



# Huntly: A campus for learning and play

## Community-Led Place Plan

February 2021

# Acknowledgements

Huntly and District Development Trust wishes to thank the following for their help with this project:

- Our co-funders:
  - Scottish Government
  - Marr Area Partnership
- The Learning and Leisure Campus Plan Steering Group:
  - Stuart Caddell (The Gordon Schools)
  - Claire Newman (Huntly Nordic Ski Club and HDDT)
  - Gwyneth Petrie (Elected Member, Ward 14, Aberdeenshire Council)
  - John Porter (Huntly Community Council)
  - Dr Joyce Reed (Gordon Primary School Parent Council)
  - Gary MacBeath (Aberdeenshire Council, observer)
- Our consultancy team:
  - Ice Cream Architecture (Neil Fergusson and Desmond Bernie)
  - Willie Miller Urban Design (Willie Miller)
  - Nick Wright Planning (Nick Wright)
- The Huntly Town Team
- All those in our community, and beyond, who contributed to this plan.

# Contents

<b>Executive Summary</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>About</b>	<b>8</b>
Creating a Community-Led Place Plan	14
Ambition for Huntly's Campus	15
<b>Huntly's Approach</b>	<b>16</b>
Development Principles	19
Impact of Coronavirus	23
<b>HUB</b>	<b>24</b>
1. The Square	25
2. Community, Leisure and Wellbeing Centre	27
3. Christie Park Synthetic Pitch	30
4. New School Nursery	31
5. School Upgrades	32
6. Cricket Club Improvements	35
7. Activities Hub	36
<b>PARK</b>	<b>37</b>
8. Community Orchard and Meadow	38
9. Outdoor Classrooms	40
10. Outdoor Gym	41
11. Woodland Rewilding	42
12. Roller-Ski and Cycling Training Routes	43
13. Larger Sports Pavilion	45
14. Bus Drop Off	46
15. Improved Pitches and Running Track	47
16. Expanded Nordic Outdoor Centre	48
17. Cooper Park Adventure Play	50
<b>ACCESS</b>	<b>51</b>
18. Path Improvements	52
Promenade Paths	53
West Loop	54
East Loop	54
Signage Network	55
19. Town Shuttle Bus Service	56
20. Changing Travel Patterns	57
21. Arrival Threshold Points	59
<b>Delivery</b>	<b>60</b>
Immediate next steps	64





## Executive Summary

“Huntly: A Campus for Learning and Play” is a Community-Led Place Plan for the ambitious, coordinated, high-quality development of learning and leisure facilities in the northern area of Huntly, Aberdeenshire.

The ‘Campus Plan’ plan was developed in 2019 and 2020 through extensive community engagement. It builds on the 2018-19 *Huntly: Room to Thrive* regeneration strategy, produced by the community of Huntly and District and other key stakeholders and led by the multi-stakeholder Huntly Town Team. The *Room to Thrive* strategy outlines a holistic, long-term action plan to reverse a decline in the town’s fortunes and comprises five key themes, the second of which is addressed by the Campus Plan:

*A town centre that belongs to us,*

***With a campus for learning and play.***

*A rural place with transport that works for us,*

*Where the focus is people, environment and culture,*

*And real opportunities exist for enterprise.*

The *Room to Thrive* community engagement revealed that despite the wide range of leisure and learning facilities in Huntly, many are substandard, operating above capacity or not fit for purpose. Economic and geographic barriers prevent access to higher quality facilities elsewhere, and acute deprivation limits the means the community has to bring about improvement itself. Several community attempts to improve individual facilities over the years have stalled due to lack of capacity and funding, frustrating the individuals and organisations behind them. The Campus Plan aims to galvanise ambitions, build capacity and secure funds to develop and deliver projects and facilities that improve the health and wellbeing of the community of Huntly and District.

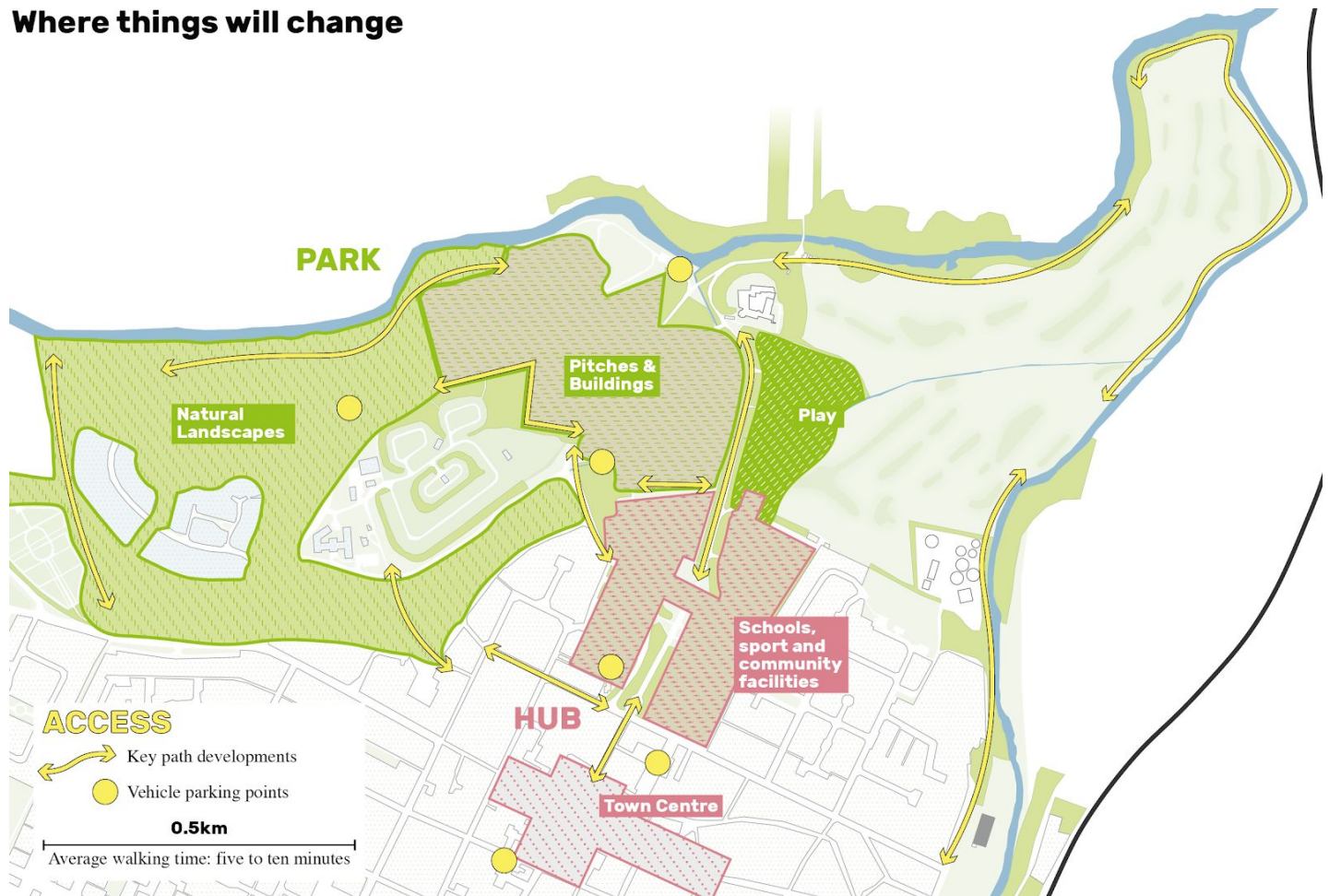


Delivery of the Campus Plan will not only enhance a special place in the town for the benefit of locals and visitors alike. It is essential to meeting the regeneration outcomes identified by our community in the overall Room to Thrive strategy.

The community generated the Campus Plan using a facilitated, staged co-design process. The plan contains twenty-one complementary projects (at a range of scales) that, when realised, will deliver improvement for learning, leisure, health, enterprise, tourism, self-sufficiency and (overall) community wellbeing.

The projects fall within one of three types; hub, park or access. The power of the plan is that when delivered, the whole will be greater than the sum of the parts.

### Where things will change



### HUB

Investing to create clusters of buildings that support learning and leisure activity, that can adapt to demand and which maximise the advantages of a central location in town, close to existing facilities.

#### *Development principles:*

- Activating existing buildings in the Town Centre by increasing the number of leisure and learning activities that take place there.
- Condensing building developments in the vicinity of the schools to provide new, easy-to-manage facilities that make efficient use of land.

PARK

Delivering improvements that celebrate Huntly Castle and enhance its surrounding environment of parkland for the benefit of nature and people.

Development principles:

- Improving the quality and range of park facilities available along the Avenue corridor, while recognising its historic importance and link with Huntly Castle.
- Investing in outdoor sporting facilities to directly support participation, development and performance.
- Making sensitive interventions that accommodate nature and human activity side-by-side.

ACCESS

Making it possible for people to get around the campus area in environmentally-friendly ways that respect its historic and natural setting.

Development principles:

- Adapting how people travel to, from and around the campus.
- Making walking and cycling a safe and accessible option for all.

Huntly’s compact nature, with facilities located within minutes walk of the town centre and where many people live, is a real asset for the town, one which the community appreciates and is seeking to build on (in line with the 20 minute neighbourhood principle). Therefore, the plan doesn’t centralise all development but rather spreads activity in nodes across the area, all within convenient walking distance of each other. This approach respects the historic significance of the Avenue to Huntly Castle, and maximises the use of existing buildings in the Town Centre conservation area.

PROJECTS LIST

HUB	PARK	ACCESS
The Square	Community Orchard and Meadow	Path Improvements
Community, Leisure and Wellbeing Centre	Outdoor Classrooms	Town Shuttle Bus Service
Christie Park Synthetic Pitch	Outdoor Gym	Changing Travel Patterns
New School Nursery (under construction)	Woodland Rewilding	Arrival Threshold Points
School Upgrades	Roller-Ski and Cycling Training Routes	
Cricket Club Improvements	Larger Sports Pavilion	
Activities Hub	Bus Drop Off	
	Improved Pitches and Running Track	
	Expanded Nordic Outdoor Centre	
	Cooper Park Adventure Play	

Having created this Campus Plan, the community of Huntly and District now has:

- a demonstrated need for the projects listed above;
- a motivated and committed group of individuals and organisations ready to play their part in delivering the improvements; and,
- a coordinated plan for how the improvements can best be delivered.

However, a number of things are still required in order to make things happen.

## **PARTNERSHIPS**

While there are several individual organisations motivated and willing to deliver projects within the plan, strong collaboration will be needed. Partnerships between local, regional and national organisations need to be formed to agree more detailed plans for taking forward projects.

## **CAPACITY**

The Campus Plan is a statement of long-term ambition. Its scale means that it cannot be delivered on volunteer effort alone. Nor should it. Drawing on recent experience within the community, establishing jobs focused on delivering development will create the time capacity needed.

## **CAPITAL**

The third key component is capital investment. The plan will require several millions of pounds to deliver over its lifetime. That level of investment is beyond the local community which, while rich in natural assets and community organisations, face significant economic challenges. Levering external financial support and investment is therefore required.

The effort the community has put in over the last few years to consider how its future could be different - the Room to Thrive strategy, and this Community-Led Place Plan - puts Huntly in a strong position to 'build back better' after the COVID-19 pandemic. The projects in the plan create opportunities for asset-based community development with an increased focus on community wealth-building. This will result in more and better jobs and greater opportunities for training, personal development and volunteering.

Ultimately, if we grasp this opportunity we can fundamentally improve the quality of life of the people of Huntly and District.

*Two supporting documents accompany this plan. One describes in more detail the community engagement process by which it was collated. The other provides a range of background information upon which next steps for each of the projects can be based.*



# About



The market town of Huntly sits within the confluence of the rivers Deveron and Bogie in western Aberdeenshire. It has a population of around 4,500 in the town itself with a further 7,000 in its rural district. Huntly is bounded to the south and west by the Aberdeen-Inverness A96 trunk road, to the east by the Aberdeen to Inverness railway line and River Bogie, and to the north by the River Deveron.

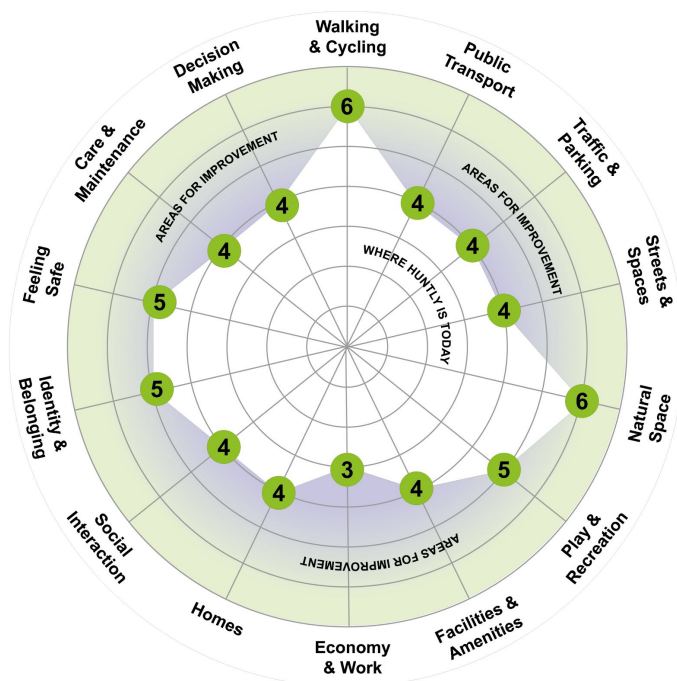


*Map of Huntly, with campus study boundary marked in green*

The town has traditionally functioned as a rural service centre, providing retail, banking and other business services, as well as school and leisure facilities for the wider area. In recent years, that role has come under pressure as the way people shop and access services has changed. Main economic functions now are local services, food manufacturing, oil and gas service support and the public sector. The town still houses the area's secondary school and key leisure facilities.

The heart of Huntly is a fine example of an 18<sup>th</sup> century planned town, the set piece of which is the main Square. From the town centre, a linden tree-lined avenue leads northwards to Huntly Castle, historical home of the Gordon clan. The area along the Avenue to the Castle and east or west along the River Deveron, contains a diverse range of well-used and loved sport, learning and leisure facilities, as well as open parkland.

While these facilities are appreciated and their setting attractive, during development of the 'Room to Thrive' strategy ([www.huntly.town/strategy](http://www.huntly.town/strategy)), the community identified a strong need for investment and coordination to provide greater opportunities for the town. It was felt that by capturing these opportunities Huntly will be better able to respond to the challenges faced by its existing population. It will also be better placed to attract new residents, especially as the A96 dualling project progresses and Huntly's designation on the Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Growth Corridor is made real.



*Huntly Place Standard Results, 2018*



A town centre that belongs to us,  
With a campus for learning and play.  
A rural place with transport that works for us,  
Where the focus is people, environment and culture,  
And real opportunities exist for enterprise.

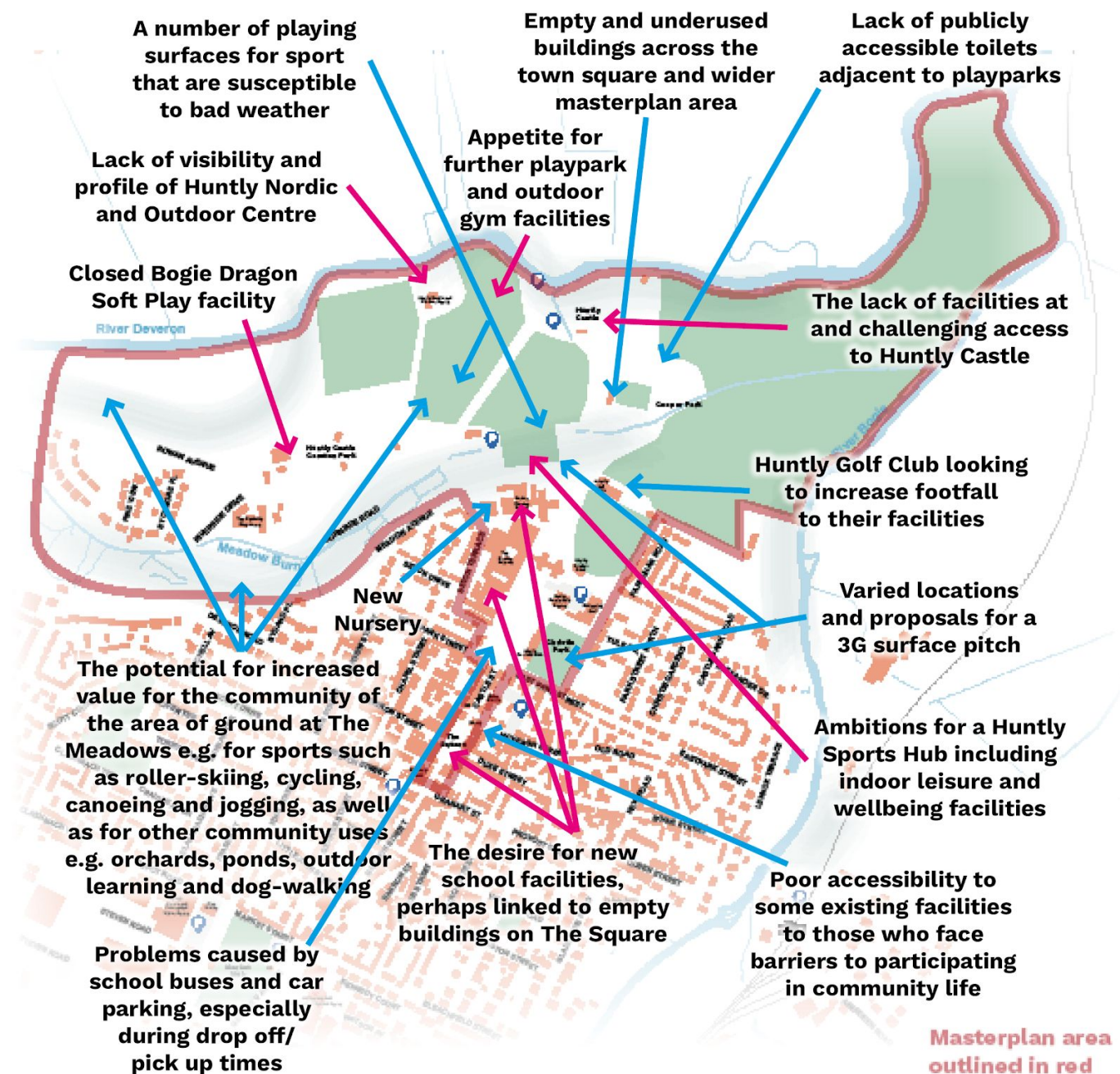
*Huntly: Room to Thrive strategy themes*

Historically, Huntly has shown a self-starting attitude towards activities, education, wellbeing and leisure with over 150 different clubs, groups and organisations operating locally. Over the years, the community has led work to build its own swimming pool and mart. In the 1980s and 1990s, Huntly Limited



delivered several projects of significance to the town and today many local organisations are playing key roles in meeting the town's needs.

In keeping with this proactive tradition, a number of different organisations and groups have been pursuing ambitions to improve and develop the facilities for learning and leisure across northern sections of the town, many of which have seen better days or are not fit for their current purpose. However, for various reasons, these independent projects - many of which require significant investment of time and money - have largely stalled. Perhaps not surprisingly then, the idea of developing a coordinated plan for improving this existing 'community campus' of learning and leisure facilities received strong support through the Room to Thrive project.



*Mapping of initial ambitions and local challenges gathered in development of Room to Thrive strategy.*

The close proximity of existing leisure and learning facilities to the town centre offers Huntly a unique opportunity to capitalise on the benefits that improved facilities could bring. The current decline of the town centre as a traditional market town could be reversed by adopting the ‘Town Centre First principle’, integrating different types of learning and leisure activity into some of the underused buildings. Making better connections between existing assets and new/improved facilities would create a campus supporting enterprise, with Huntly promoted as a regional/national hub for leisure activities and lifelong learning.

Room to Thrive sets out two complementary long-term strategic objectives for a learning and play campus in the north of the town:

A shared plan exists for minor and major capital investment to continually raise the standards of facilities available.

Everyday learning and leisure activities blend together creating a town-centre campus of first-class facilities. This campus is a network of coordinated and sustainable facilities generating income and retaining profit for re-investment.

Through the support of the Scottish Government’s Making Places scheme, the Marr Area Partnership, and Huntly and District Development Trust, this Community-Led Place Plan directly addresses both.

## Community challenges

The 2020 release of the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) gives further detail on the challenges faced by the communities of Huntly & District:

- Two out of five SIMD datazones in Huntly are in the 30% most deprived in Scotland. One of these is the 12th most deprived area in Aberdeenshire.
- Around 9% of the population in Huntly & District can be described as income deprived and 7% of the working population employment deprived.
- Over half of the datazones in Huntly & District have a higher than the national average proportion of the population with no qualifications.
- 7% of 16-19-year olds living in the most deprived datazone in Huntly are not participating in education, employment or training. In the same datazone, 13% of residents live in overcrowded households.
- Overall initial leaver destinations from The Gordon Schools (TGS) are in line with national data, however a disparity exists within the most deprived 30% of pupils, particularly with those whose initial destination is unemployment/seeking work (22% at TGS, 7% nationally).
- 26% of Huntly’s population is aged 65+ (18% across Aberdeenshire). The town also has a higher rate of dementia compared to Aberdeenshire levels.
- Depression rates range from 12% to 20% of the population.
- All data zones that constitute the district hinterland of the town are in the 20% most geographical access deprived in Scotland as a whole. One of these is ranked 132nd out of 6,976 for geographic access.

Further, Aberdeenshire Council statistics from December 2019 reveal that Huntly's average household income (£25,353) is the lowest of any town in Aberdeenshire, 32% below the Aberdeenshire average (£37,191).

This Place Plan is firmly rooted in the community's ambition to tackle such significant challenges that Huntly and District faces. It is not a plea for better learning and sporting facilities for their own sake. With many current facilities in a substandard condition or not fit for purpose, and geographical and economical barriers inhibiting access to higher quality alternatives for many, there is a genuine and urgent need for greater investment in the learning and leisure campus to support those who are most deprived. Such investment will allow people to improve their life chances by accessing facilities close to where they live, hence in a low-carbon way.



# Creating a Community-Led Place Plan

With facilitation from icecream architecture, Willie Miller Urban Design and Nick Wright Planning, and direction from a local steering group, a co-design approach was adopted to create this Community-Led Place Plan. This followed a staged approach, with opportunities for the community to directly input to work.

Stage	Key community input
Inception	Creating a collective map of what people know about today. Sharing what places are important and changes people would like to see.
First Co-Design	What should be in Huntly's campus for learning and play?
Second Co-Design	Exploring the different options of how improvements people wanted to see could fit together.
Third Co-Design	Bringing different proposals together, what does the whole package look like? What's missing?
Review	Feedback on the combined plan.

The format of the above stages was varied through delivery, responding to feedback and requests from the community. Remote ways of inputting were always included. In addition to more formal co-design events, public drop-ins were held, general workshops were run with local groups and schools, and focused public discussions convened, for example on ecology and culture. Collectively 731 people attended in-person events or drop-ins.



Huntly: A campus for learning and play

# Ambition for Huntly's Campus

Through the development of this Place Plan a number of shared ambitions emerged as to what the campus can achieve for the community. These are outlined below, along with the reasoning of why it is important or the need within the community that requires to be addressed.

Ambition	Need being addressed
<b>Schools that inspire children and our whole community to enjoy learning and succeed together.</b>	Raising school attainment and outcomes, and creating environments and buildings more suitable for 21st century teaching and learning.
<b>Peaceful parkland that is a haven for nature and wildlife.</b>	Recognising Huntly's key natural assets need support to ensure that humans and wildlife can co-exist.
<b>A town centre that welcomes people and gives them a reason to stay.</b>	Long-term decline of town centre, and with it a sense of purpose to what it is for.
<b>Spaces that can be a platform for Huntly's culture and creativity.</b>	Culture and creativity are sometimes seen as happening on the fringe of local life rather than at the heart of it.
<b>Sporting facilities that support individuals to lead healthy lives, achieve greater enjoyment, develop skills and achieve higher performance.</b>	While Huntly has produced world-class athletes, there is potential to increase the level of participation and success to a wider range of people and sports.
<b>Public buildings and places that are accessible to all.</b>	Not all buildings have step-free access throughout.
<b>Visitors all year round.</b>	Making the most of Huntly & District's different winter offering to go beyond the typical visitor season.
<b>Places where people of all ages can learn.</b>	There is no further/higher education directly available in Huntly, and nearest providers are 30-40 miles away.
<b>Flexible buildings that make efficient use of resources.</b>	Recognising that social, environmental and economic benefits are being missed through not accommodating different activities in multi-purpose buildings.
<b>New revenue generating opportunities for local businesses and groups.</b>	Supporting businesses operating in a challenging environment, with online competitors and changing consumer taste and demands.
<b>Provide opportunities for employment or self-starting enterprises.</b>	Parts of Huntly have a low rank within employment and income aspects of the Scottish Index for Multiple Deprivation. Parts of the community are less likely to have the means to start an enterprise alone.
<b>Making use of natural resources to achieve carbon-negative performance across the campus.</b>	Transitioning to a carbon-free and self-sufficient economy, ultimately addressing the climate crisis.



# Huntly's Approach



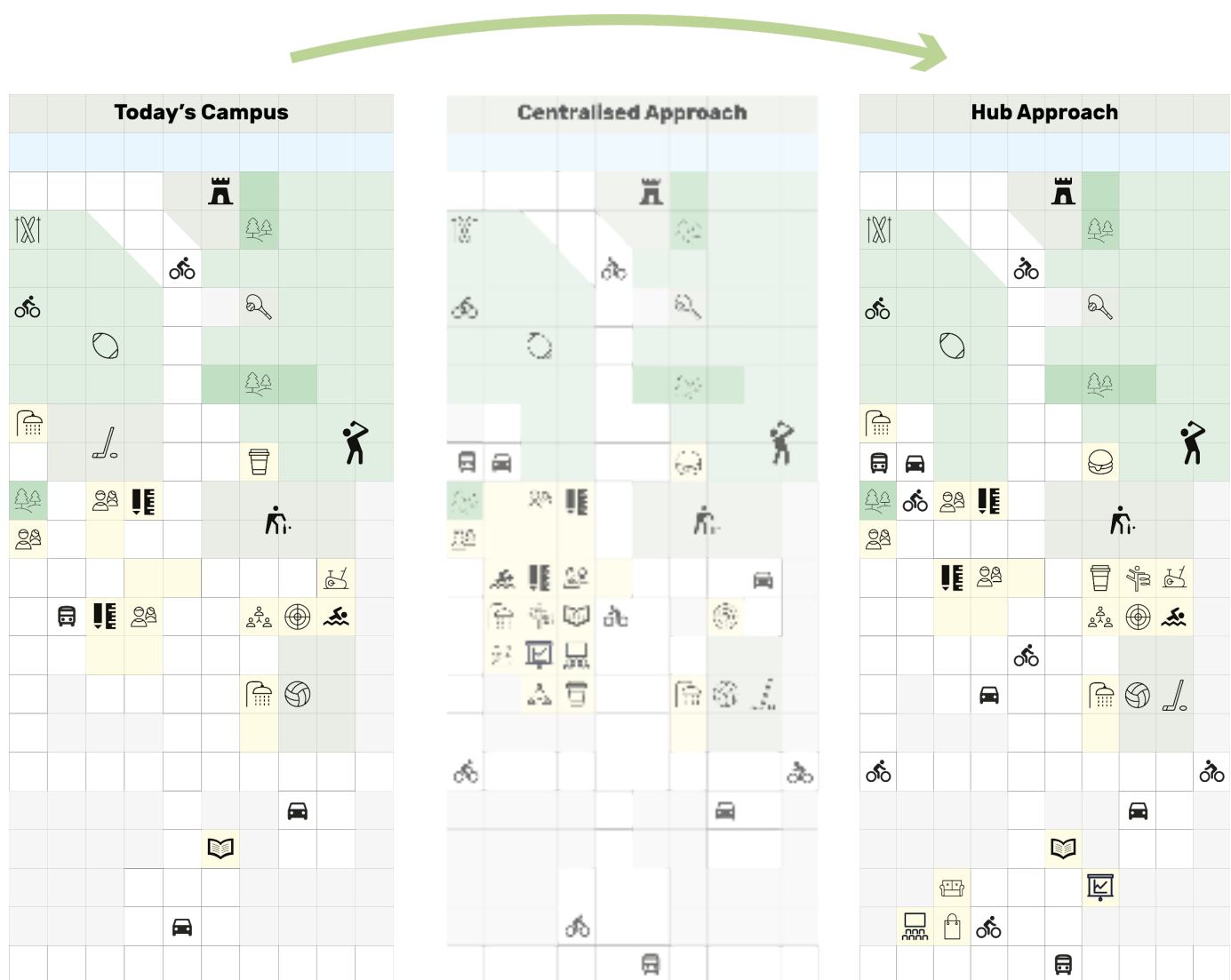
Recent years have increasingly seen the development of ‘community campus’ facilities across Scotland. Almost invariably these centralise services and facilities in one location/building, often on the edge of town, thus removing potential customers from town centre businesses and encouraging people to drive to them. While the application of the word ‘campus’ to these types of facilities may be relatively new, for decades Huntly has already had a form of learning and leisure campus, with the main schools, sport, leisure and community facilities all within easy walking distance of each other and of the town centre.

Building on this situation, and the Town Centre First principle, Huntly has an opportunity to take a unique approach, introducing sympathetic modern additions that complement and maximise the potential of historic buildings. In practice, that approach provides a significant number of benefits:

- strengthened (economic) activity in the town centre and around the schools by retaining and increasing daily footfall
- a greater number of existing buildings can be retained and improved, meaning lower capital investment and overall environmental impact
- improved access by public transport, walking and cycling
- greater community safety and cohesion by people meeting face-to-face on a daily basis.

Overall, the campus will provide a great contribution to community health and wellbeing.

While this approach does include some challenges, especially during construction works, these are outweighed by the benefits of co-location of facilities. This was confirmed independently before the Campus Plan was developed by Gordon Primary School's Parent Council. Their multi-criteria analysis of a number of potential alternative sites for a new school identified the current town centre site as the preferred location.

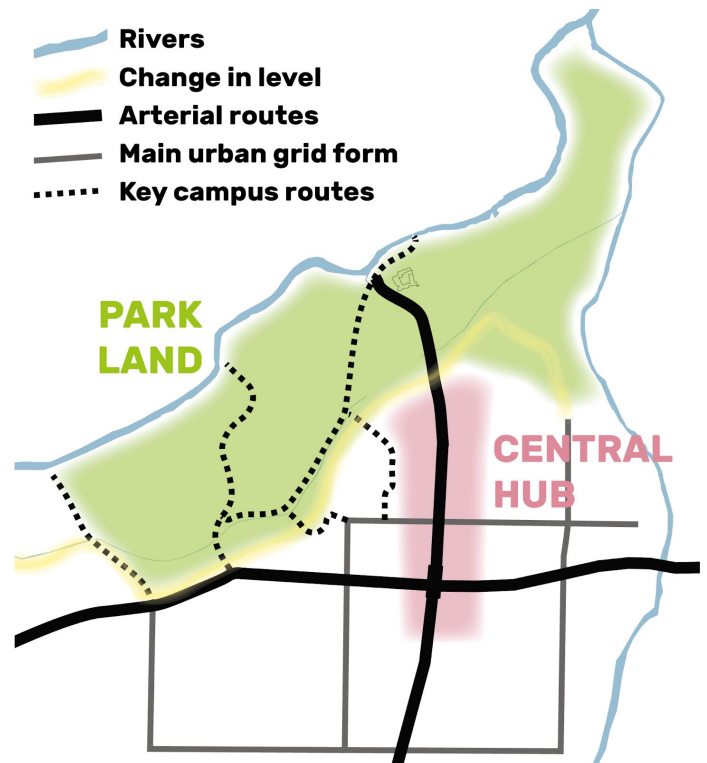




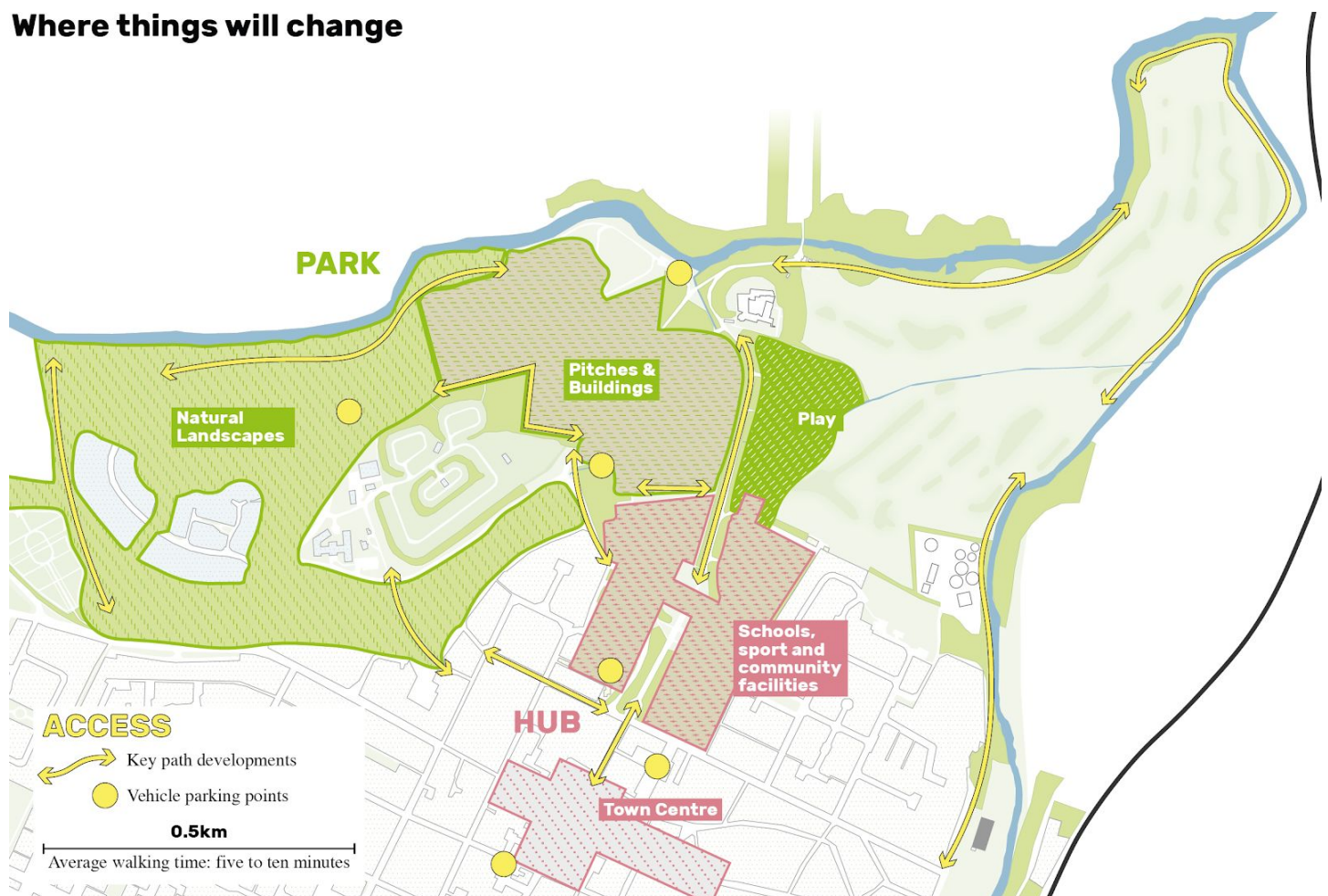
The Campus Plan is about more than activities that take place in buildings. Huntly enjoys a large area of public open space on its doorstep between the rivers Deveron and Bogie. This space - exceedingly well-used during the pandemic - also requires investment to maximise the opportunities it can provide for health, leisure and learning, while respecting it as part of Huntly's rural setting.

The key natural boundaries of the area - the rivers and change in ground level - along with the main (man-made) routes, create a number of zones connected to Huntly's largely grid based layout.

These zones closely align with the nature of activity that currently takes place there creating character areas. In terms of development planning this helps articulate the content of the plan, the principles behind developments contained within it, and the type of campus for learning and leisure facilities that the community would like to see.



## Where things will change



# Development Principles

**1. HUB:** Investing to create clusters of buildings supporting learning and leisure activity that can adapt to demand and maximise the advantages of a central location in town, and existing neighbouring facilities.

Development principles:

- Activating existing buildings in the Town Centre by increasing the number of leisure and learning activities that take place there.
- Condensing building developments in the vicinity of the schools to provide new, easy-to-manage facilities that make efficient use of land.

**2. PARK:** Delivering improvements that celebrate Huntly Castle and enhance its surrounding environment of parkland for the benefit of nature and people.

Development principles:

- Improving the quality and range of park facilities available along the Avenue corridor, while recognising its historic importance and link with Huntly Castle.
- Investing in outdoor sporting facilities to directly support participation, development and performance.
- Making sensitive interventions that accommodate nature and human activity side-by-side.

**3. ACCESS:** Making it possible for people to get around the area in sustainable ways that respect its historic and natural settings.

Development principles:

- Adapting how people travel to, from and around the campus.
- Making walking and cycling a safe and accessible option for all.



# Map of Proposals































































# How each project can contribute to the ambition for Huntly's Campus

Campus Ambitions	Projects										
		The Square	Community, Leisure and Wellbeing Centre	Christie Park Synthetic Pitch	School Upgrades	Cricket Club Improvements	Activities Hub	Community Orchard and Meadow	Outdoor Classrooms	Outdoor Gym	Woodland Rewilding
Schools that inspire children and our whole community to enjoy learning and succeed together.											
Peaceful parkland that is a haven for nature and wildlife.											
A town centre that welcomes people and gives them a reason to stay.											
Spaces that can be a platform for Huntly's culture and creativity.											
Sporting facilities that support individuals to lead healthy lives, achieve greater enjoyment, develop skills and achieve higher performance.											
Public buildings and places that are accessible to all.											
Visitors all year round.											
Places where people of all ages can learn.											
Flexible buildings that make efficient use of resources.											
New revenue generating opportunities for local businesses and groups.											
Provide opportunities for employment or self-starting enterprises.											
Making use of natural resources to achieve carbon-negative performance across the campus.											



## Campus Ambitions

Projects	Roller-Ski & Cycling Routes	Larger Sports Pavilion	Bus Drop Off	Improved Pitches and Running Track	Expanded Nordic Outdoor Centre	Cooper Park Adventure Play	Path Improvements	Town Shuttle Bus Service	Changing Travel Patterns	Arrival Threshold Points
Schools that inspire children and our whole community to enjoy learning and succeed together.										
Peaceful parkland that is a haven for nature and wildlife.										
A town centre that welcomes people and gives them a reason to stay.										
Spaces that can be a platform for Huntly's culture and creativity.										
Sporting facilities that support individuals to lead healthy lives, achieve greater enjoyment, develop skills and achieve higher performance.										
Public buildings and places that are accessible to all.										
Visitors all year round.										
Places where people of all ages can learn.										
Flexible buildings that make efficient use of resources.										
New revenue generating opportunities for local businesses and groups.										
Provide opportunities for employment or self-starting enterprises.										
Making use of natural resources to achieve carbon-negative performance across the campus.										

# Impact of Coronavirus



Collation of the Campus Plan was concluding when the initial coronavirus public health measures were introduced. Normal life in Huntly and District - as elsewhere - was upended, and the finalisation of the plan delayed. However, the profound changes in daily life for individuals - and the community as a whole - have brought a new appreciation of the quality of life that Huntly enjoys and the benefits afforded by having so much open greenspace on the town's doorstep.

Moving forward through recovery, there is recognition of an even greater need for:

- outdoor learning and recreation spaces;
- routes for safe walking, cycling and wheeling;
- improvements that make the outdoors accessible for all;
- meeting the changing demand for facilities from people living locally (for example, through increased home working);
- giving visitors reasons (and confidence) to visit the area safely;
- organisations to be working in partnership together; and
- capital investment to support the local economy.

The effort the community has put in over the last few years to consider how its future could be different—the Room to Thrive strategy, and this Community-Led Place Plan—puts Huntly in a good position to ‘build back better’. The projects contained within this plan create opportunities for asset-based community development with an increased focus on community wealth-building. This will result in more and better jobs and greater opportunities for training, personal development and volunteering. Ultimately, if we grasp this opportunity we can fundamentally improve the quality of life of the people of Huntly and District.

# HUB



# 1. The Square

Making it a key in-town destination for leisure and learning.

## Key partners

Huntly Community Council, Huntly & District Development Trust, Deveron Projects, Aberdeenshire Council, Huntly Business Association, local businesses

## Timescale

Ongoing, multi-year



The Square is the traditional heart of Huntly and the surrounding district. Over the years, with the demise of many independent businesses, banks and other service providers the space has in many ways lost its function as a ‘space for people’. It is now largely a car park and circulation space for traffic, with little or no greenery and little to attract or retain visitors. It is no surprise that creating a “town centre that belongs to us” forms one of the key Room to Thrive themes.

Virtually everyone who has participated in development of this plan has recognised that in some way or another that the Square must offer much more than it currently does, especially for ‘free time’ leisure or recreational uses. The Square can and needs to be the start and end point for the combined package of proposals across the campus area. Borrowing from the town’s motto (and song), the town offers plenty of ‘Room to Roam’ to partake in different activities, but there also needs to be ‘a home’ for them.

Improved public space in The Square can provide breathing space that invites people to stay, and signpost to other town destinations. As ways of living,



accessing services and shopping have changed, so should The Square. It could offer somewhere to... watch a film, work, stay overnight, meet friends, grab a coffee, do an evening class, sit down for lunch, withdraw some cash, go out for a meal, put on an exhibition, buy local produce, buy a book, learn something new, relax and read. What is important is for The Square is that each of those functions are interdependent; e.g. you can pop across the square for a coffee, then two doors down buy a new book and pick up a birthday gift, and cross to another space to shelter from the rain and eat your lunch.

Work to improve the offer of the Square has already started. Huntly and District Development Trust has concluded refurbishment of the former RBS building and the tenants, Orbs Community Bookshop, took occupancy this month. Further, after taking ownership of the extensive former Cruickshanks department store, HDDT has recently secured significant funds to deliver advanced plans for its redevelopment into a multi-use space. Deveron Projects has taken ownership of the former Square Deal. Its redevelopment is in progress. These investments not only aim to upgrade individual buildings but also encourage others to view Huntly as a viable place to do business.

## 2. Community, Leisure and Wellbeing Centre

Providing modern and coordinated facilities for a variety of leisure uses.

**Key partners** Live Life Aberdeenshire, Aberdeenshire Council, Huntly Rifle Club, groups based at the Linden Centre, Huntly Football Club, Huntly Community Sports Trust, Huntly & District Development Trust

**Timescale** 2½ years

**Indicative Cost** £6-9 million



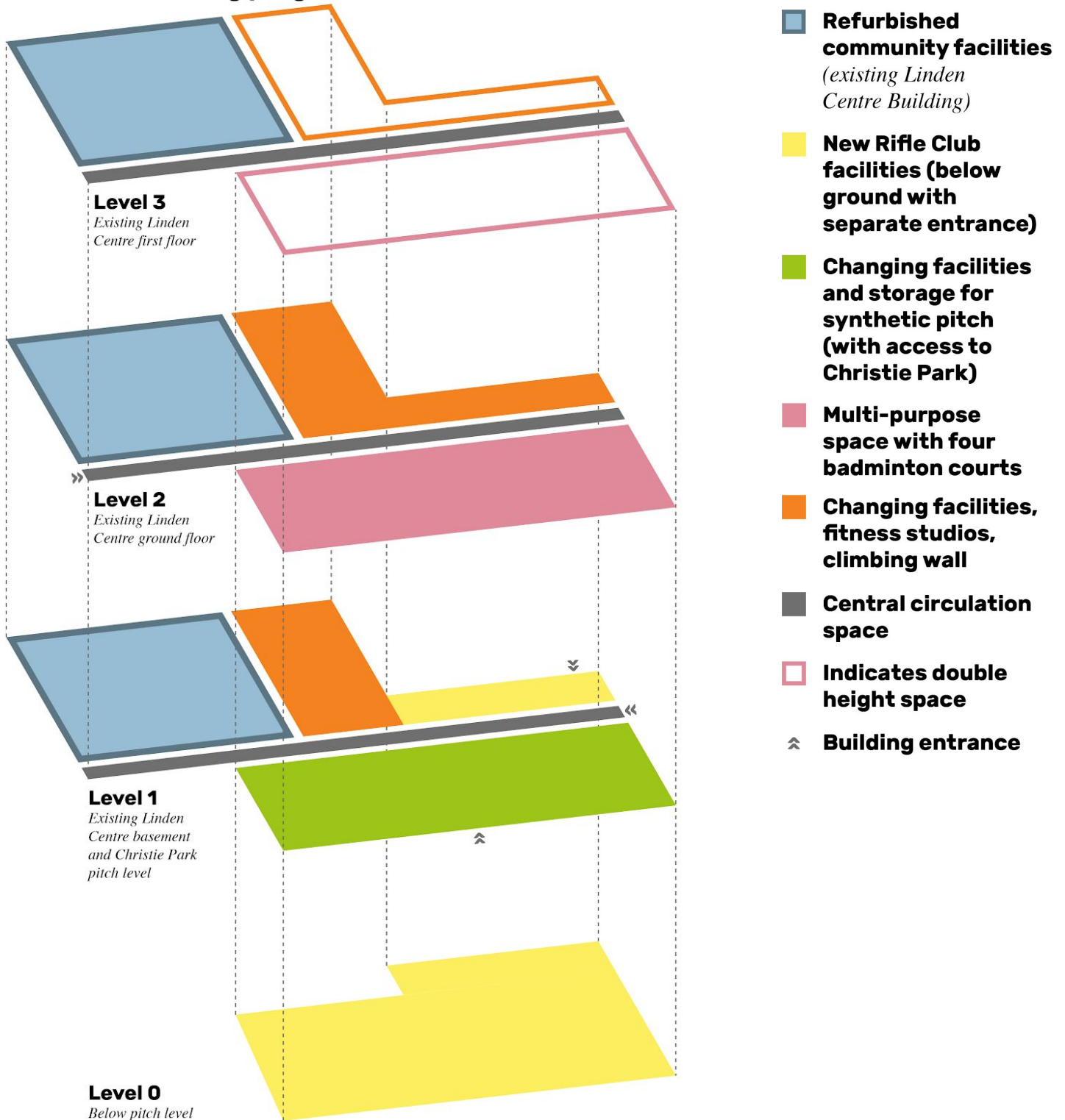
There is a market demand in Huntly for more indoor sports hall space. Plans developed previously for a new building on the current all weather pitch cannot proceed due to planning restrictions on development within the floodplain. This sets a challenge of where such a sizeable building can be accommodated so that it can be accessed conveniently by the schools but doesn't restrict their proposed redevelopment (see project 5 below).

The area around the Linden Centre and Swimming Pool could be used differently to provide a new hub building for community, leisure and wellbeing uses. Within one footprint the complex could involve:

- renovation of the Linden Centre to provide improved spaces for community, arts, culture and small-scale leisure use (e.g. yoga, indoor bowling, etc);
- new expanded facilities purpose-designed and built for Huntly Rifle Club;
- creation of a large sports hall (four badminton-court in size), changing facilities, climbing wall and soft-play;
- integration with the existing swimming pool or provision of a new one with spa facilities.

Combining many uses (beyond sport and physical activity) will encourage a variety of footfall and enhance operational viability. The Centre’s proximity to Christie Park is an opportunity to provide changing rooms and storage for the proposed synthetic pitch (project 3), with enhanced social club facilities and a view of the pitch.

### Indicative building programme



*‘Not everyone likes the same things, so it would be great to have a building where sports and arts or music can all happen in the same place, so me and my brother can be dropped off at the same time but go do different things.’ (Participant at workshop with Huntly Guides)*

The greatest design challenge with the project would be in accommodating sufficient access and parking for facilities that, even with measures to encourage walking and cycling, will generate more car traffic. Potential solutions include creating parking under the building and/or the Christie Park (synthetic) pitch, introducing a second level on the East Park Street car park or making better use of the secondary school grounds to accommodate 'park and stride' to the facility (for those that can).



*Indicative layout at first floor level*

## Precedent

*An extension to Notre Dame Primary School made use of vertical stacking of facilities alongside the historical school to create one coherent and accessible building. Works also included refurbishment of the original building, increasing its sustainability and energy efficiency, and reducing running costs. While the building use here is different, the Linden Centre's original use as a Primary School shows a good example of seamlessly combining old and new. (Glasgow City Council & Hoskins Architects)*

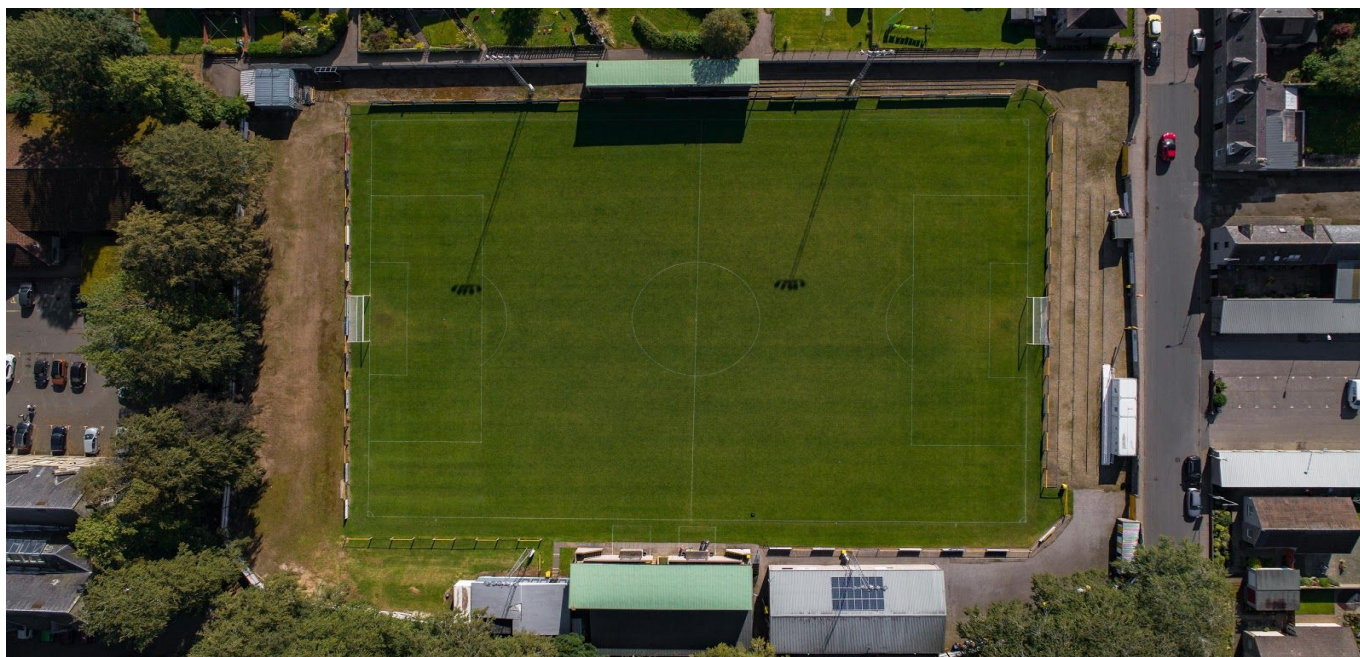




### 3. Christie Park Synthetic Pitch

Creating a resilient playing surface serving more people, more often

<b>Key partners</b>	Huntly Football Club, Huntly Community Sports Trust, Huntly Sports Trust, User Groups, Aberdeenshire Council, Huntly & District Development Trust
<b>Timescale</b>	18 months
<b>Indicative Cost</b>	£450k



The natural grass pitch at Christie Park, home to Highland League Club Huntly FC, can only be used once or twice a week on average. Changing to a synthetic surface would not only provide a more resilient surface for HFC training and matches but open up the facility to a much larger number of different users far more often in a typical week than turf can. While replacing the pitch surface is in itself a relatively simple change, the project would be an integral part in unlocking an improved campus. The pitch's proximity to the schools allows it to be easily accessed for outdoor PE. Improved changing and other ancillary services/facilities for the pitch can be integrated into the community and wellbeing centre on the adjacent site (project 2). More ambitiously, creation of the new surface also offers an opportunity to provide underground parking serving the whole campus and town centre.

A key early decision is how this proposal relates to the plan to upgrade the existing Meadows all weather pitch, which is currently unusable until resurfaced. That resurfacing plan should also be considered along with projects 13, 14 & 15 *larger sports pavilion, bus drop-off and improved pitches and running track*). At whichever location such a pitch is realised (or both), robust business planning will be required to ensure proper maintenance and replacement of the surface can be funded (after around 10 years of use).

## 4. New School Nursery

Providing a modern environment for early years childcare.

**Timescale**

Opened in January 2021



*Digital 3D model of new nursery building (source: Aberdeenshire Council)*

Aberdeenshire Council has recently constructed a purpose-built nursery for Huntly, adjacent to Gordon Primary School where the Deveron Building used to stand. Nursery classes in Gordon Primary School are moving to the two-storey building to provide enhanced provision in line with the Scottish Government's policy of expanding early years childcare. The facility is the first of its kind in Aberdeenshire, and includes a sensory room, family room, GP room (for outreach services) and three classrooms which open onto a section of woodland for outdoor learning and play.



## 5. School Upgrades

Blending modern learning facilities in a historic setting.

### Key partners

Gordon Primary School, The Gordon Schools, Aberdeenshire Council, Scottish Government

### Timescale

Up to 5 years



The A-listed Simpson Building, the original part of The Gordon Schools, dates from 1839. Over the years, a number of extensions have been added, most recently with four groups of temporary buildings. The Gordon Primary School dates from the late 1960s, again with several temporary classrooms since added.

The secondary school serves a Learning Network of twelve feeder primary schools in the area and has a current roll of 662. The adjacent Gordon Primary has a roll of 425, with an additional session capacity of 80 expected in the new nursery (project 4). On current trends, Aberdeenshire Council projects that by 2024 the school roll at The Gordon Schools will increase to 812 (93% capacity of the current school buildings), and Gordon Primary will decrease to 349.

While there is a strong pride in and affection for the schools, during development of this plan the community expressed great frustration at the poor condition of several areas of both the primary and secondary schools, and their surroundings, and the number and quality of the ‘temporary buildings’ that are still in operation decades after their original construction. This strong desire to see fundamental improvements to the school estate possibly came second only to the need for action to improve the town centre. Many felt



that replacing, or at least extensively renovating, the current school buildings would greatly increase the attractiveness of Huntly as a place for people to choose to live, which in turn would support other elements of the Room to Thrive strategy.

While presenting an immediate challenge in maintaining ongoing education, in the long-term if the existing school estate were to be redeveloped there is a clear opportunity to make more efficient use of the site. Viewed together, the two schools currently take up a large footprint, but the majority of buildings are single storey; meaning moderate gains in building capacity can be made from intensifying the current inefficient usage.

The ambition for upgrades would retain key historic buildings and features but ensure that modern educational environments are created within them. The aim would be to create attractive, efficient buildings with condensed footprints, opening up opportunities to use outside space differently. A key design criteria would be that modern aesthetics and sustainable materials used in any new buildings respect the heritage environment in which they are used.

In the short-term, Aberdeenshire Council has committed to improving an internal courtyard space within The Gordon Schools. Other immediate improvements requested by the community included new equipment in the primary school playground, installing acoustic panelling in the secondary sports hall and improvements to the woodland behind the new nursery.

### Precedent

*Replacing an existing 1960s building on a condensed two-storey footprint, Oak Meadow Primary School was one of the first schools in the UK built to Passivhaus standards.*

*Delivering a more energy efficient building (with a 85% reduction in energy running costs), the design and build didn't cost any more than less sustainable construction methods would have.*

Wolverhampton City Council & Archetype





The overview of existing school footprints within the site boundaries (left) shows that around half of the buildings are single-storey. This provides opportunities to make more economical and effective use of the land available through refurbishment or redevelopment—an indicative footprint of a two-storey Primary School is shown top-centre.

The potential of the existing site could also bring flexibility in the phasing of development, and the provision of extra or different amenities (e.g. playground, sports, public gardens, growing spaces, housing). It could also provide an alternative site for the Community Leisure and Wellbeing Centre (project 2).



## 6. Cricket Club Improvements

Expanding capacity, access and quality of training facilities.

**Key partners** Huntly Cricket Club

**Timescale** 1½ years



Cricket in Huntly has a strong tradition, with the club being one of the most successful in the north of Scotland. First formed in the 19th Century, today the club has hundreds of members and active users across age groups and genders. Relatively simple improvements would make a difference to local players today, and also open up the opportunity of the club being a regional centre for training events. These improvements include adding a second changing room so two genders can play and train at once, renewing an astroturf wicket and net frames used for training. The club could also benefit from and make use of the proposed Community Leisure and Wellbeing Centre (project 2), which would be adjacent and (more ambitiously) possibly linked to it.



## 7. Activities Hub

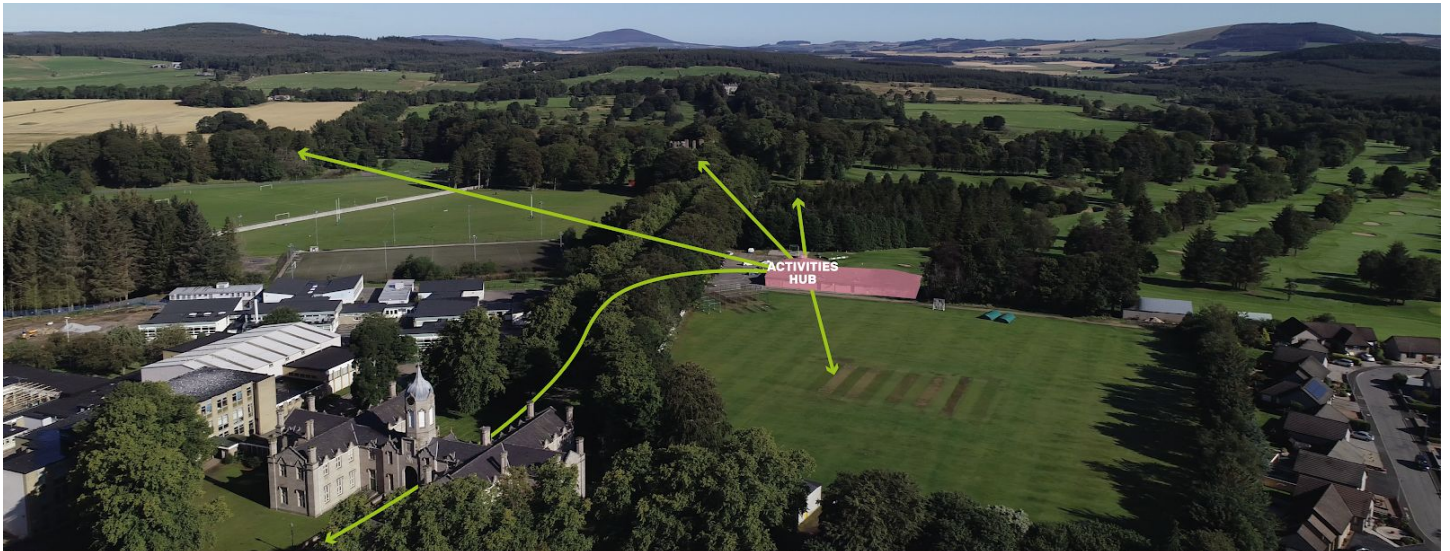
Coordinating and marketing activities available to visitors.

### Key partners

Huntly Golf Club, Huntly Nordic Outdoor Centre, Huntly Castle, Huntly & District Development Trust

### Timescale

Up to 12 months development



With an extensive range of facilities and activities available in a concentrated area of the town, there is an enterprise opportunity to market Huntly's leisure offer and coordinate bookings. As Huntly Golf Club is open daily, they are well placed to take immediate advantage of this opportunity. The key to this is viewing it as an enterprise opportunity that can sit alongside the functions the building performs for the golf club; remodelling as an activities hub for people to access the vast parkland Huntly has at its heart.

The initial changes required for this are a simple reallocation of reception services with specific marketing and management to cover booking and facilitation. Acting as a booking office for Nordic skiing, mountain bike hire, tubing, and of course golf. A managed package of activities should be widely promoted to encourage visitors and tourist spend. Early activity packages could be delivered by seasonal staff, club leaders or local freelance coordinators and expand to provide valuable jobs and training in the leisure and hospitality sector. As the market grows the commercial structure, equipment, facilities and personnel should increase within the viable capacity for locals and visitors to enjoy the wealth of improved facilities.

Another aspect is catering provision. The clubhouse already provides large event space, packaging with other facilities (e.g. Nordic Centre) additional catering concessions could be added, using the golf club as a base.

# PARK



## 8. Community Orchard and Meadow

Creating new wild habitats through less intensive land management.

**Key partners** Huntly Climate Action, Community Orchard Group, Aberdeenshire Council

**Timescale** 2½ years



As part of a process known as rewilding, a habitat mosaic of orchard, meadow, scrub, tree group and wetland can be created, in what is currently a relatively dormant space. This can be done through making use of organic and less intensive land management practices. It would provide a different landscape to explore and learn. Alongside a natural evolution of this large space, unique items of interest can be introduced, including interpretation of the habitats and wildlife, natural play items or public art. It can also sit well alongside recreational uses, such as roller-skiing and cycling routes, and with minimal intervention could host cyclocross training and events.

While this proposal can sound like a radical transformation, in practice it is just an extension of existing small-scale practices, such as the community orchard, existing cycle and walking routes and a recent installation alongside the river by Clemens Wilhelm (commissioned by Deveron Projects).







## 9. Outdoor Classrooms

Making learning settings directly in the natural environment.

**Key partners** Gordon Primary School, The Gordon Schools

**Timescale** 9 months

**Indicative Cost** £10k



There is a desire to create spaces that can be used for people to learn about natural habitats and the wildlife on our doorstep. These could be used by schools or non-school groups alike. Within the Meadow plantation are opportunities to explore wetland life, mature woodlands and the habitat's insects and wildlife (including roe deer and red squirrels). Tying in with the existing community sensory garden and orchard in the Meadows area, and the ambition of rewilding, there is a unique opportunity to learn how this land has been shaped by the people of Huntly over time - from uncultivated floodplain centuries ago, to farmland, public space, places to live, and then a 'rewilded' meadow. These outdoor classrooms could include huts providing shelter, building on what the community has already done in the local area, for example on the Battlehill.



## 10. Outdoor Gym

Encouraging people to participate in a different form of exercise.

**Key partner** Live Life Aberdeenshire

**Timescale** 9 months

**Indicative Cost** £13k (based on 5 pieces of equipment)



*Visualisation of outdoor gym*

Providing equipment for people to do some moderate-intensity exercise for free, and in the fresh air is well established in many towns and cities. In Huntly, a site off Deveron Road has been suggested as a key anchor location being close to where people live, with other equipment spread along the path network to the river allowing people to combine a walking/jogging route with a circuit exercise routine.



## 11. Woodland Rewilding

Progressively restoring native woodland species and environments.

### Key partners

Aberdeenshire Council, Forestry and Land Scotland

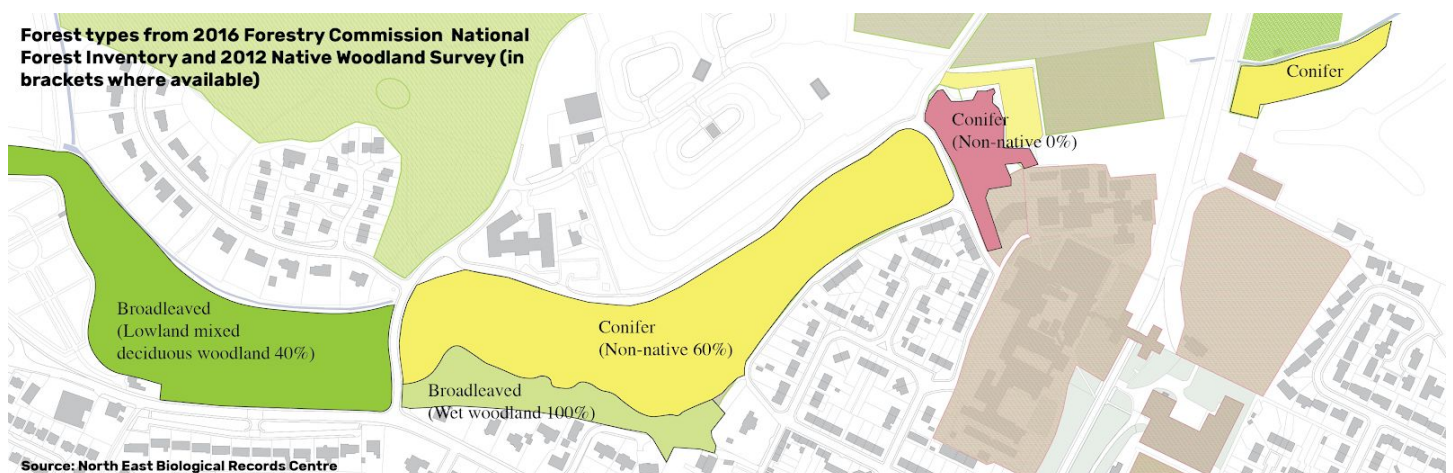
### Timescale

Up to 10 years



*Looking south onto the Meadow Plantation woodlands*

This project would, in effect, be a continuation of what has already happened around the town's former skating pond. There are clusters of non-native woodland (at Cooper Park, north of the new nursery, and eastern parts of the Meadow plantation) that could benefit from rewilding to make a greater contribution to the wider ecology of the town.





## 12. Roller-Ski and Cycling Training Routes

Creating more challenging training surfaces for roller-skiing and cycling performance development.

<b>Key partners</b>	Huntly Nordic Ski Club, Snowsport Scotland, Scottish Cycling, Aberdeenshire Council, Huntly Cyclists, Huntly & District Development Trust
<b>Timescale</b>	18 months
<b>Indicative Cost</b>	£50-200k



*Roller-skiing in action<sup>1</sup>*

Huntly has a proven performance record in developing Olympic standard Nordic skiers. For cycling, a lack of appropriate facilities has held back the possibility of similar sport development. While Nordic ski and cycling are very different disciplines (not least in terms of the environments in which competitions take place), there is crossover in the type of training and body conditioning required, and the facilities needed to support this. Both sports would benefit from some

---

<sup>1</sup> Photograph source: Huntly Nordic Ski Club (<https://www.nordicski.co.uk/>)

relatively simple interventions that would open up new training routes and development opportunities. For Nordic ski (through roller-skiing) this will allow for more demanding, more realistic year-round training opportunities. For cycling, this would create consistent and continuous routes to safely help existing cyclists develop their skills and bring others into the sport for the first time.

The first intervention proposed is to connect the Deveron riverside paths at the Huntly Nordic and Outdoor Centre to the A920 road to Glass, via the existing A96 underpass. This would involve upgrading the existing unsurfaced trail path along the north-west boundary of the 'old' graveyard and the proposed West Loop path (part of project 18) to create a surfaced link. Upgrading will open-up a long distance route towards the Clashindarroch Forest - used for winter training by Huntly Nordic Ski Club.

The second intervention would take advantage of gradient changes in the Meadow Plantation, weaving a route through the woodland to create a training setting closely related to competition environments. Introducing new loops or curves that are more challenging than the current relatively flat loops that exist around the Nordic Outdoor Centre are much needed:

*'New training routes are needed as these would allow for more challenging interval training programmes to be developed, which in turn should see improvements in personal sporting performance.'*

Co-Design participant

The third intervention would upgrade existing paths to connect both of these to the existing loops at the Nordic Outdoor Centre, creating a comprehensive network of routes that can be used by all disciplines and abilities in different ways.

It must be noted that to be effective for roller skiing, specialist tarmac surfaces must be used and the possibility of making closed loops for training events or competitions factored into layouts. These appear compatible with the needs of cycling development programmes.

The expanded network will have wider benefits. It will allow more sporting events and competitions to take place in Huntly. These include closed-road circuit events for either roller-skiing or cycling within the campus area and beyond Huntly itself. The roller skiing/cycling routes would also present opportunities for developing participation and performance in other sports and activities (e.g. rugby or football) as part of wider fitness programmes. Finally, and importantly, they will provide a safe route for children and adults to learn how to cycle and to get around Huntly confidently.



## 13. Larger Sports Pavilion

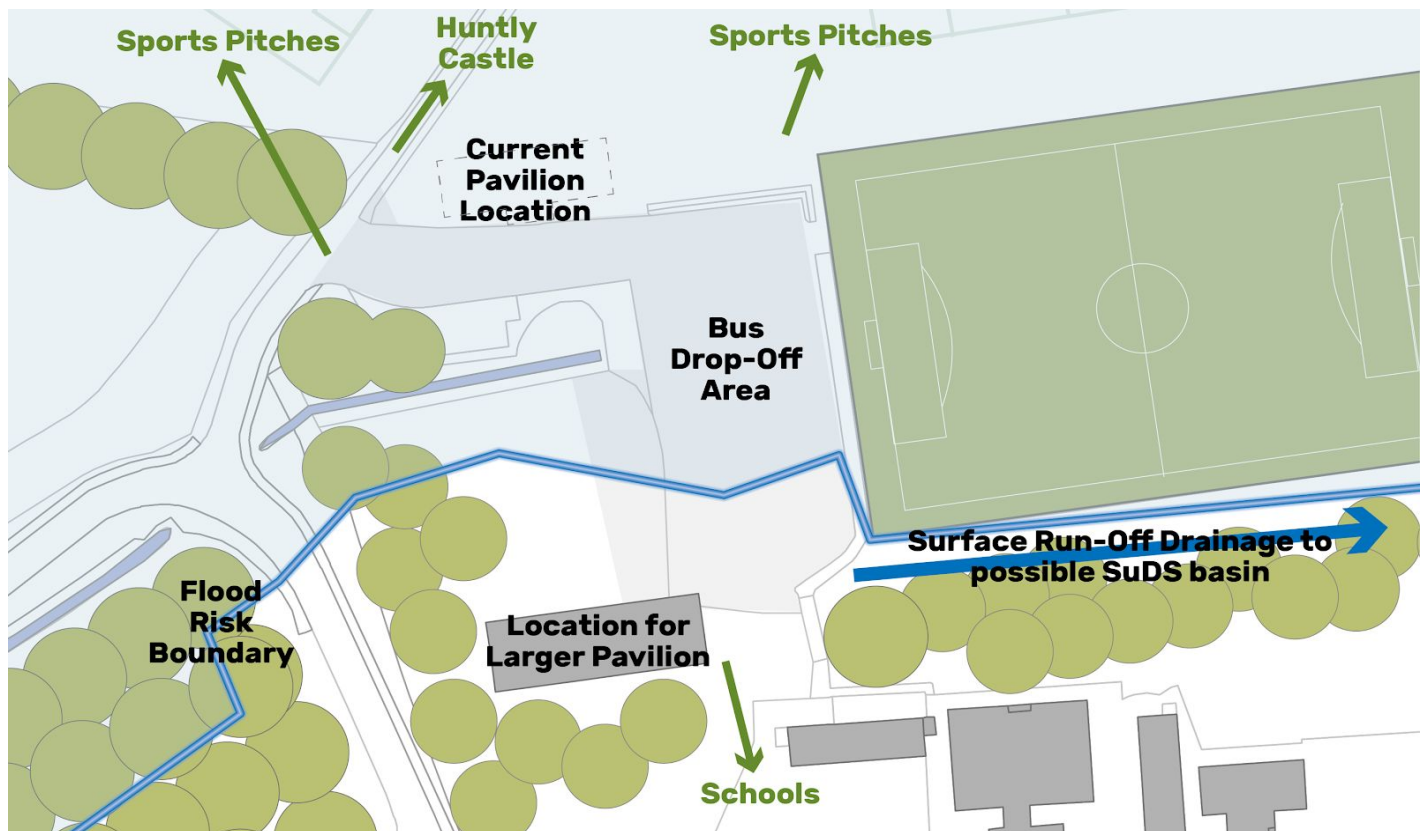
Providing additional capacity for growing sports groups.

### Key partners

Huntly Sports Trust, The Gordon Schools, Gordon Primary School, Aberdeenshire Council, Live Life Aberdeenshire, User Groups

### Timescale

18 months



The single storey sports pavilion close to the all weather pitch frequently operates at capacity, and there is ever-increasing demand from groups using nearby pitches. Pavilion expansion would support activity by providing additional equipment storage, changing facilities, toilets and social facilities. The latter could help provide a sustainable business case for operating the facility and provide funds for future replacement of the all weather surface. Increased capacity would also facilitate changing for PE by schoolchildren.

Planning restrictions on building in the floodplain prevent simple extension of the pavilion footprint. One option for expansion is to add a second floor to the existing building. Structural investigations are needed to determine whether this is feasible. Alternatively, a larger pavilion could be accommodated south of its current site, outwith the floodplain, but still adjacent to the pitches. This could potentially be designed as an 'earthship' built into the hillside overlooking the playing fields.

## 14. Bus Drop Off

Accommodating bus and coaches for school, sports and visitors in one location within walking distance of several destinations.

**Key partner** Aberdeenshire Council, Huntly Sports Trust

**Timescale** 18 months

**Indicative Cost** £200-600k (subject to design and size)



A long-standing issue for Huntly is the danger and disruption caused by school buses passing through the town centre several times a day. This adds to congestion and discourages walking and cycling to school. Creating a new bus park at the all weather pitch and re-routing the buses could tackle this problem and free up the current school bus park for future development (project 5). The adapted parking provision would create space for school buses and visiting coaches (whether teams using sports pitches or visitor groups looking to access nearby Huntly Castle). Link paths from the bus park to the new nursery, primary and secondary schools would make this a mini-hub within the wider campus.





## 15. Improved Pitches and Running Track

Excellent and resilient sports surfaces serving more people, more often.

**Key partners** Live Life Aberdeenshire, Huntly Sports Trust, User Groups, Huntly Community Sports Trust

**Timescale** Up to five years

**Indicative Cost** £22k per pitch, exc resurfacing of all weather pitch



The north of Huntly has large areas of grass containing numerous sports pitches of varying quality, with pitch marking changing through the (sporting) seasons. It is also home to the town's all weather pitch, which is currently unusable until resurfaced. There is high demand for all pitches by different sports clubs, as well as both schools. The recent Outdoor Facilities Network Plan (OFNP) developed by Live Life Aberdeenshire found that Huntly has the lowest per population provision for outdoor sport across Aberdeenshire.

Improvements to pitches within the campus area can make a real difference in supporting participation and development in sport, whether through schools or local clubs. The focus of work, according to both the OFNP and community contributors to this plan, should be to reinstate drainage and (where required) reseed grass to ensure the best playing surface possible. Through these works, layout changes can improve capacity and provide a permanent running track (currently seasonal), with the ambition of providing an all-weather track if/when the current all weather pitch is resurfaced. A key decision is how that resurfacing proposal relates to the planned Christie Park synthetic pitch (project 3).



## 16. Expanded Huntly Nordic & Outdoor Centre

Creating a unique visitor attraction from a national facility.

**Key partners** Huntly Nordic Ski Club, Live Life Aberdeenshire, Snowsport Scotland, Scottish Cycling, Huntly Cyclists

**Timescale** 2½ years

**Indicative Cost** £450k-675k



The current Huntly Nordic and Outdoor Centre (HNOC) is a truly unique facility of Huntly, and is recognised as a key national venue for Nordic skiing. However, at present it is somewhat hidden and even locals are unsure of how welcome they are within it. There is a challenge and opportunity to increase the provision of the facility helping cement its place as both **the** national centre for Nordic skiing and a place to access equipment and training in other outdoor sports, including cycling. This would attract more people to visit, use it and take part in outdoor sport and activities, with wider spin-off for Huntly and District.



The Campus Plan proposal is to make HNOC a landmark building to improve its visibility and provide an intriguing lookout through the trees to the river, castle, woodland, meadows and hills that surround Huntly. The expanded and refurbished building, would host enhanced provision for Nordic skiing, cycling and other outdoor sports through spaces suitable for coaching (personal, team or leadership) and specialist indoor training equipment. Reframing the visitor offer to include an upper floor cafe and provision of a greater range and visibility of activities will give people more reason to visit the HNOC and its activities.

HNOC is, of course, not just the building itself, but the facilities around it. The existing dry ski slope needs to be improved. A pump track for cyclists could be created on or adjacent to the existing skate ramp facilities, with the possibility of a natural pump track on Hill of Haugh itself. A BMX facility could be created to the West on the West Loop Path (see project 18). Those improved paths would link HNOC to the improved roller skiing and cycling training routes (Project 12).

HNOC is a five minute walk from Huntly Castle Caravan Park (HCCP), which welcomes thousands of visitors annually. Huge potential synergy exists between the two facilities. The visitors should be an ideal market for the HNOC. In turn, HNOC activities/events could bring additional visitors to the HCCP. With the agreement of the HCCP, its Bogie Dragon building could be put to use during competitions or events, or even as a full-time specialist training facility.

All of the above aligns with Live Live Aberdeenshire's Outdoor Facilities Network Plan for Huntly which includes the stated aim to invest in the HNOC to broaden its range of service offering and links with other facilities. Importantly, the elevated position of the HNOC and the path access along the flood defence bund means that in planning terms the site is more suitable for development than other parts of the Meadows area as it is less likely to be flooded.



*Existing Huntly Nordic & Outdoor Centre with the current skatepark on the right.*

## 17. Cooper Park Adventure Play

Transforming the park in the shadow of Huntly Castle into a destination

**Key partners** Historic Environment Scotland, Live Life Aberdeenshire

**Timescale** 2½ months

**Indicative Cost** £25-75k

In its heyday, Cooper Park was a ‘must-visit’ destination for locals and visitors. Over time, it has lost that attraction but with the investment that maximises its setting adjacent to Huntly Castle, it has the potential to regain its former status.

The park currently hosts a mix of play equipment, three hardcourt tennis courts, a concrete basketball/football court and a pavilion. There is also a large section of open grassland.

Multiple options exist for upgrading the facility. These include transforming the former skatepark, a patchwork surface of tarmac and concrete into a new cycling pump track or BMX area. The grassy open areas could host more inventive play equipment, mazes or even, as in the past, putting greens and crazy golf. All of these would make Huntly and the Castle stand out as a rounded destination for families.

Sitting alongside the Castle’s visitor facilities, ways to breathe new life into the Cooper Park pavilion should be explored, e.g. as a space to serve the park visitors, for youth club and/or nursery provision, storage or as a club meeting/training room. Improving the link between Huntly Golf Club’s clubhouse and the lower park (which was once seamless, as shown in the inset photograph from 1950<sup>2</sup>) would mean that public facilities (toilets and refreshments) improve the visitor offer. This would also better serve the existing tennis courts.

### Precedent

*Drapers Field park introduced a large number of subtle playful features in a relatively small space, alongside existing sports facilities. The overall layout does not segmentise spaces and activities but allows play to flow over a ranging landscape by different ages, abilities and interests.*

Waltham Forest Council & KLA



<sup>2</sup> Photograph source: <https://canmore.org.uk/collection/1269759> © HES (Aerofilms Collection)



# ACCESS

## 18. Path Improvements

Expanding the variety and increasing the accessibility of paths for all.

**Key partners** Aberdeenshire Council, Huntly & District Development Trust, Scottish Cycling, Snowsport Scotland, Huntly Community Council

**Timescale** Up to 6 years

**Indicative Costs** Promenade Paths: £270k  
West Loop: £570k  
East Loop: £720k  
Bespoke seating: £900 per location



The Campus Plan area hosts several paths that are well used, particularly by dog walkers. However, route options are limited and path surfaces are of varying quality. Improving the quality of existing paths and adding route options will make walking, cycling and wheeling more attractive and accessible for all, and create regular activity that makes the large campus area feel alive.

Striking a balance between improving accessibility and maintaining natural environments, three key phases of path development are proposed — promenade paths, a West loop and an East loop. Alongside each, there is a need to introduce signage for way-finding and interpretation to share the currently untold stories of the place and create opportunities to sit or rest along the way. These in-town path proposals complement ongoing work to improve the wider AB54 path network.



## Promenade Paths



Promenade paths would be introduced along the edges of the area's playing fields. With seating, they will become social spaces for spectators when sport is being played, as is often the case in this part of Huntly. These would also be excellent safe places for children to play and learn to cycle. Introducing edible plants and hedgerows to soften the boundaries of turfed areas would also in turn support nature and wildlife.



## West Loop



The proposed West Loop project would tarmac a 700m gap in the path along the new River Deveron flood bund and result in a fully accessible circular route west along the river from the HNOC, through the Meadow Plantation and back to the town centre. It would allow much improved access for wheelchair users, buggies and prams and be a vital part of the proposed roller-skiing/cycling training routes (project 12). Items of interest could be added along the way, including public artworks and natural play items e.g. boulders.

## East Loop



The East Loop would be a less intensive development, increasing accessibility slowly over time. It would require the creation of safe access near the Elgin Bridge beside Huntly Castle and a route along the edge of the golf course to the gorgeous ‘meeting of the waters’. The loop would then continue south alongside the River Bogie and connect back into town. Respecting its setting, surface upgrades that improve access should only use natural materials to do so.



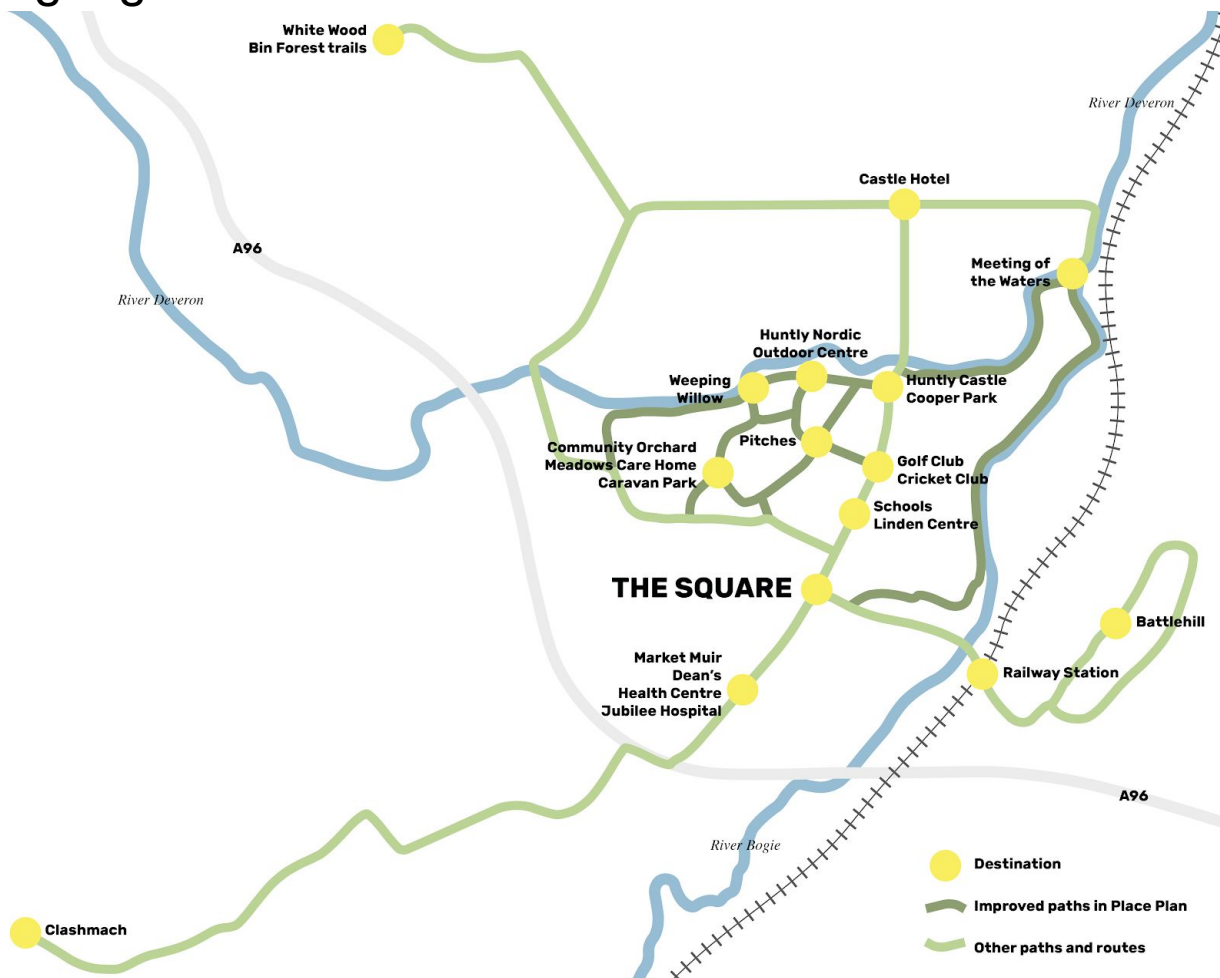
## Precedent

*Cuningar Loop is a new woodland park on a meander of the River Clyde between Dalmarnock and Rutherglen. A boardwalk has opened a route along the riverbank that would otherwise be inaccessible to most, while limiting the impact of infrastructure on surrounding nature.*

Forestry & Land Scotland



## Signage Network



The network of paths within the campus area connect with existing path routes to destinations out of town that are easily reached within a half-day round trip e.g. Deveron Projects' White Wood, Signposting these routes and destinations will support Huntly's offering to visitors. Inclusion of interpretative elements along routes will add context, creating a sense of place.

## 19. Town Shuttle Bus Service

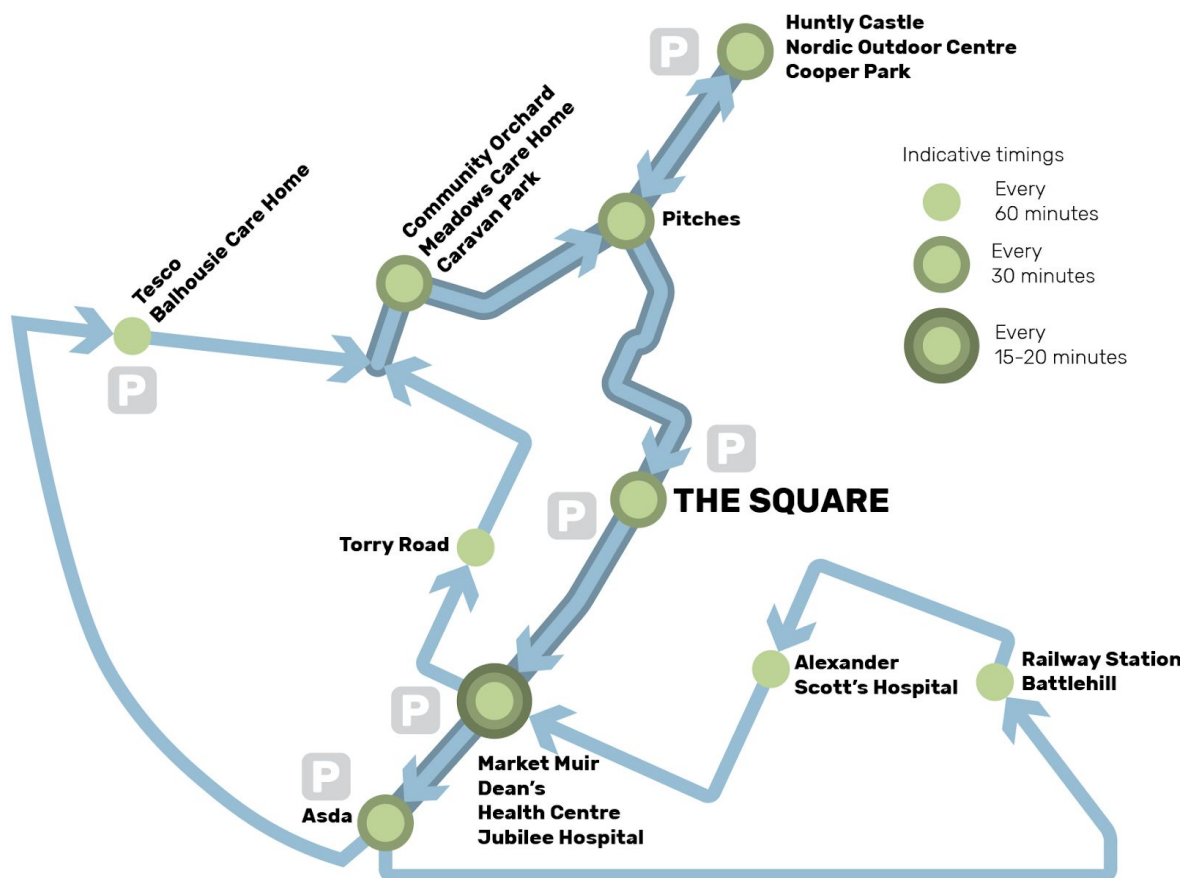
Providing zero-emission community transport around Huntly.

### Key partners

Huntly & District Development Trust, Aberdeenshire Council

### Timescale

2½ years of development



Across many of the campus proposals, transport and access is a key consideration. Giving people improved infrastructure for getting about the area by active travel means has the potential to reduce traffic in the area and avoid the need for car parking at key facilities. Another alternative to private transport would be to establish a dedicated town transport service, such as a zero-emission town shuttle bus. This would provide an opportunity for all to access the town centre, schools, sports facilities, The Meadows and Huntly Castle in a convenient, low-carbon way, supporting other green and active travel initiatives in the town.

Travelling on a fixed 'loop' around Huntly (indicative map shown above) at a frequency of every 15 to 60 minutes a level of service could be consistently provided to give users confidence. The shuttle would help reduce demand for car access and parking in the campus area itself, and spread the remaining need for parking across several sites in town as opposed to one (akin to the principle of 'Park & Ride'). The service could be a visitor attraction in itself.



## 20. Changing Travel Patterns

Encouraging active travel to, from and around the campus while enhancing the visitor heritage experience.

<b>Key partners</b>	Aberdeenshire Council, Sustrans, Huntly & District Development Trust, Heritage Environment Scotland, The Gordon Schools, Gordon Primary School
<b>Timescale</b>	4 years
<b>Indicative Cost</b>	£150k



Closing the Avenue to traffic between the War Memorial and Simpson Arch has been suggested by many to make walking routes to and from school safer and protect the Simpson Arch from further vehicular damage. This would immediately allow greater enjoyment of the natural surroundings of the Avenue and the large public space flanked by the linden trees. It would enhance the heritage experience of travelling from the town centre to the Castle and add richness to this nationally recognised historic designed landscape. Interpretation can be added to inform the community and visitors of its significance and explain why the linden trees were planted by the Gordon family as a Jacobean geopolitical gesture, and why the Simpson Building and the arch through it exist.



The closure of the Avenue to vehicles could retain emergency access to the Linden Centre area and accommodate those with mobility issues. It would improve access for pedestrians and cyclists, many of whom could be schoolchildren and their parents, especially if school buses were to be re-routed to the new bus park (project 14). The proposed town shuttle bus service (project 19) could also support access.

To retain a level of vehicle parking in the vicinity of the Avenue and Linden Centre, layouts of East Park Street car park and the south end of The Gordon Schools can be reviewed to provide sufficient capacity. The long-term cost and benefits of adding parking below the proposed synthetic pitch at Huntly Football Club (project 3) should also be investigated. As shown in the map below, for those who are able many facilities are within a 5-10 minute walk of current public car parks.



Changing access to the Avenue fits with current work (supported by Sustrans) to create safer walking, cycling and wheeling to school opportunities.



## 21. Arrival Threshold Points

Welcoming people into Huntly's parkland.

### Key partners

Huntly Community Council, Deveron Projects, Huntly Climate Action, Community Orchard Group, Aberdeenshire Council, The Gordon Schools, Gordon Primary School, Historic Environment Scotland

### Timescale

9 months

With the foregoing array of proposals that collectively make the northern parts of Huntly much more of a destination, marking a threshold of arrival is necessary. The community has suggested two sites for this, one at the beginning of the Avenue (close to Huntly's War Memorial) and the other at the start of Rowan Avenue (which is the main viewpoint when travelling down Riverside Drive).

Huntly Community Council are currently investigating designs for a permanent garden on the east and west flower beds of the Avenue, to enhance the setting of the War Memorial. This would mark the beginning of the avenue of linden trees that leads to the castle. While no specific designs are currently proposed at Rowan Avenue, an entry point to the community orchard could be created that signals the threshold of a destination.



*War Memorial at the Avenue*



*Community Orchard at Rowan Avenue*

# Delivery



The projects described above present a diverse and ambitious list of initiatives. Huntly's community-led place plan to bring about a modern campus for learning and play can, however, be encapsulated as follows:

## There is a need for improvement

For a number of years the northern parts of Huntly have been recognised as a key asset of the town, but one that in many respects has been underused, undervalued and under-promoted. Many facilities are substandard or not fit for purpose; geographical and economical barriers inhibit access to higher quality alternatives elsewhere. There is a genuine and urgent need for investment in the learning and leisure campus to support those who are most deprived. Such investment would also provide a low-carbon solution by allowing people to develop themselves close to where they live.

## There is motivated community support

Not only is there clear ambition for ongoing improvement from across the community of Huntly and District, several organisations and individuals with motivation are already doing what they can. They - and others - also want to do a lot more. While delivery of the Community-Led Place Plan must be such a collective effort, Huntly & District Development Trust has agreed (subject to securing additional resources and capacity) to support the community and other organisations take forward proposals within it. The steering group that guided the development of the Place Plan has also agreed to continue to provide guidance in advancing developments and supporting collaborations.

## There is a route-map forward

This Community-Led Place Plan offers a coordinated plan of complementary projects that can bring about significant improvements needed by the community to support its health and wellbeing, educational attainment, local enterprise, sporting performance, and wider economic regeneration.

**However, several key components are still needed in order that the community can successfully deliver the plan.**

## Partnerships

While several individuals and organisations are motivated and willing to deliver projects within the plan, to avoid duplication of resources — and ultimately create stronger outcomes — collaboration between many partners will be needed.

Echoing the form of the steering group that guided the making of this Place Plan, informal partnerships (i.e. non-constituted) should be formed around groups of projects that are related (either by geography or type). These partnerships should then meet regularly to agree strategy for taking projects forward, discussing issues and ways to create synergy between improvements. They would then link back to a broader campus group, and the wider community.

## Capacity

The scale of the Campus Plan means it cannot be delivered on volunteer effort alone. This was also identified within the Room to Thrive strategy which recommended creating town centre activators whose job it was to work with community groups to deliver priority strategy projects.

The first of those roles, a Town Centre Development Manager, achieved the following within their first two years:

- helped bring two buildings on The Square into community ownership through Huntly & District Development Trust;
- secured over £2.5m of funding to enable their renovation;
- worked with Huntly Community Council to deliver maintenance improvements in The Square's public realm; and,
- supported Huntly Business Association in development of a town app.

This example shows a clear way forward for the community if time and capacity can be created to lead and support delivery of the plan. Such development workers would help deliver projects directly, assist others and coordinate different actions across different steering groups.

## Capital

The third key component still needed is capital investment. Delivery of the plan requires investment beyond that which the community can raise alone. This is especially true given that, while rich in natural assets and community organisation, significant parts of the Huntly community face economic challenges through income, employment, or educational deprivation. Two of Huntly's datazones lie in the third most deprived of Scotland as a whole according to the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation 2020, and Huntly has the lowest household income of any main settlement in Aberdeenshire. It is therefore unrealistic to expect local investment to fund the kind of multi-million long-term investment necessary, which is summarised below. External financial support is required but the rewards will be significant.

Estimated costs for projects contained within the Place Plan			
Community, Leisure & Wellbeing Centre	£7,500,000	Improved Pitches and Running Track	£154,000
Christie Park Synthetic Pitch	£450,000	Nordic Outdoor Centre	£560,000
Outdoor Classroom	£10,000	Cooper Park Adventure Play	£50,000
Outdoor Gym	£13,000	Path Improvements	£1,580,000
Roller-Ski and Cycling Training Routes	£125,000	Changing Travel Patterns	£150,000
Bus Drop Off	£400,000	<i>Mid-estimates used for costs given with a range.</i>	
<b>Estimated Total (excluding school upgrades)</b>			<b>£10,992,000</b>

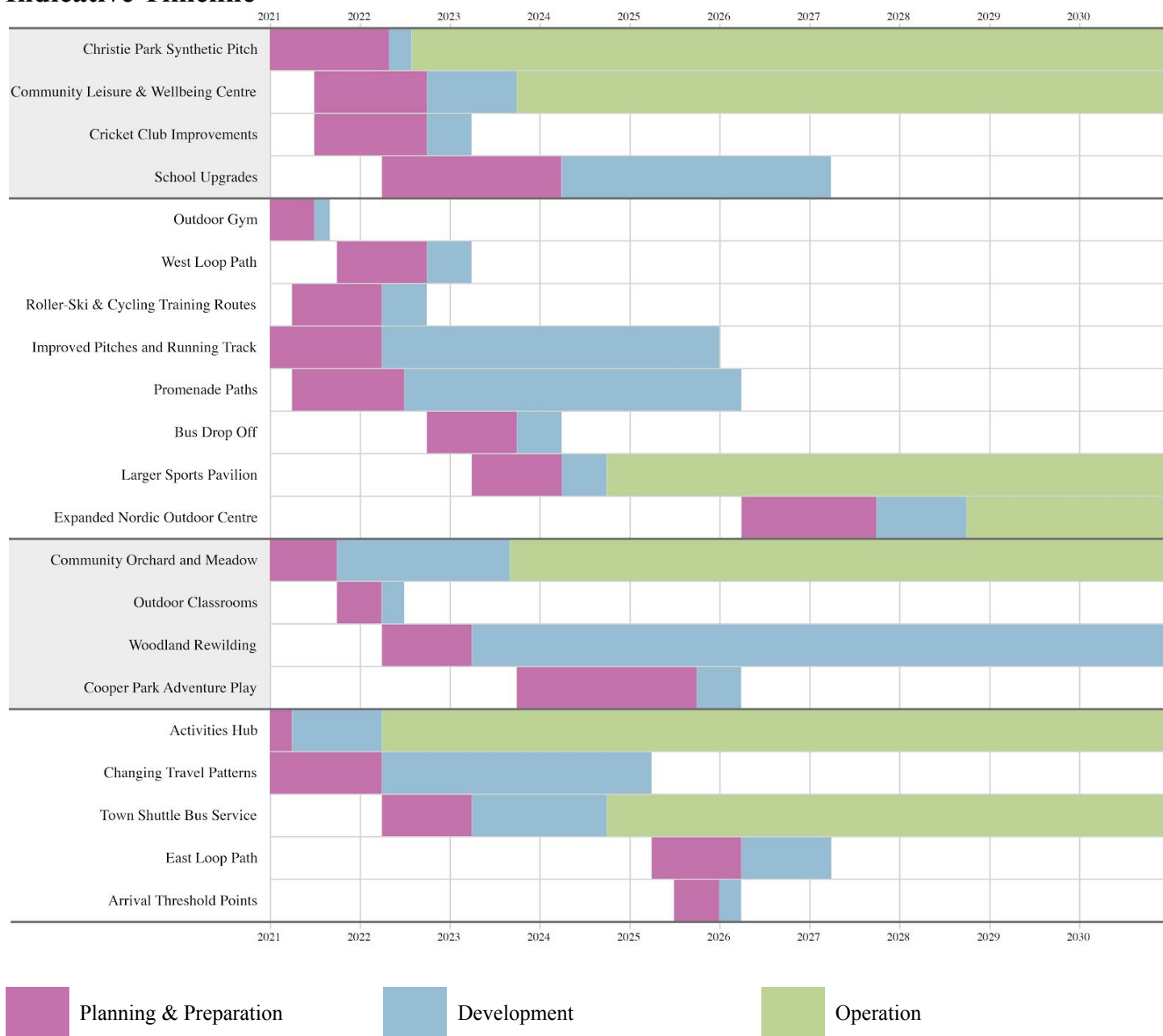


# A ten year plan

This plan is unashamedly ambitious. Our community deserves such ambition and needs it to be made real. Delivery will of course take sustained (community) effort and investment of significant levels of time and money over several years.

Using the clustering approach proposed within the partnerships below, and taking account of work already in hand, the following indicative timeline shows how the proposals could be delivered over a period of time. Seasonal operations and conservative contingencies in the preparation stage have been factored in. For flexibility, space has been allowed so that the plan can still be delivered over ten years should delays be encountered, or new opportunities arise.

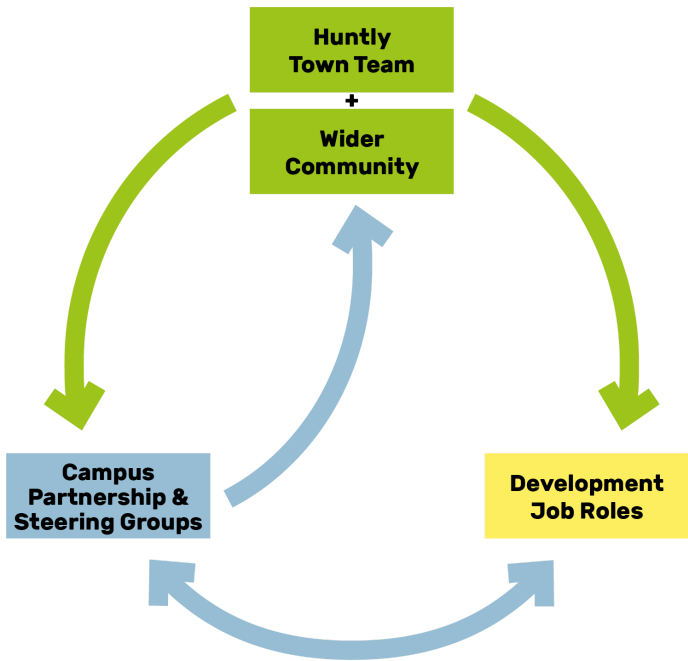
## Indicative Timeline



# Immediate next steps

The immediate next step required is for Huntly & District Development Trust to feedback the contents of the Campus Plan to the community and the various stakeholders whose input informed it, and whose collaboration will be needed to make development happen. Discussions can then follow on forming partnerships that can take forward proposals to delivery.

## Next steps for partnerships



It is important that partnerships formed do not sit in a vacuum. The wider community should be able to contribute either via local organisations on steering groups or directly with those in development job roles.

Partnership steering groups will respond to work from those in development job roles, and in turn direct future activity. The wider community will be kept updated on developments by partnership steering groups (or, where appropriate, organisations within them).

Outlined below are four proposed groupings for partnerships to be formed. Items are shaded by development theme within the Place Plan (Hub, Park, Access) and any projects where delivery could be simultaneous are linked.

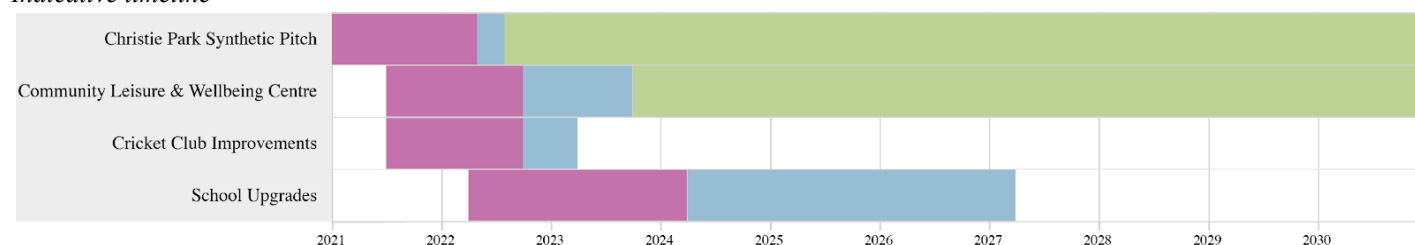
A key aspect of the partnership working will be exploring the different, complementary or innovative operating models or business plans to follow the creation of new facilities. The immediate strategic focus of the partnerships should at first be on proposals which have the potential to achieve a large impact (relatively quickly) and where the community are in a strong position to lead delivery:

- Community Orchard & Meadow
- Improved Pitches and Running Track
- Christie Park Synthetic Pitch
- Community Leisure & Wellbeing Centre
- Changing Travel Patterns
- Activities Hub
- Outdoor Gym
- Roller-Ski and Cycling Training Routes
- Promenade Paths



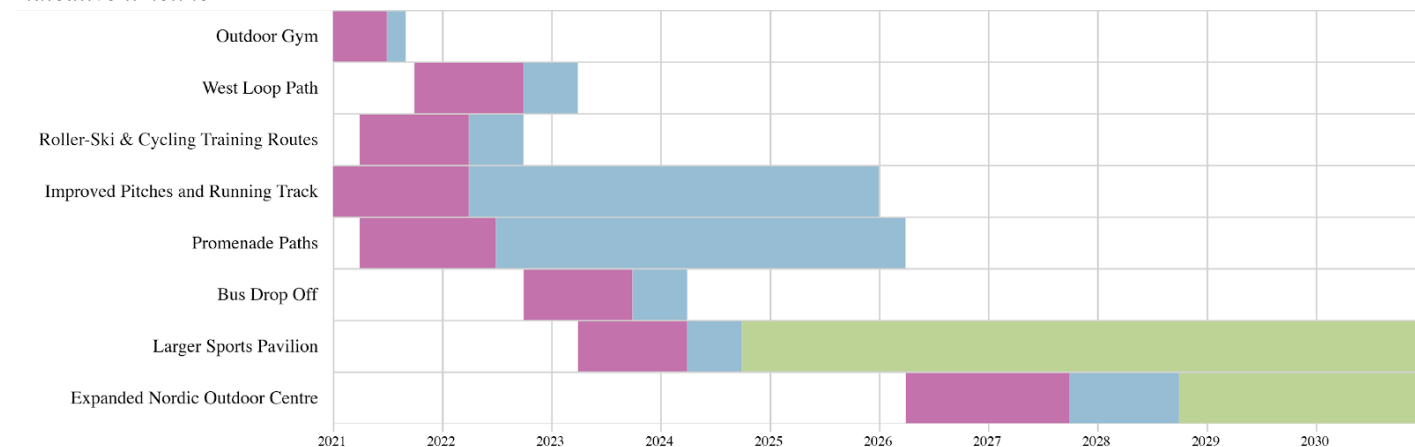
Projects within partnership steering group		Suggested Local stakeholders	Suggested regional/national stakeholders
<b>School Upgrades</b>	<b>Christie Park Synthetic Pitch</b>	Gordon Primary School Huntly Community Council Huntly Community Sports Trust Huntly Cricket Club Huntly & District Development Trust Huntly Football Club Huntly Rifle Club Huntly Sports Trust The Gordon Schools	Aberdeenshire Council Live Life Aberdeenshire Sportscotland
<b>Cricket Club Improvements</b>	<b>Community Leisure and Wellbeing Centre</b>		

#### Indicative timeline



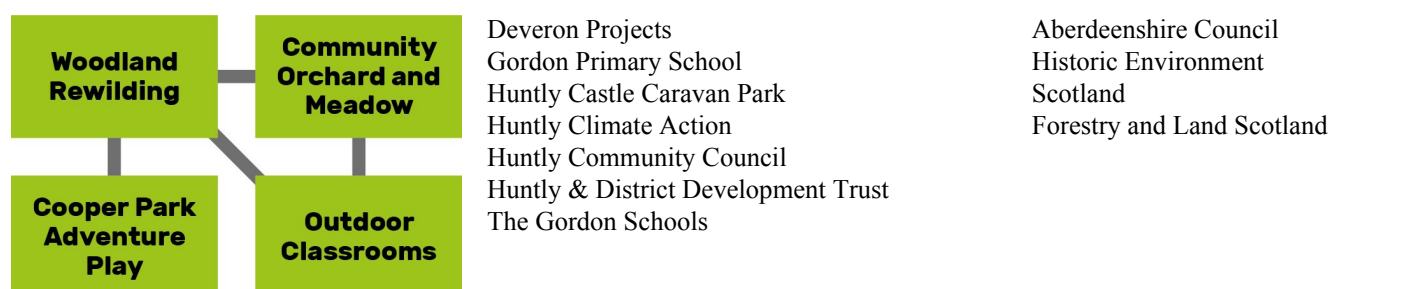
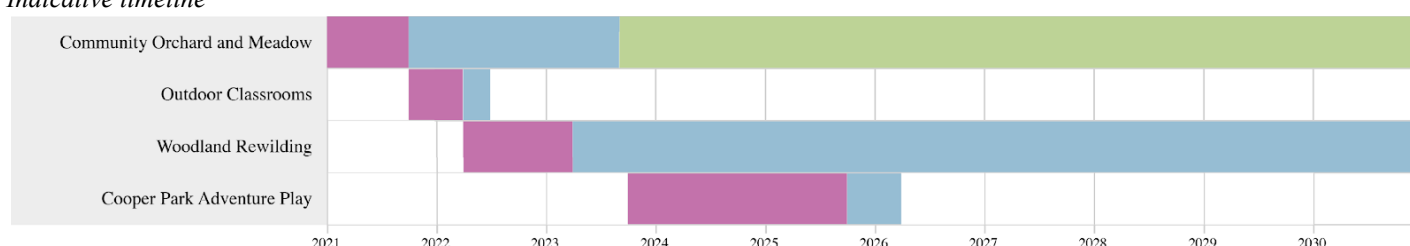
<b>Larger Sports Pavilion</b>	<b>Improved Pitches and Running Track</b>	Huntly Community Council Huntly Cyclists Huntly & District Development Trust Huntly Nordic Ski Club Huntly Rugby Football Club Huntly Sports Trust The Gordon Schools	Aberdeenshire Council Live Life Aberdeenshire Historic Environment Scotland Scottish Cycling Snowsport Scotland Sportscotland Sustrans
<b>Bus Drop Off</b>	<b>Promenade Paths</b>		
<b>Outdoor Gym</b>	<b>West Loop Path</b>		
<b>Expanded Nordic Outdoor Centre</b>	<b>Roller-Ski and Cycling Training Routes</b>		

#### Indicative timeline

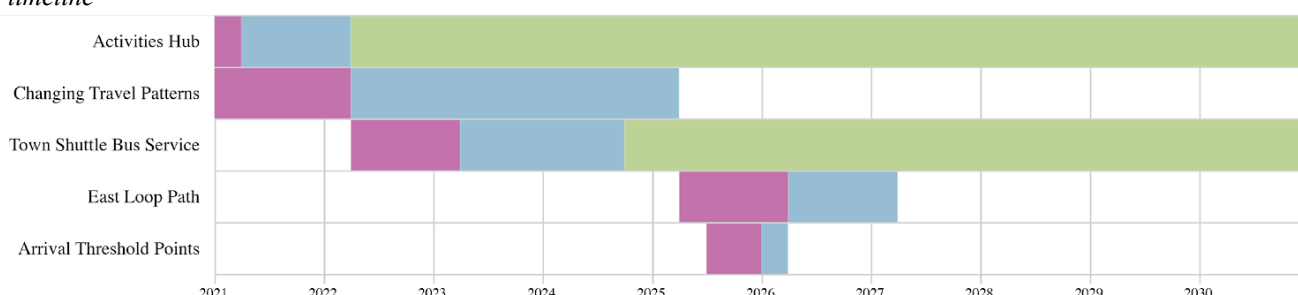




Indicative timeline



Indicative timeline



## Next steps for capacity and capital

The sooner that the community's capacity to deliver projects can be increased, the greater the impact there will be. However at this stage with no ready income generation to support such roles, external financial support (or secondments for example) will be required. The immediate next steps should be seeking out suitable sources of funding for such a role (or roles). More generally, as part of forming partnerships with regional or national organisations, the potential of linking projects with any capital investment should be explored.