

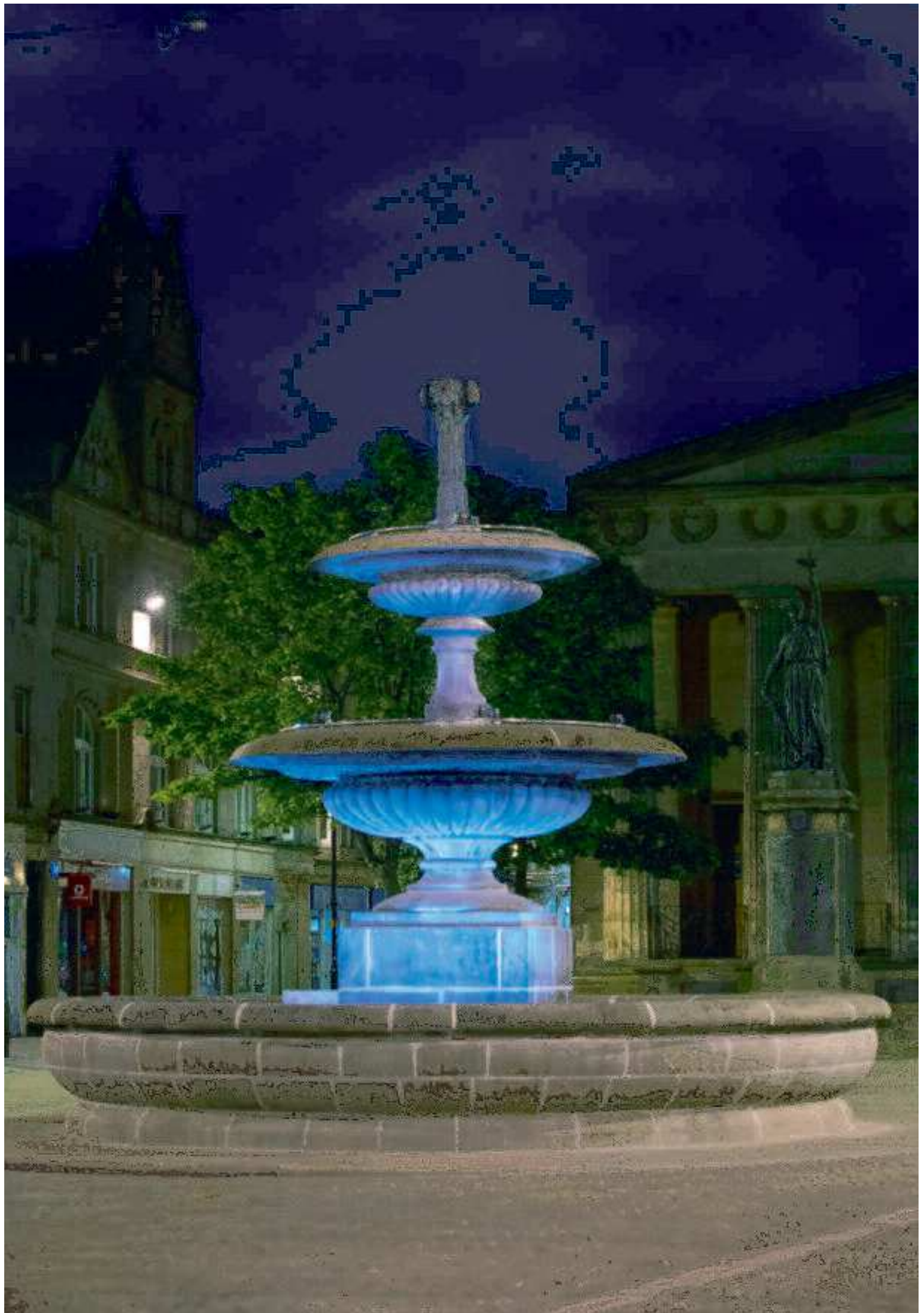
ELGIN CONSERVATION AREA
REGENERATION SCHEME
FINAL REPORT



HISTORIC
ENVIRONMENT
SCOTLAND

ÀRAINNEACHD
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ALBA





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*Members of the Castle to Cathedral to Cashmere and Elgin CARS
Management Group, along with contractors, supporters and staff.*

FOREWORD

It is a great privilege to be the Chair of the Castle to Cathedral to Cashmere and the Elgin CARS Management Group. We are very proud of the significant success of the CARS Scheme and the difference that it has made in Elgin.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the funders for their financial support, the Partnership Management Group and Moray Council staff who provided a wealth of expertise and commitment throughout, enabling them to fulfil the objectives in conserving and breathing new life into some of Elgin's key buildings and public realm.

We are extremely fortunate to have such an attractive High Street which boasts excellent examples of architecture. The investment has not only enabled the physical restoration and future preservation of these buildings, it has also created a legacy for our future generations.

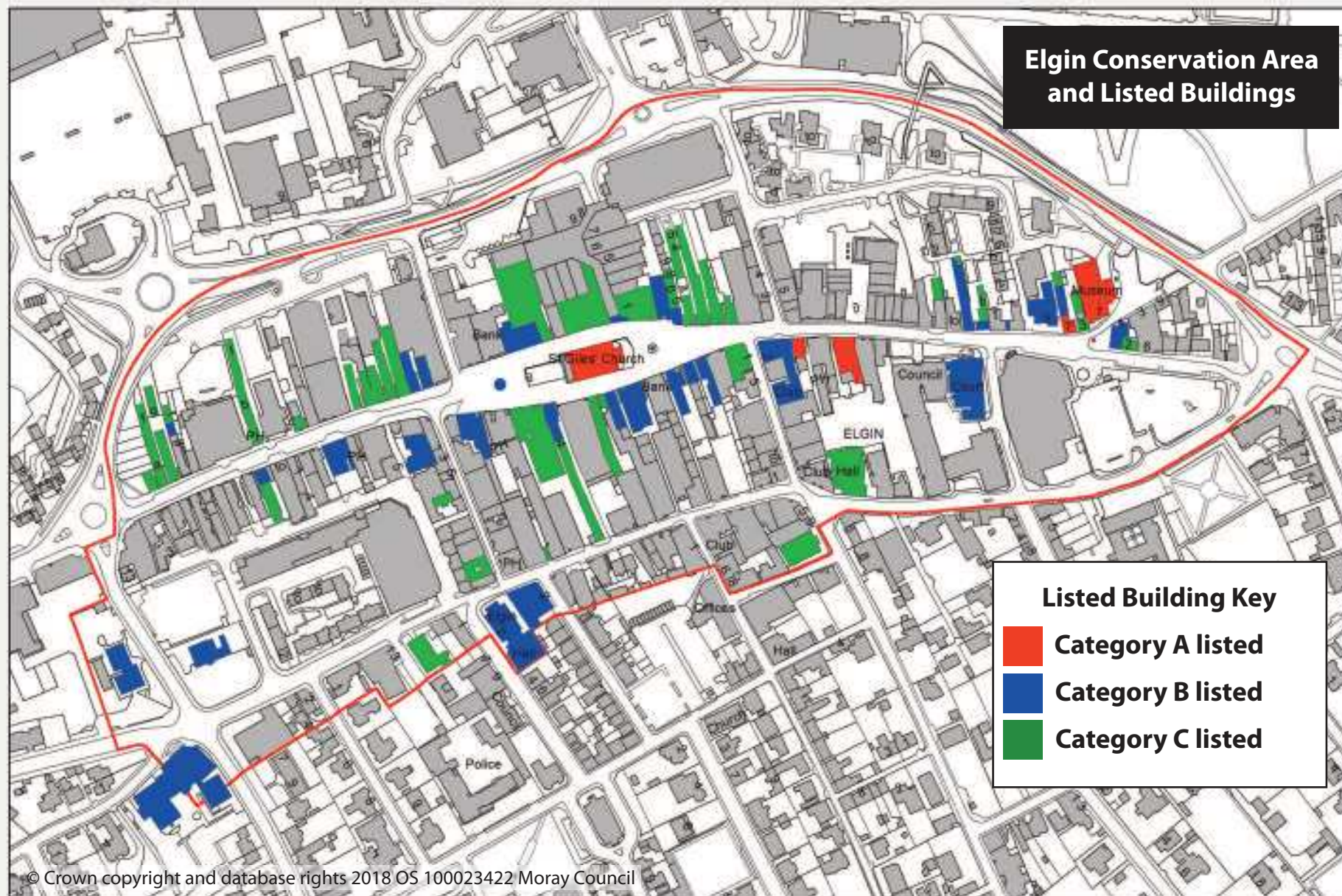
As a result of all of the hard work, we now have a more attractive place to live and work, and we can look confidently towards building a healthy future of economic growth to attract inward investment and tourism for Elgin and the wider Moray area.



Jim Royan

Chair of Castle to Cathedral to Cashmere

And Elgin CARS Partnership Management Groups



1 SUMMARY

Elgin Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme

The *Elgin High Street Conservation Area Appraisal* which was carried out in 2012 as the foundation for building the Castle to Cathedral to Cashmere Partnership and Elgin's Heritage Experience highlighted the need for vital repairs and refurbishment of a number of buildings and monuments within the Elgin Conservation Area.

The report commented that "*Elgin has some of the most attractive and durable sandstone on the Scottish mainland but the widespread use of softer stone from quarries operating from the mid-19th Century has taken its toll*" and that Elgin's townscape benefits from a number of important historic qualities requiring preservation, namely; the Medieval layout of the Burgh; a legacy of original shopfronts; a high standard of stone carvings and architectural details on street frontages and buildings.

In April 2013 the Elgin Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme (CARS) was established and repairs and restoration works were carried out on 53 properties through the delivery of 73 CARS Grants. The project ran for 5 years, ending on 31st March 2018.

The grants were categorised as - Priority Buildings, the Building Health Check Scheme, Shopfront repairs, General Fabric Repairs and Public Realm works, representing a wide scope of buildings and historic monuments which were repaired and refurbished. To compliment this, there were educational opportunities through 2 apprenticeships as well as a training programme for tradespeople, contractors and the general public.

The highly successful Elgin CARS project enabled investment of £2,560,795 utilising all the funding that was available and, together with an additional £1,200,000 of owners investment as a direct result of the Elgin CARS representing a value of funds invested into the Elgin Conservation Area of £3,770,795.

The Funding Partnership of Historic Environment Scotland, The Moray Council, Elgin BID and the Elgin Fund enabled this project to benefit from excellent positive contributions from each and the management of all the funds locally greatly assisted the process.

2 PRIORITY PROJECTS

The Elgin High Street and Conservation Area Appraisal carried out in 2012 identified properties within the Conservation Area it considered were Priority Buildings in view of their condition, and prominence within the townscape, together with their historic significance. These included a building on the BAR Register and 175-177 High Street.

As the owner of 175-177 High Street also owned Victoria Cottages and could proceed with one development during the timescales for CARS, it was agreed that Victoria Cottages would replace 175-177 High Street in the Priority Buildings scheme.

Consequently the works that were completed on Priority Buildings were;

- 35 High Street
- 185 High Street
- 'Clancys' building - 165,167,169 High Street
- 7 South Street
- Muckle Cross
- Victoria Cottages (6 adjoining buildings)

***Please note:** Whilst 186-188 High Street (the property on the BAR register) was included within the Conservation Area Appraisal, during the CARS project the property was sold and Planning Consent granted for conversion to part residential and part commercial use, though owing to various issues, this building is, as yet, undeveloped.*

The UP Church in Moss Street was also identified as a Priority Project, however unfortunately were unable to proceed with the works during the project timescale.

A total of £188,161 was grant funded to these properties with owners' contributions amounting to £164,827. The combined investment was £352,988 with an average intervention rate of 61%.

35 HIGH STREET



This property comprises an Early 19th century unlisted building with 3 storeys, an ashlar façade, 12 pane glazing, and a slate roof. There is a modern bar and shop front on the ground floor.

The building is located towards the east end of the High Street. The primary issues were that the upper stories of this building were having a negative visual effect on the Conservation Area as it was in a poor state of repair, and together with the deteriorating stonework, the condition of the building was declining rapidly.

Repairs of the original building fabric included: cutting out and lime repointing of full façade of upper levels; repairs to the cast iron guttering and downpipe; replacement of 4 first floor windows with new slim line double glazed timber sash and case windows which complied with HES guidance on the size of the window profiles.

The external restoration has significantly enhanced the building and the replacement stonework has ensured that further deterioration of the façade is halted. The replacement windows are in keeping with its appearance and safeguard the building from water penetration.

The upper floors of the building are now in use as a residential apartment.

Grant Award: £16,870

Total Cost: £28,116

185 HIGH STREET



Owners quote:

"The two grants they are contributing means renovation work can now go ahead at the two Cancer Research UK shops in Elgin so all customers and volunteers get the best possible shopping experience. We'd like to say a huge thanks to all our supporters."

This is an early 19th century Category C Listed building having 2 storeys and an attic. There are 2 bay windows on the top floor and a modern shop front on the ground floor. With a classical ashlar facade and symmetrical corniced windows, this is a prominent High Street property.

The building had suffered from considerable deterioration through water penetration and resultant rot. The schedule of works was put in place to address these issues.

Works to this property were substantial and included; roofing work, skew pointing, lead work, replacement cast iron rainwater goods, replaced and repaired stone work, window repair and paint and rot repairs.

Grant Award: £35,924

Total Cost: £71,848

VICTORIA COTTAGES



Victoria cottages form a block of six Grade C Listed terrace cottages built prior to 1870 and situated in the west end of the conservation area and which forms part of a popular thoroughfare known as Victoria Close. The flat and row of cottages had been boarded up for over 10 years and refurbishment has had a high visual and positive impact to the townscape.

The owner secured Scottish Government Empty Homes funding to restore the properties internally which are being let as affordable housing thus contributing to the regeneration of the High Street.

There were multiple external repair issues which had to be addressed including masonry work, chimney heads and roof replacement (which was not structurally sound), replacement cast iron guttering, external paint work, repairs to sash and case windows and replacement external doors.

Following the CARS grant refurbishment scheme the properties were made available to rent as Affordable Housing and have subsequently all been let.

Grant Award (total for all 6 cottages): £69,094

Total Cost: £138,188

Owners quote:

“Without the CARS grant it is unlikely that we would have proceeded with the project. Being able to apply for each individual property made a huge difference to the viability of the overall project.”



165, 167, 169 HIGH STREET



This group of properties is known as 'Clancys' and is Category B Listed. Built circa 1811, it comprises four bays with a centre depressed arched pend with a keystone and is flanked by modern shop fronts. There is a date on the keystone above the pend entrance.

Whilst this building was initially included within the Priority Buildings, having three owners meant that lengthy negotiations delayed an early start, therefore it was included within the Building Health Check group of properties where the buildings were surveyed by architects and recommendations for repair were made to the owners and the works were then architect supervised.

The works were all at high level and once commenced, it was found that the chimneys had suffered considerable decay and poor levels of repair had led to holes developing in the chimneys - the stack had a cement render applied which had been struck to imitate stonework.

An extension of grant funding was awarded and further additional works to the value of in excess of £15,000 was funded by the owners.

The chimneys at this building were attached to the building next door, 161-163 High Street which was not undergoing grant work. Further investigation at high level revealed the urgent need for this adjacent building to carry out emergency works to its chimneys, roof and gable wall which were found to be in a dangerous condition. The value of this ongoing work to the adjacent property is estimated to be in the region of £1m.



Grant Award: £28,798

Total Cost: £35,998

7 SOUTH STREET



This property was identified for priority funding as the original cast iron grilles on the front of the building had decayed significantly over time.

New, cast iron grilles were manufactured in the original pattern and replaced on this shop frontage.

Grant Award: £1,494

Total Cost: £1,993

“Elgin BID is proud to have been a partner in the Elgin Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme. From inception to completion, our support remained steadfast, such was our belief in the importance and unprecedented value that CARS would contribute to Elgin City Centre. That is what drove us to make the substantial private sector investment we did.

Many of our business members chose to take advantage of the opportunities that CARS presented and carry out work on their buildings, work which would have proven difficult in these challenging economic times and which may not have been possible without the grants available through the project.

In addition to the individual grants, activities such as the shrubbery removal project which we funded, supported by a CARS grant has seen the city transform and we look forward to the long term benefits that will result. We would like to take this opportunity to thank all of the partners who worked tirelessly to see it succeed.”

Richard Cumming – Chair, Elgin BID

MUCKLE CROSS



The Muckle Cross is a re-creation from 1888 of a 17th Century Mercat Cross. During its reconstruction, the original Lion, possibly dating from between 1633 and 1650, was presented to the community by the Hon. George Skene Duff whose Grand Uncle had been given it for safety.

Close inspection of the Finial raised concerns about the condition of the Lion, and as a result a reproduction of the Lion was commissioned and the original has gone to the Elgin Museum on display to the public within the museum.

Over many years, the finial, the carvings and the Lion had suffered from deterioration and damage, and as a prominent and important historic monument positioned on the Plainstones it was deemed to be a priority project for CARS funding.



Grant Award: £31,399

Total Cost: £68,335



3 SHOPFRONT IMPROVEMENTS

3% of CARS
funding

In 2015, Moray Council commissioned the 'Historic Shopfronts Appraisal' by Dr Lindsay Lennie for Elgin CARS which detailed many of the important historic features on shopfronts in Elgin.

Specific historic elements were described in this appraisal, which, through the allocation of nine grants were refurbished or re-instated on shopfronts within the Conservation area.

Notable details included; cast iron grilles; lobby tiling; vents within stallrisers and pilasters which had been boxed in; stone arch pediments which had eroded; stained glass which had been painted.

An issue with properties within the Conservation Area which created a sense of decay and dereliction was the amount of high level vegetation growth created by plant material growing in open mortar joints and exacerbated by faulty rainwater goods.

Around 50 properties were identified where growth was significant and through a combination of CARS funding matched with funding from Elgin BID, contractors were appointed through an Invitation to Quote to remove plant material and spray herbicides to inhibit further growth. This action made a considerable difference to the impact of the building refurbishments and the overall look of the town centre.

Grants for the nine shopfront improvements ranged from £361 to £28,764 with grant awards totalling £68,928 and these included seven of the shopfronts featured in the Appraisal.

The properties allocated funding are;

5 Commerce Street

21 Batchen Street

22 South Street

24 South Street

25 Commerce Street

33 Batchen Street

54 High Street

105 High Street

104 High Street



Before



After



33 Batchen Street

Some examples of the refurbishments are shown in the photographs.



Before



After

7 South Street grilles

21 Batchen Street



Before



After

54 South Street



Before



After

105 High Street



After

4 BUILDING HEALTH CHECK SCHEME

25% of
CARS
funding

In 2015, Elgin CARS offered a free condition survey to a number of building owners, where their building had been identified as needing repair. There was a very positive response to this offer and consequently through an Invitation to Quote, contractors bid to provide External Fabric Condition Surveys to 26 properties.

Based on the Stirling Traditional Building Health Check Scheme, these surveys identified and categorised emergency, urgent and necessary repair issues. This was a concept which helped with owners difficulties in obtaining 3 quotes required for grant works as this was becoming a barrier to applications.

The contract holder, the architects, put these works out to Tender and contractors were appointed which then enabled a fully priced schedule of works to be offered to the building owners.

Of the 26 buildings identified, 26 building owners agreed to a schedule of repairs on 17 buildings and were offered grant funding towards these works at an intervention rate of 75%.

Owners of buildings receiving these surveys were encouraged to apply for grant funding and were able to choose from the priced, specified works they were prepared to proceed with. Some agreed to all or most of the specified works, others chose a selection of works from the schedule. All the works were carried out under architect supervision.

During the period of time from initiating the Building Health Check Scheme the costs of contractors had risen appreciably and as a result, the intervention rate was raised to 75% to encourage owners and to take account of the rising costs.

The majority of the repairs were at high level and involved the repair and refurbishment of chimneys, though many also included lime pointing, stone replacement, guttering and fascia replacement and a number had roof works included.

Through this scheme, some dangerous chimneys were identified both on the grant recipients' buildings but also on adjoining buildings where urgent work was required and carried out on an emergency basis.

The value of this additional investment in emergency repairs which is as a direct result of the CARS project is estimated at in excess of £1,200,000 and some of these works will be ongoing throughout 2018 and into 2019.

The grant funding for the Building Health Check Scheme totalled £417,953 with owner contributions of £223,215 bringing the total value of the scheme to £641,167

Buildings which were part of the Building Health Check Scheme were;

**12,14,18,20
Batchen Street**

**Harvest Centre,
Greyfriars Street**

**101 High Street and
3,4 Forsyth Close**

Owners quote – “the grant has allowed us to carry out the works which may not have been undertaken and as a result work uncovered some additional emergency repairs which needed to be done. I noticed that from all of the buildings that have benefited, the buildings which have not had works on them done seem more prominent”

**165,167,169 High Street
(Clancys Building -
an identified Priority Project)**



**190,190A,190B
High Street**



Owners quote – “The CARS Grant has enabled me to bring the fabric of the building up to a standard that should help to preserve its future for a long time to come. It has put more of the building into a condition that when time and funds permit the upstairs of the building could be utilised to its full potential. I think the CARS programme has improved the city centre enormously - great to see so many ‘tired’ buildings brought back to life.”

16 Harrow Inn Close



54 High Street



26 Batchen Street



**36,38A,40
South Street**

Highfield House

42 South Street

**73,75 High Street,
Union Buildings**



10 Batchen Street

Owners quote "I think Elgin city centre has had a huge impact from CARS with longstanding issues such as the roof garden, fountain and Muckle cross all benefitting. There has been pain with the amount of scaffolding and disruption but shortly I believe that the city will look fantastic."



2-6 South Street



5 GENERAL FABRIC REPAIRS

The grant applications from individuals were initially slow, however, these increased as the project became more visible with scaffolding around numerous buildings in the High Street with CARS banners visibly displayed.

These grants covered a variety of works, encompassing high level chimney and roof works, through to replacement windows, repaired and replaced stonework, lime pointing and new cast iron rainwater goods.

Property owners were enthusiastic about CARS as it enabled them to carry out much needed repairs in keeping with Conservation principles, ensuring that historic detailing was replaced and elements like windows and rainwater goods were appropriate for their buildings. A number of buildings had lime pointed and replacement stonework including high level work to chimneys and roofs.

Notable buildings which benefitted from grants included:

The Elgin Museum, which received a grant of £111,554. The museum is a Category-A listed Fine Italianate building built in 1842 with a polished ashlar frontage, designed by Thomas Mackenzie. The museum houses a recognised collection of fossils and developing collection of archaeological artefacts from local digs. There is also a collection of Pictish stones and artefacts that attracts visitors from across the world in addition to the finds of the Victorian era.

St Giles Church – built by Archibald Simpson, 1825-28, St Giles Church is an outstanding category A listed Greek Revival church occupying a prominent position in the centre of the Plainstones in Elgin High Street.

The Elgin Club in Commerce Street which was identified as a building of note in the Conservation Area Appraisal: “A and W Reid. 1869. Built for Elgin Club and functioned as gentleman’s club until 2002 when the building closed. Datestone over door reads: Inst. 1864 EC 1869.” This is a category B Listed building which was on the BAR register.

There were a total of 27 individual grants which ranged in size from the smallest at £930 to the largest at £145,506 with an average intervention rate of 61%.

Within the High Street properties included;

164 High Street

207 High Street

227 High Street

54 High Street

58-62 High Street

206A High Street Owners quoted that he has “noticed a big difference in the look of the town and in particular the guttering which has been cleared improves the visual appearance. Also it has been good for the economy and creating work for masons, contractors etc.”

Elgin Museum

96-98 High Street

104 High Street

38-40 High Street

St Giles Church

Newmarket Close

Ex-servicemens Club

206A High Street

In South Street, Greyfriars Street, Commerce Street, Lossie Wynd, North Guildry Street and Academy Street the following were funded;

McCalls, South Street

40/40A South Street

20-26 South Street and Emmaus House

1 North Guildry Street

15A Lossie Wynd

29, 29A, 29B, 29C South Street

Bridge Centre, 1 Academy Street Owners quote, in his view "he has seen a great difference in the fabric of the town due to the various works"

Thunderton House



25 Commerce Street



10 North College Street

The Elgin Club, Commerce Street

23 Batchen Street Owners quote:
"The grant has enabled me to use the space I already have and has prevented further problems within the property. If this work had not been carried out the leaks would have had significant impact on the electrics and fabric of the building. Also the windows were dangerous and prevented an accident happening".



Harvest Centre, Greyfriars Street

GRANT AWARDS - £548,006

TOTAL INVESTMENT - £909,657

6 PUBLIC REALM

The Public Realm in Elgin is significant and notable in its historic importance. The High Street Plainstones have St Giles Church situated in the centre and the Muckle Cross and the Elgin Fountain positioned at either end of the Church. The historic Closes run off from the High Street to the North and the South.

Public Realm CARS funded works comprised restoration to two prominent historic monuments; The Elgin Fountain and the Muckle Cross and additionally, funds for the Castle to Cathedral to Cashmere (CCC) Partnership Heritage Experience had identified the need for Elgin to enhance the visitor experience together with driving town centre regeneration and economic sustainability through improvements within the centre of Elgin.

Castle to Cathedral to Cashmere

Within the Conservation Area of the town centre, the Heritage Experience included; the installation of three tiers of heritage interpretation panels to raise the profile of the town's story in an engaging and multi-dimensional fashion (with the deployment of QR codes on panels leading readers to the deeper and richer content on the website and mobile technologies). This included an Orientation table to encourage visitors to expand their journey whilst also providing increased visibility of Elgin's history and heritage both to visitors and residents; the installation of lighting to enhance the sculptures which cover aspects of Elgin History and are prominently positioned on the Plainstones; and additionally, signage to aid visitors and enhance their experience of the town.

The Elgin Fountain

The Elgin Fountain – This is attributed to Thomas MacKenzie (1844-46) and consists of 3 tiers of saucers and decorations of lotus blossom and leaves. At some point in its history the base basin had been infilled with concrete of several phases and there was evidence of leaks at the mortar joints, particularly the cope bed joint. A non-waterproof concrete had been placed in the basin up to the cope joint thus allowing water to directly percolate from the basin, passing through cracks in the concrete and weeping out of lower ashlar mortar joints. Copes were pointed with a water-proof lime mortar on completion of works to the basin pool.

Refurbishment included removal of the concrete and installation of specialist tanking to preserve and maintain its primary use as a fountain and also works to address cracking to the stone pillar supports.

Coloured programmable lighting has been installed as an additional feature to the fountain and a mechanism to allow the water to cut out in the event of high winds.



The Muckle Cross

As mentioned previously in this report, the Muckle Cross was a Priority Project and its restoration was completed in 2017.

Closes Signage

As part of the Public Realm, it had been an ambition of Elgin CARS to fund improvement works to the Closes, however, as the project progressed and the take-up of funding increased, the works to the Closes became unaffordable. It was possible however to replace a number of the Closes signs which ensured that they were in keeping with their historic style.



7 TRAINING & EDUCATION

Training for contractors, craftspeople and conservation professionals

A training program was a joint initiative with the Keith CARS where Elgin CARS contributed 50% of the cost. The aim of this training program was to run day courses on specific topics for contractors, craftspeople, architects, planners and other professionals working in the field of conservation.

Initially, a skills audit was carried out for Moray to ascertain which trades the area was lacking in and what sort of skills local contractors and tradespeople would be keen to learn. This gave a basis on which to put together a tender for training.

Frew Conservation designed the bespoke training programme which was assembled utilising expert tutors and was felt matched the education requirements of the local contractors and conservation professionals:

- **Understanding the Repair and Maintenance of Traditional Buildings**
- **Using Lime Mortar**
- **Repair and Maintenance of Sash and Case Windows**
- **External Masonry Paint and Limewash**
- **Dampness in Traditional Buildings**
- **Structural Repairs to Historic Buildings**
- **Repairing and Maintaining Traditional Roofs**
- **Lime Harling and Render**
- **Stone Decay and its Repair**
- **Conservation and Repair of Traditional Shopfronts**
- **Maintaining and Restoring Interior Joinery and Plasterwork**
- **Repair and Upgrade of Traditional Windows and Doors**

These 12 courses ran across Keith and Elgin and were extremely well attended and received overwhelmingly positive feedback.

In total, there were 158 separate attendances at the 12 courses, made up of 117 individual people. Hence - 74% of people who attended a course chose to return and attend at least one other.

Most of these delegates attended at least half of the courses in the series and frequently commented that the reason for continued attendance was down to the excellent quality and delivery of the training material.

Many of the attendees at specific courses were already highly-trained craftspeople who came along to offer their own experiences and discuss the topic amongst their peers. In this respect, a number of the training days naturally took the form of skills forums in which the craftspeople in attendance supplemented the tutors to offer multiple opinions and solutions for the topics discussed. This gave a more rounded learning experience for delegates and ensured that everyone got the most from a day whether they were a relative beginner or a trained expert in the subject.

Training and education for the public

In addition to the above, the training provider Frew Conservation held evening talks and drop in sessions for local homeowners. The evening talks covered specific subjects that it was felt non-professional property owners and suchlike would benefit from the most.

The drop in sessions allowed anyone to turn up and have access to the CARS officers for Keith and Elgin as well as planning & building control officers and local craftspeople. These evenings were generally well attended and received positive feedback from participants.

The Keith and Elgin CARS also hosted Historic Scotland to run an Energy Efficiency course and a two day Technical Seminar. These events had a combined attendance of 110 people. The number of people who turned up at these events who wanted to know the best methods of maintaining their properties, or who were simply interested in the topics was encouraging, and is an indication that the CARS projects are making a difference in their respective areas.

Interactive Tours Training

Based upon the success of the Heritage Experience attendees were offered 2 training sessions to enable them to deliver heritage tours with the potential to further develop this and possibly start up their own tour business. The long term objective is for tours and walks to be provided by young people, college students or others that have an interest and passion in heritage and/or interacting with members of the public.

The first workshop focused on storytelling and public speaking and how to craft a story, engage an audience, using both voice and body to add emphasis and how to overcome nervousness in speaking to a crowd. The second workshop covered the wider picture on how to create an entire tour, including planning the route, managing a tour group, different types of tours and how to run interactive tours.

13 people were trained and feedback from the workshops was extremely positive.

GRANT AWARD - TRAINING AND EVENTS - £81,280

TOTAL VALUE - £170,772



Apprentice Stone Mason Training Programmes

Two apprentice Stone Masons were given training over 3 years from 2013 to 2016 which was overseen by The Moray Council Building Services Manager.

The training programmes involved stone masonry work and learning the skills by working alongside qualified Stonemasons. Apprentices developed their general site duties and knowledge and they advanced their skills in the use of hand tools to assist colleagues at all stages of their apprenticeships with established stonemasonry contractors.

Apprentices attended college on a block release basis undertaking further study and an SVQ Level 3 in Stonemasonry, developing their knowledge, understanding and experience to allow them to successfully work towards and complete their apprenticeships.

One of the two apprentices qualified as a Stonemason and was offered full-time employment and the second apprentice moved into another field of work.

GRANT AWARD APPRENTICE TRAINING - £103,146



Jim Royan with apprentice stonemason

8 COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES

The CCC partnership which obtained the funding for Elgin CARS and the Heritage Experience was formed from more than 17 organisations from a large range of sectors.

The aims and objectives of the CCC were twofold. Firstly to make Elgin & Moray a 'must see' destination by bringing its history to life and to engage more people with their heritage and to attract larger numbers of visitors. Secondly to improve the infrastructure through a schedule of physical works through a CARS Scheme to transform key buildings, monuments, and the public realm.

A full calendar of events attracted over 20,754 visitors and helped build community participation and engagement. The local community were actively involved in the project throughout various stages and overall more than 191 volunteers committed 2176 hours to the Heritage Experience project.

This enhanced community support and people were kept informed throughout the process via public consultations, stakeholder events, and regular press releases.

Young people from local schools and Moray College were consulted and included regularly throughout the planning and development stages. Two Elgin High Schools also included their work with the project as part of their curricula.



Economic Activities

The CCC project has been part of a wider commitment to improve the historic townscape of the centre of Elgin and to drive forward town centre regeneration, economic sustainability and an enhanced visitor experience. The decluttering of parts of the High Street and most particularly the Plainstones around St Giles's Kirk, which is the historic centre of the Royal Burgh, has led to a marked improvement in the appearance and aesthetic of the town.

The interpretation panels have significantly enhanced the townscape and have demonstrably improved the visitor experience. This has been coupled with enhancements to other signage across the wider route of the 'trail'. An illuminated film show projection that takes place every evening during the winter months onto St Giles's Church has improved the attractiveness and appeal of the town centre. The completion of the cleaning and restoration of the Muckle Cross and the refurbishment and lighting features on the fountain have resulted in this part of the Plainstones becoming a key focal point in the heart of the town.

The 3D high definition scanning element of the project which was undertaken by a team from Robert Gordon University (RGU) in Aberdeen has produced a richness of data and material which has provided scope for a range of digital technology initiatives at Moray College UHI. This has resulted in valuable architectural and archaeological data, which is of use well beyond the life of the project itself. RGU have also given public presentations and talks on their scanning at Elgin Museum, Moray College and Elgin Academy. There is ongoing capacity for the 3D scanning materials to be used in other projects including, but not exclusively, gaming.

Moray Council carries out annual Town Centre Health Checks; those undertaken prior to the commencement of the Castle to Cathedral to Cashmere initiative provided the baseline for subsequent monitoring of impact. Additionally, the Elgin Business Improvement District carries out business surveys, which provides feedback on increase in turn over. These, combined with data from the Chamber of Commerce which delivers the Moray Speyside Tourism (the tourism development company), Historic Environment Scotland and Johnstons will allow the ongoing assessment of the impact of the project.

Elgin was shortlisted amongst the top ten most beautiful High Streets in Scotland (Scotland's Town Partnership, Keep Scotland Beautiful and Herald competition) with an article about the CCC project featuring in History Scotland magazine.

9 STAFFING AND PROJECT MANAGEMENT

6% of CARS
funding

Elgin CARS was administered by Moray Council and a full-time CARS Project Officer was employed, supported by a dedicated accountant for the scheme and with administrative support. The post was based within the Economic Development team which provided managerial support and supplementary layers of assistance. Whilst there were changes of CARS Project Officers during the lifetime of the scheme, the support from the Economic Development team ensured that the transitions between CARS Officers was efficient and smooth. Additionally, the scheme was supported by Moray Council Legal, Planning and Building Control teams for assistance with specialist matters relating to the project.

A dedicated Management Group was formed from the CCC Partnership and stakeholders including local councillors for Elgin, and representatives from Partnership funding bodies and local representatives. This group was advised by the CARS Officer, the Economic Development team and other relevant bodies from Moray Council as required.

The Management Group met at regular intervals to assess and discuss the grant applications and to monitor the scheme as it progressed. A scoring system was applied to all applications and these were obtained either at Management Group meetings or by email as timescales deemed appropriate. The Management Group responded with efficiency and speed on all applications and grant extensions and operated with flexibility to suit the needs of the project.

The application process

For the *General Fabric Repairs*, the *Priority Projects* and the *Shopfront Repairs* there was a 2 stage application process. A building owner who was interested in applying for grant funding initially contacted the CARS Officer and filled out an *expression of interest form* outlining the proposed project.

The CARS officer would provide guidance at this point around eligibility, scope of works and standards of repair, allowing the owner to work up the project into a full application and obtain the necessary 3 quotes for the proposed work from contractors or craftspeople.

Once this full application was ready, it would be submitted to the steering group for assessment. At this point, the steering group could consult advisors such as the Conservation Officer, Planning Officers or CARS Officer around any specialist areas if required.

The project would be scored according to set criteria and a grant award would be offered to the applicant based on this. There were very few projects which did not pass this process as the CARS Officer worked closely with the applicants beforehand to ensure that all necessary criteria was met. On the few occasions where a grant award could not be offered, recommendations were made which advised the applicant how to proceed with a more suitable application.

A grant award could be made at between 25% and 75% of the eligible cost of the project. This grant intervention rate would be discussed by the steering group and made according to the scope of works proposed.

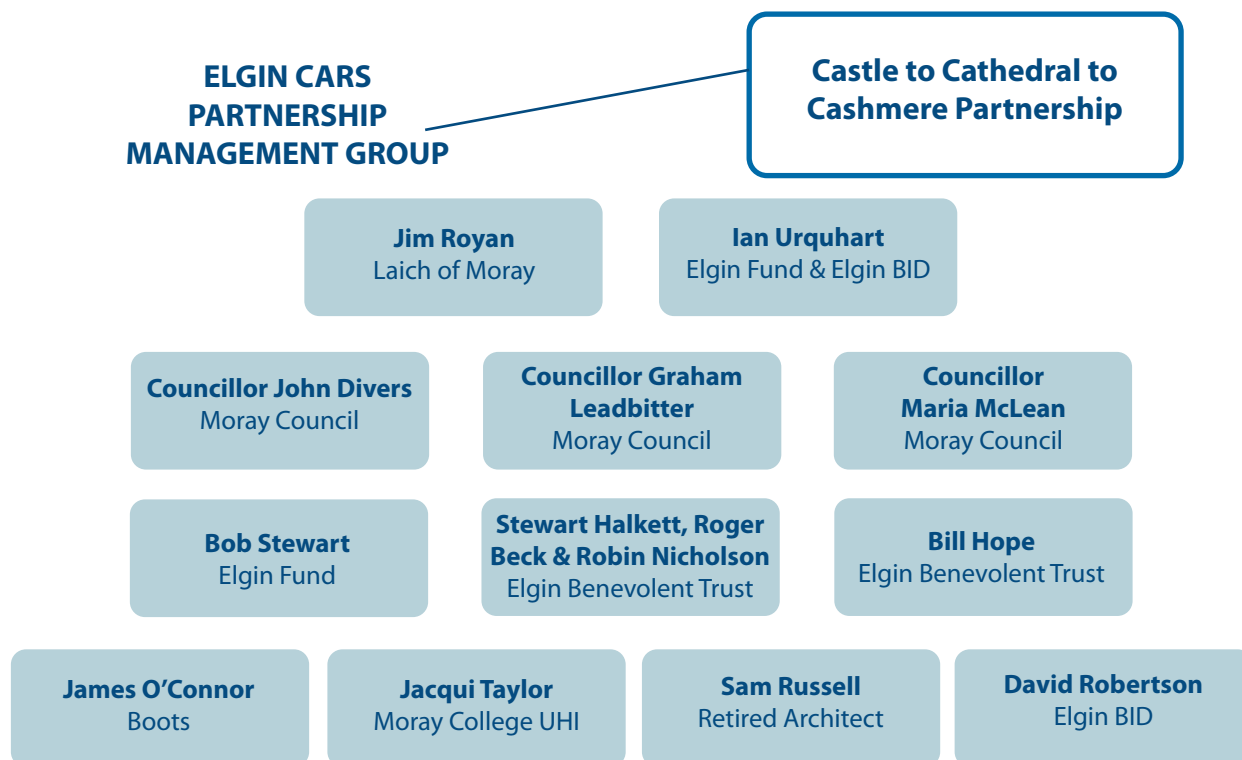
When a grant offer was made, the CARS officer would liaise with the owner to check on agreed timescales and to monitor the quality of the work undertaken.

Grant funding was paid out upon the satisfactory completion of the works and in the case of grants exceeding £25,000 in value where the works were architect supervised, architect certificates were provided prior to grant funding being released.

For the *Building Health Check grants*, following receipt of the building surveys and the fully priced specification provided by the architect appointed contractors, the owners identified the works they were happy to go ahead with and a grant award was offered pertaining to these agreed works.

Architect certificates were provided for the *Building Health Check* works prior to the grant funding being released.

PARTNERSHIP MANAGEMENT GROUP - ORGANISATIONAL CHART



Supported by:

Moray Council: CARS Officers - Kirsty Conti, Ellen Cox & Carolyn Powell; Reni Milburn, Yvonne Joss, Finance, Legal, Procurement, Planning & Building Control; Elgin BID – Gill Neill.

10 PUBLICITY

Throughout the CARS scheme, publicising the project was a high priority both for increasing awareness of the scheme and the availability of funding to potential applicants together with training courses, and also to provide updates on the schemes progress.

Following the official launch of the scheme, the dedicated CARS website was regularly updated with information about the scheme, alongside information provided on the Elgin BID website.

Free, one day courses were offered on traditional building methods and stonemasonry along with two drop-in sessions in the centre of Elgin to offer information on how to apply for a grant and raise awareness of the project.

Leaflets were produced with comprehensive information about the scheme and these were distributed throughout the lifetime of the project to local residents through a variety of outlets and also by post direct to property owners with letters encouraging applications. A shopfront guide was also produced to promote and inspire shop owners to apply for *Shopfront Improvement grants*.



There was regular media coverage, both local and national of elements of progress, events and activities throughout the duration of the project and CARS took stands at local events to further promote the scheme.

It became apparent that as more scaffolding appeared throughout Elgin, enquiries and applications increased.

CARS website - www.elgincars.org.uk



11 ECONOMIC & SOCIAL OUTPUTS

	CARS	OWNERS/PRIVATE	TOTALS
PRIORITY PROJECTS	£188,161	£164,827	£352,988
SHOPFRONT REPAIRS	£54,248	£14,679	£68,927
BUILDING HEALTH CHECK	£417,953	£223,215	£641,168
GENERAL FABRIC REPAIRS	£548,006	£361,652	£909,658
PUBLIC REALM	£105,205	£51,444	£156,649
TRAINING AND EVENTS	£81,280	£89,492	£170,772
APPRENTICES	£103,146	-	£103,146
ADMINISTRATION and CARS OFFICER	£157,489	-	£157,489
TOTALS	£1,655,488	£905,309	£2,560,797
ADDITIONAL PUBLIC INVESTMENT (Estimate)		£1,200,000	£1,200,000
TOTAL Investment		£2,105,309	£3,760,797

BREAKDOWN OF CARS FUNDING

Historic Environment Scotland	£750,000
Moray Council	£740,488
Elgin Bid	£125,000
Elgin Fund	£40,000

Key indicators for the properties receiving CARS funding is as follows:

Approximate numbers of new jobs created	3
Existing economic activity safeguarded	34
New Businesses	24
Floor space back into use - commercial	665sqm
Floor space back into use - residential	1,445sqm
Category A listed buildings grant funded	2
Category B Listed buildings grant funded	11
Category c Listed buildings grant funded	3
Historic shopfronts grant funded	4

There has been a marked decrease in the number of empty shop units in the Conservation Area:-

Total Vacant Units (Where former use was comparison, convenience, retail service, or leisure service)

2018	2016	2014	2012	2010
25	36	39	25	15

This shows a significant improvement over the last 2 years, and brings it back to the occupancy level of 2012. A noticeable difference is evident on Batchen Street and Commerce Street. Also, it appears that some of the vacant units are currently being re-fitted e.g. Relax, Charlie's shoe shop.

Some vacant units have temporary uses e.g. some of the units at St Giles Centre that have been vacant for a long time are now being used for community activities and training.

SOCIAL INDICATORS

The data below shows the anti-social behaviour statistics for Elgin and Moray as a whole for the start of the scheme in 2013 and at its completion in 2017/18. It should be noted that this data covers Elgin as a whole and not just the town centre. These identify a marked decrease in anti-social behaviour as a whole in Elgin over the five years 2013-2018.

Anti Social Behaviour Stats - Community Safety

Type of Complaint	Elgin 2012-13	Elgin 2017-18	Moray 2012-13	Moray 2017-18
Noise*	381	362	1102	906
Rowdy Behaviour**	490	277	1164	719
Neighbour Dispute*	125	231	296	589
Graffiti	14	5	23	13
Vandalism*	260	145	798	504
Litter	6	8	181	122
Fly Tipping	1	11	327	317
Dog Fouling	59	51	140	201

Source: Community Safety, Moray Council

* Incidents reported to both Police and the Community Safety Team

**Rowdy Behaviour figures include incidents of: Breach of the Peace, Urinating, Drunk & Incapable and Threatening or Abusive Behaviour from Police Scotland and Rowdy Behaviour & Youth Disorder from the Community Safety Team

Data from the Town Centre vacancy rates for Scotland compare the % vacancy rates for Moray against 30 Councils that submitted data.

Town Centre Vacancy Rates – Scottish Local Authorities Economic Development Group (SLAED) - OC8 – Town Vacancy Rates (2016/17)

This indicator is used to measure vacant retail units in a local authority's key town centres as a percentage of the total retail units, reflecting the relative vibrancy of town centres. Based on the 30 Councils that submitted data for this indicator, the overall estimated number of retail units in Scottish town centres in 2016/17 was 29,012. Of these, 2,956 were vacant or void which represents a 10.2% vacancy rate across Scotland. This is a considerable decrease on the 2015/16 figure of 11.9%.

Aberdeenshire and Stirling Councils had the lowest town vacancy rates at 2.5% each, followed by East Lothian at 5.6%. City of Edinburgh and Midlothian Councils both had a vacancy rate of 5.7%. In comparison, the vacancy rate was highest in Angus Council at 34.9%, followed by South Ayrshire Council at 23.9% and Inverclyde Council at 20.8%. Meanwhile Moray Council had a rate of 11.9%, down from 12.9% in 2014/15.

Source: <http://www.slaed.org.uk/publications.html> - SLAED Indicators Framework Annual Report 2016-17

12 CONCLUSION

Elgin CARS ran from April 2013 until March 2018. The scheme repaired 53 properties through 73 grants with a total value of £1,655,486 with match funding of £905,309 - a total of £2,560,795.

Long term empty properties providing 6 new homes at affordable rents were refurbished along with residential flats at upper floor levels in 3 buildings. New office space was created and a total of 665sqm of commercial space was brought back into use. Repairs to 4 historic shopfronts were funded and 16 Listed buildings repaired and refurbished.

The success of the *Building Health Check scheme* was particularly significant, as it addressed the barriers owners were facing in obtaining quotes for works. The scheme offered a free condition survey to a number of owners where their building had been identified as needing repair. Consequently through an invitation to quote process, contractors bid to provide External Fabric Condition Surveys for 26 properties. These surveys identified and categorised emergency, urgent and necessary repair issues. Of the buildings identified, 26 owners agreed to a schedule of repairs on 17 buildings and were offered grants towards these works. Additionally, as a result of this scheme, some dangerous chimneys were identified both on the grant recipients' buildings but also on adjoining buildings where urgent work was required and carried out on an emergency basis.

Wider community involvement was achieved through a calendar of events and training opportunities, which included 2 apprenticeships and a joint Keith and Elgin CARS training provision. Twelve courses ran across Keith and Elgin with 158 attendances at them, involving 117 people. The Energy Efficiency courses attracted 110 attendees.

The impact of Elgin CARS has been considerable, with increased occupancy of vacant shops and the High Street benefitting from considerable Public Realm enhancements. Batchen Street has seen huge improvements with occupancy rates of retail units now at around 95%. Documented feedback gathered through the project, corroborates the general perception that people are now feeling proud of the town centre and it has been noted that greater numbers of people are visible in and around the High Street at varying times of day; enjoying shopping, leisure activities and participating in tourist pursuits.

As a direct result of Elgin CARS, a further £1,200,000 is being invested into building repairs and improvements during 2018, which brings the total invested to £3,770,795.

Crucial to the success of Elgin CARS has been the regular wider community engagement and the partnership model for management and local decision making process, which has created a sense of ownership and pride. The project has transformed the town centre into a more attractive place to visit, live and work, leaving a legacy for future generations.

