

To: COATBRIDGE LOCAL AREA PARTNERSHIP		Subject: COATBRIDGE TOWN CENTRE ACTION PLAN UPDATE
From: HEAD OF PLANNING & REGENERATION		
Date: 1 August 2013	Ref: SP/03/12/SP	

1. Purpose of Report

1.1 This report seeks to update the Partnership and Committee on progress with the Coatbridge Town Centre Action Plan.

2. Coatbridge Town Centre Framework and Action Plan

2.1 The Council is now developing new frameworks and action plans for all of its town centres. The new frameworks will look to address issues including development opportunities; town centre activity; accessibility and movement; design, quality and character; town centre management; business support and marketing and promotion. A guidance note which sets out the process for preparing these Frameworks can be viewed at www.northlanarkshire.gov.uk/towncentres.

2.2 The first round of consultation to develop the new Coatbridge Town Centre Framework with a wide range of stakeholders including councillors, council services, partners, local businesses was completed in 2012. The second stage workshops and public consultation took place in February and March 2013.

2.3 Two newsletters which summarise the input to the consultation to date are available on the council's website www.northlanarkshire.gov.uk/coatbridge. Copies have been placed in the Buchanan Centre.

2.4 The information gathered is being analysed and will lead to a draft Action Plan later in 2013.

3. Capital Budget

3.1 The Council agreed its Capital Programme for the period 2013/14 to 2017/18 in March 2013. A capital bid for Town Centres has been approved for a five year period from 2013/14 – 2017/18 for the delivery of future capital projects in each town centre. No funding has been allocated for Coatbridge Town Centre. Consequently the new Framework and Action Plan for Coatbridge will need to identify opportunities for external funding.

4. National Review of Town Centres

4.1 Malcolm Fraser's External Advisory Group reported to the Scottish Government on 4th July with key recommendations for re-energising Scotland's town centres. The review - guided by the principles of Diversity, Empowerment and Pragmatism, identified "Leadership and Collaboration" as the key. Their recommendations were made under 6 themes:-

- Town Centre Living
- Vibrant Local Economies
- Enterprising Communities
- Accessible Public Services
- Digital Towns
- Proactive Planning.

Underpinning all of this is the key principle of "Town Centres First" – which is already included in the draft Scottish Planning Policy currently out to consultation.

- 4.2 It includes a number of proposals to help breathe new life into town centres.
- A 'town centre first' principle whereby public bodies will consider how they can support town centres before considering development elsewhere
 - Working with housing providers to bring empty town centre properties back into use as affordable housing
 - A town centre focus to review current business rates incentivisation schemes
 - A recommendation that public bodies should consider the impact of proposals to relocate services out of town centres
 - Broadening the appeal of town centres with a mix of leisure, public facilities and homes
- Officers will be addressing the points made in the emerging Town Centre Action Plans. The report is on-line at <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2013/07/7250>

5. Town Centre Activities

- 5.1 **Vacancy Rate:** The Local Data Company has an average UK shop vacancy rate average of 14.1% (May 2013) whereas the British Retail Consortium suggests the national UK town centre vacancy rate was 10.9% in January 2013. Coatbridge currently has a vacancy rate of 14.7% - just over the national average - with 41.1% of the active businesses being

Town Centre	Total no. of available units	Total no. of active businesses	New businesses	Businesses closed	Void Units (% vacancy rate)
Coatbridge	238	203	4	1	35 (14.7%)

independent retailers.

- 5.2 **Footfall :** The reduction in footfall parallels the overall footfall reduction in shopping centres of 3.0% in April 2013.

Town Centre	April 2013	May 2013	June 2013	End of Q1	% comparison Q1 2012/13 & Q1 2013/14
Coatbridge	537,217	568,870	546,022	1652,109	- 3.74%

5.3 Coatbridge Events

TCA will be delivering a Back to School Sports Day on the 31st of August 2013 with local athletes and exercise classes to promote healthy living and what is on offer locally. The next Coatbridge Business and Community Alliance will meet again on the 3rd September 2013 at 5.15pm, venue to be confirmed.

6. Business Improvement Districts

- 6.1 As reported at the last meeting, the Council has been considering the potential for establishing Business Improvement Districts (BID) in North Lanarkshire's town centres. After an awareness raising exercise with North Lanarkshire TC businesses, it was established that there is a lack of private sector interest in establishing a BID despite the willingness of the Council to engage appropriately with any emerging BID. It is difficult to envisage any further useful action that could be taken at this point. Therefore BIDs in North Lanarkshire will be kept under review but no further action is currently planned.

7. Restoration of the Vulcan

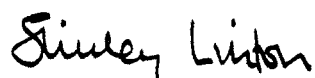
- 7.1 Progress is being made on the restoration of The Vulcan, the first iron hulled vessel built in Scotland. The Vulcan is currently being restored in Arbroath and will be returned to Summerlee Heritage Park on completion to be used as a floating classroom.

8. Dundyvan Church

- 8.1 Works to maintain the safety of Dundyvan Church have now been completed and the contractor paid. The owners Neatearth Ltd have been advised of the outstanding costs owed to the Council. To date no response has been received from Neatearth Ltd. The costs will be added to those that the Council is now pursuing via legal action.
- 8.2 Officers are continuing to seek to identify potential users for the site in order to try and address the blight caused by its current state.

9 Recommendations

- 9.1 It is recommended that the Local Area Partnership note progress made on the projects and initiatives contained within the Coatbridge Town Centre Action Plan.



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Local Government Access to Information Act: for further information about this report, please contact Jennifer Thomson on 01236 632625 (4 July 2013)