

Buckie Town Centre Improvement Plan

December 2021

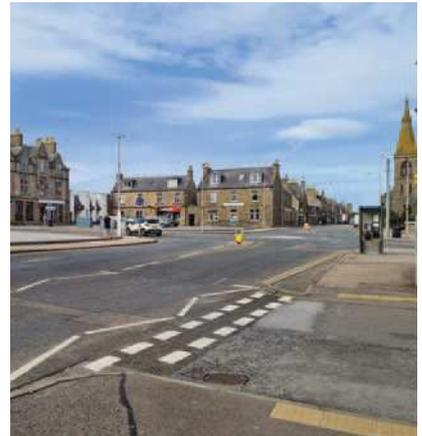
Vision

To improve and enhance Buckie town centre making it an attractive, safer, greener, and well connected place for people to use and relax and for businesses to thrive.

The Vision is supported by a series of objectives set out below:

- Enhance Cluny Square for people and civic use.
- Improve pedestrian and cycle infrastructure in the town centre to support active travel and enhance the pedestrian experience.
- Transform vacant sites and buildings to provide residential opportunities.
- Create an attractive town centre through the enhancement of the public realm to support new and existing businesses.
- Embrace Buckie's coastal and fishing heritage through the public realm and heritage interpretation panels.
- Develop a Lighting Strategy to enhance the visual appearance and showcase Buckie's heritage and public spaces to create a vibrant town centre.
- Improve digital connectivity and investigate the provision of public Wi-Fi within the town centre.
- Develop a Shopfront Improvement Scheme to ensure that traditional shopfronts are retained and improved to reflect the historic character of the town centre.

Cluny Square Enhancement



Proposed Outcomes

- Create an attractive, pedestrian friendly civic space.
- Redesign the area using public realm improvements.

Aims/Purpose

Cluny Square is in the heart of Buckie's Town Centre, and also the start/finish of some local walks, including the Speyside Way walk. The Square is a very busy junction with East Church Street, West Church Street, High Street and North High Street running off it. It splits into 4 quadrants, and 3 of these are currently used as car parks, which makes Cluny Square dominated by cars. The Buckie War Memorial, seating area and attractive flower beds are located at the fourth quadrant.

Given that the quadrant located at the North Church Hall sits further back from the junction, it is proposed to remove car parking from this quadrant and transform it into a space where people want to spend time. This project aims to attract people to the town centre and increase the footfall for local businesses. To redesign this area different hard (i.e. paving) and soft (i.e. plants, shrubs) landscaping, usage of street furniture and public realm improvements are necessary. The existing seating area overlooking the sea will be extended, picnic benches and parklets will be introduced to replace the current car parking.

The project also includes the installation of a drinking fountain to benefit visitors to the town centre and walkers with being located in close proximity to the start/finish of some local walks. The existing bike storage will be enhanced with an attractive design and will provide further spaces to encourage active travel within the town.

To compliment this enhancement, the 2 remaining quadrants used for car parking will also be redesigned using more attractive hard and soft landscaping. The project will include looking at different paving options and the introduction of planting around the car park to screen the cars and create a more appealing townscape which is not dominated by car parking. This planting will contribute to a more attractive and welcoming image of the Square, which would also complement the planting at the War Memorial quadrant. The footpath will be widened at the High Street end of Cluny Square, outside of the Post Office and the North High Street end using different paving options to provide a safe pedestrian environment.

The Cluny Square project will also be part of an overarching Public Realm Strategy, including a Lighting Strategy, to create a more holistic approach to the town centre reflecting Buckie's history and heritage. As part of those projects, lighting for the War Memorial, enhancement of the 2 old bus shelters on North High Street, signage and an interactive board located at the Square are all proposed.

Public Realm Strategy



Proposed Outcomes

- Redesign Buckie town centre to create an attractive civic space which encourages active travel and embraces Buckie's heritage.
- Implement cohesive and consistent public realm improvements.

Aims/Purpose

The public realm is a key part of the town centre and is formed of all areas of publicly accessible open space. It should interlink the key components of the town centre to create an attractive space which people can enjoy. The aim of the project is to take a holistic approach to improve the public realm and the attractiveness and vitality of the town centre. This will encourage people to come and visit the town centre and engage in social interaction by providing high quality spaces.

The project will build on Buckie's history and heritage, guide users towards key places and spaces such as the High Street, East and West Church Street, the Speyside Way, the Harbour; and improve connections to other key assets, such as Ian Johnstone Park. This will aim to boost tourism to Buckie and make the town centre an attractive and vibrant place with a sense of character and identity. This will boost pride in the town and support its economic vitality, making it an attractive place for future investment.

The strategy would include incorporating public art into hard landscaping (by improving paving), soft landscaping (including planting at Cluny Square and the Speyside Way), street furniture (seating areas at Cluny Square), wall art and murals (a trail of art and murals in Cluny Square leading onto the harbour), and lighting (to highlight key buildings and pieces of art and create a series of safe and welcoming trails). The strategy would include projects such as doric and memory walks; creating walks with seating areas and investigating food growing, allotment opportunities at East-West Church Street to enhance the living of older people. These projects will reflect the history of Buckie creating a sense of place and will provide talking points in the town centre, encouraging visitors and providing navigation benefits. A key area for public art opportunities will be the old bus shelters leading onto the Harbour from Cluny Square, which have the potential for murals which celebrate Buckie's history and tell the story of the town.

Street furniture could be improved in key areas in the town centre, most notably Cluny Square, although there are other opportunities at the start/finish of the Speyside Way. This would create attractive places for people to stop and enjoy, promoting social interaction, increasing footfall in the town centre and encouraging people to spend more time in the town centre, which will support local businesses. This will also promote active travel and encourage healthy lifestyles. Additional or upgraded benches and seating, street lighting, flower pots and flower beds, litter bins, cycle racks, bollards and signage will create an attractive town centre. Street furniture can contribute to and showcase the local history and heritage, and should be robust and durable so it becomes a long standing part of the town centre. It can contribute towards the identity of the town centre and can enhance a sense of place.

Seating should provide an opportunity for social interaction. At Cluny Square and the start/finish of the Speyside Way, there is an option to provide seating in areas which will be highlighted as part of the Lighting Strategy to transform dark and underused areas into safe and welcoming spaces for people to use and spend time in the town centre.

Waymarking is a key element to guide people around the town centre, and will promote active travel and more pedestrians travelling in the town centre. Signage connecting attractions are currently out-of-date and in need of updating, e.g. the information board at Cluny Square. There are opportunities for new signage at Cluny Square and at the start/finish of the Speyside Way, which would provide a focal point for visitors and tourists.

Soft Landscaping such as planting can transform the feel of the town centre and can help create links through key routes, while contributing towards biodiversity. Hedges or planting can have the effect of screening parking in areas like Cluny Square, making the area more attractive and creating a visual barrier from cars. In areas like the start/finish of the Speyside Way, this can contribute towards the creation of a more attractive area which encourages community use.

Hard landscaping such as improvements to paving and differentiation in street materials can create a more pedestrian friendly environment, which will encourage more people to walk. This will prioritise active travel and improve access for people with mobility issues.

Lighting Strategy

Proposed Outcomes

- Lighting to be used to showcase Buckie's built heritage and cultural features.
- Create a safer and attractive town centre for users.
- Lighting to be used to emphasise key routes to encourage people into the town centre.
- Prepare a comprehensive Lighting Strategy.

Aims/Purpose

The project will assist in the objectives to create a vibrant and attractive town centre.

Lighting can take the form of individual art forms or sculptural pieces to create an attraction, be designed into the public realm or street furniture, or highlight whole or parts of individual buildings. To avoid a piecemeal approach to Town Centre Improvements a holistic approach must be taken to ensure that it takes cognisance of other projects highlighted in the masterplan ie Cluny Square enhancements, public realm improvements.

Buildings

Buckie contains a number of traditional buildings for which lighting can be added to highlight and showcase. This could take the form of highlighting individual buildings, such as those fronting Cluny Square. Highlighting buildings and their traditional architectural features not only helps to make the town centre feel safer in the darker months but it also contributes to reinforcing the sense of place.

Movement

Lighting can also be used to reinforce key routes and guide users through spaces by creating safe and welcoming routes. In conjunction with wider public realm improvement (see separate project) this could be used at key locations such as Cluny Square and the streets leading out of it which are key and well used routes and would help to encourage people into the town centre.

Creative lighting can be used to showcase and open up other surrounding streets that feed into the town centre such as Blairdaff Street, Newlands Lane, East Cathcart Street and Cluny Place.

Public Realm

Any Lighting Strategy must take account and be embedded in any Public Realm Strategy. This will ensure creative lighting is integrated into the fabric of the streetscene and be embedded in any other public realm improvements.

Vacant & Derelict Buildings

Proposed Outcome

- Redevelop derelict buildings and find potential use for derelict sites in close proximity to the town centre to benefit the town.

Aims/Purposes

OPP2 Blairdaff Street



The Old Lemonade Factory is considered to be suitable for residential redevelopment which should be compatible with the residential character of the surrounding area as set out in the Moray Local Development Plan (MLDP) 2020. The site is located just outside of the town centre boundary identified by the MLDP 2020, but its close proximity to the town centre, shops and bus route would make it an ideal residential property. It could be redeveloped for affordable housing in line with Scottish Government and Moray Council aspirations.

OPP3 Barron Street



This site has been vacant for a while due to contamination issues including a fuel tank, gasworks and boatyard. The nearby commercial buildings, in particular the fish processing activities need to be taken account of when redeveloping this site. Given its close proximity of the town centre, this could be an ideal residential development respecting the scale of adjoining properties and the character of the area.

Shopfront Improvement Scheme

Proposed Outcome

- Develop and implement a Shopfront Improvement Scheme.

Aims/Purpose

A Shopfront Improvement Scheme, with a design guide, will be developed to improve and maintain the quality and visual appearance of Buckie's shopfronts. This will strengthen the town's rich historic character and help to promote the town centre as a destination. Improving the shopfronts will enhance its appeal to customers as well as visitors and will encourage further investment by boosting business confidence. This will be achieved through improving signage in line with the design guide by making repairs and renovating shopfronts.

Digital Infrastructure

Proposed Outcomes

- Increase digital connectivity.
- Provide residents, visitors and local businesses with easy internet access.

Aims/Purpose

Opportunities for the provision of public Wi-Fi within the town centre will be investigated. This would increase digital connectivity and provide easy internet access to residents and visitors. The access to public Wi-Fi could be connected to virtual notice boards in order to help leading people through the town centre and promoting key areas. Local businesses could also benefit and use the digital infrastructure for online promotion and marketing.

Electric Vehicle (EV) Charging Points



Proposed Outcome

- Provide additional electric vehicle (EV) charging points to promote environmentally conscious travel.

Aims/Purpose

Additional electric vehicle (EV) charging points will be added to car parking areas, such as Cluny Square, and other car parks surrounding the town centre. This will encourage the use of electric vehicles, and help to create a green town centre.

Speyside Way



Proposed Outcomes

- Improvements to the start/finish of the Speyside Way.
- In conjunction with other projects (e.g. Public Realm Strategy) improve the start/finish of the Speyside Way to create an attractive area that can be enjoyed and will lead people into the town centre.

Aims/Purpose

The project will utilise public realm improvements to create an attractive place to stop and enjoy the start/finish of the path.

Improved signage will provide clear direction and other public realm improvements such as seating and soft landscaping will make an attractive area for people to stop and enjoy. This will form part of a holistic approach which will connect the area with other nearby proposed public art at Cluny Square and leading onto the Harbour. This will create a sense of place on the path and lead visitors to other key destinations in the town.

There is also an opportunity for planting, either flowers or a community garden, possibly with raised beds and food growing opportunities. This would create a community area within the currently empty green space, which would encourage members of the community to spend time in the area and promote social interaction.

The Speyside Way path is in close proximity to the town centre, and the path is bordered by gardens. Due to the constraints of the path, in terms of space and lack of natural surveillance, few improvements can be made to the path itself.

Gateways

Proposed Outcome

- Create attractive high quality gateways into Buckie town centre that showcase the heritage and history of the town.

Aims/purpose



Tesco roundabout

The town centre can be approached from the A942, High Street. Visitors entering Buckie this way are greeted by a roundabout, which is currently unwelcoming and have little impact apart from Buckie`s Darling, a new sculpture inspired by the heritage of Buckie. There are opportunities to further enhance the roundabout and light up the sculpture to create an attractive, welcoming entrance into Buckie leading into the town centre.

Barhill Road roundabout

Recent growth in Buckie has been focused at the west side of town within the Buckpool area along Barhill Road. From these recent housing developments, the town centre can be approached via Barhill Road. Visitors entering Buckie from the A98 towards Barhill Road are greeted by an unwelcoming roundabout. As a result of further growth planned within this area of Buckie, improvements to this roundabout will add to a positive feel and welcoming first impression when entering Buckie and travelling towards the town centre.