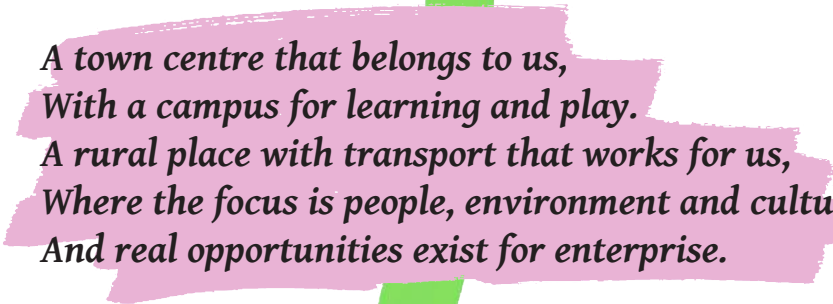






# Huntly <sup>Room to</sup> Thrive



*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.*



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January 2019



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The European Agricultural Fund  
for Rural Development:  
**Europe investing in rural areas**



**Scottish  
Government**



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It received funding from the South Aberdeenshire Local Action Group, financed by the Scottish Government and the European Community LEADER 2014-2020 programme.

# Foreword from Huntly Town Team

Huntly is at a critical juncture where radical action is required to remake the town centre for the changing 21st Century, giving it a new purpose whilst retaining its status as being at the heart of the community, in other words it has Room to Thrive. This strategy has been developed by people and organisations from across the community and sets out key development priorities between now and the year 2030.

The basis for the work began in 2017, when a diverse group of organisations came together to form the Huntly Town Team and to start looking at a process to develop a strategy for Huntly. Since then the dialogue has grown, with the people of Huntly and its district at the heart of every stage of the development of this strategy. Throughout the process of developing the Strategy we have been impressed with the strong sense of community spirit that exists within the town. This is clearly evident in the vast range of ideas, events, assets and proactive people that bring life, excitement and enterprise to the area.

As you will see across the five key themes of the Strategy, Huntly has set significant challenges for itself to meet, with the greatest being bringing new life and purpose to buildings in the town centre. The scale of the challenge means it is not for one group, individual or organisation to solve, it requires a whole town effort to recast the town. The strategy is therefore open to all to help deliver, and you will find commitments from organisations within the Huntly Town Team in this document.

Huntly has a wonderful story to tell, about the people, events and tales that has made the town as it is today and, by working together as we move forward to 2030, we can ensure that Huntly is seen as a bustling, thriving town in which people can live, work and play.

All in Huntly Town Team would like to take this opportunity to thank the many hundreds of people who have helped bring this strategy to fruition, we look forward to working with you all and new partners in its delivery.

# Context

*The Ba'Hill,  
The Battlehill,  
The Clasmach  
and The Bin*

*They a' form a circle  
and Huntly lies within*

*Local rhyme*



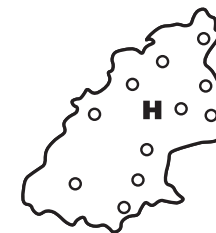
*Looking north to Huntly from Clashmach Hill*

Huntly is a small market town of almost 5000 people in the heart of north east Scotland. Largely set on a Georgian grid-iron plan it is a compact town with lots of activity—that may be missed at first glance—making it the service centre for a hinterland roughly equivalent to the AB54 postcode district. The town is bound to the north by the River Deveron and fantastic open greenspaces that sit alongside it including Huntly Castle (ancient seat of Clan Gordon). To the south is the main A96 linking Aberdeen and Inverness; the Moray Firth coastline, Cairngorms National Park, Royal Deeside, Speyside whisky trails and city of Aberdeen are all within an hour's reach of Huntly.

## Population<sup>1</sup>

**4803** people living in Huntly

**20%** under 21      **26%** over 65



**7100**  
people living  
nearby





Map of Huntly (2018)





*Ancient seat of Clan Gordon and  
birthplace of the  
Gordon Highlanders*

## Local activity

**121**

Local groups, charities and member organisations

**85**

Artworks in the Town Collection

**3**

Recent national or regional Awards:  
Creative Place 2012 & 2013  
Green Butterfly 2018

## Land use<sup>2</sup>

**2340**

Homes<sup>2</sup>

**30%**

Of town is public greenspace<sup>3</sup>

**28%**

High Street vacancy rate<sup>4</sup>

## Employment & income<sup>3</sup>

**112**

Local businesses<sup>5</sup>

**£24,381**

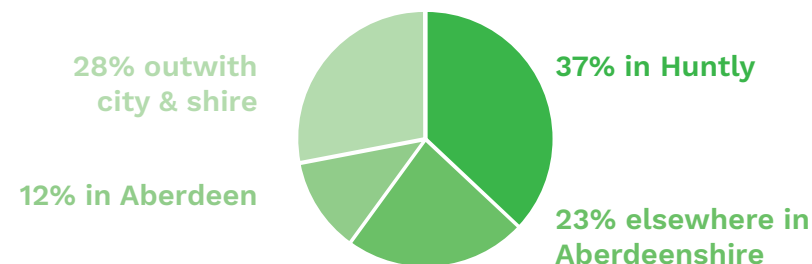
Average household income<sup>6</sup>

(One third below Aberdeenshire average)

**1.46%**

Unemployment rate<sup>7</sup>

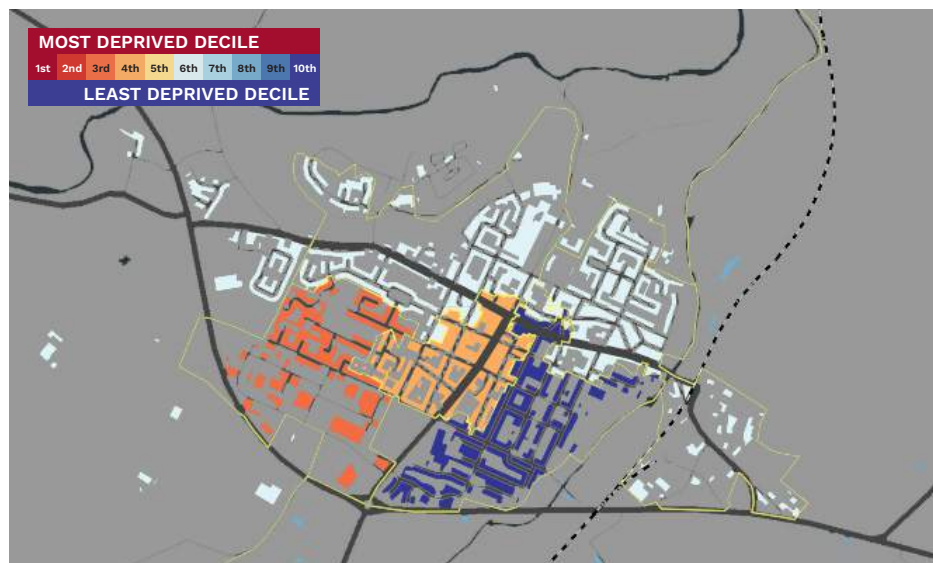
Where people work<sup>8</sup>



## The Gordon Schools leaver destinations<sup>9</sup>

2016/17	All pupils		Most deprived 30%	
	TGS	Scotland	TGS	Scotland
Employed	24%	22%	11%	21%
Further Education	30%	27%	56%	35%
Higher Education	39%	41%	11%	27%
Unemployed	4%	4%	22%	7%

## Deprivation<sup>10</sup>



*Map of Huntly's five Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation datazones (2016)*

The Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) is a tool used by the Scottish Government to identify small area concentrations of multiple indicators of deprivation across all of Scotland in a consistent way. The last publication of data was in 2016 when Huntly comprised of five data zones.

One zone (S01007012) is ranked in the 30% most overall deprived in Scotland and data zone (S01007010) is ranked in the 10% least overall deprived in Scotland. Locally four out of the five data zones in Huntly are ranked in the 30% most deprived overall areas in Aberdeenshire, with data zone S01007012 in the 5% most overall deprived areas in Aberdeenshire. The fifth zone is in the 20% least deprived.

The four lowest ranking data zones are all in the 20% most deprived areas in Aberdeenshire for income and employment, with three of these also in the 20% most deprived areas local in terms of health, education and housing. 10.9% of the population of Huntly can be described as income deprived and 5.0% as employment deprived.

4 of 10 SIMD data zones that constitute the district hinterland of the town are in the 5% most geographical access deprived decile in Scotland.

## Huntly Town Team

The Huntly Town Team was brought together in November 2016 by Aberdeenshire Council with the aim of improving communication, partnership working and project delivery within the town.

The organisations currently represented on the Huntly Town Team are:

- Aberdeenshire Health and Social Care Partnership
- Departments of Aberdeenshire Council
- Deveron Projects
- Gordon Primary School
- Gordon Primary School Parent Council
- Gordon Rural Action
- Huntly Business Association
- Huntly Community Council
- Huntly Community Sports Trust
- Huntly & District Development Trust
- Huntly & District Tourism Action Group
- Huntly Sports Trust
- Live Life Aberdeenshire
- Local Councillors
- Networks of Wellbeing
- The Gordon Schools

## Developing a town strategy

One of the main reasons for the Huntly Town Team forming were concerns, both in the community and at Aberdeenshire Council, around the health of the town centre. In recent years a number of businesses had closed, leaving high street properties lying vacant. This continued and intensified in the beginning of 2018 with four key closures including the Visitor Information Centre, a branch of The Royal Bank of Scotland and Cruickshanks which collectively occupied a very large amount of retail space in The Square.

Over the previous ten years a number of large projects, strategies and plans had been worked up with the view to enhance the town, but for a variety of reasons (e.g. changes in macroeconomic context or flooding incidents impeding development) the community had been unable to take them forward. In order to move forward in a more holistic and strategic manner, it was considered a review of these previous plans and strategies was required.

There are a number of groups in the area who have been very successful at fundraising and delivering projects. Over the last few years, however, there has been growing awareness that the funding climate is getting more challenging. It was recognised, by these various groups, that were Huntly's groups and organisations to work more closely together on a jointly agreed strategy for the town, they would be more likely to retain their successful funding record than if they risked working in competition.

The Huntly Town Team, via Aberdeenshire Council, secured funding from the South Aberdeenshire LEADER Local Action Group (part-financed by the Scottish Government and the European Community LEADER 2014-2020 programme) to commission a comprehensive town strategy. This would be developed in partnership with the community; taking all previous work in the town into account and providing a plan to deliver a vibrant Huntly. The commissioned strategy would deal with some of the key issues in the town centre, whilst supporting the capacity development of the Huntly Town Team and the wider community to deliver the strategy.

## Huntly in 2030

2030 was selected as the long-term time frame for the strategy. This year was chosen as it is the expected date that work will be completed on the upgrading of the A96 trunk road between Inverness and Aberdeen (via Huntly) to a dual carriageway with grade separated junctions.

The opening of a town bypass for the A96 in the 1970s opened up new areas of development for the town; the new route of the road has not yet been developed, but it is likely that this major national project will have an equally fundamental impact on the nature of the Huntly.



*Huntly Castle*



# Process

## Project milestones

- March 2018: 'How's Huntly?' started
- April 2018: Ideas Bank opens
- September 2018: Draft strategy event
- December 2018: Community strategy launch
- January 2019: Final report compiled

## Project Team

icecream architecture and CLES (Centre for Local Economic Strategies) were appointed via an open tender to deliver a community-led process that would generate a comprehensive strategy and action plan for Huntly moving forward. Working closely with representatives of the Huntly Town Team throughout, the project team consisted of Desmond Bernie & Neil Fergusson of icecream architecture and Stuart Macdonald of CLES.

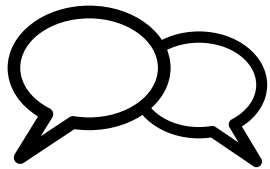
At the outset, it was agreed that the overarching aim of the project was to develop a "strategy to ensure Huntly is a thriving town for everyone", as such the project was branded **Huntly: Room to Thrive**; echoing the town's current branding motto *Huntly, Scotland: Room to Roam*.



*Branding adopted for project*



*Clipping of Huntly Express announcing inception of project*



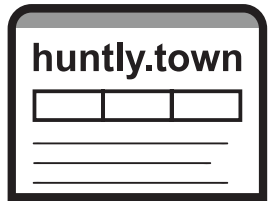
## 411 face to face conversations

The people of Huntly and its district have been at the heart of each stage of the process developing the Room to Thrive strategy. The mainstay of this has been face to face conversations with the project team; chance encounters on the street, door-to-door leaflet drops, formal meetings, popping-up at events, and invites into people's homes.



## Six Huntly Town Team meetings

The direction and delivery of the project has been overseen by members of the Huntly Town Team. Six thorough meetings were held in Huntly, with discussions also taking place via an online project management tool on a regular basis.



## Over 5900 website visits

A project website was setup at [www.huntly.town](http://www.huntly.town); the majority of online engagement with the project took place here and was also used for updates on the project's progress.



## 12 newspaper articles

Local newspaper *The Huntly Express* has an average weekly circulation of 1,800 connecting with those less likely to be 'web-connected'; regular updates on the project (and how people could get involved) were reported in *The Huntly Express* as well as the regional daily *Press & Journal*.



## Five poster & flyer campaigns

Five distinct poster and flyer campaigns across Huntly were undertaken, encouraging people to get involved in project activities like 'How's Huntly?' or the *Ideas Bank* or promoting upcoming public events.

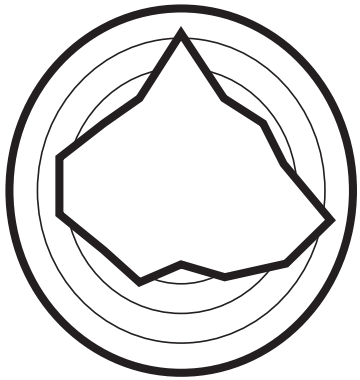


## 58 Twitter, Instagram & Facebook posts

477 reactions, comments and shares

23,398 total Facebook post reach

Social media was also a key component of the project's outward and inward communication. A variety of different regular posts were made informing people how the strategy was developing and ways people could get involved.



## How's Huntly?

**738** responses

**135+** hours spent completing

**94,474** words submitted

The first stage of the Room to Thrive project looked to set a benchmark of where Huntly is today. To do this, a campaign was created asking people to take part in an exercise asking 'How's Huntly?'.

The main part of this exercise was based on the Place Standard tool developed by Architecture+Design Scotland, NHS Health Scotland and the Scottish Government. The Place Standard Tool has been formulated to provide a rounded view of life in a place that facilitates comparisons across different groups within a community, over different time periods for the same place, and with other places. Identifying assets and places to improve, it has been used successfully in starting conversations about places across Scotland.

Trial Place Standard exercises had taken place before the project began, and there was a desire to reach further into the community to build a more extensive picture of what people think of their town. In addition to the Place Standard questions a number of demographic questions were included, alongside an open question of individual priorities for action.

Three approaches were taken to collect engage people to take part in the 'How's Huntly?' exercise:

- workshops facilitated by the project team;
- exercises facilitated by organisations within the Huntly Town Team;
- a campaign encouraging individuals to take part.

Digital completion was encouraged via the project website, [www.huntly.town](http://www.huntly.town). As there would be some situations where digital completion was not possible or appropriate, a paper worksheet was also produced (including a large print version).

Posters, flyers and physical worksheets were distributed around the town, as well as being available at three return points in the Stewart's Hall, Largue Pharmacy (Gordon Street), and Huntly Asda (Steven Road). This was also supported by local press coverage and advertising on social media.

## 'How's Huntly?' exercise

Set out below are the main questions that formed the 'How's Huntly?' exercise. To aid with analysis respondents were also asked some simple demographic questions along with their connection to Huntly.

*From your perspective give a rating for each question on the scale between 'Lots to improve!' (1) and 'It's great!' (7), and leave any reasoning for your response.*

1. Can I easily walk and cycle around Huntly?
2. Does Huntly's public transport meet my needs?
3. In Huntly, do traffic and parking arrangements allow people to move around safely?
4. Do the streets and public spaces of Huntly create an attractive place that is easy to navigate?
5. Can I experience good-quality natural spaces in Huntly?
6. Can I access a range of places for play and recreation in Huntly?
7. Does Huntly have the things that I need to live and enjoy life? For example, this could include shops, schools, libraries, health services or places to eat and drink.
8. Does Huntly have an active local economy with good-quality work opportunities?
9. Do the homes in Huntly meet the needs of the community?
10. Is there a range of spaces and opportunities to meet people in Huntly?
11. Does Huntly have a positive identity and do I feel I belong to it?
12. Do I feel safe in Huntly?
13. Are Huntly's buildings and public spaces well cared for?
14. Do I feel able to take part in decisions and help change things for the better?

*If you had to choose three priorities for action, what would they be?*



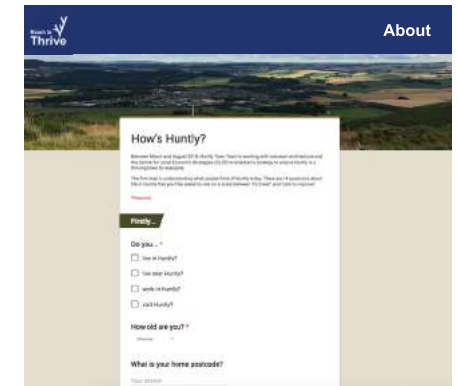
Pickup & return station at Stewart's Hall



Printed copy for offline completion



Clipping from Huntly Express



Website for online completions at [www.huntly.town](http://www.huntly.town)



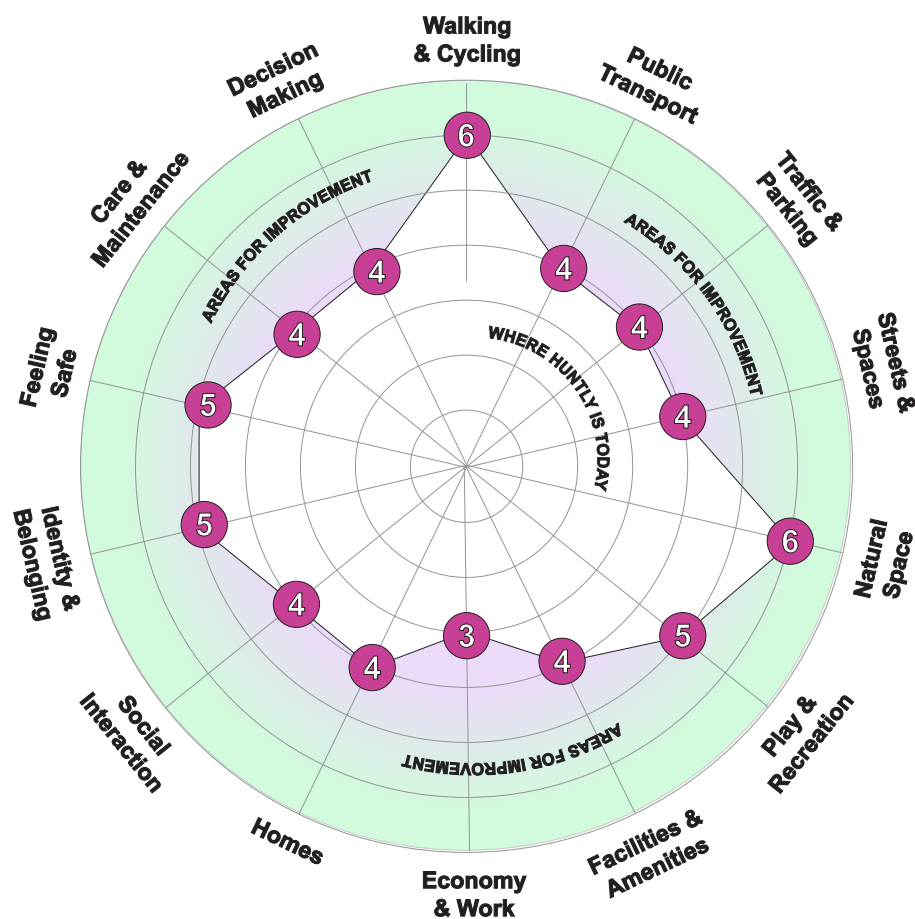
Promotional Facebook post



Promotional poster



## 'How's Huntly?' results



Aggregated 'How's Huntly?' results plotted on the Place Standard tool chart for Huntly, based on 738 respondents, March 2018

A detailed results document can be found in Appendix 1.

The results show greatest strength in the town's natural areas, getting around town on foot and space for play and recreation. It's clear that people feel safe in Huntly and feel the town has a strong sense of identity. The quality and availability of homes also ranked relatively highly.

Public transport, traffic and parking received an average rating of 4.2 out of 7 suggesting these are above average, although public transport did divide opinion between positive and negative ratings per respondent. Drawing on the respondent's comments, it seems this related loosely to positivity for regional connections and negativity for local and rural connections.

Many highlighted the variety and quality of clubs and societies— especially sports on offer in the town. Outdoor spaces were praised however there were calls for improved indoor spaces.

Respondents were a little divided on whether streets and public spaces were in a quite good or quite bad state. Public spaces were said to be well maintained, however there was a certainty that the amount of empty buildings in the town centre was detrimental to the quality of the town. 25% of all respondents put the vacancy rate forward as their reasoning for a negative response.

The empty buildings elicited a major response in relation to care and maintenance also, highlighting the severity of the issue. Many key public and private buildings were seen to be outdated or in disrepair, with the primary school and the Stewart's Hall receiving the most negative comments.

People feel disconnected from decision making and are keen that action stems from this consultation work, now rather than later.

What the town centre offers requires immediate action. The declining retail at the heart of the town was cited as a major concern. The variety of places to casually meet, eat and drink needs to be improved, with many eager for a 'cafe culture' or affordable places to spend time in the town centre. More activities and a space for young people were also requested, while parents are seeking family-orientated facilities.

The condition of the local economy and opportunities for work it brings was the key weakness highlighted. The job market was said to be limited, offering mostly low-paid and low-skilled jobs. On the flip side, people cited enterprise opportunities in the vacant units, the heritage and natural assets of the town and increased partnership working among community groups, schools and local families.



*Looking southwards over The Square, Huntly*

## Priorities for action

The results of people's main priorities for action in Huntly generated 1,694 unique responses. After analysis, five main priorities were being raised consistently:

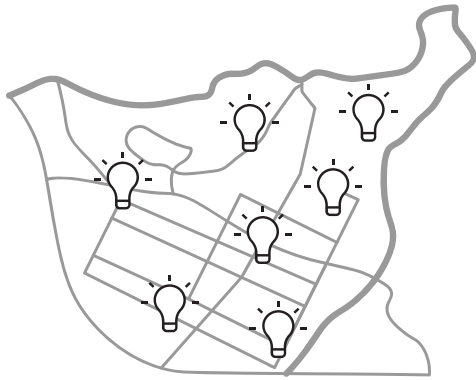
A **town centre** with well maintained buildings and spaces that attract use by enterprise and community alike, and communicates a positive story to locals and visitors.

An array of different **things to do**, whatever your age, background or interests, that cater for the local community and give visitors a reason to come to Huntly.

A competitive local economy where current and new **businesses** prosper alongside one another, which in turn provides a more prosperous **job** market.

Modern **school** facilities that integrate with the town as a whole, and meet the ambitions of all who attend them.

Better **transport** delivering improved connections between Huntly and other places whether rurally or regionally, as well as in and around town when you get there.



# Ideas Bank

**188** different ideas

**17,434** words submitted

The second stage of the Room to Thrive project was generating ideas that would address the five main priorities for action while making improvements to different areas of life highlighted by the 'How's Huntly?' exercise. The primary action towards this was establishing an 'Ideas Bank'. This existed as a digital repository of ideas for projects or actions that Huntly could take forward, the bank was populated with submissions from a variety of sources:

- Suggestions extracted from the 'How's Huntly?' results.
- Directly online at the project website ([www.huntly.town/ideas](http://www.huntly.town/ideas)).
- Via a paper form dropped into a postbox at the Stewart's Hall.

Proposals were elicited following a standardised format, designed to encourage thinking beyond a headline idea to include how it could be achieved and the benefits it may bring.

The ideas submitted to the bank were open to the public to explore and read via an interactive map and list of ideas on the project website. A large physical map version was also exhibited in a vacant shop unit (9a The Square) for use alongside drop in events and meetings in May and June 2018.

## Ideas Bank submission questions

1. In a few words, describe your idea:
2. Select the option below that best fits your idea:
  - ☐ Just an idea right now.
  - ☐ There is a plan of how this could happen, waiting to go.
  - ☐ It's already happening, but should be supported to continue.
3. Use this space to expand on the idea/plans in more detail.
4. What are the benefits this would bring to Huntly?
5. Who could be involved in making this idea happen?
6. Where in Huntly does this relate to?
7. Which of the below categories does the idea relate to?
 

<input type="radio"/> Town Centre	<input type="radio"/> Transport
<input type="radio"/> Things to Do	<input type="radio"/> Schools
<input type="radio"/> Business & Jobs	<input type="radio"/> Something else

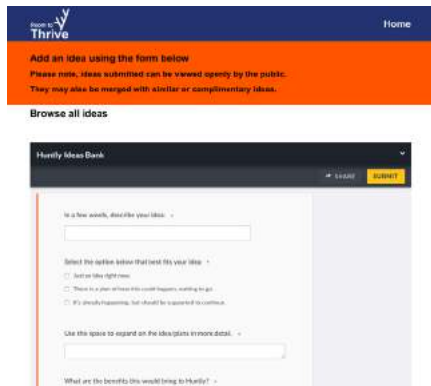




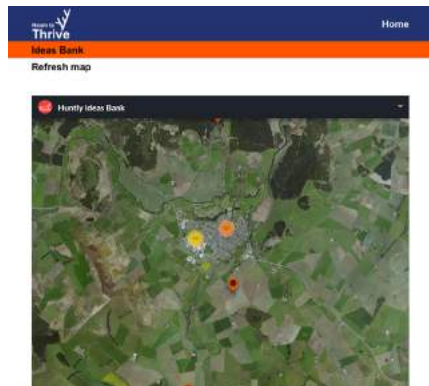
## Forms for paper submissions



### Physical display of Ideas Bank



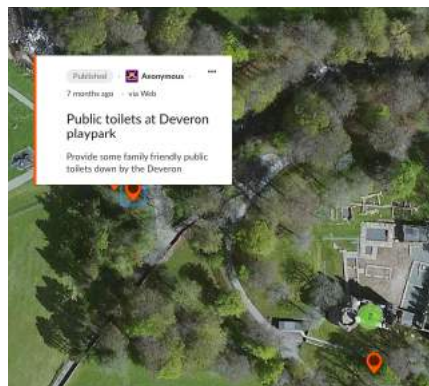
*Website for online submissions*



Promotional Facebook post



*Initial view on website's interactive map of two ideas submitted*



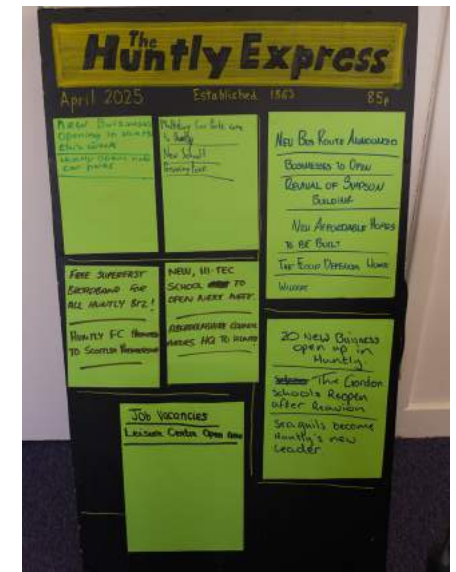
## Developing a Shared Vision for Huntly

The 'How's Huntly?' results gave a clear indication of where the priorities for action in Huntly lay; during the Ideas Bank stage the project team completed quick exercises with a range of people to set a shared vision of what the town could achieve in the years to come.

Keeping in mind Huntly's priorities for action, participants were asked to imagine what would be making the headlines of the Huntly Express in April 2025. At each of these sessions a collective newspaper front cover was assembled. The collective results (and common themes that ran through them) were used as a benchmark vision that Huntly can work towards, and to help generate ideas that will make it happen.



Two example 'front pages' created by Gordon Primary School Parent Council and pupils at The Gordon Schools.



A summary of headlines written can be found in Appendix 3.

## Generating Ideas

While the Ideas Bank was open for submissions, a number of different activities were staged, to encourage the generation of different ideas, from members of the public.

### *Pop-Ups*

This saw members of the project team popping-up at existing events or meetings in the town with a small stand or display. This was often coupled with feeding back results from the 'How's Huntly?' exercise, or the 'headline' visioning exercise.

### *Drop-In Events*

Taking place in a vacant shop unit on The Square, this gave members of the public an informal opportunity to find out about the project, meet the project team and start a conversation on their understanding of what Huntly needs to do and importantly how this can happen.

### *Business Workshop*

This workshop was run in partnership with Huntly Business Association and was intended specifically for those currently running businesses in Huntly today. Ten different businesses were represented at the meeting where detailed discussions were held on the current business environment and outlook within the town, barriers they faced and solutions that could make a difference and deliver improvements.



*Pop-up sign at Farmers Market, 1st June 2018*



*Pop-up stand at Stewart's Hall Coffee Morning, 21st April 2018*

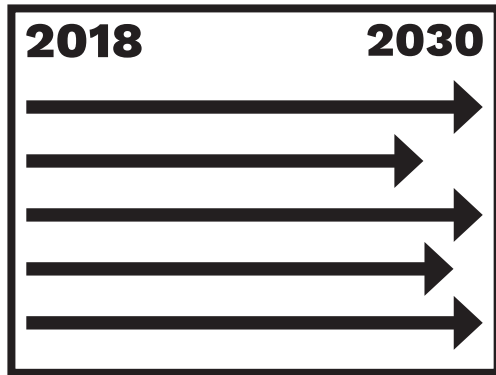


*Workshop with local businesses, 18th May 2018*



# Describe your idea in a few words...

Footbridge over A96	Clear out and reopen the old skating pond in the plantings for skating in the winter and as a paddling pool /duck pond in summer.	A real centre for Huntly	Carbon Neutral Huntly or Carbon Positive Huntly?	Community cafe	Re-open the Brander Museum Room in the Brander Building as a visitor attraction
Get the clock of Stewart's Hall running again		Community Co-op	Huntly home insulation project	Outdoor Exercise Equipment	
Extend river paths	Events alongside the farmers market	Accessible Cycling Centre	More development around Huntly?	A coffee shop, such as a Costa or Starbucks.	Room to reinvent projects
Room To Thrive - Huntly information Hub (pilot)	Build up the Huntly Business Association/Huntly Business Web Portal	More vibrant town centre	Huntly Hydroponics	Huntly book festival	Improved rail times to and from Aberdeen along with increased space for Cycles
Reduce traffic through square particularly at crunch times - School Coaches	Heritage Centre	A Huntly Arts Hub	Huntly Solar	Purchase former RBS building and turn in into a hub or rental units for 2 small businesses	Strathbogie and Cabrach Trail (walking) Network
Gull Eradication Programme	Physical redesign/improvement of the town square	Huntly 'TED Talks'	Bring empty buildings in town centre back into use	Feasibility study on community use of RBS	Rickshaw rides for the elderly/infirm provided by young people-scheme already operating
3G Sports Pitch	Indoor farmers/craft market	Multi-business space	Farm to shop	Replace bridge at Pirriesmill and open up walking routes from here.	Local Transport to visitor attractions and travel hubs for visitors and teenagers (everyone really)
Room to Recycle	Community Hub	Huntly Hotel as a community asset	Family centre	Improve Stewart's Hall	Huntly Rewards Scheme
30min free parking window	Larger crow proof bins at Deveron and Cooper Parks	Boutique Hotel	The Square is the focal point of our town and it is dead.	All-Abilities access path Huntly to Tin Hut (Gartly Community Hall) giving access to Darroch Wids/Clashindarroch and further afield	Extend the Castle Tour Guides to include Adult guides
Huntly & District Bus Company	Lobby for Regeneration Investment	Car-free Huntly	New school	Rejuvenate the Market Muir and Pavilion	Community Compost site
Farmers Market on Duke Street	Support for wider retail experience	Fix the clock	Up to date sports facility and outdoor areas	A riverside walk / cycle track from Huntly to Gartly	Community Workshop
One way on road down to castle	Shop / business enhancement scheme	Get Stewart's Hall clock working again	Community Hub	Gym or Sports Centre	Community Cooperative Bank
Public toilets at Deveron playpark	Community purchase of town centre buildings.	Re-open Huntly Hotel for pop-ups	Public sculpture	Cycle Routes/Walks in open spaces	Huntly pound
Longer library opening hours	Dog owners in Huntly should pick up their dog shit	Bring people together	Art Gallery /Museum	Close down the square from traffic	Support current businesses with modernisation and advertising
Town Museum	A free parking period in the square	Town improvements	Community Hub	Huntly becomes a Cycling Centre for Scotland	Mini allotments
Huntly Highland Games and Music Festival	BMX trails	Pedestrianise the Town Square	Investment in the local economy	Do something with empty shop windows particularly in the square	Community learning and leisure for elderly
Weekly Farmers Market during Summer	A New School Campus & Sports Hub	An indoor market	Soft play/children amusement	Community Pizza Oven	Pure gym type establishment
Sports & Wellbeing Centre	Build a new school	New shops	We should have the Wright to replace our doors and windows with what we want	Huntly Highland Games	Scheme to encourage and support start up creative businesses to locate in town centre
Path to Bin Forest	A co-operative of pop-up shops	More market type shops	Produce a walking guide for long distance walking to/from Huntly	Local Car Pool	Empty Shop Strategy
Small Business Saturday event	Huntly - The Digital Town	Community Hub/cafe	Community buses for AB54 area	Community Cafe and Bakery	Events
Website promoting businesses in Huntly & district	Community sports information hub	Boutique Hotel	Have a dog poo composting scheme.	Pedestrianise Huntly Town Square	Innovation Fund
Make this junction easier to cross	More shops	Community Cafe	Use the empty shops as thrift shops.	Charity Shop weekends in Huntly	Heritage and culture Town Trails
Separate pavement at top of Duke Street	A small music venue	Thrift Shop	Greening the square/Huntly	Protect our Local Paths	Increase visibility of the delivery bodies
Make this junction easier to cross	Cinema for Huntly	More green in Huntly town square!	Community record store	Zero-waste Grocers	Link bike shack to provision or cycling and tourism
The Town Collection	Connecting wider Huntly communities	Cruickshanks emporium	Open a shop that sells local artists work	Large public artwork	George Macdonald archive and town trail
Upgraded play equipment at Deveron play park	Permanent shop championing local produce	Put Huntly's Charity Shops on the map	Improved facilities for the performing arts	Late night train	Huntly hotel redeveloped
Community Sports Centre	More ceilidhs	Make local walking routes more accessible	Signpost local walks / amenities in huntly with a distance and time to get there based on walking (Similar to what Aviemore has)	Cruickshanks building and RBS	Develop links between Deveron Projects and the school
Path along A96	Community Hub for Huntly	George MacDonald Heritage Centre	Pedestrianise and green the square	Performing arts - music, comedy, drama	New School
Make town centre more people focused	Close Town Square to Traffic	Serviced offices with a crèche	Have cost effective hotdesk / teleworking facilities	Annual festival celebrating local culture	Grocers shop
Building Improvement Scheme	Safe public space	Local shop co-operative	Summertime open air foodhall / cafe space in the square	Town Centre Project Manager	
Walks	Turn the brown field site near the train station in a wild life park	Make Huntly a 'plastic free' town	New community school encompassing primary, secondary, community centre	Can we have some local transport links please!!!!	
Dress shop	Create a welcoming brochure for the town to attract new people settling here	Repaint and clean lampposts sign posts etc.	A plastic free local store		

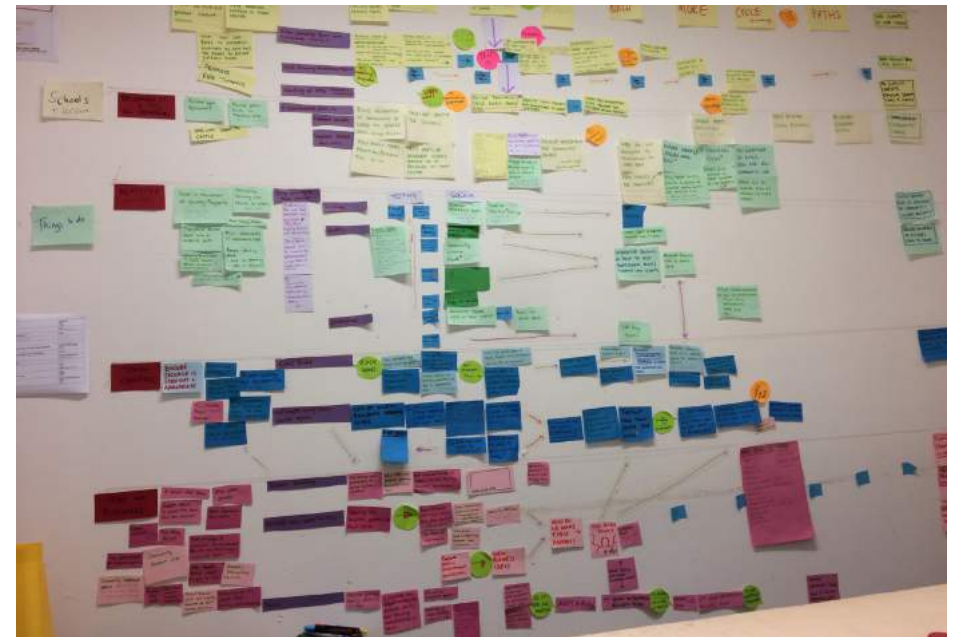


## Draft Strategy

The third stage was to develop a draft strategy that would then be presented to the Huntly Town Team and the general public for consideration. This would take into consideration everything the project team had learned from the 'How's Huntly?' exercise, conversations, and review of previous studies and current policies.

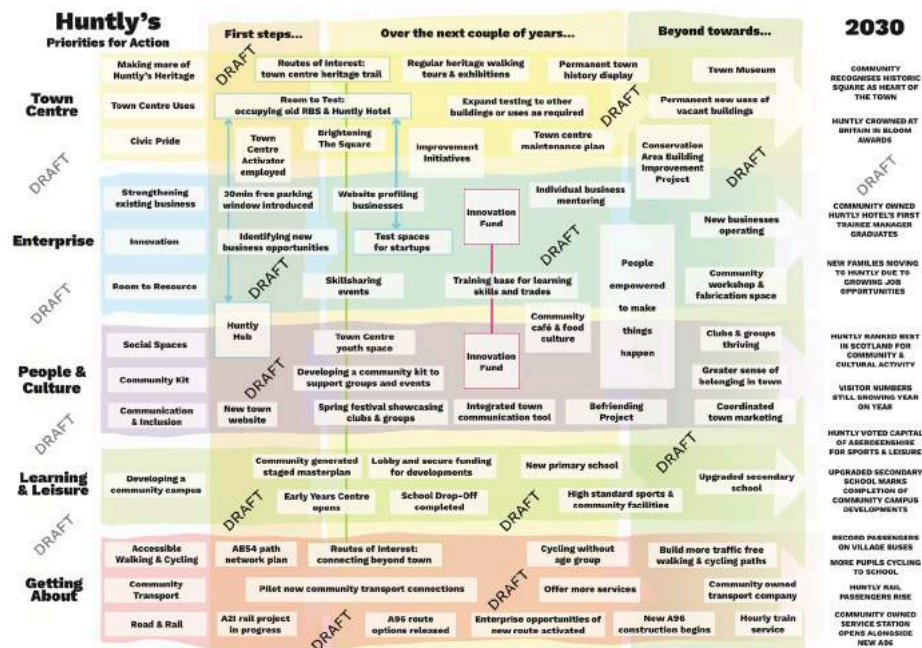
Initially there was a review of all ideas submitted, with similar or related ideas being combined; this also highlighted areas where there was consistent support for specific actions. The ideas were then grouped according to the town priority that it related to most, and matched with ambitions from within the long-term vision to develop strands of common activities nesting under the main priorities. Any linking actions (e.g. before we can do this, something else has to happen first) were also added at this stage.

The final step took a consideration of the big picture that had been created; this saw some of the individual project strands from different town priorities combining to create five overarching strategy themes.



*Working snapshot plotting ideas into draft project strands towards long-term vision*

# Shaping the Draft



Draft strategy overview diagram

On the 1st of September 2018, Huntly's annual *Hairst* festival (celebrating the food and traditions of Aberdeenshire) took place; the festival combines with the annual *Room to Run* races (which had over 1,000 entrants) and monthly farmers market to attract people into the town centre. To coincide with these events the project team secured the temporary opening of the vacant Huntly Hotel to showcase the contents of the draft strategy.

People were encouraged to 'pop in' to the hotel throughout the day to learn about and help shape the draft with a large version of the overview diagram and key details from the actions behind it displayed on the walls for direct comment, additions or editing. This activity was offered together with complimentary refreshments, live traditional music, a display stand from the Vattenfall Clashindarroch Community Fund and a free Huntly history walking tour (organised in partnership with The Gordon Schools and local historian Patrick W. Scott) encouraging over a hundred people to meet the team throughout the day.



Many of the vacant hotel's windows were filled with colour to fit the part of the wider festival activities



View of The Hairst and Farmers Market, filling The Square with activity and people, from the Huntly Hotel

## POP IN! to the Huntly Hotel

The Hotel will be open from 10am-4pm this Saturday the 1st during the Hairst

**POP IN!** ...to see all the ideas for Huntly from the Room to Thrive project's Ideas Bank and How's Huntly. Shape the action plan that will help deliver them.

Vattenfall Clashindarroch Community Fund  
**POP IN!** ...to find out how the fund supports local groups and projects, and help set future priorities.

**POP IN!** ...for a free Huntly History Walking Tour  
NO NEED TO BOOK - CHECK WEBSITE OR HOTEL ON DAY FOR TIMINGS

[www.huntly.town](http://www.huntly.town)

Poster promoting the day's activities



Promotional Instagram post



Entrance to the hotel including a new apple tree given by the Town is the Garden project





*Selected photographs of displays and activity within the Hotel*



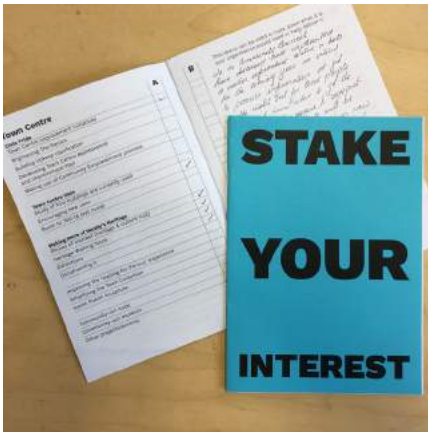
*Huntly Town Team meeting, 21st September 2018*

Following the *Hairst*, feedback from the general public was taken forward and used to shape a number of facilitated discussions with the Huntly Town Team. This enabled them to take the draft to a comprehensive final strategy to set the direction of activities in Huntly between now and 2030.

This involved the project team adding detail to the different proposed actions or projects and garnering an understanding of the capacity or aspiration within specific organisations to deliver different parts of the strategy. Project strands and individual actions were refined or modified to ensure that there was a distinct purpose within each of the five strategy themes so the content of them could be clearly presented.



*Prioritisation exercise with the Huntly Town Team*



*Booklet, used to ascertain an initial indication of what parts of the strategy were important to organisations in the Huntly Town Team*



*Clipping of sheet from follow-up exercise with the Huntly Town Team to identify organisations willing to lead parts of the strategy forward*

## Public Launch



*Selected photographs from Public Launch on 1st December 2018*

The headline details of the strategy were shared with the general public at a launch event on Saturday the 1st of December 2018. This was held to coincide with the opening of the Huntly Hive, made possible by the Huntly & District Development Trust (HDDT) securing a short-term lease from the Royal Bank of Scotland of their old branch for community use. Alongside the presentation of the strategy the 'Hive' space hosted Handmade in Huntly stalls, display boards from HDDT and a consultation exercise by Deveron Projects.

Throughout the day over 300 people came through the doors to learn:

- what was included in the final strategy
- how this will translate into change in town
- what is already happening
- about ways they could be involved in making things happen



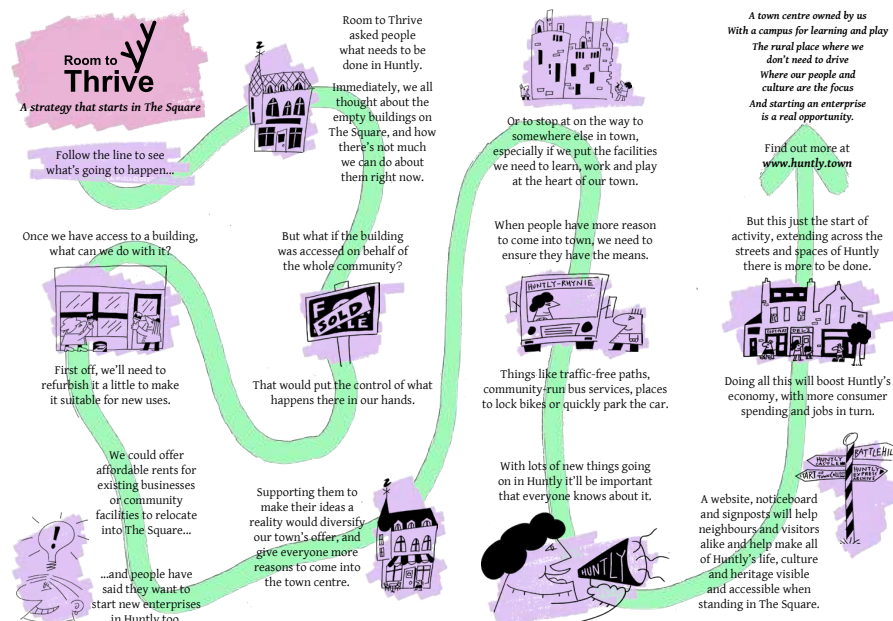
*Clipping from Huntly Express*

Huntly: Room to Thrive shared their video.  
28 November at 06:35 · G

This Saturday 1st December, come along to the Hive (old RBS on The Square) between 10am and 2pm for the launch of the Huntly: Room to Thrive Strategy, and find out how to make it all happen.  
<https://www.facebook.com/events/332253254020576/>



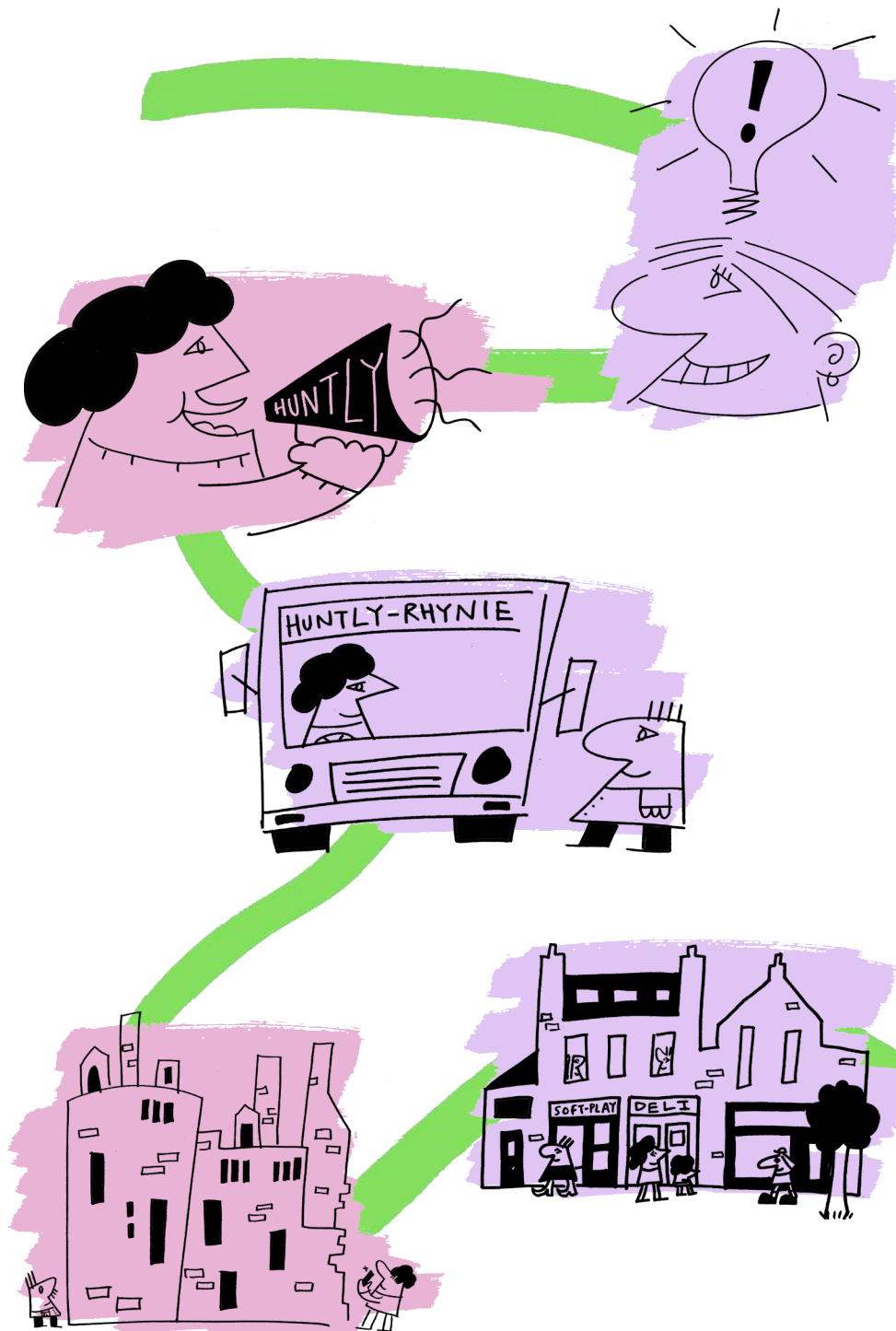
*Promotional Facebook post and video*



*Handout distributed at launch providing an overview of what is in the strategy*



# Room to Thrive Strategy



*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.*



# A town centre that belongs to us

What's got to change:

- Long-term vacancy and dependence on retail has led to the town lacking purpose.
- The level of investment in the fabric of the town centre.
- Few reasons for people to visit the town centre and lack of visibility of the rich community life that is present.

Quotes from 'How's Huntly?' responses:

***"The streetscape of Huntly is one of its main strengths. Shops and restaurants could be more concentrated around The Square and tops of Gordon & Duke Streets to offer a busier core."***

***"The Square is a great asset and is under-utilised, it should be the focal point of the town!"***

Strategic objectives for Huntly's town centre:

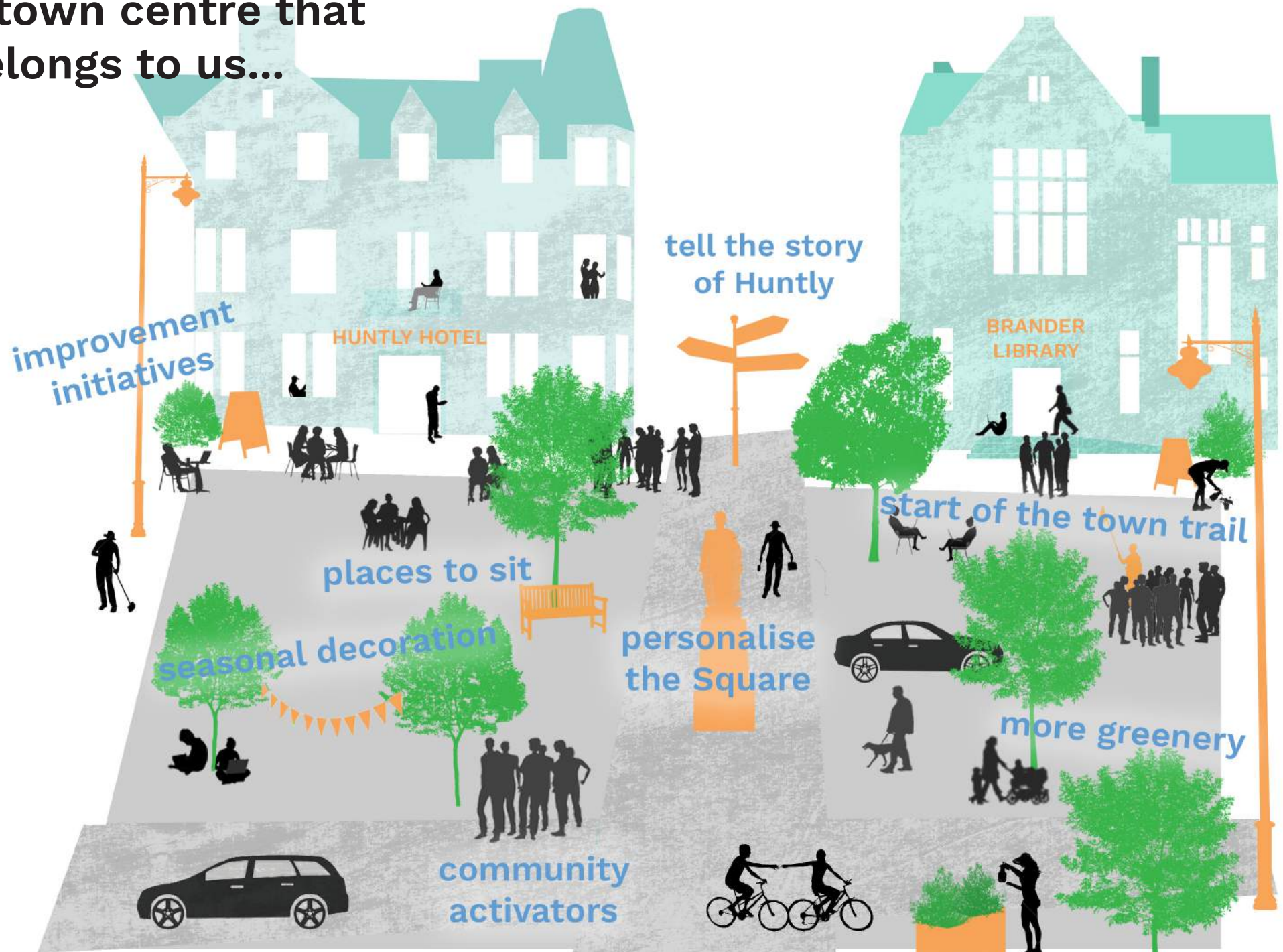
- 1.1 Community control of town centre buildings with the purpose of:
  - providing flexible and affordable options for community and business use
  - carrying out appropriate modernisation
- 1.2 The town has a people-friendly centre; bringing life and colour to the streets making a distinctive place to be that's easy to get around.
- 1.3 Bring new activity and purpose that creates a positive and modern story of Huntly as a place to live, work in or visit.
- 1.4 Develop partnership working between the community, proprietors and the local authority to protect and enhance Huntly's built heritage.

Huntly benefits from a historic town centre, much of which dates back to a planned town established by the Duke of Gordon in 1769. From this point Huntly grew as a market town for the fertile agricultural lands of Strathbogie. The Square has acted as the focal point for the town throughout this time and has weathered many changes, including the re-routing of through traffic when the A96 bypass opened in 1978.

Today The Square and wider town centre faces its most significant challenge. Huntly has not been immune from the long-term national trends affecting decline in town centre retail and this has been compounded by the opening of two large supermarkets on the periphery of the town. The town centre now has high vacancy rates, for example in November 2018 over 60% of The Square's commercial property was vacant.

Huntly is at a critical juncture where radical action is required to remake the town centre for the changing 21st Century, giving it a new purpose and retaining its status as being at the heart of the community. To do this, a range of new approaches must be trialled to obtain more local value from town centre properties and the public realm.

# A town centre that belongs to us...







Major town centre project:

# Community-Owned Hotel

There is room to increase the overnight accommodation available to visitors in Huntly. The Huntly Hotel (a prominent building in The Square) sits idle and in real risk of deteriorating without a purpose. The Huntly Town Team and wider community have all expressed the urgency for, and potential impact that a new lease of life for the Hotel would bring to the town. There are opportunities to bolster the use of the hotel to include many of the other proposals in this strategy, or to offer hospitality training courses and employability skills through the ongoing operations.



Precedent:

## *New Lanark Mill Hotel, South Lanarkshire*

New Lanark Conservation Trust has owned and operated a 38 bedroom, 4 Star hotel and self-catering accommodation for over 20 years. All surpluses from the commercial operations are returned to the Conservation Trust to support the continuing programme of restoration and development of New Lanark Village. This involved the restoration of Mill No. One, a working cotton-mill until 1968, and by the 1980s in serious danger of total collapse. The hotel offers facilities for many functions, such as weddings, conferences and business meetings, as well as leisure visits. In addition, there is self-catering accommodation in the adjacent Waterhouses.



# A campus for learning and play

What's got to change:

- The potential that the area of north Huntly (extending north from The Square to the boundaries of the Deveron and Bogie rivers) holds for learning and play should be maximised for the benefit of local economy and community equally.

Quotes from 'How's Huntly?' responses:

***“Woodlands such as The Meadows are great to have but could be better managed for access, biodiversity, etc. The open space down at the Deveron offers great opportunity for a riverside park incorporating 'natural' space and designed recreation e.g. cycle and ski tracks, orchard, wetland”***

***“There are a lot of potential sports and recreation places, although they need to be maintained and used imaginatively to be sustainable.”***

Strategic objectives for a learning and play campus:

- 2.1 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.
- 2.2 A shared plan exists for minor and major capital investment to continually raise the standards of facilities available.

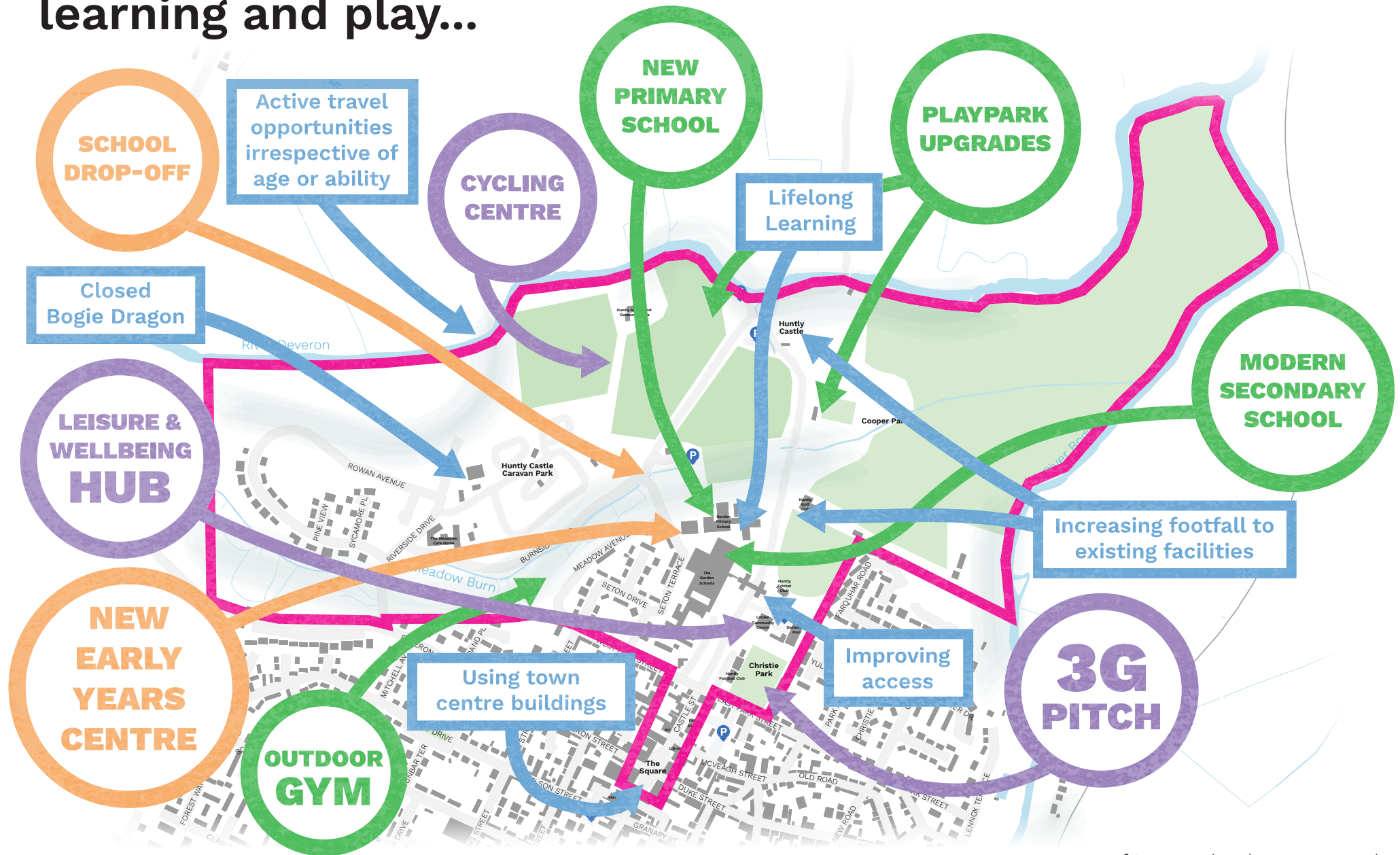
Huntly is a small town which historically has a self-starting attitude towards activities, education, wellbeing and leisure with over 100 different clubs, groups and organisations operating locally. Many of the buildings and facilities for learning and leisure have seen better days or are not fit for their current purpose. As such a number of different organisations and groups have been pursuing independent ambitions for improvements and developments across northern sections of the town.

The idea of developing a community campus of learning and leisure facilities has received strong support throughout the Room to Thrive project. Many of the buildings and facilities for learning and leisure have seen better days or are not fit for purpose. As such a number of different organisations and groups have been pursuing independent ambitions for improvements and developments; these largely cluster in northern parts of the town as shown in the map overleaf.

The close proximity of existing leisure and learning facilities to the town centre offer Huntly a unique opportunity to capitalise on the benefits improved facilities could bring. The current decline of the town centre as a traditional market town could be transformed by integrating different types of learning, leisure and play breathing life into some of the underused buildings. Making better connections between improved facilities and existing assets would create a campus that would support community-led enterprises with Huntly promoted as a regional and national hub for leisure activities and lifelong learning.



# A campus for learning and play...



Summary of issues, developments and aspirations mapped onto the campus area.





Major learning and leisure project:

# Activities Enterprise

Huntly offers more sporting and leisure pursuits in a square mile than an Olympic Park; and even a team of local Olympians to shout about. There’s an opportunity to capitalise on this while supporting the improvement and expansion of these facilities. By packaging the pursuits available into a marketed programme of activities and training local school-leavers as coordinators to manage day and half-day itineraries around existing activities, the town could quickly build an income generation to continually improve the facilities and support increased jobs in the activities and adventure sector. This could be coupled with light conferencing and catering facilities within the Linden Centre to provide away-day programmes for businesses, groups and parties. Activities could take part in the heart of town, while also connecting and improving access to woodland and mountain trails across the district.



Precedent:

## *MY Adventure, Edinburgh*

A social enterprise that delivers high quality outdoor and experiential education, personal and social development, adventurous activities, skills acquisition programmes and vocational qualifications. All profits are reinvested into community projects.

MY Adventure instructors are trained through the in-house programme with significant expertise in youth and social work, outdoor and experiential education, personal and social development, skills development and training. They work with broad clientele from challenging groups who are leaving the city for the first time, to instructor training programmes; and from stag and hen parties, to delivering a City & Guilds in cycle mechanics. It delivers safe, fun and educational programmes that are tailored to the abilities, needs and budget of the client.



## A rural place with transport that works for us

What's got to change:

- The range, quantity and quality of facilities for active travel.
- Public transport across the AB54 area is patchy.
- A major road project is going to impact the town fundamentally, Huntly needs to ensure it benefits as much as possible from it.

Quotes from 'How's Huntly?' responses:

***"You can walk fairly well but lots of paths could be put in across farmland etc. Cycling isn't easy or safe, currently the primary school don't allow cycling to school as there are no safe routes."***

***"Bus and trains are OK but not good enough to ditch my car."***

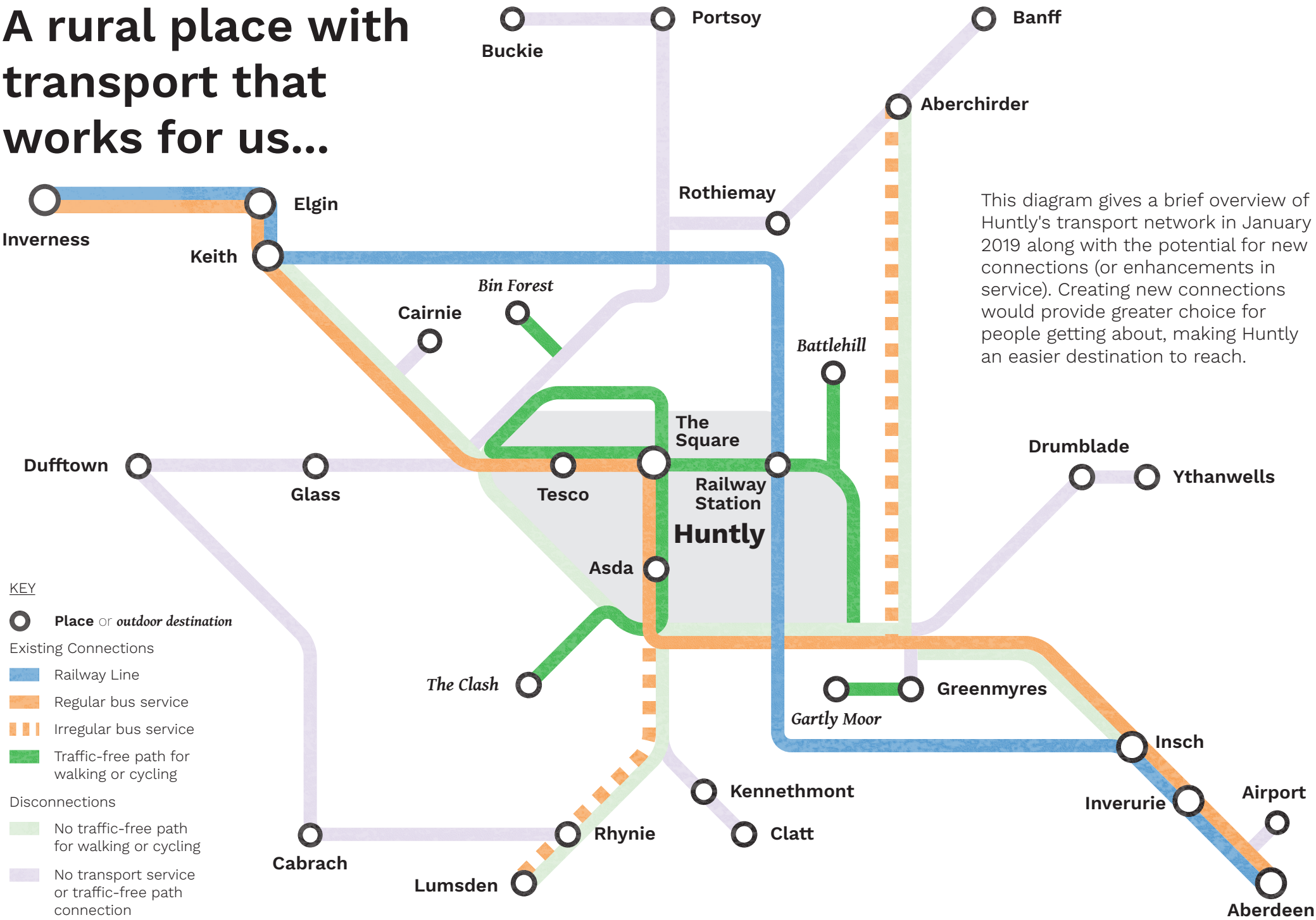
Strategic objectives for getting about in Huntly:

- 3.1 Easy access to active travel—irrespective of age or ability—to get into town, around town and accessing rural leisure routes like Battlehill, Clashindarroch or The Bin Forest.
- 3.2 A range of attractive transport options that meet the needs of people living, working and visiting Huntly and District is available.
- 3.3 The town is prepared to:
  - engage with the route planning of the new A96
  - take advantage of the economic and development opportunities the final route will bring

As a market town within a rural area, Huntly's local infrastructure radiates from the Town Square outwards to the edge of town and beyond to the outlying villages within the District. Regional travel is focused predominantly linearly on the Aberdeen to Inverness road and rail corridor. While the linear road and rail transport has been and is due to continue improving, the radial transport to outlying villages has suffered service reduction, with many areas in the district isolated from access to public transport. This results in an over-reliance on private transport which has a negative impact on job opportunities and social mobility for those without cars and on the environment for us all.

To offset this, improved localised transport across the district is a priority. This should focus on affordability and the need for flexibility to accommodate all potential users. By coordinating localised transport with regional timetables and services, maximum connectivity of transport can be achieved. By continuing to develop the car club service and improving routes for walking and cycling that are accessible for all (regardless of age or ability), more sustainable options will become the norm.

# A rural place with transport that works for us...







Major getting about project:

## Community-Owned Transport Company

The need for more joined up transport provision in Huntly and District is unlikely to be solved by waiting for public transport providers. Huntly should learn from the experience of other rural communities and examine options to establish its own community-owned transport company to improve matters. Huntly is already well-placed to do so given the existing car club and electric bike hire scheme, a community minibus and a bicycle refurbishment and maintenance initiative. These discrete schemes need to be combined or at least aligned, expanded and better promoted to provide a complementary service to that of public and private transport operators.



Precedent:

### ***Buchan Dial-A-Community-Bus, Aberdeenshire***

Buchan Dial-a-Community Bus (DACB) is a growing social enterprise in North East Aberdeenshire, focussing on reducing social exclusion through the provision of high quality community transport delivery and support services. It is a community owned company which has been operating for over 15 years. Originally DACB operated as a weekly service utilising a borrowed social work minibus, driven by off duty police officers but since 2000 it has evolved into a major transport provider in the Buchan area and currently runs services in Buchan and in Aberdeen City.

Working closely with partner organisations such as Police Scotland, Aberdeenshire Council and local bus operators, all volunteers and staff access training through a Social Enterprise DAB Plus Driver Training. The success of DACB is further demonstrated by low staff turnover and a high volunteer retention rate. DACB have also provided a route into employment for several volunteers who have taken up paid posts within DACB over the years.



## The focus is people, environment and culture

What's got to change:

- Communication of what Huntly has to offer to people within town and beyond it.
- The range of opportunities available for informal socialising.
- Climate change has the potential to significantly challenge how people live and work in Huntly and its rural communities.
- People don't always have access to the resources needed to make things happen.

Quotes from 'How's Huntly?' responses:

***"Lots of provision for sports and outdoor pursuits (even specialist) but not much nightlife beyond pubs for those who, living rurally, want to socialise"***

***"Huntly does accumulate a lot of people from outside the town, who attend clubs here and allow new friendships to be made throughout."***

Strategic objectives for Huntly's people, environment and culture:

- 4.1 Making use of a range of tools to communicate to locals, visitors and potential visitors alike.
- 4.2 Empowering people of Huntly to contribute towards life in the town through the sharing of skills or resources and actively pursuing ventures that include opportunities for socialising and inclusion across communities.
- 4.3 Take action that reduces greenhouse gas emissions and allows the town to transition to a circular economy.

People and culture is what brings Huntly to life, making the town more than a place just to live, work or shop for groceries. It represents people working collaboratively or individually for a greater good or towards a shared interest or goal. Along with the town's historical and natural strengths, the people of Huntly are its greatest asset and they run well over a hundred active clubs, charities, groups and member organisations that breathe vitality across every part of the town.

The town centre holds a dormant opportunity to broadcast the creative, musical and sporting energy and enthusiasm that exists within the town while telling the story of Huntly and its people. Activities and events should regularly be held in full view offering showcases and an invite for unaware local people and visitors to engage, connect and become part of the vibrant culture. The communication that supports this energy must be coordinated to promote activities and build cross-sectoral working. This will support capacity and make the community more resilient and regenerative.

Internationally it is widely agreed that immediate action is required to mitigate the effect that climate change is having on the environment of people to live and work. Huntly is not immune from this and has a contribution to make to national and worldwide efforts while supporting people and culture in the town in transitioning to a circular economy.



# The focus is people, environment and culture...

Tools to make people and culture more visible



Attracting attention to make new projects possible.

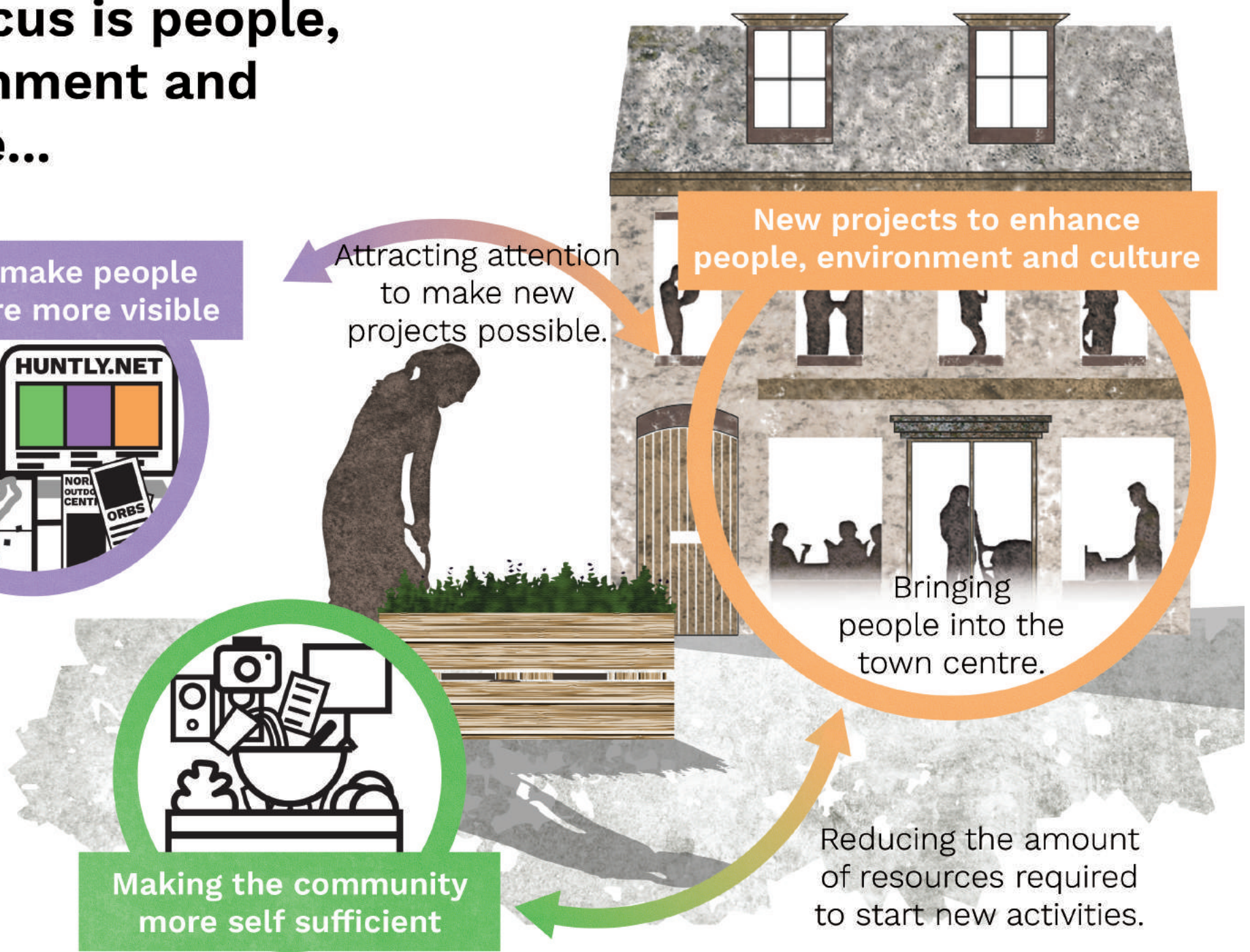
New projects to enhance people, environment and culture

Bringing people into the town centre.

Making the community more self sufficient



Reducing the amount of resources required to start new activities.







Major people, culture & environment project:

## People-Centred Garden Centre

Since Huntly's closed, the nearest garden centre for local people has been Inch or Fochabers. Huntly town centre has the opportunity to expand some of its current offering to deliver a unique, year-round experience for locals and visitors. From the Town is the Garden project to the monthly Farmers Market and the work that goes into the floral displays, there is already a current of green-fingered and local produce activity. Behind the mainly sandstone exterior of many town centre buildings, pockets of greenspace or gardens exist. With a coordinated approach, a network of outdoor town centre spaces for growing and indoor places for learning, eating local and seasonal produce could provide a sustainable income, training facility and social outlet for all ages of the community in the heart of town. It could also be a base for projects that actively explore aspects from Huntly's heritage, for example the growing of flax to be used in linen production to highlight the importance this industry once had in the town. The unconventional 'garden centre' approach could also be an anchor to attract tour buses into the town centre from castle and whisky trails.



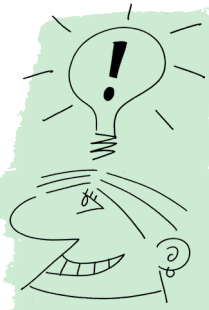
Precedent:

### ***Hulme Community Garden Centre, Manchester***

Hulme Community Garden Centre (HCGC) is a unique community-led, urban horticultural project, run as a not-for-profit organisation with a mission to bring the community together through gardening. It is a fully stocked garden centre but also a volunteer, education and training hub working with socially excluded people in Manchester. Operating as a social enterprise, they have a turnover of around £250,000 (two-thirds of which is self-generated) and employ 2 full-time and 8 part-time staff.

Starting in 1998 it has doubled in size since, adding a polytunnel, retail space, café and a classroom. The centre offers plants for sale and has its own plant nursery. They offer a range of volunteering, training and outreach sessions; working with groups with learning disabilities and mental health issues; toddler groups; school groups; probationers and mainstream volunteers who help develop, maintain and manage the gardens.

In a typical year the Centre attracts over 10,000 visitors, and provides over 3,350 volunteering, training and workshop opportunities to encourage people to grow their own food, green their own communities, lead active and healthier lifestyles and improve their life chances. The accessible, sensory garden provides a space for people with disabilities to enjoy, the messy play area gets local children outdoors and exploring, while the edible garden provides organic produce for the community.



# Where real opportunities exist for enterprise

What's got to change:

- Existing business is struggling to compete.
- New enterprises meeting changing consumer demands aren't forthcoming.
- Opportunities for lifelong learning, through skillsharing or different forms of training are currently limited.

Quotes from 'How's Huntly?' responses:

***"Economy and work is a key weakness. The loss of shops and services in the town centre is an added stress and opportunities for school leavers or people moving to the area are not obvious."***

***"Any incentives or support available to anyone who might be looking to start a business in the town are certainly not obvious."***

***"Huntly has enjoyed, in the past, a vibrant and independent business spirit which it needs to rediscover."***

Strategic objectives for enterprise in Huntly:

- 5.1 Existing businesses and new enterprises complement each other to sustain footfall.
- 5.2 Starting new enterprises is a supported process.
- 5.3 Develop lifelong learning opportunities, within existing organisations, services and businesses that can increase the town's collective skillbase, and capacity to apply these to enterprises.

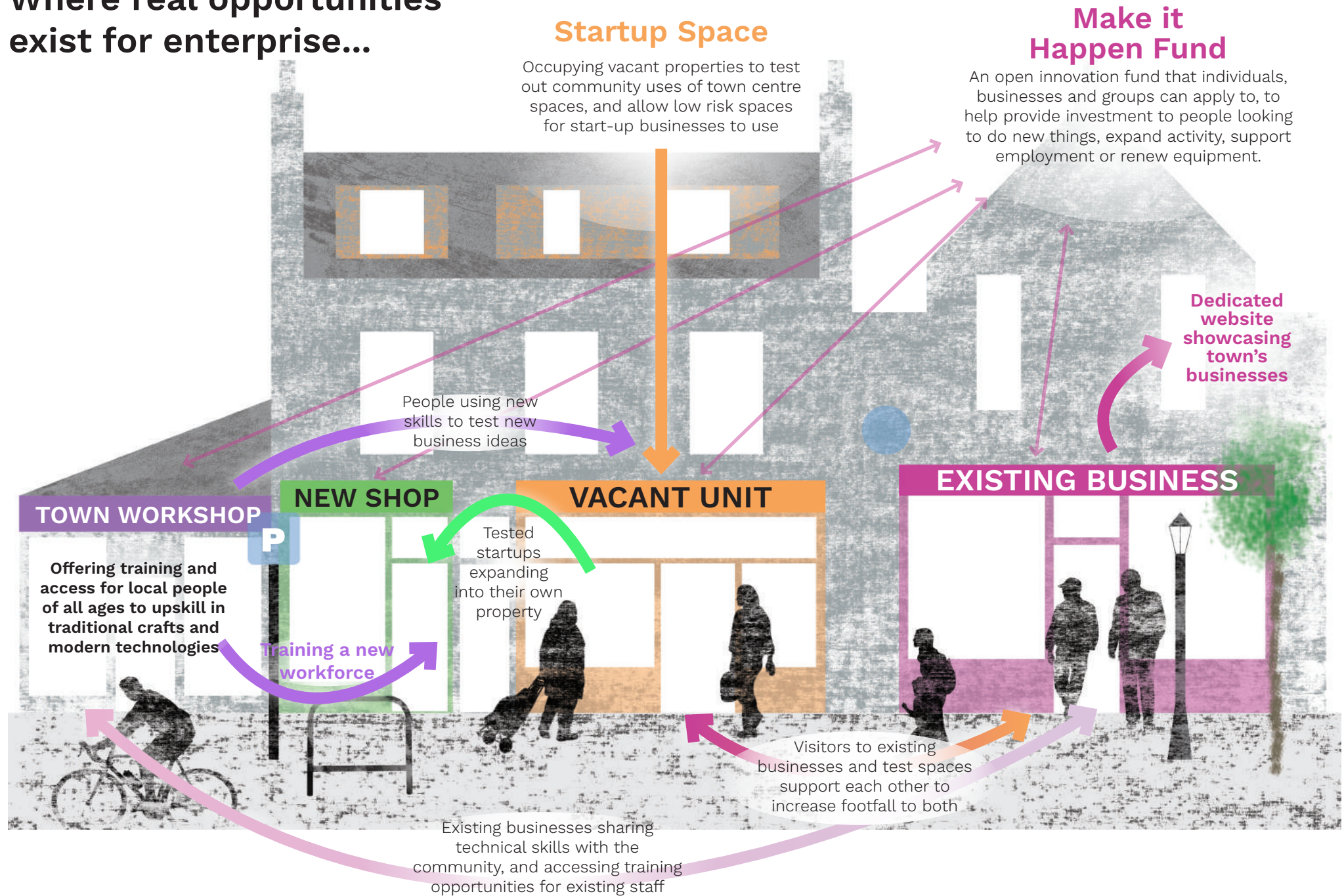
During the 'How's Huntly?' exercise, Economy and Work was by far the weakest of all the themes for Huntly. The average household income for 2017 in Huntly is significantly lower than the equivalent for Aberdeenshire however the unemployment rate is lower. This suggests a low-wage and low skills jobs market. A perception exists of a limited job market across Huntly and District with many people suggesting the need for people to have to commute well beyond the local area to find work.

To offset this perception and to increase household income, Huntly can reignite a culture of enterprise within the town by supporting employers and businesses to retain and develop their existing business while giving potential entrepreneurs the confidence, skills and space to begin trading in the town.

Offering skills and training to young and under-employed people in the town with a focus on collaborative and peer support has the potential to build a sharing economy, offering a new route for career development in the town. As education becomes more mobile; modules and qualifications could be delivered remotely in Huntly alongside the running of a small enterprise. The success of any new enterprise—and in turn the town centre—will always depend on the support of local people as consumers.



# Where real opportunities exist for enterprise...





Major enterprise project:

## Flexible Enterprise Space & Support

The costs associated with new entrepreneurs setting up enterprise in Huntly can often scare them away or make it difficult to provide quality from the get go. Spaces like Cruickshanks, the old RBS, Reid Flory, Square Deal, the old post office etc. could be secured and made good for smaller enterprise ideas to be tested. Often young enterprises don't need high-end facilities, instead requiring space to spread out and support from peers to get to the next step. Based on the needs of enterprises coming forward, facilities and equipment should be offered e.g. food production equipment, tools and machinery, IT equipment. Enterprises would be offered graduating rents and supported through training and peer-mentoring.



Precedent:

### ***What if... Girvan, South Ayrshire***

A programme delivered by Firstport working with local people to inspire them to turn their ideas into businesses that transform their local area and benefit the wider community. The programme recognises that there are two things that Girvan and the South Carrick villages have in abundance: beautiful places and a resilient spirit.

What If.. gives access to one to one business training, mentoring from industry experts, peer support, access to a coworking hub and up to £3,000 in funding for community members to test their ideas. The programme has generated community-led social enterprise activity and started to give empty spaces a new lease of life; where new enterprises are creating jobs that provide vital skills for local people.



# Underlying principles

The Strategy Themes, to different degrees, address the Town Priorities for action set by the How's Huntly exercise. The strategic objectives within each theme have a collective objective to deliver three key outcomes, outlined below.

## *Investing in places*

- By 2030, investment has been made into the buildings and spaces that make up the town centre and campus for learning and leisure in the north of Huntly.

## *Empowering people*

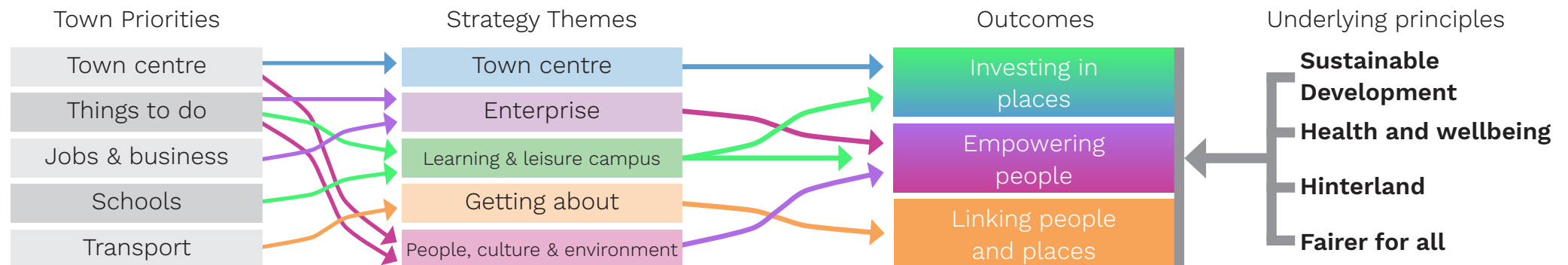
- By 2030, people have been empowered to make things happen for the benefit of Huntly.

## *Linking people and places*

- By 2030, sustainable links will exist between the people and places that make up Huntly and District.

A number of underlying principles should be incorporated into the delivery of projects or actions that contribute to the Room to Thrive strategic objectives; these are set-out in more detail overleaf. Combining any number of these underlying principles, with work to address strategic objectives, will strengthen each other and improve their contribution towards Huntly being a thriving town.

The primary focus of people and organisations in the town is delivering noticeable change in Huntly itself. In reality this work does not sit in a vacuum, but contributes to wider efforts, whether regionally or nationally, and the connection between these is also explored in this section.



## Sustainable Development

Considering the international context, in October 2018 the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change issued a report outlining that rapid action is required within the next 12 years in order to mitigate the potential of global warming caused by greenhouse gas emissions. In Scotland, the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 created a statutory framework to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and in May 2018 a new bill was introduced in the Scottish Parliament to amend and increase the targets for this. Huntly is not immune from the effects of climate change, nor can it stand back from being part of national and international efforts to combat it through sustainable development.

There is not one solution that will make Huntly more sustainable. The 2010 Huntly Sustainability Plan (HuSP) set out that in order to achieve sustainable development, a holistic approach is required. Referencing internationally recognised definitions, the HuSP defines sustainable development as being one that “meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”

Since publication of the HuSP in 2010, a greater emphasis has been placed on expanding the capacity of communities in Scotland to engage in the ‘circular economy’ - reducing carbon emissions, waste and expenditure while building social capital and environmental awareness. At local, national and international policy level, it is intended for development to not only be bearable, equitable or viable, but truly sustainable, where everything is considered to have value and nothing is wasted. The environmental, economic and social systems that underpin this are intrinsically linked, therefore solutions to the sustainability problem must consider and balance all three of them.

Within the HuSP is a process for assessing how potential projects (or actions) intersect with issues of sustainable development pertinent to Huntly; outlined below, is a framework based on the HuSP process that can be used to inform the delivery of projects to ensure that the collective action of individuals and organisations in the town holistically and meaningfully contributes to sustainable development.

### *Environmentally Sustainable Development*

Understanding Huntly’s place in the world and the positive contribution that its being environmentally sustainable can make allows for the development of opportunities to work towards creating a productive and circular economy in the town, where existing resources are shared and made the most use of before new ones are sought. Developing systems and products with their whole life-cycle in mind makes it possible to save energy and reduce waste, while increasing their efficiency and sustainability. In the face of climate change, people are aware of the need to live a more sustainable lifestyle, making cumulative impact through small, manageable actions and advocating for change at higher levels.

*Aspects of projects that could contribute to environmentally sustainable development:*

- Low-carbon technologies and practices
- Encouraging active travel
- Greater self-sufficiency in food and energy production
- Reducing unnecessary demand on resources through a sharing economy
- Realising new opportunities for training, job and service provision
- Reduction of greenhouse gases to mitigate the risk of climate change
- Alleviating the effects of surface water run-off
- Embracing what are known as the 7R’s: refuse, reduce, reuse, repair, regift, recover, recycle



*Construction of wind turbine at Greenmyres*

*Image credit: Huntly & District Development Trust*



### ***Economically Sustainable Development***

As a rural community, people in Huntly are acutely aware of the need to deliver outcomes that are economically sustainable in the long term. To achieve greater economic sustainability, the town can integrate innovative business approaches into projects, making use of social enterprise models and assets that both capture local consumer spending and attract incoming visitors. By taking a people-centred approach to local economic development, control of the town's wealth can be placed back in the hands of the local people and organisations who created it, and directed into projects that directly interest, affect and benefit the town.

*Aspects of projects that could contribute to economically sustainable development:*

- *Innovative business models*
- *Creation of products where the overall value is higher than its price*
- *Inhabiting empty or underused premises before looking to build new*
- *Ensuring that more people of working age are skilled and qualified*
- *Job creation, to keep more people in work*
- *Local wealth building, keeping more money in the local economy*

### ***Social-Culturally Sustainable Development***

By coming together as a community to tackle shared challenges, Huntly can strengthen its voice and identity, and advocate for the kind of changes it actively wants to pursue. Creating stronger links between individuals and organisations can also ensure sustainable capacity for the planning and delivery of project activity. A major barrier to generating action is a lack of awareness of the resources available within communities and how to access them, so it is important to build capacity, flexibility and resilience through sharing ideas, knowledge, tacit skills and resources. This will boost social capital in the town; strengthening its networks, building trust and reciprocity between its people and generating a shared understanding of the assets in the community and their power to make a difference.

*Aspects of projects that could contribute to social-culturally sustainable development:*

- *Encouraging and enabling social interactions in public and private living spaces*
- *Promoting integration, inclusion, resilience and solidarity*
- *Improving access to housing and resources*
- *Consolidation and creation of equipment and public facilities*
- *Support community participation and decision-making*
- *Employing methods of shared ownership*
- *Promote healthy and sustainable lifestyles*

## **Health and wellbeing**

The majority of Huntly's community are healthy, safe and thriving. However key indicators show that some in Huntly experience health inequalities and there is an increasing elderly population.

Putting health and wellbeing at the heart of projects and actions can help address these acute issues; encouraging people to make healthy life choices and engage with their community. A key starting point is embracing the widely recognised *Five Ways to Wellbeing*:

### ***Give***

Giving your time, your words or your presence can give you a sense of purpose and boost your own happiness.

### ***Keep Learning***

Embracing new experiences, finding new opportunities and learning something new gives us a sense of achievement and confidence.

### ***Be Active***

Exercising can have a positive effect on mood and self esteem. Do what you can and find activities that you enjoy.

### ***Take Notice***

Paying attention to yourself and the things going on around you can help you to enjoy life and understand yourself better.

### ***Connect***

Spending time with others, talking, listening and making connections can help us to feel happier, more secure and build a sense of belonging.

Some organisations already use the *Five Ways to Wellbeing* to inform the work that they do; beyond this recognising how individual projects and actions can contribute to the wider health and wellbeing of the community should be a positive part of their delivery.

Community life, social connections and having a voice in local decisions are all factors that have a vital contribution to improving health and wellbeing. These community determinants build control and resilience and can help influence health-related behaviour.

# Hinterland

Huntly's rural hinterland relies on the town for many of the services people need to live and enjoy life; jobs, schools, shops, health services, transport links, events, activities, clubs and groups. In turn the town relies on its hinterland population to sustain itself and the result is a strong connection between town and rural living and working as one community. How the delivery of projects or actions impact and connect with Huntly's rural community should be of key concern.

While the Room to Thrive strategy sets out a direction for the town of Huntly itself, consideration should also be given to the ambitions and issues affecting smaller communities that rely on Huntly; for example around connectivity whether physically (via transport) or digitally (via broadband or mobile data).

# Fairer for all

Huntly is not immune from social injustice and inequality issues that exist within Scotland today. For a variety of reasons, within the Huntly community not everyone has the same equality of opportunity to feel empowered to take action on the priorities that matter most to them.

Consideration should be given to how projects or actions can be delivered in an inclusive way that is open to all—regardless of age, background, experience, employment status, or financial means. This approach will contribute to a fairer society not only within Huntly but across Scotland.

# National Performance Framework

The Scottish Government's purpose is for government and public services to create a more successful country, with opportunities for all of Scotland to flourish, through increasing sustainable economic growth. The National Performance Framework was developed by the government, in partnership with communities, to reflect Scotland's values as a nation and the aspirations it holds for the future and contains eleven National Outcomes:

- Economy:** We have a globally competitive, entrepreneurial, inclusive and sustainable economy.
- International:** We are open, connected and make a positive contribution internationally.
- Poverty:** We tackle poverty by sharing opportunities, wealth and power more equally.
- Communities:** We live in communities that are inclusive, empowered, resilient and safe.
- Children & Young People:** We grow up loved, safe and respected so that we realise our full potential.
- Education:** We are well educated, skilled and able to contribute to society.
- Fair Work & Business:** We have thriving and innovative businesses with quality jobs and fair work for everyone.
- Health:** We are healthy and active.
- Environment:** We value, enjoy, protect and enhance our environment.
- Culture:** We are creative and our vibrant and diverse cultures are expressed and enjoyed widely.
- Human Rights:** We respect, protect and fulfil human rights and live free from discrimination.

The Room to Thrive strategic objectives that Huntly has adopted working towards 2030 can make meaningful contributions to many of these national outcomes, as outlined in the table overleaf.

## How Huntly can contribute to Scotland's National Policy Framework outcomes

		National Outcomes								
Room to Thrive strategic objectives		Economy	Poverty	Communities	Children & Young People	Education	Fair Work & Business	Health	Environment	Culture
<b>A town centre that belongs to us</b>										
1.1	Community control of town centre buildings with the purpose of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>providing flexible and affordable options for community and business use</li> <li>carrying out appropriate modernisation</li> </ul>	●	●	●						
1.2	The town has a people-friendly centre; bringing life and colour to the streets making a distinctive place to be that's easy to get around.			●	●			●	●	●
1.3	Bring new activity and purpose that creates a positive and modern story of Huntly as a place to live, work in or visit.	●					●			●
1.4	Develop partnership working between the community, proprietors and the local authority to protect and enhance Huntly's built heritage.	●		●					●	
<b>A campus for learning and play</b>										
2.1	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.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
2.2	A shared plan exists for minor and major capital investment to continually raise the standards of facilities available.	●		●	●	●			●	
<b>A rural place with transport that works for us</b>										
3.1	Easy access to active travel—irrespective of age or ability—to get into town, around town and accessing rural leisure routes like Battlehill, Clashindarroch or The Bin Forest.		●	●	●			●	●	●
3.2	A range of attractive transport options that meet the needs of people living, working and visiting Huntly and District is available.	●	●		●		●			
3.3	The town is prepared to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>engage with the route planning of the new A96</li> <li>take advantage of the economic and development opportunities the final route will bring</li> </ul>	●		●					●	
<b>The focus is people, environment and culture</b>										
4.1	Making use of a range of tools to communicate to locals, visitors and potential visitors alike.			●	●					●
4.2	Empowering people of Huntly to contribute towards life in the town through the sharing of skills or resources and actively pursuing ventures that include opportunities for socialising and inclusion across communities.	●	●	●	●	●		●	●	●
4.3	Take action that reduces greenhouse gas emissions and allows the town to transition to a circular economy.	●		●					●	
<b>Where real opportunities exist for enterprise</b>										
5.1	Existing businesses and new enterprises complement each other to sustain footfall.	●								
5.2	Starting new enterprises is a supported process.	●					●			●
5.3	Develop lifelong learning opportunities, within existing organisations, services and businesses that can increase the town's collective skillbase, and capacity to apply these to enterprises.		●		●	●				



## Local Wealth Building

Scotland is among the most advanced economies in the world and yet it faces stark economic challenges. Despite national growth and historically low levels of unemployment, wages have failed to keep track with living costs and most peoples' living standards aren't rising. Wealth is increasingly generated by large companies owning and controlling common resources (such as land and energy), extracted by distant shareholders. The economy favours dividends over the servicing of local demand or production. In short, the fruits of growth are not increasing incomes for the majority. The problem is not so much a lack of wealth, but where this wealth goes, who owns it and who benefits from it. At a local level, the prevailing model of economic development has failed to engage with these questions of wealth distribution, focusing instead on generating contributions to Gross Value Added (GVA).

The way we organise our economy underpins every aspect of how we live our lives and how our communities' function. There are plenty of examples of new ideas and approaches being tested and demonstrated in Scotland and beyond, showing ways in which the economy could work better to create more liveable places and deliver more sustainable and equitable prosperity. There is a rich source of innovative thinking outside the mainstream, plenty of evidence that the system can be designed differently; and also a huge will to do things differently. Re-thinking the economic system and how it works for us, can no longer be part of an 'alternative' approach. It is a question of urgently building a new, mainstream, practical economic system that functions well enough to provide good lives sustainably and equitably for everyone in Scotland.

Local Wealth Building is a new approach to economic development that addresses the failure of the current agenda to generate significant benefit for local economies and people. Born out of a frustration with 'development as

### **Preston, the most improved city in the UK**

Following the failure of an economic development plan based on attracting inward investment, Preston City Council saw the need for a new approach to address the growing needs of the city and its people. Since 2013, Preston has adopted a Local Wealth Building approach in its economic development strategy, as a result over £70 million has been redirected back into the Preston economy; £200 million invested into the Lancashire economy; spending behaviour within public bodies has been transformed; and, new tools for a fairer economy have been developed.

### **Co-operative Councils Innovation Network**

The Co-operative Councils' Innovation Network is a collaboration between local authorities who are committed to finding better ways of working for, and with, local people for the benefit of their local community. The network supports the shaping of a new role for local authorities that replaces traditional models of top down governance and service delivery with local leadership, genuine co-operation, and a new approach built on the founding traditions of the co-operative movement: collective action, co-operation, empowerment and enterprise.

usual' approaches, Local Wealth Building provides a practical framework for generating and spreading wealth within communities. Over the last decade, people across the world have taken on local wealth building ideas, applied them in their own communities and witnessed the fruits of their work through the growth of inclusive, living waged jobs, invigorated local supply chains, greater concentrations of local business and increased local spending.

A growing number of businesses, social and public sector organisations which are rooted in place are now driving a shift in economic development thinking. A Local Wealth Building approach harnesses the power of these anchor institutions to reshape local economic development, so that it creates place-based and democratically owned local economies.

Aberdeenshire Council can adopt a Local Wealth Building approach and use its convening power to bring together anchor institutions in place to support a new approach to local economic development from within. Public organisations are embracing the 'public pound', procuring goods and services locally so that this money flows through local supply chains, increasing the recruitment of local people who face barriers to employment and developing under-utilised assets for the benefit of local people. Local Wealth Building requires an active approach from all anchor institutions working together to support the local business base to supply, recruit and buy locally, pay the Living Wage and offer progression routes, and develop investment portfolios which reflect local need.

Anchor institutions across Aberdeenshire can play a role in stimulating the local economy and supporting greater democratic ownership of it, through growing SME's, mutually owned businesses, co-operatives, social enterprises and municipally owned companies to enable the wealth generated in a community to stay in that locality, and play a vital role in counteracting the extraction of wealth.

# Huntly is a place where people make things happen.

It is all these different businesses, member organisations, charities, clubs and groups that makes Huntly more than just a collection of homes. The common thread running through each and every venture is the people of Huntly; without the people none of them would happen.

1st Huntly Brownies 1st Huntly Guides 1st Huntly Rainbows 1st Huntly Scouts 2nd Huntly Brownies  
2nd Huntly Guide 2nd Huntly Rainbows Aberdeenshire Council A M Phillip Agritech Adult Keep Fit  
Air Training Corps Alexander Forsyth & Son Alexander Scott's Hospital Eventide Home Argyll Garage  
Aurora Productions Baby - 1 year Group Baby Massage Class Balhousie Care Home Bargain Box  
Barnett TV Shop Beavers Belly Dancing Bin Ranger Summer Club Blythswood Care Shop Books Abroad  
Borland Insurance Bowling (Indoor) Brander Reading Group Bridge (Improvers) Brogan Fuels  
Bruce Newsagent Café India Carers Support Group Cassie's Castle Café Castle Hotel Chaps Barbers  
Chiropody & Natural Healing Christ Church Climbing Club Common Threads Community Development  
Group Cycling Group D & G Groundcare Ltd Dean's of Huntly Deveron Dental Practice Deveron Home Start  
Deveron Projects Deveron Taxi's Divine Beauty DIY Club (Respite) Douglas Heggie Fine Art Dragon Garden  
Dru Yoga Duke Street Dental Practice Duke Street Pharmacy Duncan & Todd Opticians Duncan Taylor & Co  
Dundendance Dunedin Guest House Elegant Nails & Beauty Emin's Pizza and Kebab Esson's of Huntly  
Ex-Servicemen's Club Financial Options NE Ltd First Aid for Parents Forbes Raeburn Butcher Frasers Motor  
Spares Fred Watt Jeweller Fred Watt Opticians FRESH Turkish Barbers Friends of Jubilee Hospital  
Friends of Market Muir Friends of the Clash Funky Monkeys G & L Marshall Motor Engineers  
Garromuir Kennels General Iyenga Yoga Glenburn Guest House Gordon Arms Hotel Gordon Fly Fishers  
Gordon Primary School Gordon Primary School Parent Council Gordon Primary School PTA Gordon Rural Action  
Gordon Schools Midi-Rigby Gordon Woodwork Group Grampian Food Ingredients Great Lengths Youth Group  
Greenmount Guest House Gymnastics Club Hand Made in Huntly Hillview Guest House  
Huntly & District Development Trust Huntly & District Disabled Club Huntly & District Guide Dogs  
Huntly & District Pipe Band Huntly & District Tourist Action Group Huntly Amateur Football Club  
Huntly Amateur Swimming Club Huntly Area Cancer Support Huntly ASDtitude Huntly Auction Mart  
Huntly Auto Services Huntly Beavers Huntly Bowling Club Huntly Boys Brigade Huntly Boys' League  
Huntly Business Association Huntly Business Centre Huntly Carpet & Blind Centre Huntly Castle Caravan Park  
Huntly Chip Shop Huntly Christian Fellowship Huntly Christmas Lights Huntly Community Council  
Huntly Community Kitchen Huntly Community Sports Trust Huntly Cricket Club Huntly Cubs  
Huntly Day Centre Huntly Educational Trust Huntly Fabrics Huntly Family Resource Centre  
Huntly Farmers Market Huntly FC & Social Club Huntly First Responders Huntly Fishings Huntly Floral Fund  
Huntly Folk Night Huntly Framers Huntly Golf Club Huntly Health Walks Huntly Histories  
Huntly Junior Cricket Club Huntly Laundrette Huntly Live Events Huntly Minibus Committee  
Huntly Motorcycles Huntly Motors Huntly Nordic Ski Club Huntly OAP Association Huntly Parish Church  
Huntly Rifle Club Huntly Scottish Country Dance Club Huntly Snafs Group Huntly Sports Trust  
Huntly Stroke Club Huntly Swift Group Huntly Tang Soo Do Huntly Vehicle Care Centre Huntly Writers  
Huntly Youth Football Club Huntly Youth Forum Huntly's Pop Up Indoor Market Indigo  
Inspire Rural Support Service J & J Watt Jackie's Jenny Durno Catering Jessiman Dance School  
Johnston Carmichael Joy Indian Takeaway Just Hair Just Move It Kenny's Store Kiddiewinkles Nursery  
Kingdom Hall Ladies Circle Largue Pharmacy Linden Lacemakers Linnorie Firewood Services  
Long Technology Machine Knitting & Craft Group McWilliam's Haulage Murdoch McMath & Mitchell Solicitors  
Networks of Wellbeing Nickel N Dime Orb's Bookshop Over 50s Group Peterkins Pilates Pipeline Technique  
QED R & M Engineering R Barron & Son Really Cool Club Redmayne Bentley Rizza's of Huntly  
Scottish Slimmers Sellars Agriculture Senior Section Shearer of Huntly Simpson Mechanical Services  
Sinclair's Bakers Sinclair's of Rhynie Solo Hair Design St Margaret's Church Stewart & Watson  
Strathbogie Archaeology Strathbogie Art Group Strathbogie Fiddlers Strathbogie Flooring  
Strathbogie Forest & Garden Strathbogie Horticultural Society Strathbogie Junior Agricultural Club  
Strathbogie Junior Fiddlers Strathbogie Parish Church Strathbogie Riding for Disabled  
Strathbogie Veterinary Centre Strathbogie WRI Strathdeveron Bar TD Barbers TGS Parents in Partnership  
The Bank Café & Restaurant The Bike Shack The Crown Bar The Digital Croft The Ethical Giftshop  
The Fag Man The Furniture Plantation The Gordon Schools The Hedge Doctors The Huntly Rotary Club  
The Kindergarten The Larder The Mart Café The Meadows Care Home The Merry Kettle Tea Shoppe  
The Royal Oak The Yarners Tin Hut Sessions Town is the Garden Towns & Cairnie Visually Impaired Group  
Watt Ironmongers Whiskies of Scotland You Make the Difference

The people of Huntly have their priorities in sight.

***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.***

To meet these priorities, how does Huntly make things happen?

There's no magic wand or benefactor waiting in the wings that Huntly can call upon. Instead to grow and change in the ways it wants to, Huntly needs empowered people to unlock the potential of the assets around them. Forging opportunities collaboratively for social and economic development will make the town more resilient and self-empowered.

Unlocking assets.

Many of the spaces in The Square have been empty for some time and local people have not held influence over the prominent buildings to put them to best use. Recently even more key properties have become available, and though this has an obvious downside at the moment, there is an opportunity for the local community to make the most of the changing market conditions and shape the town centre so that it is fit for the future.

The town (by means of the Huntly Town Team or some of its organisations coming together) could look to acquire properties—either by purchase or long-term lease—in order to control and improve the town based on local need and maintaining local benefit.

New community empowerment legislation gives the community additional capability and advantage in securing properties for community ownership. Participation requests will allow a community body to enter into dialogue with public authorities about local issues and local services on their terms and can lead to permanent asset transfers.

The wealth of things that already happen in Huntly could have more impact if town centre spaces were available for them. This could create a double unlocking of assets, getting into and activating highly-visible spaces.

Empowering people.

Huntly's heritage as a market town was built by enterprising people who took a chance and began to trade. These chances created household names that were successful businesses for many years. Though the models of town centre business has changed, the need for these types of innovative, chance-takers in the town remains.

The reinvigorating of the town isn't an effort reserved for the Huntly Town Team or Aberdeenshire Council, and both these organisations should present the opportunities and build the talents of potential chance-takers in order to stimulate the local, private and social enterprise sector.

The town needs to become an incubator for ideas put into action. Entrepreneurs need a supportive environment to feel confident in taking and managing risk. Huntly needs to provide strong lead for this and start to de-risk the process of starting a business. This offer should also extend beyond a solely business focus, to build skills, knowledge and confidence among everyone who has an interest in doing something.

Leading and communicating.

Huntly is not a dormitory town! People from across the town and district initiate and involve themselves in community life. Everyone has differing capacity to drive, run, volunteer and show up at meetings and events, but the feeling is that people are keen to do what they can, when they can.

The Huntly Town Team has come together to lead the town and must drive things forward, gathering people and pace as it goes. This will take collective leadership with communication at its core.

Inwardly, members of the Huntly Town Team must continue to talk and work as closely as possible in the generation of ideas and the delivery of their projects, sprinting in groups together wherever appropriate and collectively keeping an eye on the bigger picture.

Outwardly, the Huntly Town Team should make communication to locals and visitors as easy and constant as possible. The Huntly Town Team will be a strong and influential voice for Huntly to communicate the reasoning for decisions to be made at a regional and national level.



Planning and action must go hand-in-hand.

There's been a slow and steady decline of many town centres for many varying reasons. Huntly town centre needs to think and act quickly to adapt to this changing context. Huntly is already well studied and considered; putting the town and its organisations in a strong position to make important changes immediately. Huntly is full of resourceful people who can respond and adapt to ensure projects are successful, even as the needs, parameters and income changes.

Many sprints make a marathon.

Changes aren't always easily made or positively recognised when there are so many variables and differing requirements existing in one place. However there is unanimous recognition in the responses to this study, that change needs to be made for Huntly's sake.

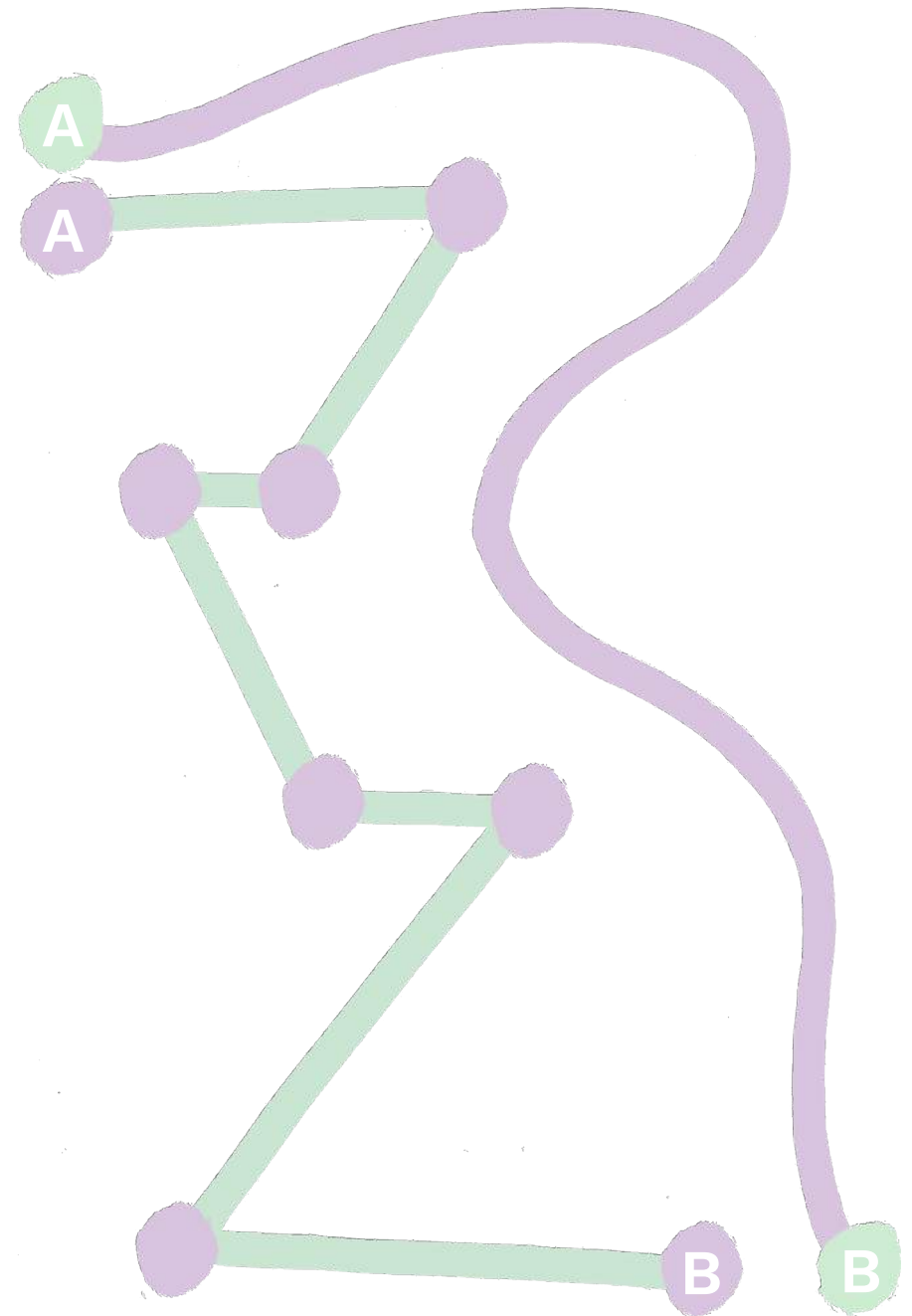
The changes aren't always guaranteed to work and the risk of failure can make it difficult for organisations to try new things.

To overcome this, the Huntly Town Team in partnership with relevant Aberdeenshire Council departments should adopt a localised identity (Room to Test?) for testing and implementing enterprising ideas for change. Projects should be visible and tagged under the same Beta banner before graduating to tried, tested and fully presentable ideas. Testing can be done in quicker, more achievable and rewarding stages that are always building towards a developing end goal rather than big, costly strategic changes. Know the purpose and make sprints, not marathons.

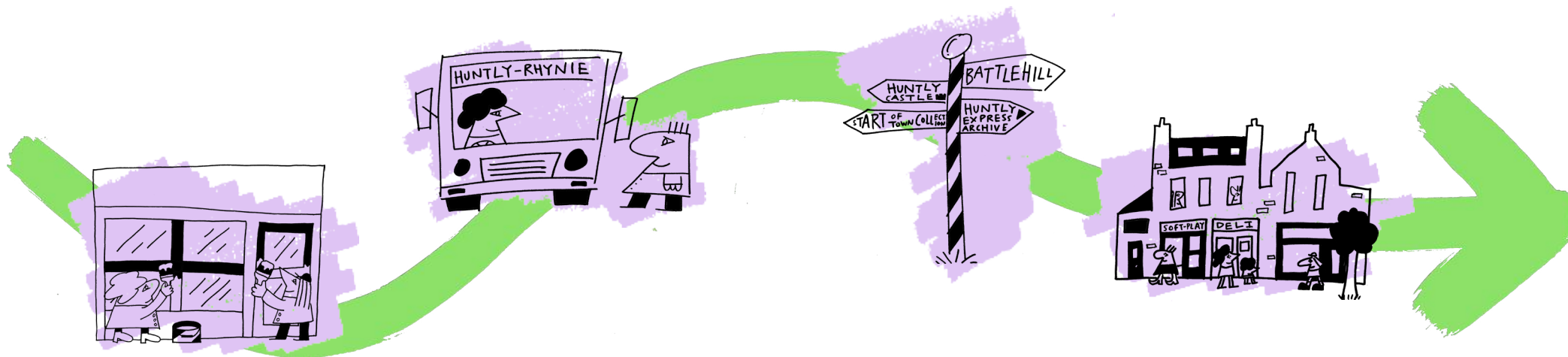
Huntly's central square is the perfect testing ground, but this can happen across the district and further beyond still.

*Similar approaches other places have taken:*

*Dublin City Beta Projects, Co-operative Councils Innovation Network*



*Many sprints can build one marathon, reaching the same goal but by a different route*



## A Vision of Huntly in 2030

With collective action, Huntly can tackle its current challenges and ensure that the town enables all its people to thrive.

Huntly in 2030 is a resilient town that gets things done, typified by the strong character and community-spirit that has driven the town for centuries. Folk of all ages feel confident that Huntly has what they need to thrive personally and collectively.

The town square and surrounding streets are bustling with life and colour. Several of the vacant buildings that detracted the town centre for years are now owned by different community organisations, offering low-rents to small enterprises; a greeting cards and craft shop, antiques store, soft-play centre, clothes shop. A radical approach to growing mean that plants, flowers, trees and edible gardens are a mainstay of town centre, no matter the time of year.

A group of people have come together to set up a social enterprise hotel in the town centre, welcoming visitors, providing hospitality training to local people and paying profits back into the renovation of other buildings in the town. One of these has been Stewart's Hall, where improvements have made it the premier events venue between Aberdeen and Elgin. A community cinema project has just celebrated its 10th anniversary and attracts thousands of people across the north east to Huntly each year. These new enterprises are having ripple effects to other businesses in the town centre, with new bistro's and bars opening.

Getting into and around Huntly is easier than ever. Coupling local and national investment has expanded the amount of traffic-free routes for walking and cycling that are accessible to all regardless of age or ability. A once ad-hoc community mini-bus service has grown to provide regular services into Huntly from outlying villages and an express route to Aberdeen, all on a reliable and regular timetable and at affordable prices.

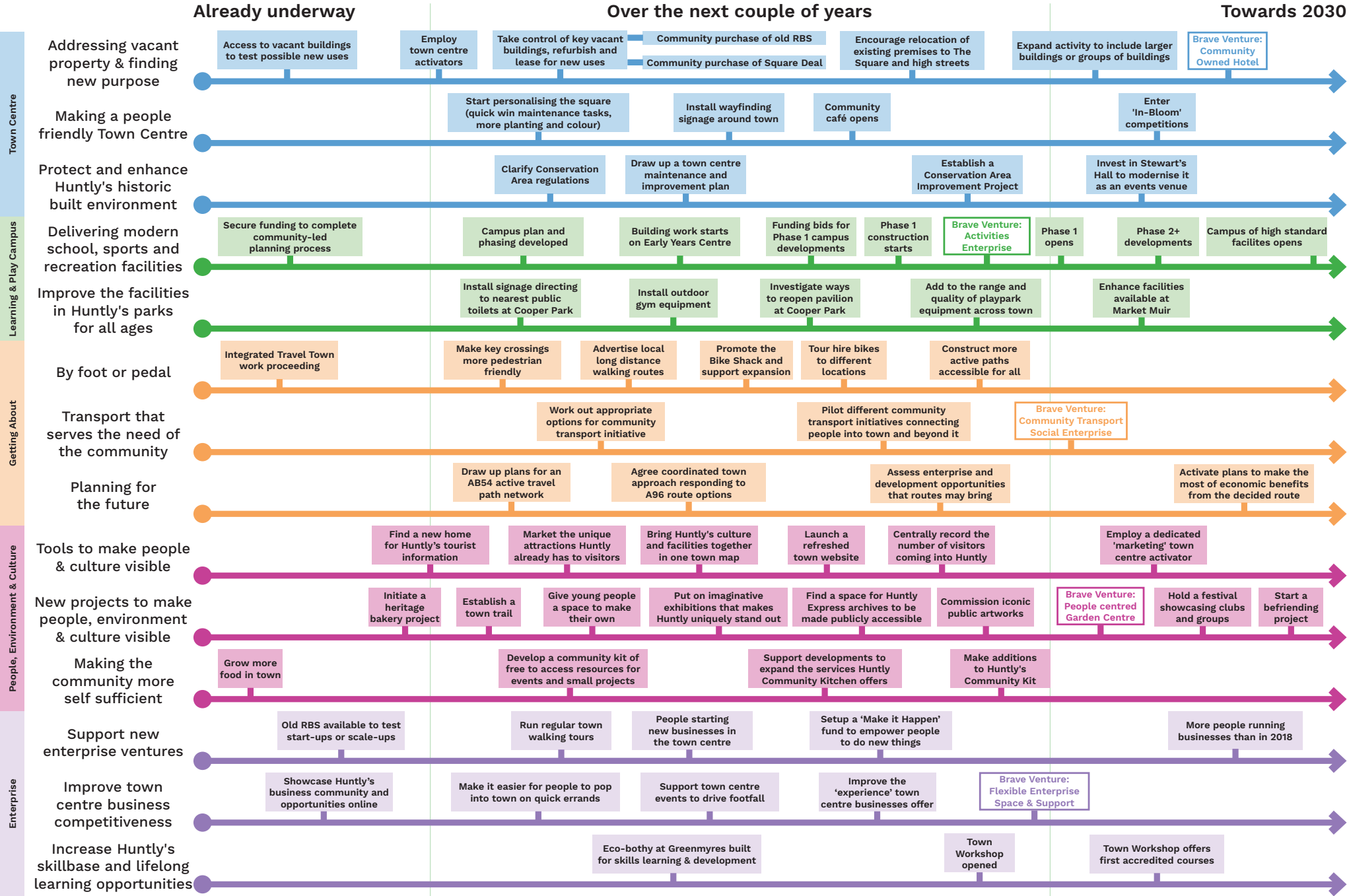
Representatives of different groups have worked in partnership to secure significant investment in developing a campus of community learning and leisure facilities connecting up from the town square all the way to Huntly Castle. Individuals have taken advantage of Huntly's sporting heritage to setup unique attractions providing a range of activities for locals and visitors alike—bringing new skilled jobs.

This rich tapestry of enterprise, culture and people assembles in celebration at key seasonal festivals where locals, visitors and new families moving to the area can get to know each other and share their interests, skills and willingness to support all things Huntly.

One theme running through all this activity is an embrace of sustainable development principles that is lessening Huntly's collective impact on the environment, improving social connections, and allowing the whole community to do more, with less.

A Vision for Huntly in 2030

# Huntly's Milestones





## Huntly Town Team Commitments

Organisations currently represented on the Huntly Town Team have made commitments to the part that they will play in delivering the Room to Thrive strategy in the years leading to 2030 and beyond.



Aberdeenshire Council will support the Huntly community to deliver the Room to Thrive Strategy in a number of ways. Aberdeenshire Council's Marr Area Office will continue to work with the Huntly Town Team as the group leads and enables the community to deliver aspects of the Room to Thrive Strategy. The Marr Area Office will act as the main link to specialist Aberdeenshire Council officers through the Marr Area Management Team.

The council will also support and encourage the development of local Huntly based community planning groups that set up to take forward particular projects in the plan either through the Learning Community Partnership or the Area Office.

Where infrastructure improvements that come under the remit of the council are agreed by the council to be necessary and funds can be made available these will be taken forward. Where improvements are desired and funds are not available, the council will seek to work with the community to find ways to draw in funds that might not be available to the council to enable the works to take place. This may involve partnerships between the council and Huntly Town Team members or 'friends' groups or other approaches as appropriate and will require active involvement of the community.



Deveron Projects is a socially engaged arts organisation that has been living and working in Huntly for over 22 years. Our identity is rooted here, for us, the town is the venue. With no physical venue, this small rural town is the stage, playground and meeting place for our work; its identity, people, politics and history is the starting point for artists who come to work and live here.

Our maxim of *think global, act local* has created an arts organisation that has never lost sight of the town, while embracing internationalism. Our programme takes risks, is audacious and responsive to socio-political change and is constantly refreshing and challenging to artists and communities. We do not provide art to an audience but use the creative force of artists working with our community to regenerate our culture, change how we act and take ownership of our future. We have a diverse and active range of partners - locally, regionally and internationally.

We inhabit, explore, map and activate Huntly through artist-driven projects. The artists (whether local or global) are 'in residence'; they live and work here during their projects and so being an artist becomes like any other job in town. Recent years have dramatically demonstrated how swiftly our context changes locally, regionally and globally. Our community has identified new priorities for regeneration and we wish to create an artistic and experiential legacy for Huntly to own, exploring what home means socially, environmentally, politically, economically, and building on the physical, environmental and social heritage of the town through imaginative and effective interpretation.



Huntly Business Association is a non-profit organisation made up of local people with the welfare of Huntly and Huntly district's business community at heart aiming to provide a voice for all businesses, large and small, in Huntly and the surrounding areas. We support the Huntly Town Team strategy and are committed to working with the Team to support businesses of all sizes, where possible, and to take Huntly forward to become a thriving town.



Huntly Community Council's role is to ascertain, co-ordinate and express to the local Authority and other public authorities, the views of the community in relation to matters for which those authorities are responsible for and to take such action in the interests of that community that is practicable and reasonable.

Huntly Community Council is made up of individuals each with their own skills, their own expertise, their own interests but when it meets, it works as a team and acts as a link between the people of Huntly, elected Councillors, Aberdeenshire Council and other organisations.

It discusses issues of concern, planning issues and suggests how Huntly could be improved to provide a better quality of life for those that live and work in the town.

It supports groups and causes relating to the town and acknowledges the achievements of organisations and individuals. As a representative body on the Huntly Town Team the Community Council will act as a lobbying body in support of the development of the priority themes to be pursued in regenerating the town.

Support will be given wherever possible by members in taking the themes through the various stages of development and into implementation, promoting the towns history, facilities and attractions to visitors and build on the strong community spirit that already exists.



Huntly and District Development Trust (HDDT) is a member-owned community company and a registered Scottish charity serving Huntly and District as defined by the AB54 postcode. We work with others to help build a resilient, inclusive, enterprising community capable of dealing with ongoing change.

Since 2009, we have delivered a range of projects to make Huntly a better place to live, work and visit. Largely grant-dependent at the start of our journey in recent years we have secured our own significant annual stream of unrestricted income through involvement in three local renewable energy projects. We will use this income to co-invest in projects to deliver the Room to Thrive Strategy over the years ahead. Our 500 members, board of volunteer directors and small staff team will all play our part: leading where we need to lead, supporting where we need to support. We are an ambitious, innovative and outward-looking organisation and look forward to the journey.

## **Huntly & District Tourism Action Group**

Huntly and District Tourism Action Group aims to support the Huntly Town Team's ambition to increase the profile of the area to visitors through a diverse strand of actions detailed within the strategy.

Primarily, this will be achieved through identifying the towns unique selling points and engaging with the visitor journey, from initial interaction, browsing and interest, to consideration of travel options and visiting, then subsequently gathering customer feedback of experience.

It is envisioned that fulfilling the objectives of the strategy will see an expansion of training opportunities in Hospitality and Customer Service, Catering and Events organisation, along with assessing any increased requirements for accommodation.

HADTAG as a voluntary organisation has no paid employees and although much has been achieved in the past 10 years this has been through the free and generous giving of volunteers' time. However, to deliver the Tourism ambitions identified in the Room to Thrive Strategy, the capacity of HADTAG as an organisation will need to increase, including the use of employed personnel to progress various tourism projects that have already been identified, this route has been successful in the past.

A strand of the Room to Thrive strategy and action plan aims to refresh the focus on Tourism, to make the town and rural area a must visit, must return destination, which would make a win for businesses through improved financial turnover and employment, along with increased visitor spend into the local economy and an associated win for visitors who will report an excellent visitor experience throughout their journey.

Originally constituted in 1997, Huntly Sports Trust, is a registered, not for profit, company, Limited by guarantee. We are responsible for the management, upkeep and maintenance of the all-weather pitch, supporting sporting equipment along with the management, maintenance and provision of changing room facilities within the pavilion at the Meadows playing pitches. The committee is made up of volunteer individuals from across the community including representation from Aberdeenshire Council and the sporting groups who use the facilities at the Meadows.

Our objective is to provide and assist in the delivery of sporting facilities within Huntly in the interest of social welfare and wellbeing. Our aim is to improve health and wellbeing opportunities for local residents, visitors and tourists via all aspects of indoor and outdoor sports, recreational and leisure activities.



Launched in January 2019, Live Life Aberdeenshire is a new and innovative approach to delivering Sports and Cultural Services on behalf of Aberdeenshire Council. As part of this exciting new strategy, the library service will be working with local people, groups and partners to help develop connected and cohesive communities through culture. Central to this strategy are our strategic outcomes:

**The Wider World:**

Working to support a national and international cultural profile for Aberdeenshire by promoting and celebrating our unique Doric culture, our places, our people and our heritage.

**Our Sense of Place:**

Working to tackle inequalities, promote diversity and develop opportunities to share, learn and create. We will promote and protect the natural and historic features of our communities.

**Our Local Economies:**

Working to support a strong and diverse creative industry and to attract inward investment. We will support a thriving and diverse programme of performances and

events, using culture to make Aberdeenshire a popular tourist destination. We will also support volunteering, apprenticeships and other learning to support people in work.

**Health and Wellbeing:**

working to ensure people are happy and healthy by promoting learning and literacy, supporting programmes which promote good mental health and using cultural activity to help older people live rich and independent lives.



Networks of Wellbeing (NoW) is a long-standing independent charitable organisation based in Huntly, Aberdeenshire. We promote and support improvements in mental health, wellbeing and resilience, in particular, encouraging social inclusion for those disadvantaged due to disability, age, finances and/or lack of connections. Our services are centred around the New Economics Foundation's "Five Steps to Wellbeing" approach to good mental health.

We support Recovery journeys and help people to discover their networks of wellbeing, both in terms of personal mental health management techniques, and also by making connections to their wider community. The journey for each person is different and our support varies with individual need.

The multi-disciplinary/holistic approach we take to mental health and unique combination of individual support with community-based activities helps to break down barriers, improve community integration, reduce social isolation, change perspectives and build confidence - so promoting mental health resilience for the benefit of the individual, their wider networks and our communities.

As a representative on the Huntly Town Team, our multi disciplinary/holistic approach provides us with a natural means to promote and support the community in the development and delivery of the Room to Thrive strategy.



## References

- <sup>1</sup> Most recent population data available is for 2016, sourced via Scottish Government (<https://statistics.gov.scot/>).
- The following intermediary data zones were used to calculate population:
  - Cromar and Kildrummy - 04,
  - Inch, Oyne and Ythanwells - 02-03,
  - Clashindarroch - 01-06,
  - Huntly - 01-05,
  - Rural Keith and Strathisla - 05
- <sup>2</sup> Homes data sourced from Aberdeenshire Council (<https://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/media/22094/huntly-profile-september-2017.pdf>).
- <sup>3</sup> Greenspace calculated by icecream architecture, January 2019.
- <sup>4</sup> High street vacancy rate calculated by icecream architecture, November 2018, based on The Square, Castle Street, Gordon Street, Duke Street , Bogie Street and Deveron Street.
- <sup>5</sup> Local businesses calculated by icecream architecture and Huntly Business Association, November 2018.
- <sup>6</sup> Average household income for 2018 sourced from Aberdeenshire Council (<https://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/media/23639/household-income-in-aberdeenshire-2018.pdf>).
- <sup>7</sup> Unemployment rate for November 2018 based on number of Job Seeker Allowance and Universal Credit claimants, sourced from NOMIS.
- <sup>8</sup> Work destinations sourced from Aberdeenshire Council (<https://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/media/22094/huntly-profile-september-2017.pdf>).
- <sup>9</sup> School leaver destinations sourced from The Gordon Schools.

## List of Appendices

1. 'How's Huntly?' Results & Policy Review (June 2018)
2. Potential external funding sources
3. Vision headlines
4. Visitor numbers to Huntly attractions



