

Section 2

Executive Summary

Framing Future Forfar

Our project team for the Forfar Town Centre Charrette - led by Pidgin Perfect, comprising partners Nick Wright Planning and Willie Miller Urban Design and consultants, Professor Leigh Sparks of Stirling University, Arts Curator Patricia Fleming and Architect Matt Bridgestock of John Gilbert Architects - undertook a pre-charrette programme that aimed to engage as widely and broadly as possible to uncover the critical issues for people in Forfar and use this knowledge to frame the structure of the charrette itself.

To gather a detailed picture of Forfar Town Centre the project team met with local residents, business owners, community groups of all descriptions, council workers and elected members. The research conducted was broadly across three distinct areas: Public engagement, conversations with Community Planning Partners, and strategic desk research into Forfar Town Centre.

For clarity and accessibility, we created a visual identity for the charrette that was simply titled Future Forfar: a series of creative conversations, activities and events to explore the future of Forfar Town Centre. The project was also accessible on Twitter through @FutureForfar and #FutureForfar and on Facebook with all the interactions being documented through Storify.

See link: <https://storify.com/pidginperfect/future-forfar>

We created a physical presence for Future Forfar by distributing flyers with this identity highlighting the programme of activity. Crucially our team also established a town

centre presence by taking over a shop unit on the High Street, creating a space for advertising the charrette, intended to accommodate activity from local community groups in the lead up to and post charrette.

Our team gathered important statistical information and maps of the urban framework for analysis and comparison with the information gathered public engagements.

The intensive Pre-Charrette Phase was invaluable to the framing of materials and discussions in the Charrette Phase. Out of the engaging conversations we had in the community came the clear themes of:

- How can we attract more visitors, investors and business to Forfar?
- How do we make the town centre better for the people of Forfar?
- How can we improve the town centre streets and outdoor spaces?

A series of fun engagement tools were made that took people through, what they valued in Forfar Town Centre; their aspirations for life in Forfar; the existing challenges and issues faced by the town centre; the opportunities for change in the town centre; what these changes should look like and; how they could work together to develop them.



Summary of impressions pre and post charrette

As can be seen in the many comments from local residents, business owners, community groups of all descriptions, council workers and community planning partners there were a number of challenges that were repeatedly highlighted for Forfar Town Centre such as:

- A sense of under development and lack of investment
- An absence of things to do, places to go and things to see in the town centre that meet people's interests
- A perceived lack of collective action and activity

Central to Forfar's ability to address the challenges highlighted will be collective action, yet a lack of community cohesion was one of the overriding impressions observed by the consultant team. Clear signs of this can be seen by the absence of a Community Council and the disconnected spread of community groups across Forfar.

The interpretation of our project consultant Professor Leigh Sparks of his research conducted through the Understanding Scottish Places forum, www.USP.scot, appears to corroborate the impressions above. A brief overview bears out what was learned in the public conversations:

- Comparatively more older couples without children
- Fewer charitable organisations per head implying less community cohesion
- Comparatively fewer shops and job opportunities than other similar sized towns implying less activity

- Difficulty to compete with the pull of the out of town shopping
- Something distinct therefore is needed to place the town centre in people's minds in order to draw them there

Furthermore the conversations conducted by Nick Wright with the Community Planning Partners, documented in the appendix, highlights the experience of key institutions, council workers and elected members. This too reiterates the impression that Forfar is lacking in civic cohesion.

The Emerging Vision for Future Forfar

The Forfar Town Centre Charrette ran from the 22nd - 24th November in which we received a huge number of great ideas and had passionate discussions with a wide range of individuals, organisations and stakeholders. The result was an overarching vision that everyone committed to push forward on.

Forfar Town Centre needs more buzz about it, primarily by encouraging local people to stay loyal to their town: to visit the town centre more often, to stay there longer, for work, shopping, meeting and eating, and this should be achieved by focusing on developing:

A Distinctive Character *by enhancing Forfar's underlying unique features such as buildings, shopfronts and streetscapes*

Forfar's town centre is full of distinctive character, but it needs to shine. Too many buildings are shabby, public spaces tend towards the utilitarian and are dominated by vehicles and there is a lack of beauty despite what lies beneath the surface. This group of proposals is designed to bring out the best in the town centre and encourage businesses and community groups to make the town centre's public spaces their own.

A Forfar for All Generations *by creating affordable spaces for all age groups*

Forfar is home to people of all ages. For the town centre to thrive in the future, it needs to offer something to all these different generations. For example, young people

have nowhere indoors to go without having to spend money. Young adults have difficulty getting one or two bedroomed homes, the kind of development that is ideally located in the town centre. In the evenings, people of all ages have lots of organised groups to choose from – but the choice of restaurants, bars or cafes is more limited.

Consolidating the Centre *by making The Cross and town centre a focus for the local community*

There was a strong desire from charrette participants to make the town centre more of a focus for the local community. This includes creating a central place for the community to meet and call its own, an important concept, but one which needs more detailed work. Complimenting that is a year-long town centre events programme and, in the long term, focussing future growth and investment on the town centre.

Better Communication *and coordination between all local partners on what is happening in Forfar and greater promotion to the wider world*

Forfar has a lot going on, but not everyone knows about the different activities and events available to them. To revitalise the town centre, residents need to know what there is to attract them into town. Community groups, businesses, social enterprises, the Council and its Community Planning Partners need to share and coordinate what they're doing. And, beyond all that, Forfar needs to communicate what it has to offer the wider world. The purpose? To create and share the buzz!

(See full charrette programme overleaf.)





Future Forfar

A series of creative *conversations*, *activities* and *events* to explore the future of Forfar Town Centre

About **Future Forfar**

Future Forfar is a series of creative *conversations*, *activities* and *events* to explore the future of Forfar Town Centre.

Across three days the local community of Forfar will collaborate with architects, planners, artists and other experts to explore how Forfar Town Centre can be improved and develop an action plan for a Future Forfar. Everyone is welcome. Please join us!

Booking is not required for any of the activities at the Future Forfar Cafe and Workshop – just turn up!

There will always be someone around during the Drop In times at the Future Forfar Cafe to welcome you, listen and record your comments.

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Follow, post and share on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram using: **#FutureForfar**

@futureforfar | @AngusCouncil | @pidginperfect | @NickWright1 | @williemiller

pidginperfect.com |
nickwrightplanning.co.uk | willemiller.co.uk

Schedule for **Future Forfar Cafe**

Programme of events in 3 East High Street...



Sunday 22nd November

12:00 – 14:00

'A Taste of Forfar'

Official launch Event with food by Forfar Cooking Club and special entertainment by DD8 Music.

We're kicking off Future Forfar by bringing the local community together and we want you to join us!

Monday 23rd November

09:30 - 11:30

Cereal Cafe & Drop In

13:00 - 14:00

Lunchtime Drop In

19:00 - 21:00

Game Night & Drop In

Tuesday 24th November

09:30 - 11:30

Coffee Morning & Drop In

13:00 - 14:00

Lunchtime Drop In



19:00 - 21:00

Open Mic Night & Drop In

Schedule for **Future Forfar Workshop**

What to expect at 132 East High Street...

- A warm welcome and a unique space for open discussion.
- An opportunity to review, comment and question.
- An informal structure and relaxed environment.
- Plenty of tea, coffee, soft drinks and locally made baked goods!

Sunday 22nd November

14:30 – 17:30

An introduction to Future Forfar

- Presentations and discussions

Monday 23rd November

10.00 - 12.30

How can we attract more visitors investors and business to Forfar?

- How can we create more opportunities for business and enterprise?
- How can we attract more visitors to the Town Centre?
- How can we make more of Forfar's heritage and culture?
- What should we do about vacant buildings?

If you are a business owner, run a social enterprise and are passionate about culture, heritage and tourism this will be of interest!

Locations



- ^ **Cafe**
| 3 East High Street
- ^ **Workshop**
| 132 East High Street

The **Future Forfar Cafe** is located in the former 'Treasured Gifts' shop at 3 East High Street. It is adjacent to The Cross and just next to the Post Office. Look out for the Future Forfar logos in the shop window!

The **Future Forfar Workshop** is located behind the red door at 132 East High Street at the Forfar Dramatic Society. The entrance is next to the British Red Cross Charity Shop. Look out for the Future Forfar sandwich board on the High Street!

No booking required.
Light catering from local businesses provided.
Creche facilities available.

Acknowledgements

Future Forfar is a joint project and initiative between Pidgin Perfect, Nick Wright Planning and Willie Miller Urban Design, Scotland's Towns Partnership and Stirling University Institute of Retail Studies to explore future of Forfar Town Centre.

Future Forfar is a Town Centre Design Charrette. This Charrette is a collaborative process which asks the public, local partners and professionals, 'How do we make the Town Centre even better?' and will lead to further actions for Forfar Town Centre. Future Forfar is funded by Angus Council.



WMUD
nick wright planning

With special thanks to; Forfar Dramatic Society, Pitstop, Forfar Cooking Club, DD8 Music, Glenview Community Group, Forfar in Flower, St. Margarets Church, Padanaram Action Group, Angus Cycling Club, CTC Tayside, Voluntary Action Angus, Lordburn RP Action Group, Forfar OAP Society and the many more organisations, community groups and individuals of Forfar who have helped make Future Forfar possible.

16.00 - 18.30

How do we make the Town Centre better for the people of Forfar?

- How can the Town Centre work better as the heart of the local community?
- How could it more welcoming for people of all ages?
- How can Forfar offer a better experience of leisure, culture and entertainment in the evenings?
- How can the local communities of Forfar work together to create positive change in the Town Centre and in Forfar?
- How can Forfar be a more attractive place for people to live and raise their families?

If you are a resident or an active member of community groups supporting health and wellbeing in Forfar then this will be of interest!

Tuesday 24th November

10.00 - 12.30

How can we improve the Town Centre, streets and outdoor spaces?

- What should the balance be between people and vehicles?
- How could we make streets and spaces more enjoyable to spend time in?
- Which spaces and places that should be a focus?

- What are the opportunities and challenges to the Town Centre brought by the Community Campus?
- What type of activities and events would you like to take place at The Cross?

This will interest residents, community groups, businesses and those with ideas about green space, outdoor events, transport, traffic, parking, walking and cycling.



16.00 - 18.30

A vision for Future Forfar?

- Presentations and discussions
- An opportunity to catch up on the conversations, activities and events so far!
- Special presentations from the public, community groups, local partners and invited professionals.
- Creating timeline for action
- Storytelling and imagining Future Forfar from different perspectives
- Exploring the local appetite and capacity to take action and make changes in Forfar.

This will interest EVERYONE and we encourage you to join us at the Future Forfar Cafe at 19:00 for our Open Mic night!



These events are aimed at bringing people together from across the community. All welcome!

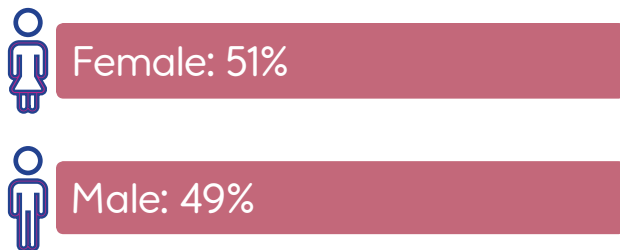
Engagement Statistics

Throughout the Future Forfar consultation programme Pidgin Perfect gathered information from participants which has been anonymised to provide the following statistics. The following statistics demonstrate the breadth and inclusion of the programme. The online social media engagement started relatively low, but the numbers increased gradually, with Facebook being most effective.

Pre-Charrette Engagement

Prior to the charrette itself, a number of key stakeholders, businesses and community groups within Forfar were engaged to help promote the charrette amongst local residents and ensure people had a clear understanding of the charrette's aims.

Participant Gender Split



26

Days spent in Forfar pre-charrette



1

Empty shop unit used to promote Future Forfar



216

People engaged pre-charrette



3000

flyers distributed

Social Media Engagement

In order to engage participants and share progress of the consultation programme with the wider Forfar community, social media was used throughout the project. This also enabled us to further promote the workshops and events amongst participants, without using costly advertising. A special @FutureForfar twitter account was set up so local residents knew where to find out further information about the charrette.



152

Tweets mentioning #FutureForfar



244

Re-tweets



210

Likes



300+

Facebook Friends



20

Likes



Pidgin Perfect @pidginperfect

Follow

Thanks to everyone who attended Day 1 of #FutureForfar! Fantastic creative conversations! #BuildingBetterCommunities



Charrette Engagement

The following data is a record of participants who took part in the five charrette workshops. The statistics reflect the diverse population engaged.



3

Day engagement programme



5

Charrette workshops held



54

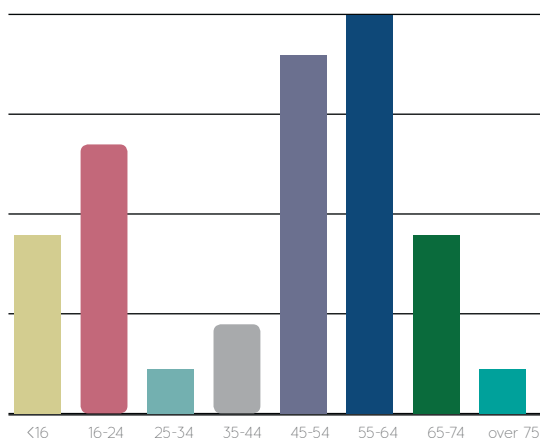
Total number of participants engaged in across the charrette workshops



1000s

of opinions, ideas & responses

Participant Age Range



12%
Under 16

18%
16-24

3%
25-34

6%
25-34

24%
45-54

27%
55-64

12%
65-74

3%
Over 75

taken from participants who chose to disclose their age. 21 participants chose not to disclose their age.

Participant Gender Split



Female: 52%



Male: 48%

Drop-In Sessions

Across the three days, seven informal drop-in sessions were held in a vacant shop space on West High Street. The shop space provided a vital public platform, raising awareness of the project with Forfar's residents, regardless of whether they actively engaged in the charrette. It also provided a venue for the launch event and closing party.



7

Drop-in sessions held across three days



2

Events held to mark the beginning and the end of Future Forfar



60

People who came into the shop for a chat and a cuppa



100s

of people stopped to look in the window and find out more about Future Forfar

It is true to say that, in general, we found public engagement slower on the uptake than expected. Whilst there was plenty of interest amongst the community in the charrette process, encouraging participation was more difficult. There were however a number of enthusiastic groups engaged and more time is required to continue to develop positive relationships with these groups and the wider community. (See contact list.)