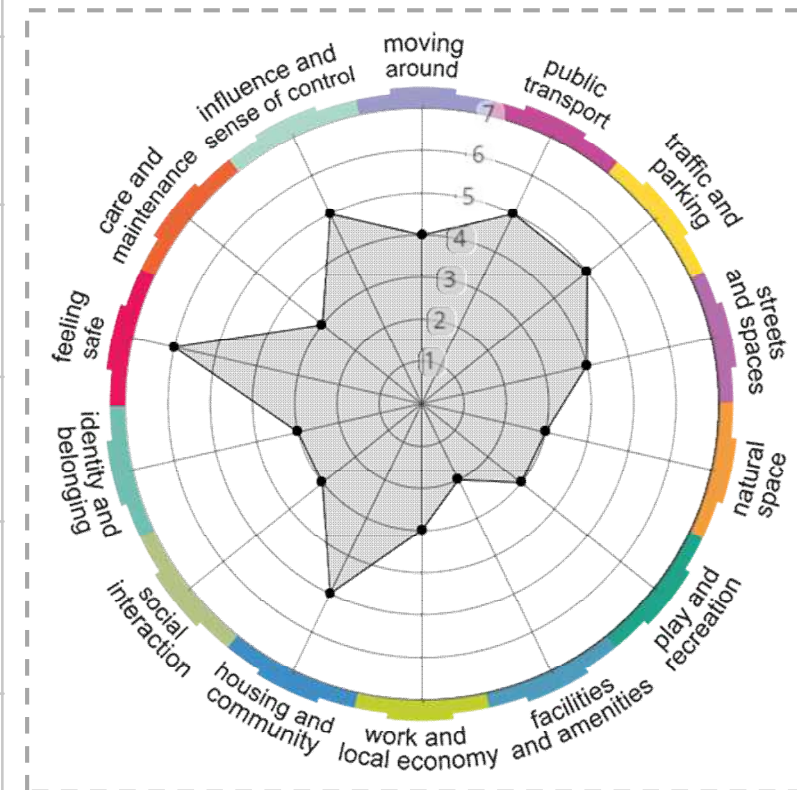
*"Not everyone has social media so often events and groups get missed as no one knows about them."*



Images (Left to Right): Stewarts Hall, Huntly Library and Strathbogie Drumblade Parish Church.

# KEY CONSIDERATIONS & OPPORTUNITIES

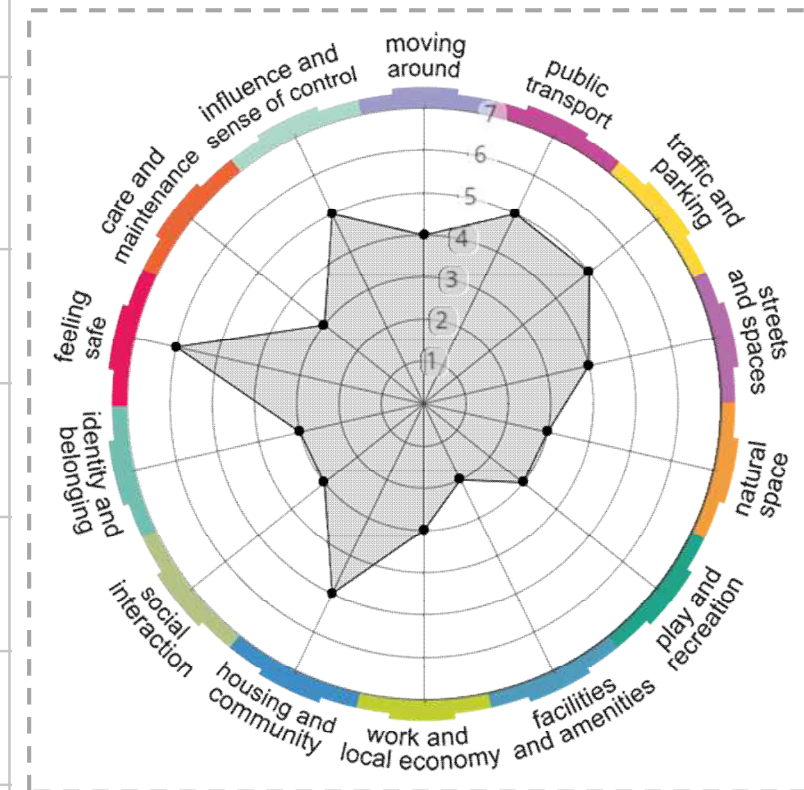
Theme	Key Improvements
<b>Identity and belonging</b> Rating: 3	Both the community and businesses felt overwhelmingly negative about the town centre and often commented on its recent decline. People care about the town though and are sad to see how it has changed. It is hoped regeneration plans will make a difference.
<b>Feeling safe</b> Rating: 6	Safety during the day scored highly and crime figures are low. To improve in this category people's feeling of safety during the evening should be considered which may benefit from the installation of CCTV and the repair/maintenance of lighting columns.
<b>Care and maintenance</b> Rating: 3	The overall perception of the care and maintenance of buildings within Huntly Town Centre was poor. This ranked within the bottom five topics within the surveys. Interventions looking at improvement works to buildings would be welcomed by the local community.
<b>Influence and sense of control</b> Rating: 5	Huntly has a strong network of charitable and voluntary groups working together to benefit the town centre. Not all people are aware of the groups and their purpose so wider promotion or engagement could be considered.
<b>Moving around</b> Rating: 4	This scored well in the surveys but observations highlighted that there is a lack of infrastructure such as signage, maps and cycling facilities which would benefit peoples ability to get around the town centre. A lack of maintenance in areas such as road markings and tactile paving was also noted.
<b>Public transport</b> Rating: 5	Generally, Huntly has good public transport links when looking to travel east or west however it is more difficult to travel north to south with provision for settlements in the catchment area lacking.
<b>Traffic and parking</b> Rating: 5	Traffic and parking received a mixed response through the surveys. Opinions gathered included people wanting to see parking removed from the town centre whilst others noted that parking within The Square should be free to encourage people to use the local shops.





# KEY CONSIDERATIONS & OPPORTUNITIES (CONTINUED)

Theme	Key Improvements
<p>Streets and spaces</p> <p>Rating: 4</p>	Both the community and businesses felt negatively towards aspects contained within this topic including the attractiveness of the town, the lack of seats and the condition of the pavements. These topics are all aspects that could be considered through an appropriate strategy.
<p>Natural space</p> <p>Rating: 3</p>	There is no natural space within the town centre. However, volunteers work hard to provide planters in The Square which is welcomed and there is good access to open space in close proximity. There are opportunities to consider the area within The Square for further green space.
<p>Play and recreation</p> <p>Rating: 3</p>	There are no play and leisure facilities within the town centre boundary. However, there are a number of facilities within 0.5 miles of the town centre. There is also an aspiration to see a soft play centre in one of the vacant units in the town centre.
<p>Facilities and amenities</p> <p>Rating: 2</p>	This topic was viewed fairly negatively by both the community and the businesses as only 10% of the community thought Huntly had the services expected in a town centre. Opportunities to fill the vacant units to both improve the vibrancy and variety would help.
<p>Work and local economy</p> <p>Rating: 3</p>	Businesses are lacking in confidence about the future of the town centre. Deprivation and low pay are key considerations. Opportunities to bring new businesses to the town would be welcomed to encourage investment in buildings and staff.
<p>Housing and community</p> <p>Rating: 5</p>	Housing and Community was a strong topic for the town centre. There is a good mix of housing available within the town centre and within a mix of tenures to support all of the people within the community.
<p>Social contact</p> <p>Rating: 3</p>	There was a large desire to see additional events happening within the town centre, including family friendly events which would make better use of The Square. At the times of the survey the Stewarts Hall was being used for vaccinations so not in use for indoor gathering.



**BUSINESS & COMMUNITY SURVEY RESPONSES: How Would You Rate? Top 5 Highest and Lowest Scoring Categories****Community****Top 5 Highest Scoring Categories:**

1. Feeling of Safety During the Day
2. Farmer's Market
3. Ease of Getting Around
4. Standard of Service in Shops
5. Parks/ Green Spaces

**Top 5 Lowest Scoring Categories:**

1. Variety of Shops
2. Vibrancy in the Evening
3. Vibrancy During the Day
4. Café/ Restaurant Choice
5. Care and Maintenance of Buildings

**Business****Top 5 Highest Scoring Categories:**

1. Feeling of Safety During the Day
2. Ease of Getting Around
3. Standard of Service in Shops
4. Parks/ Green Spaces
5. Farmer's Market

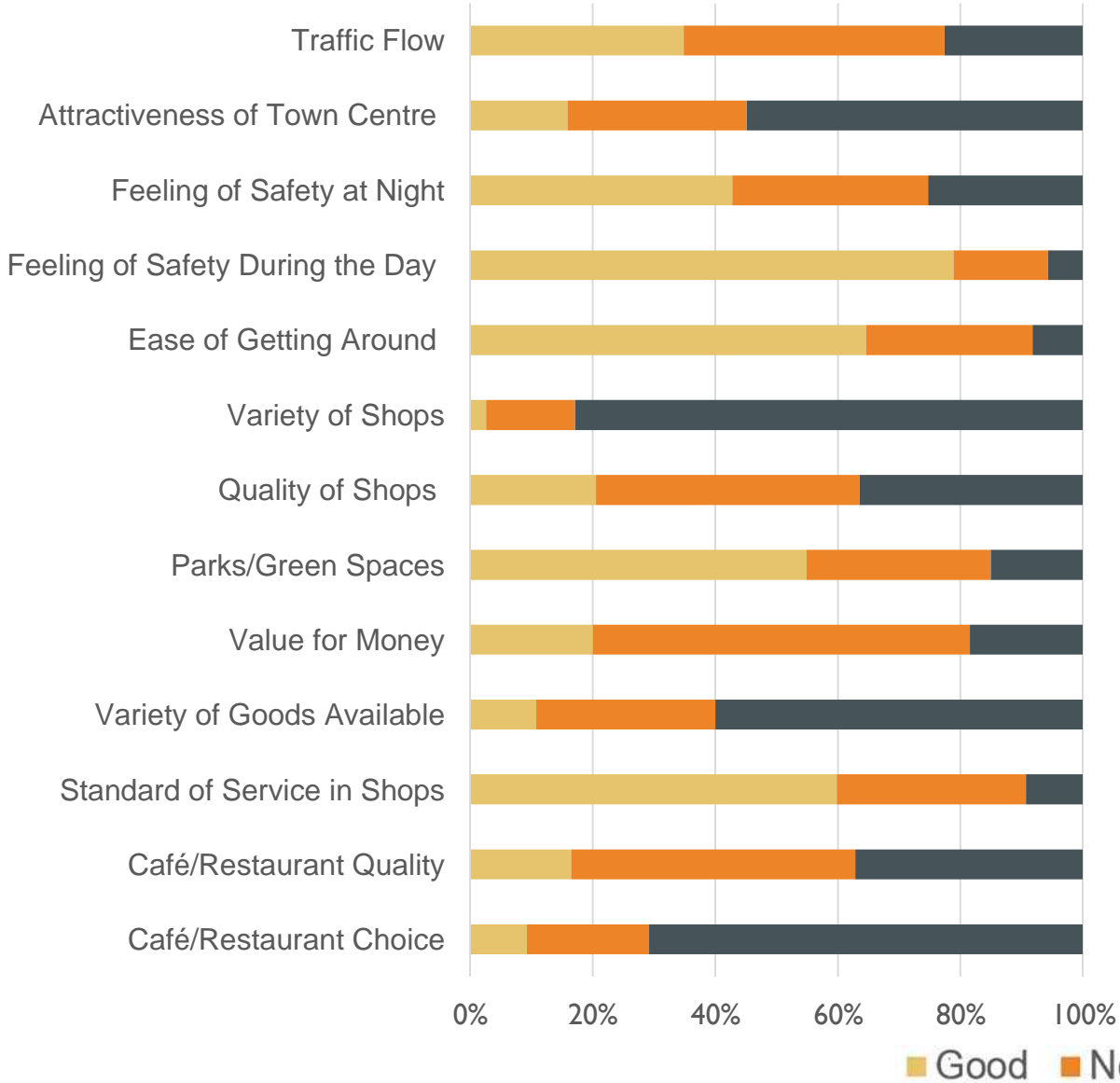
**Top 5 Lowest Scoring Categories:**

1. Variety of Shops
2. Care and Maintenance of Buildings
3. Café/ Restaurant Choice
4. Attractiveness of Town Centre
5. Range of Events

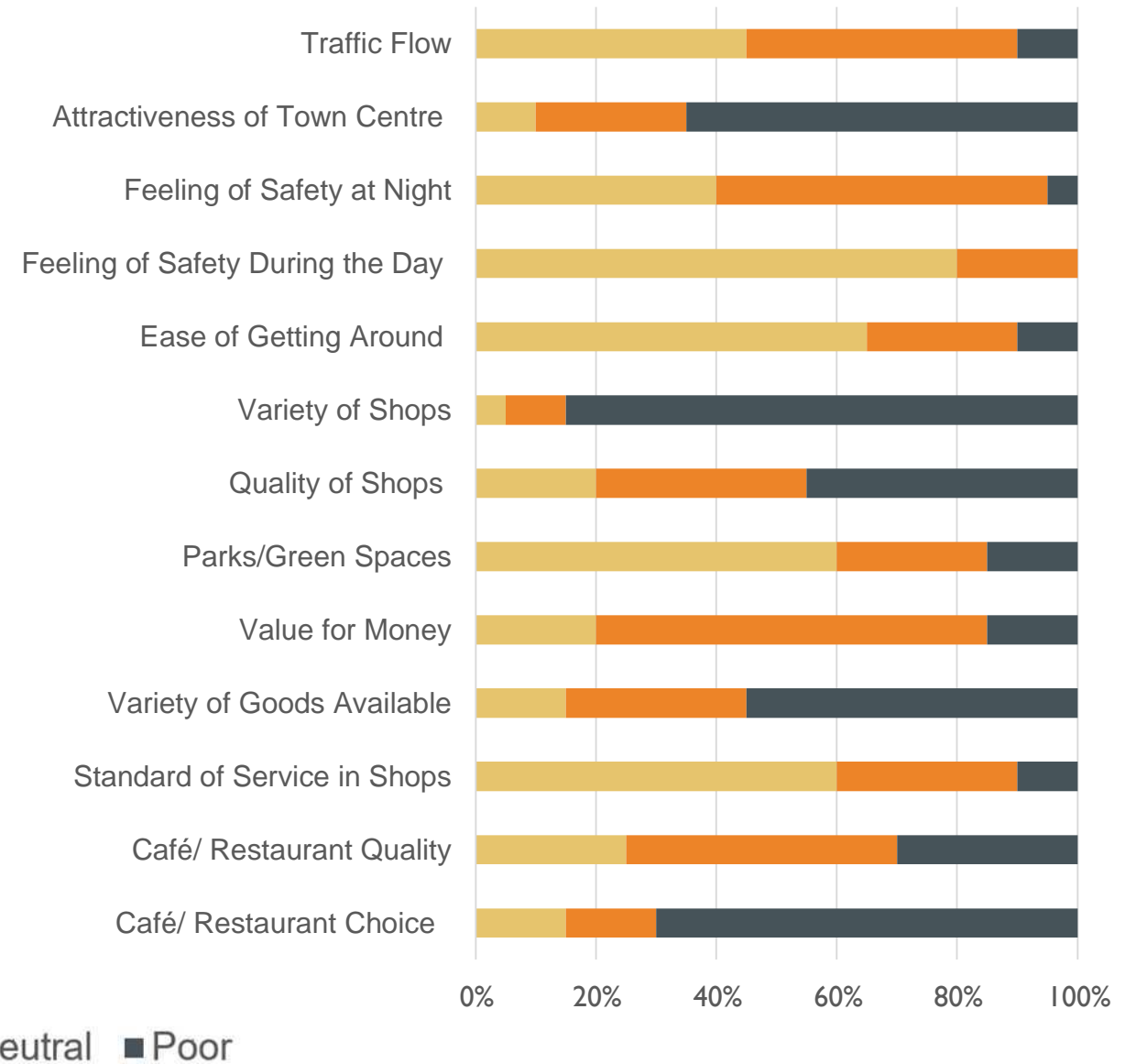


## BUSINESS & COMMUNITY SURVEY RESPONSES: How Would You Rate?

### Community Responses:

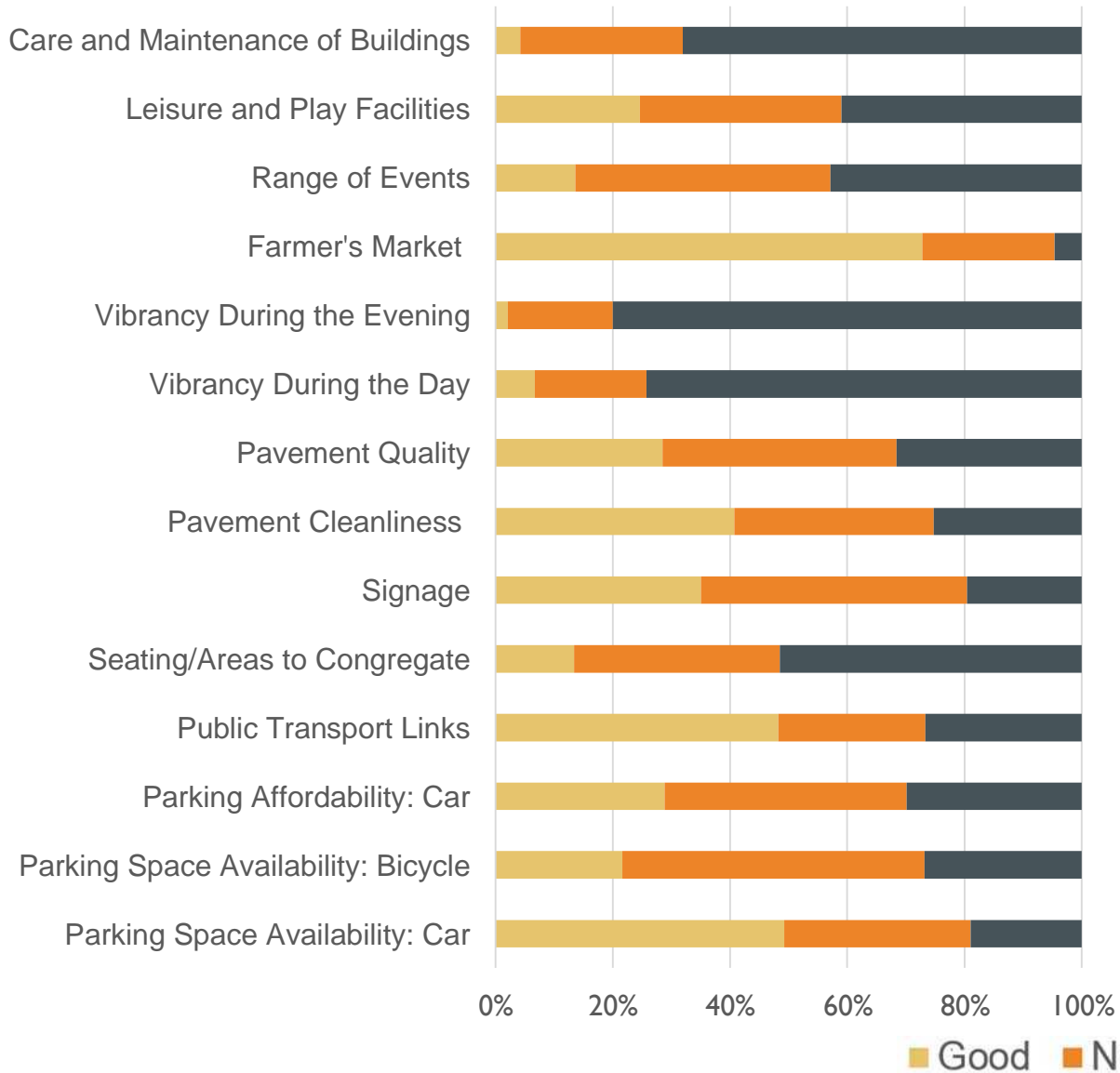


### Business Responses:

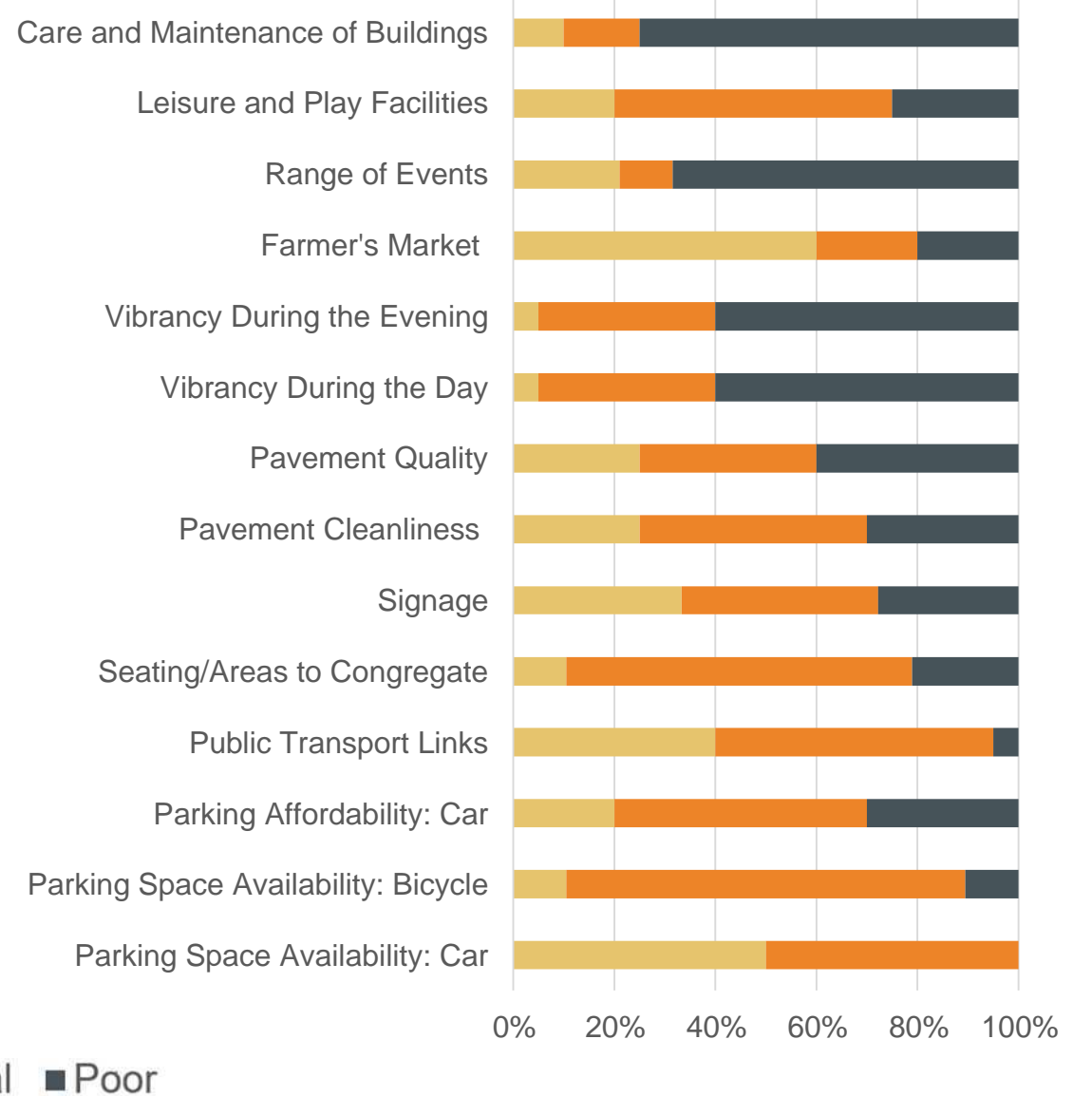


# BUSINESS & COMMUNITY SURVEY RESPONSES: How Would You Rate? (Continued)

## Community Responses:



## Business Responses:





# A PARTNERSHIP APPROACH: WORKING TOGETHER FOR THE BENEFIT OF OUR TOWNS

A key element of the new approach to undertaking Town Centre Health Checks in Aberdeenshire is to work in partnership with stakeholders with an interest in the success of our town centres to collect and share knowledge, information and opportunities. This has added an extra dimension to the health checks, providing a base from which future, plans, strategies, engagement and collaboration can be built upon. A big 'thank you' goes to the following teams, organisations and individuals in 2021 and 2022 for their contributions to the project:

## Business and Community:

Huntly & District Development Trust

Huntly Business Association

Huntly Community Council

Networks of Wellbeing

Footfall Count Volunteers

Accessibility Audit Volunteers: 5 adults



## Partner Organisations:

Sergeant Mellis, Intervention Hub,  
Police Scotland

Elaine Bisset, VisitAberdeenshire



## Council Teams:

Planning Information and Delivery      GIS Team

Community Learning and Development      Marr Area Office

Community Payback Unpaid Hours Service      Community Engagement and Equalities

Transportation

Economic Development

Customer and Digital Services

Planning Policy

**Aberdeenshire**  
COUNCIL



# Aberdeenshire

## COUNCIL



TOWN CENTRE HEALTH CHECK  
SEPTEMBER 2022

REPORT PRODUCED BY THE PLANNING INFORMATION AND DELIVERY TEAM  
PLANNING AND ECONOMY ; ENVIRONMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES ; ABERDEENSHIRE COUNCIL

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