Stories of Fife – Site visit write ups summer 2023

In summer 2023 two Fife Council planning officers visited various settlements across Fife (and some out with Fife) to assess their quality of place and consider the retail and commercial value of the businesses in the centre. The settlements outwith Fife were selected as benchmarks for the Fife settlements to be used as comparison of performance and quality of place. This approach was not pursued for all places but does provide some interesting data. This assessment is necessarily subjective and is based on the opinions of the officers who visited the settlements.

The town and local centres were visited and a high decile area and low decile area in each place (although it is considered that the value of the decile assessments is fairly limited).

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Dunfermline/Stirling

Dunfermline

11.00am, Friday 23rd June. Cloudy and rainy intermittently.

TC Notes:

(On NCN 1 and 764) Perceptions from the bus station are good, it is in a great location just north of the city centre, it stands out from the built form, making it accessible, and routes into the centre are obvious from it. The building itself is modern and not especially attractive but functional. The train station is tucked away from the centre, and linkages are not especially obvious; there is signage, but it is not clear or abundant. The building of the station itself is excellent, well-preserved built heritage that fills an important function for the city. Roads into Dunfermline are well maintained, but not particularly attractive as retail parks, industrial uses and car infrastructure dominate and do not give a great perception of place on arrival. They are characterised by dual-carriageways heavy with traffic. The landscape that surrounds Dunfermline is attractive, and it sits nicely on the rolling and steep hills that characterize it.

There is a large amount of built heritage in Dunfermline, with many high-quality historic assets being well preserved and filling an important place in its built form. Distinctive and important buildings include Dunfermline Abbey and Palace, Dunfermline City Chambers and Abbot House; have been sensitively maintained and used, giving the heritage quarter of Dunfermline unique character. Modern buildings tended to be of a lesser quality and maintenance, which stands out against the high-quality heritage constructions. The Dunfermline Carnegie Library and Galleries is a key exception to this, giving an important historic building a new lease of life by integrating a contemporary extension and renovation, tasteful to its sensitive context. The skyline of Dunfermline is a key feature which makes it highly distinctive, with its long history and ecclesiastical/industrial past showcased from many different angles and viewpoints.

Despite the rain when we visited, the centre felt bustling and busy. There were a large number of people around the high street, shopping centre and side streets. Several of the streets near the centre have been quasi-pedestrianised, which makes accessing them easier and allows for a more active frontage along key retail spaces. There were no bike lanes, and we did not see any cyclists, but bike parking was being well-used. There were no stand-out barriers to movement, although there was a fair amount of street clutter from various projects, and bins and refuse took up a lot of key street space.

There were some signs of investment in the public realm, although none that looked recent (in the last 10-15 years). These were mostly branding projects, like consistent paint for street furniture, and there was no sign of significant investment in updating or maintaining the streetscape beyond aesthetics. There are unfortunately several derelict sites throughout the centre. The actual state of the public realm was not bad however, fairly litter free, no broken paving and little to no graffiti; we saw litter picking being carried out on our visit. The centre of Dunfermline is very leafy, and this greatly impacts public space. Pittencrieff Park is important to the urban form, with many gates and pathways connecting it to the centre, giving a key landscaped and green space to Dunfermline; it fulfils an important civic role in the centre of Dunfermline. There were a good amount of trees lining streets at the centre, and attractive, well maintained landscaping has been carried out around the heritage quarter; generally with benches sheltered under tree lined areas.

The centre of Dunfermline is very welcoming, streets are well-framed and busy, and there is plenty of lighting. This also helps to keep the centre feel safe. There were many well-stocked planters on the streetscape, which softened the built form and kept key parts cared for and inviting, these were delivered by the business community in Dunfermline. This does mean that there was little sign of community involvement with place near the centre, as with many other large settlements and cities, there was a more retail and corporate feel than one of civic ownership.

There are several key points missing from the town centre: public toilets (although there are some in the Kingsgate shopping centre), cycle lanes/infrastructure and community involvement. There is no square or plaza to act as a focal point (outside of the space in front of Pittencrief Park), and this would be key to delivering civic ownership and engagement. The landscaped area along Maygate would be ideal for accommodating more services and functions, like public toilets etc. The landscaped area near the abbey and Carnegie Library would be ideal for something like this, but it is relatively cut off from the high street and connections are not obvious. While there was bike parking, proper segregated bike lanes would improve accessibility and connectivity greatly, opening up the centre and encouraging people to leave their cars at home. Unfortunately, the centre is still very much reliant on private car usage, although steps are being taken (signage to the train station and quasi-pedestrianizing streets), they are not yet obviously making a difference (yet).

Outside of TC:

Highest Decile: Overall, the area was very attractive and inviting to walk around. Very good green infrastructure throughout the site, with provision of trees, grass and green space throughout. There was good access to a large nearby park as well. The road was in fairly poor condition, with cracks and potholes prevalent. Homes themselves were grand/large stone built Victorian town houses, in the grey stone typical of Dunfermline. There were some other styles of home as well, although these were less common. They were in a very good state of repair, and gardens were very well maintained. Permeability was good, as although some streets led to cul-de-sacs there were still pedestrian pathways cutting across the sequential housing developments. Access to the centre of town was also easy, with pedestrian links across Dunfermline Park connecting the area within a ten minute walk. There were some shops integrated with the area, although not many.

Lowest Decile: Greenspace was well maintained, with a large open area at the centre with a play park attached. There was a lot of new and modern housing that was of standard design, but not in a bad state of repair. There was evidence of landscaping throughout the area, however it had not been maintained and was generally overgrown, although there was little litter visible. The area was fairly active, with a good amount of facilities, services and shops; all available commercial spaces looked occupied. Gardens were generally not well-maintained, while there were a few exceptions most were overgrown or not cared for. Pavements and roads were also in need of repair, with large areas cracked and crumbling. Most of the area felt quiet; it was not especially inviting or welcoming, but did not feel dangerous or hostile either.

Stirling

10.30am, Friday 30th June. Intermittent rain and light drizzle.

TC Notes:

(On NCN 76 and 765) Perception when arriving by rail is very good, the building itself is very nice and so is the surrounding area. While it looks onto the backs of buildings in the city centre, recent landscaping and infrastructure is obvious and leads one towards the city centre: with new planters,

paving, pedestrian crossings (including a bridge over the train tracks), large sheltered cycle storage and fully segregated bike lanes. The castle is framed on its hill from views at the train station exit, and routes into the heart of the centre are obvious and attractive. The bus station is very close to the train station, but has not had the same recent investment as the train station. It suffers from the same problem of looking onto the backs of buildings, but more so: it's connected to the Thistles Shopping Centre, the city centre is therefore obscured, landscaping does not draw people towards it, and the main pedestrian route from the bus station is through the shopping centre itself. The bus station was mainly glass shelters, which have not been maintained recently and were showing signs of disrepair. The experience when approaching by road was fairly standard, leafy but industrial (warehouses and car sales); more could have been made of views of the castle and surrounding skyline. The landscape that surrounds Stirling and that can be viewed from the settlement is excellent, with dramatic hills, wooded areas and heritage like the Wallace Monument providing fantastic views. In this regard, Stirling is situated very nicely in it's landscape.

The buildings in Stirling are highly distinctive, and there is a large amount of high-quality built heritage. Some of the key buildings that define and make the centre distinctive are Stirling Castle, Stirling Library, Holy Rude Church, The Tolbooth, and The Engine Shed which tastefully blends industrial heritage with modern uses and design. There are good details and motifs across historic buildings that have been well-preserved, with only a few exceptions. The layout and framing of the buildings complements the streetscapes and key buildings well. Modern installations tended to be poor or very poor, and stood out against the historic backdrop strongly; the Thistles Shopping Centre in particular stands out as a grey monolith: it is an ugly modern building that dominates the skyline and bus station.

Walking and cycling around Stirling was very attractive, with sections of the centre totally pedestrianised, and traffic calming measures to slow vehicles and encourage other modes of transport in other areas. There were a good amount of segregated bike lanes, lots of high-quality bike parking and pavements were wide and well-maintained. There were no obvious barriers to movement. Despite the rain, the centre was busy and we saw a large amount of people walking and making use of the town centre.

There was obvious, recent investment in the centre, particularly around the train station. Public space was new and attractive, and included a small green space which was previously missing from the town centre, wildflowers, planters, bike lanes, pedestrian crossings and updated paving and routes. The public space was generally very clean, no issues with litter beyond typical cigarette butts near bins and planters used as seats. The public space in the shopping centre was of typically poor quality, bland and characterless; although clean and it offered a wide range of retail and service options, it was well-used. Stirling Arcade was an interesting take on indoor shopping at the centre, a Victorian shopping area that contrasts with the contemporary Thistle Centre. It unfortunately had several vacancies and was considerably quieter, although its layout and design are high-quality and inviting. There were some trees in the centre, mostly lining the streets and public areas, and good green and blue infrastructure connections throughout the settlement. This combination led to attractive streetscapes and well used street frontages.

The town centre was welcoming, and easy to navigate. Streets were wide and leafy, and busy with people which gave a lively and safe atmosphere, especially as roads were generally quiet and slow. A lot of the retail was hidden in the shopping centre, which pulls visitors and shoppers away from the main high street. There was very little evidence of community involvement or civic ownership in the centre, the planters that were provided did not include any local organisations or business communities, and were handled by Stirling Council.

There was nothing obvious missing in the centre, in terms of services or provisions. Overall, the centre felt busy and successful.

Outside of TC:

Lowest Decile: The area had recently (over the last ~20 years) gone through a regeneration process, so it was interesting to see the results. Buildings were generally good quality, with some exceptions that were particularly good (outward looking, community orientated buildings with good landscaping) and vice versa (small housing crammed into cul-de-sacs with poor permeability, cheap materials and car dependent design). There was a good amount of open space, but it was not of the best quality: it was often poorly maintained and felt like leftover space. The nearby community complex had public art outside, a tree-lined frontage and lots of paved open space; nearby were buildings that did not have an obvious connection however, where private and public spaces were blurred and routes were not direct. One of the newer developments used more expensive materials and building practices, and included photovoltaic panels and Tesla chargers lining each house. The actual setting of the area was excellent, with hills on one side and the castle on the other, framed nicely on its hill. There were notices on a community board about continued engagement and regeneration schemes. Access to the centre was ok, though some distance; cars were definitely the main mode of transport in the area. A bike lane was put in recently, but we did not see it used.

Highest Decile: The houses and gardens in this area were very high quality, extremely well maintained Victorian town houses. Greenery was in excellent condition, with a large green square at the centre and trees lining most of the surrounding streets. The area was unusually large, and the high-quality houses and streets were consistent throughout. There was investment being undertaken in the area, with roads being updated and bike lanes being put in. Access to the centre was easy, and there was good permeability and connections throughout.

Kirkcaldy

Kirkcaldy

10.00am, Friday 21st July. Sunny and warm.

TC Notes:

(On NCN 76 which turns into 766) The rail station in Kirkcaldy is well-located in the city centre, for both visitors and residents. The building itself is not particularly nice, however routes into town are obvious and pleasant; it's a short walk through the Kirkcaldy Galleries landscaped grounds where signs point towards various nearby landmarks. The bus station is likewise not a particularly nice building, but is given a prominent position in the urban form. It isn't particularly well-signed from the west, but is fairly obvious from the east coming from the high street. Perceptions when arriving by road are not good, dominated by fast traffic and wide roads where the form and landscape character of the settlement are not obvious. The character of Kirkcaldy is clearly heavily influenced by its coastal landscape setting, with development and routes spreading from the coast. It is an important feature, although much more could be made of the river front which is poorly activated and integrated with the nearby high street and centre.

Kirkcaldy has many interesting and distinctive buildings throughout, heritage from varied uses throughout the history the town: trading and mercantile buildings on the high street, civic buildings

from the 20s-50s (like Kirkcaldy Town House or Kirkcaldy Galleries), stone-built Victorian terraced and tenement style flats which characterise much of the housing, and heritage assets left over from various forms of industry. Modern buildings tended to be of a lesser quality, detracting from the built environment. Maintenance was also an issue, throughout most of the older and modern installations, but particularly with built heritage from industrial uses; the decline of industry and with many large companies leaving the town there are often no suitable occupants for many of the larger buildings, warehouses and plots. Large areas and buildings are therefore becoming dilapidated rather than preserved.

Generally, the town centre felt quiet throughout our visit. We saw no cyclists which isn't surprising given there were very few bike parking spaces and little cycle infrastructure, and there were not a lot of people walking given the pleasant weather and time of week. Part of the high street has been turned into a semi-pedestrian shared space; which was not very successful given that a large quantity of cars still park on and use it. There were no obvious barriers to movement beyond car dominance.

Kirkcaldy has received significant investment in its town centre's public space. Paving is relatively new and has used high-quality materials, signage and information boards are well-maintained and up-to-date, and flower boxes around the town are well kept. The square in front of the Council Offices is particularly well kept, and has new bins and benches alongside well-maintained paving and landscaping. There is good provision of bins and benches throughout the centre, both of which are well used; encouraging use and preventing build-up of litter. The Mercat Shopping Centre at the centre of the high street has been poorly maintained however, and takes up a large amount of public space at the town centre. Its space is bland and unengaging, and it's dominated by vacant units which gives an uninviting and deteriorating feel. There are some trees along the high street, but few, poorly integrated with other street furniture and unhealthy. Beyond the few trees and well-kept flower boxes, green and blue infrastructure is poorly integrated with the town centre. Parks and large green spaces are fairly cut off, and require walking along busy and fast roads to access. There are some bike lanes to help access them, but there are no parks in the town centre itself.

Signs and maps are well provided, which helps the town to feel inviting to visitors; and there are a large number of landmarks and built heritage present. The main issue which detracts from the welcoming feeling in the town is the amount of vacant and derelict sites and buildings throughout. This issue means many parts of the centre are poorly activated and used, with very little going on. This did not make these areas feel unsafe, given our visit was in the morning however, the austere feeling from vacant spaces may make people uncomfortable. There was very little sign of community or civic engagement with place.

Overall, the town did not feel busy and successful. Regeneration efforts have improved and updated the public space, but there are clearly deeper economic issues that need to be addressed. Public space could further be improved by including further public art or inclusions like cycle infrastructure, and this might encourage a bit more civic and community engagement; but local economic resilience needs to be stimulated in order to activate the town centre and create equal opportunities for engagement with place.

<u>Outside TC:</u>

High Decile Area: Mostly bungalows, although a mix of housing was in the area. Gardens were very well kept, and green space surrounding the site was also well maintained. Built heritage was well maintained thorughout the site, with inclusions from the former estate obvious throughout: bits of

walls and outbuildings maintained and made features. The area felt a bit like a gated community, in that it was very cut off from the centre and surrounding areas. It didn't feel unwelcoming, but was hardly inviting.

Low Decile: There were several plots of vacant and derelict land. Nice landscape views from throughout the site, as it sat on a hill; and there was some nice integration of industrial heritage as factory facades were incorporated into housing or service/shopping developments. A lot of the industrial heritage in the area is under threat however, as they are large and expensive buildings to take on and maintain; many are dilapidated. Roads and pavements were cracked, but not in a terrible state. Gardens were generally poorly kept, but one of the most obvious issues was a huge amount of litter and rubbish strewn throughout the area. We did see a voluntary litter pick being undertaken.

Glenrothes

1.30pm, Friday 18th August. Cloudy, windy but warm.

TC Notes:

(No train station although NCN 766 runs along the east of the town) Perception when arriving from road is generally pretty poor, with the main access road being the A92, which doesn't provide great landscape setting and is a dual carriageway which is heavily used. It is not all bad, as there are very leafy roads in and around Glenrothes which are quite pleasant, and there are some hills to the north which can provide good views, as well as a large provision of public art. These positives are overshadowed by the car dominance of Glenrothes' infrastructure and layout: with wide, fast roads and roundabouts make the car heavily relied upon while other transport modes are relegated and unpleasant. The bus station in Glenrothes is also fairly poor. The building itself is unattractive, a modern, tired looking extension that links directly to the Kingdom Shopping Centre, which passes as the only centre in Glenrothes. There is some landscaping outside (the bus station), but none of the green space is usable and it's once again dominated by a fast, wide road.

The buildings in Glenrothes are all modern (except a few country houses in the area), owing to it being planned and built in the 40's and 50's. The buildings tend to be of low architectural quality and are very bland, they have very little in terms of distinctive features and materials. Maintenance of the buildings is not great either, and many feel grimy or are showing signs of damage and age.

Walking and cycling around Glenrothes is generally not particularly attractive. There is fairly good separation of pedestrian and car infrastructure, which makes it safer, but does not address the layout of streets which were designed around the car. Roads are wide and fast, making walking fairly unpleasant; and the low-density layout means that pedestrian access requires walking long distances and being patient with traffic. There are a fair number of cycle routes, and most are separated from the roads which is good, although they often use pavements instead and suffer from similar issues faced by pedestrians: routes are busy/unpleasant with traffic and there is very little direct access. Good active transport infrastructure does little to prevent heavy car dependency. The actual centre is car free, but because it is in an indoor shopping centre, which is very bland and unattractive to walk around.

The fact that the centre is solely made up by the Kingdom Shopping Centre means there is no coherent public space, just privately owned and operated retail/commercial space. The centre itself is clean, and there is plenty of public art in and around it, but there is little else positive about the

centre. Maintenance in and around the centre is poor, buildings look tired and even new paving is cracked and damaged. The centre is not very leafy, there are no plants in the shopping centre and landscaping around it is generally poor with mediocre/young plants being poorly looked after. There is some green space on a vacant site, but it is poorly used and looks onto the back of the shopping centre. The parks around the centre are good, but there is a distinct separation between them and the centre. The lack of architectural variety and open public space in which to view it really damages the identity and distinctiveness of Glenrothes; the centre isn't just dominated by car parks, retail parks and a shopping centre, it is almost entirely these things. There has been some recent investment in landscaping and bike parking, but these features have not taken well – there are also plans for investment at Albany Gate.

The lack of public space in the centre makes it a very unwelcoming place to spend time. It doesn't feel particularly unsafe or hostile, but the space is drab and so lacking character that it fails to invite and retain visitors. While carrying out the site visit, we were confronted by a security guard who wanted to know what we were up to and wanted us to get permission, which reiterated that it was private space where behaviour is being directly monitored. While this undoubtedly makes it a safe place to do business, business is obviously not the only function of a town centre and will make many feel uncomfortable and unwelcome. There were several community noticeboards, and plenty of information on the history, growth and development of Glenrothes – but there is little opportunity for community engagement with the space at the centre of the town. There are several "squares" in the shopping centre in lieu of open public squares/plazas, but most of these were fenced off or rarely used.

There are several key features missing from Glenrothes' built environment and service provision that would improve it greatly. A focal public space would solve many of the issues previously mentioned regarding character and distinctiveness, as well as making the centre more widely usable and accessible outwith retail and commercial interests. A train station would improve the accessibility of the centre hugely, providing transport in for nearby towns/villages as well as out for anyone who doesn't own a car in Glenrothes. The layout and design of Glenrothes is so heavily influenced by cars that active transport infrastructure improvements do little to encourage pedestrians, wheeling or cycling; driving is still usually the easier choice. Limiting ease of access for cars could make active travel a lot more attractive, at least for journeys that are entirely within the town. Reducing car dependency would improve access to the built heritage and blue and green infrastructure of the area greatly – providing better linkages to local history and ecology while building a stronger sense of place. While the shopping centre itself is busy, surrounding areas are only busy with traffic; activating the potential of these places should be a priority.

<u>Outside of TC:</u>

Low Decile: this area is very leafy, not just from gardens but how the roads are laid out means that bands of trees separate areas. While this means that each area has architectural variety and are generally very green, it creates low density neighbourhoods where communities are separated and cars are the most attractive form of transport. Collydean itself does have an interesting architectural vision, with angular, modern buildings that are laid in various patterns that play with public and private space. Maintenance of these buildings is generally very good, although gardens are a right mix with some very preened and others used to dump rubbish. Pedestrian connections to the centre are extremely poor, although the experimentation with public/private space means that permeability is good within the area. This does mean that the area is somewhat uninviting to visitors, as there is the feeling you are in someone's private space, even when walking down public paths; and it is worth noting that we visited in the day and these paths could easily feel dangerous or unsafe at night.

High Decile: The housing in this area was generally new-build, and had a much more generic layout and design (low-density, single-family homes often in cul-de-sacs). Gardens and houses are very well-maintained throughout. Once again, pedestrian connections to the town centre are extremely poor, but in this instance, permeability is also very poor. The roads were not in a great state of repair. Landscape views and the surrounding woodland was more obvious in these areas, and nearby mature trees and far away fields provided a nice backdrop to the area.

St Andrews

2.00pm, Friday 4th August. Sunny/cloudy and warm weather.

TC Notes:

(No train station, on NCN 1) The impression when arriving by road is good, the towns historic skyline is visible from a distance, and sits nicely in its coastal and rural landscape setting. The approach is leafy, and characterised by expensive houses and university/civic scale buildings. The bus station is also quite attractive, the building itself is not great, but is surrounded by historic assets and a good amount of green infrastructure. There is no obvious signage pointing to the town centre from the station, but large civic buildings and churches make it fairly obvious, coupled with a good location just outside of the centre.

The buildings that characterise the town centre of St Andrews are very historic. They are well-maintained, and there are very few modern buildings (the modern buildings that are in the centre do not stand out in scale and massing, and several have retained historic features). The distinctive buildings are complemented by the historic street layout, with wider commercial streets (running east-west) crossed by smaller alleys and wynds (running north-south) which provides good pedestrian permeability and showcases building details at different scales. The varied and human/pedestrian scale streetscapes are a key feature of St Andrews. The university, and ecclesiastical history have had a huge impact on the types of building throughout St Andrews, from the preservation of historic features and building types to the scale and massing of the overall built form. Important civic, university and ecclesiastical buildings serve as focal points; with smaller, finer detailed terraced streets serving as a complimentary backdrop.

As mentioned before, walking around St Andrews is very attractive: with detail at different scales in varying street dimensions, attractive shopfronts, and good permeability. It was extremely busy, but there were plenty of places to rest, and sheltered areas (including plenty of cafes and restaurants with outdoor seating and canopies); as well as quieter routes and streets. Pavements are wide throughout, and roads are narrow and often cobbled or have traffic calming measures which keeps traffic slow and relatively unintrusive. The trees along South Street, and the general leafiness of the centre also slows traffic and creates a barrier between pedestrian and traffic realms. By making the centre attractive to walk around (and since it's a small and flat town centre that's suitable even for those with mobility issues) drivers are encouraged to park on the outskirts of town and walk in; rather than crowding the streets on street parking and driving right through the town. We only saw one bike lane, and it was a poor-quality painted line on the road.

The public realm of St Andrews is very high quality – in its maintenance, utility and aesthetics. There are lots of trees in town that provide green infrastructure, as well as shelter and barriers to traffic. Planters are also well populated through the town, softening the built environment and providing some civic ownership of place. There is good provision of street furniture, but it is not cluttered.

There has clearly been investment in the public realm, with recent paving being carried out with high-quality materials. Several level pedestrian access points have been made along St. Mary's Place and Market Street.

Overall, the centre is attractive and historic making it very welcoming. There is a slightly exclusive atmosphere, which mostly comes from the town being both wealthy and dependent on tourism/students, which could make it uninviting to some visitors. Issues like traffic are well-managed however, and this allows people to wander in the roads, taking pictures and getting different views of the settlement. There was plenty of evidence of community engagement with place, which also helps to make the town feel welcoming, from well stocked planters, to bunting and information on local events.

The only thing obviously missing from the built environment was proper segregated bike lanes. Cycling is clearly very popular in the area, with lots of bike parking provided that is heavily used – but access to and around the town could easily be improved. The town felt very busy and successful overall.

Outside of TC:

Highest Decile: Mostly older, traditional houses; although there are some exceptions where more modern flat blocks have been built. It is fairly similar to the low decile area, there is some overlap between the two since the town is so small. Gardens are very well maintained in general, as are buildings. Access to the town centre is very good, it is only a short walk and there are multiple routes for accessing different sections of the centre. Blue infrastructure that passes to the north is poorly integrated, the pathway alongside does not have places to rest or proper paving – it is maintained but only in a basic way.

Lowest Decile: Gardens are generally well maintained, with only a few exceptions were hedges and lawns were overgrown. We saw no litter or fly tipping. Houses are a mix of painted and pebble dashed, but generally well looked-after and maintenance was not an issue. Roads were of a poor quality, and in need of work in some places where patches failed and potholes were formed. Very well-connected to the town centre, with only a gentle slope to walk up and several bridges to cross the Kinness Burn. Both the high and low decile area share the green and blue infrastructure that follows the Kinness Burn and Spider Park. Overall, the area was quite attractive.

Cupar/Forfar

Cupar

10.00am, Friday 7th of June. Overcast but warm and dry weather.

TC Notes:

(No bus station and not on NCN) Cupar train station was nice and welcoming, with maps, cycle parking and a large car park. The building itself was very nice, although the surrounding landscaping wasn't especially high quality. The approach by rail was pleasant, and the space was well maintained and looked cared for. The way into the centre of Cupar was obvious from the train station, although narrow pavements, busy roads and a poorly utilised riverbank/bridge made it not enjoyable. Approach by road was very pleasant and provided attractive views of the settlement, with Cupar situated very nicely in its surrounding landscape of hills and fields. Landscape edges were well-

maintained and high-quality, with tree screens and attractive/distinctive buildings standing out of the skyline.
There were plenty of attractive buildings and built heritage in Cupar's centre, some were not in a great state of repair, however the architectural variety and high-quality building materials kept the centre interesting. Modern installations were generally not good quality. Building frontages were well activated, and there was a nice mixed-use feel to the centre. The wide variety of uses and shops gave a strong and healthy market town atmosphere.
In terms of movement, there were large numbers of people walking around, and several cyclists. The closes and wynds in between buildings gave good permeability, and provided important access routes to, and spaces for, businesses and services. There were very few cycle provisions, but some bike parking in places, and roads were generally quiet or slow moving enough that cycling was a realistic option (although not attractive). Especially around Bonnygate, the pavements were narrow and not appropriate for crowds of people, especially on bin day as it uses roadside pick-up and not communal points making it quite intrusive.
There was little evidence of recent investment in the public realm outside of Mercat Cross, where there was updated parking, bike parking, maps/information, trees, benches and paving. The paving and benches were starting to show their age however, and were not maintained recently. The public realm in general was fairly litter free – although the street furniture looks dated. There were plenty of planters, but the vast majority were empty. Overall, the town centre was not very leafy, with empty planters and few trees included in public space.
The town centre felt very welcoming, and there was a lot of evidence of civic and community engagement with place. There were lots of community noticeboards and posters, and plenty of planters in and around key public spaces. Community buildings were well maintained and welcoming, we witnessed flower boxes being updated and installed on one of the churches. The town felt safe, which was helped by a strong mix of uses, active frontages and "eyes on the street" (Jane Jacobs); there were plenty of benches to rest on, shady areas and lighting (although we did not visit at night to experience how effective the lampposts or how active it was then).
Overall, the town centre felt busy and successful. There weren't too many cyclists, but plenty of people walking about – especially on Bonnygate. There weren't many trees, and not much public art inclusion, but these were not missed too much because the market town quality felt successful.

<u>Outside of the TC:</u>

Decile 9: Very leafy and sits well in the landscape – attractive and well kept gardens, and buildings are well maintained. Characterised by bungalows form the 80s and 90s, single family homes in a low-density layout with lots of cul-de-sacs. Very quiet, no walkers or cyclists and only a handful of cars moving about. Some public green space behind private homes, more connective than for playing/relaxing in, although well-kept. Heavily car-based urban design: poor permeability and disconnected form town centre.

Decile 2: less well-maintained gardens (but not bad) and still a very leafy setting (although trees and grass slightly less cared for/landscaped). Some broken walls, and pavements and roads were noticeably more worn/cracked. Again, quiet and car centric with very few walkers and no cyclists. Buildings generally in a decent state of repair. Around the high flats there were some signs of dumping/fly tipping. Benches and some basic landscaping, although no planters.

<u>Forfar</u>

11.15am, Friday 16th June. Very sunny with slight breeze.

<u>TC Notes:</u>

(No bus or train station and not on NCN) Perception when arriving by road was good, leafy and welcoming. Wide entry road, with a mixture of industrial and residential uses. The roads were of good quality, and Forfar is situated nicely in its landscape, with hills nestled in its backdrop and a historic skyline standing starkly against it. Very poor, narrow bike lane at the side of the road. Pavements were of good quality, and sections looked updated very recently. A good provision of benches in public areas made walking attractive. No cycle provisions, and very little bike parking. This coupled with extremely busy roads made cycling a very unattractive option. There were some sections of narrow pavement, but it was generally solid.
There were a good amount of trees in some spaces, but others felt hard because of the lack of leaves. There were an abundance of planters, that were well filled and clearly cared for however, showing investment of time and effort into the public realm. There is a small, poorly implemented and used park near the town centre's car park. There were a good number of bins in public areas, and it was generally clean (other than around a few bus stops which had no bins and therefore collected litter). Materials in the public realm and furniture were generally good quality and relatively new, although not maintained recently. The central public space in particular had new benches and looked paved recently; this was near open and accessible public toilets and civic buildings and included shaded areas and planters/flower boxes. The town's Bell tower was working and chimed for midday.
The town centre itself felt very welcoming, through a high-quality public realm and well activated street frontages. There were very few community noticeboards, but the abundance of planters with logos from local organisations showed good engagement with place. Local shops, rather than chains and larger brands, dominated the high street, giving a strong sense of the locality and its surrounding producers/artisans. The overall streetscape was very inviting, and is complimented well by the surrounding built heritage, with unique details/motifs (plaques explaining history context, sandstone details and built features like turrets overlooking street corners) and consistent materials. The main issue that made the centre feel less welcoming and safe was the abundance of cars, where there was heavy and fast traffic for a town centre.
The town centre felt busy and successful, although this was centred around certain key shops, and it was not overcrowded. Only three cyclists were noticed during the visit. The immediate centre was also noticeably more active than even the peripheries of the centre, where it quickly became less busy. The only obvious things missing from the centre were bike parking and supermarkets (although you can argue supermarkets aren't needed where there is a healthy selection of independent local shops).

Outside of TC:

Decile 10: Good gardens, and characterised by late 20th century new build homes. Tidy and well maintained, very standard Scottish suburban feeling. Leafy, and good views over the settlement.

Decile 1: Gardens fairly well maintained, and paths and roads were good. There was a derelict site near the centre, and some fly tipping; but overall quite green and looked cared for. Good mix of buildings. Fairly quiet, and car centric.

Cowdenbeath

10.00am, Friday 11th August. Sunny and windy but warm weather.

TC Notes:

(No bus station and not on NCN) Perception when arriving from road is generally not great, as many would approach from the A92 dual carriageway which does not provide landscape setting or urban

views. Approaching from Kelty or Crossgates, it is slightly better as these routes provide better context of which settlements are nearby and the overall landscape setting. The train station is in a good location for accessing the town centre, and it connects directly to the high street. The main issue with the location is that it sits on a raised platform, with very steep slopes to access it; presenting accessibility issues. Overall, the landscape setting of Cowdenbeath is not particularly well integrated with its built form: views of nearby fields and hills are obscured, and the layout of roads around the settlement don't provide views of the town itself.

While there are some good exceptions, like the town hall, Premier Bingo Hall (which is now shut) and the old co-op building which now houses the police station, buildings in Cowdenbeath are generally of mediocre quality. Maintenance is clearly an issue on and around the high street, where paint is chipping, stonework is worn and there are clear signs of dereliction. There are some distinctive details, like the stonework, turrets and emblems, but these are at risk. Shop fronts along the high street are either low quality or in a poor state of repair. Modern buildings were poor throughout, and there were no examples of good contemporary/modern architecture in the centre.

Traffic on the high street is the main barrier to movement through the town – it is fast and constant. There is some clutter from street furniture, but does not pose a major issue. There is bike parking near and around the station, but no bike lanes through the settlement. We saw no cyclists. Issues like traffic give the town a poor pedestrian experience, and inclusions like a retail park at one end of the high street makes it unattractive to use active travel means.

Public space in Cowdenbeath is not great quality overall. There are some spaces that are used, like the open space near the train station which has a mural overlooking it, and has new benches/planters and green space, but this is overshadowed by other qualities. The centre is not leafy, and there is very little green/blue infrastructure; there are planters throughout, but very little to no trees and nothing to soften the hard building frontages. There is no space for seating and canopies on the streets, or trees lining the high street, meaning you are left with hard building frontages on one side of the pavement, and a busy/noisy road on the other. The murals are quite good, but unfortunately little is done to make them a feature. Maintenance of the public realm is good, it is just the quality that is poor. This is seen in the investment in the town, which has provided new paving around the station, with some planters, benches and bike parking.

The centre is by no means hostile, but not especially welcoming either. The traffic is intrusive to the pedestrian experience and the built form is hard with little to soften it; which makes it fairly uninviting. The planters help to make it more attractive, but these are delivered by the council and there is little civic or local business community involvement present in the centre. The murals by Kerry Wilson are one of the few things that makes the town more attractive and welcoming, celebrating the mining heritage, childhood prospects and prowess of a local artist.

Despite some of the issues discussed, the centre did feel busy. There were plenty of people out and about, making use of local services and shops. The successful feeling is tempered by relatively high vacancy rates, but these are not felt too harshly. We did not see any cyclists on the high street, although this is not surprising since the high street was hostile for other road users. There is a cycle lane through the park to the west, and its likely that cyclists use this before walking around the centre.

Low Decile: Greenspace in this area is well-maintained, but not very exciting: it is a small grassy area with a few basic pieces of play equipment. There is a mix of houses, although most are dry-dash, semi-detached and terraced homes. Houses are well-maintained, although gardens tended to be

overgrown and sometimes used for fly tipping. Roads and pavements are in OK condition, and there was some litter but not much. There is a large central space used for car parking, which detracts from the public space in the area. The area wasn't inviting, but did not feel unwelcoming. Access to the town centre is very good, with pedestrian links covering the short distance.

High Decile: Characterised by volume, new-build homes, laid out in a low-density and car dependent fashion. Houses and gardens are very well-maintained. There was good landscaping across the site, and there was an inclusion of natural green space and woodland to the north. Pedestrian connections to the centre are very poor.

Lochgelly

11.45am, Friday 11th August. Sunny with slight breeze.

TC Notes:

(No bus station and not on NCN) Perception of Lochgelly when arriving by road is not particularly attractive, it is generally done from Cowdenbeath or the A92 which don't give a landscape impression on approach and are characterised by busy roads. It is more attractive from the North, where rural landscape setting is clear, and views of nearby hills and wooded areas are pleasant. The overall wider landscape setting of Lochgelly is good, and there are areas which are outward facing to take advantage of this; however, the majority of the settlement does not make use of this important asset, glimpses are only briefly caught when walking through the town. There is a train station in Lochgelly, however it is very small and does not have a building attached. The station is not accessible for those with mobility issues, as stairs are required to access one side of the platform. The station is also located very far from the centre, and requires walking up a hill to access the centre; although it is well-located for the nearby Lochgelly High School.

There is a good range of types of buildings in Lochgelly. There is not too much built heritage left over, although what remains is fairly distinctive. Quite a lot of the buildings are in a poor state of repair, and dereliction and vacancy are clearly an issue in the area. Stone bungalows and terraced ex-miners homes characterise much of the town. An old church (Rockgelly) has a successful contemporary extension out the back designed for a climbing facility, however the facility has never opened and it is not clear if it will.

Generally, Lochgelly is not a particularly attractive place to walk or cycle around. The roads are very busy and relatively fast, and the pavements are narrow in places. As already mentioned, there is no cycle infrastructure which is a real shame given there is the nearby Fife Cycle Park. The hilly landscape and traffic are the main barriers to movement throughout the town.

There are some signs of investment in Lochgelly, mainly the central green space and the business centre. This is a shame, as these have not weathered particularly well: both the business centre and the central green space could use better maintenance and care, and are missing any community involvement/engagement. The overall public space reflects this, as it could generally be maintained better: there is some litter and signs of vandalism/fire damage on small units along the high street. The town itself is quite leafy in the centre, and there are a few usable green spaces like Moore Park. The overall landscape setting is very green, and the hills provide an excellent setting.

Overall, the town is not particularly welcoming to spend time in. There was very little sign of community engagement with place, with no community noticeboards, planters or initiatives. There was bunting out for the children's Gala, which softened some of the hard buildings, but the event itself was carried out on the edge of the settlement, and there was no obvious connection linking it to the centre. The area is by no means hostile, but not especially pleasant either.

In terms of features that it is missing, cycle infrastructure could make a huge difference to the town. It is nearby to Lochore Meadows which has a large number of cycle paths and mountain bike trails, and it is also nearby to the Fife Cycle Park; which presents a real opportunity for the area to become a cycle destination for Fifers and visitors alike. This is currently not supported by the built environment or infrastructure in the town. The other obvious issue is the high level of vacancies on the high street. It clearly isn't a retail/commercial destination, but much more could be done to support the local economy – given the space that is currently underused. Overall, the town did not feel busy, other than with traffic through it.

Outside of TC:

High Decile: Mostly older volume houses, with generally very good maintenance. Some variation in architecture from subsequent developers, but minimal. Gardens are generally very well looked after, with only a couple of exceptions. Paths, pavements and roads are in need of repair. The green space in the centre is OK, although not particularly well landscaped or activated (it's dull). There was an empty site on the edge facing the railway, although no signs of dereliction. Views of the nearby landscape are very good, with hills, woodland, fields and the train line all providing nice perspectives. Pedestrian connection to the centre is very poor, it is a fair walk and up hill to access; however the train station is very nearby. The route is also not very permeable, and requires walking around roads designed to slow cars, rather than give good pedestrian access.

Low Decile: The area is quite industrial, and there was presence of vacant and derelict land, including a considerably sized vacant site and some obvious fire damage on one of the buildings. Buildings are generally well maintained, however there a few blocks of flats that are quite poor and in need of an update. Gardens were generally very nice. Pedestrian connections to the centre are excellent, given that this area is just off the main street.

Levenmouth

Leven

10.00am, Friday 4th August. Cloudy/sunny/windy but warm weather.

TC Notes:

(Not on NCN and no train station YET) On arrival by road, the landscape setting is attractive although not well-integrated with the towns themselves. Woodland, hills and coastal landscapes nearby are dominated instead by high-volume, new-build developments and heavy industry. Roads are well-maintained however, and are currently being updated/resurfaced. Perceptions at the bus station are good, the building is modern but functional, attractive and well maintained. It includes amenities like toilets, car parking and is surrounded by shops and services. It's positioned at the foot of the high street, which has received investment in its paving, making it attractive and accessible by walking from a large catchment.

Leven has a wide mix of buildings, some very attractive built heritage as well as a large amount of poor and very poor quality modern buildings. Some of the detailing on the buildings has been well-preserved, and much of the heritage is due to or pays homage to the industry that shaped the area (beehive detailing in the brickwork of the library for example). There is a large amount of derelict sites and buildings throughout Levenmouth, and maintenance is clearly an issue. The buildings throughout are distinctive, regardless of heritage status, but there is a feeling that what is left is at risk.

The high street of Leven has been quasi-pedestrianised, which improves the atmosphere and accessibility of the street however parked and slow cars detract from this. There were plenty of places to rest along the high street, which were well used. There was some bike parking, although we did not see any high-quality bike lanes, just lines painted on roads. Links from the promenade to the high street are not particularly good which makes a strong asset to the area quite cut off. However, a number of the closes and wynds had detailed emblems and art incorporated, showing permeability was to some degree considered.

As mentioned earlier, there was a good amount of street furniture providing places to rest, a lot of which had associated landscaping to provide views and shelter. There were several trees along the high street, which looked quite tired, but softened parts of the built environment. The state of the public realm overall was not bad, there were quite a few cigarette butts and some weeds, but overall litter and weeds were not a problem. Paving along the high street was patterned attractively, and had been updated recently around the bus station. Planters were well occupied along the high street.

The town centre did not feel particularly welcoming, partly due to a high proportion of vacant shop fronts, but mostly due to dereliction. There were a couple of signs with information for visitors, but these were weather beaten and clearly old, which did not help the centre to feel inviting. There are some nice historic buildings, but these are overshadowed by poor quality modern buildings that surround the town centre. The planters were delivered by the local business community, and there was no sign of civic engagement with place beyond a community noticeboard. It did not feel hostile in anyway, there was just very little to reinforce feelings of safety and welcoming.

The main things missing from the built environment were cycle infrastructure and community integration. Vacant and derelict plots detract from place quality, but can provide an opportunity for residents engagement and involvement with place, which could be utilised across Levenmouth.

There is a lot of contrast throughout Levenmouth, where some sections of the high street were well-activated and busy, while nearby sections felt dead; community involvement is sparse throughout most of it, but obvious in other areas; there are some excellent buildings, often round the corner from very poor developments; the beach and several green assets are high-quality, but cut off and poorly integrated with the different towns.

Methil

Methil High Steet felt extremely quiet, and the local centre actually functions along Wellesley Road rather than the High Street. There were some attractive buildings along it, as well as building sites and a mix of other architectural styles. It was mostly characterised by brick, two-story, terraced buildings. There was some green space, that was relatively well maintained, although did not provide benches or places to rest.

Buckhaven

There were several murals in Buckhaven, which brightened the approach to it's centre. Green space was relatively well-maintained, and there was some nice landscaping on the streetscape. There were some signs of litter and fly tipping throughout. There were various signs of community involvement, ranging from noticeboards to community gardens and a community charity office on the high street. There are several derelict sites and buildings, and vacant shop fronts were a real problem. There are some nice buildings (old co-op building, council offices), although maintenance is clearly an issue.

Anstruther

12.00pm, Friday 1st September. Sunny and very warm.

TC Notes:

(Not on NCN, and no bus or train station) Perceptions when arriving by road in Anstruther are good. The coastal setting is obvious on approach from the North and South, and it's rural landscape is obvious when approaching from the West. Further, the nearby settlements are attractive and give a good understanding of the nearby context that Anstruther sits in. The centre is accessible fairly quickly as the settlement is not large, although there are some low-quality, volume housing developments on the outskirts which don't give the best impression. This said, the skyline of older buildings is fairly obvious from a distance which helps to make the town distinctive and attractive.

The buildings in Anstruther tend to be very good. Maintenance is not an issue, there are no issues with weeds growing from buildings or paint peeling. Care is clearly taken with renovation work in painting and upkeeping stonework, meaning details like colourful paint are well-preserved and reinforce the coastal setting. Distinctive buildings like 'Buckie House' and Dreel Halls give the town memorable landmarks and showcase its preservation of unique built heritage. The buildings tend to be seaward facing, and the layout spreads along the coastline giving good access to the sea for all residents.

Generally, Anstruther is a very attractive place to walk around. The coastal side of the high street has a very wide pavement, and the shopfront side has some open sections for outdoor seating for cafes, takeaways, pubs and restaurants. This means there is plenty of space on the high street for walking and resting, which is needed as this part is extremely busy with tourists. Backstreets tend to have narrow pavements and a lot of on street parking, but these roads are quiet enough that it does not cause too much issue. There is some bike parking offered in the centre, but not much; we saw several cyclists keep their bikes next to the pubs/cafes they were sat at instead of the limited bike parking provided. The main barrier to movement is cars, Anstruther's rural location means it's difficult to access without using a car, and the limited space means that roads and parking get busy quickly.

The state and quality of the public realm is generally very good. Maintenance is not an issue, and a lot of care is clearly taken of public areas. There is a good provision of distinctive benches and other street furniture, which help to make the town distinctive and attractive to visitors. There was a new path through the green space just behind the high street, and this green space has clearly received recent investment. There were community apple trees, play equipment and a MUGA all installed here recently.

Although the coastal frontage is a little dominated by car parking, Anstruther remains a very welcoming town. There is plenty of public art and information boards, and much of the high street is

friendly to tourists and visitors. It is still a working town as well, and the harbour provides a great focal point for residents and visitors alike. Provisions like the coastal path encourage visitors to explore the area, and subtle/large differences between the towns and villages make each an interesting and worthwhile place to visit.

While there were some things missing from Anstruther (like a larger supermarket) this makes sense given its rural context. Overall, it felt like a busy and successful town.

Burntisland/North Berwick

Burntisland

2.00pm, Friday 21st of July. Sunny, warm weather.

TC Notes:

(On NCN 76, no bus station) Arriving by road in Burntisland provides scenic views of the landscape and urban layout. There are views of the Forth from all directions which reinforces the coastal setting, while from the east there are hills and from the west there is woodland and fields; the settlement is surrounded by an accessible array of different landscapes. The building of the train station itself is very attractive, and has complimentary landscaping and civic engagement throughout its area. Routes from the train station to the high street are obvious, although lined with poor quality modern buildings. It could be argued that the industrial side of Burntisland detracts from place quality, although contemporary industry does add a nice juxtaposition to the historic high street and coastal resort feeling on the other side of the town.

There is a wide range of architectural styles and periods throughout Burntisland's centre. Buildings were generally well maintained, irrespective of age. Tenement style stone, mid rise buildings characterise the built heritage – usually Victorian or Edwardian – details well-preserved and make the town distinctive and attractive. Modern installations tend to be of a lesser quality, and there are several modern/contemporary buildings that are especially unattractive. A large portion of buildings in the west are industrial and stand out distinctly due to their size, massing and use; but provide an interesting change in urban form.

Moving around Burntisland was generally easy. Pavements and roads were wide, and a mixture of traffic calming measures and busy street frontages kept traffic slow. There is good permeability in the centre, and the size and layout of the town made walking across it easy. The only main barrier to movement in the centre was how busy it was, however there was a fair on the links the day that we visited. There were no cycle lanes through the centre, but plenty of bike parking, traffic was relatively slow and the coastal path could be used (although it is off-road and unpaved).

Public space in Burntisland was high-quality. Streets and pavements were wide which helped to accommodate the many visitors. Trees are integrated throughout the centre, and provided shade while making the centre leafy and attractive. There was clearly some investment, with paving and crosswalks looking fairly new; and benches provided places to rest along the high street. The centre was very clean, even when busy with the fair, there was no litter and very few weeds. Green space has been well integrated with the centre, with the links right next to the beach, green areas surrounding the centre and a good provision of trees throughout.

The town felt very inviting to visitors, even on a very busy day with an event on. Parking was abundant and accessible, which encourages car dominance but does provide good accessibility alongside the rail station. The seaward layout of the town, coupled with attractive buildings and streetscapes helped to make the town inviting. There was clear evidence of community and civic engagement with place, in Rotary Club planters and flower boxes, maps and information boards for visitors and community noticeboards for advice and information for residents.

Our visit gave the impression that Burntisland was busy and successful. There was the fairground on, which will have influenced how busy the centre felt, but there were other signs of success as well in a range of independent shops and a clean/cared for public realm.

Outside of the TC:

Low Decile: Gardens and homes were generally well-maintained, with some very well looked after. There was a good mix of architectural styles, mostly modern but some very nice historic buildings as well. There was a community noticeboard, and some nice green space including a vacant plot that may have been taken over as a community growing space. Connections to the town centre were good, although up a hill which could present issues for residents with mobility issues.

High Decile: Mostly new housing, with a large area still under construction. Landscaping was very high quality, with SUDS and a large open green space included. Landscape setting was also good, making use of the hills surrounding the site. Maintenance of homes, streets and gardens was very good, given how new the area was. The actual layout and style of development was very bland, repetitive housing laid out in an exclusive and unwelcoming fashion. The layout will encourage car dominance, and connections to the centre reinforced this: it required walking around lengthy routes and over steep hills to access. The area felt quiet, and we saw few people or shops/services.

North Berwick

10.30am, Friday 28th July. Sunny with some clouds, warm weather.

TC Notes:

(Not on NCN and no bus station) Perception when arriving by road was good, roads were generally ok and several were being resurfaced. Coastal and countryside views are attractive on the journey, and much of the road from Edinburgh runs parallel to the train tracks providing nice views. The Law and Bass Rock both provide obvious landmarks that help with orientation on approach and show the varied landscapes of the area. The train station in North Berwick doesn't have a building attached, but is landscaped well and sits in an attractive area. There was a coffee kiosk/newsagents, and the car park was well kept. Routes to the centre were well signed and obvious.

Buildings in North Berwick are very well maintained, clean with architectural details (stone carving, iron balconies etc.) well preserved. There are few modern buildings (some of which are of little architectural value), but some tasteful modern extensions which integrate well with the built heritage and they add architectural diversity. Framing of key viewpoints into the town are considered well, providing attractive streetscape and skyline vantage points. Shop signs are consistently kept in the historic style, mostly wooden and painted, which gives the high street in particular a preened look. Plaques are included on homes which housed notable historic residents and events.

The town itself is very attractive to walk or cycle around, although there are some considerable barriers to movement. Pavements and streets are very narrow in the centre, which is exacerbated by the town being extremely busy. There were no events on in the area, but parking was a challenge and there were a huge number of visitors and tourists walking the narrow routes in and around town. Cars are obviously the main mode of transport for accessing the town, and the high street and surrounding roads were very busy with both traffic and parked cars. There were no bike lanes.

Public space in North Berwick was very high quality. Some of the paving used cheap materials like cement, but despite this, the public realm was very well-maintained. There was very little to no litter, graffiti or weeds. There were abundant places to rest and sit, and associated landscaping that provided shelter and something to look at. The centre was very leafy overall, with flower boxes, hanging baskets, trees lining streets and open green spaces. Green landscaping and integration were used to good effect, as trees helped to frame sightlines and streetscapes, planters were used as benches or bike parking, and several planters had herbs growing with labels attached. Residents back lanes were well kept and used, often cobbled with painted details and benches/plant pots. Information boards for visitors were throughout the town. North Berwick has a very mixed use layout at its centre, with heritage shop fronts smoothly integrated with housing above and around it. There were obvious signs of investment in the public realm throughout.

Overall, North Berwick felt very inviting/welcoming. While streets and pavements were narrow, they felt quaint and historic which offset negative feeling about lack of space. The streets were extremely busy, but this quantity of eyes on the street made it feel safe and well-used. There was a large amount of evidence of community and civic engagement with place, visible throughout the town. North Berwick in bloom delivered and maintained planters, and was supported and sponsored by various businesses active in the community. Community noticeboards were scattered throughout the centre, and there were signs along the high street about North Berwick Community Council initiatives and schemes.

There were not too many sheltered bike parking spots, and bike lanes would improve accessibility and crowding; but there was very little obvious missing from the built form. Overall, it gave the impression of being extremely successful and busy. Businesses and visitors were abundant and in a very dense and well-laid out and cared for town.

<u>Outside of the TC:</u>

Lowest Decile: There was a wide mix of architectural styles in this area which provides an attractive mix of houses. Some of the modern installations were of fairly poor quality, but these were the minority and the character of the area was still very attractive. It was well-integrated with the town centre, with many strong connections and very little distance to travel. Roads were still very busy in this area, as were the streets in general. Planters were included in some leftover space, which was a nice inclusion but a sign that some of the lines between private and public space could have been more obvious.

Highest Decile: Gardens were extremely well kept, and houses well-maintained. Backlanes were cobbled and picturesque. Materials used were high-quality, and there was a good mix: brick, stone, pebbledash and timber were all used to good effect. Links to the beach were good, and the town centre was well-connected to this area. Roads were well-maintained, although quite narrow. Greenspace was well-kept, and integrated well with the area.

Rosyth

12.00pm, Wednesday 6th September. Sunny, warm weather.

TC Notes:

(No bus station, although Ferrytoll Park and Ride is ~1.5 miles away; and on NCN 76, although mostly on road) Arrival at the rail station does not provide a great impression of Rosyth, mostly because it is on the periphery of the town itself. There is a small car park, and a small sheltered bike parking area, but there is no proper building – just platforms with small shelters. Overall it is quite isolated, and does not feel like a part of the town. Arrival by road is mixed, with some routes providing picturesque views and a strong impression of the local context, while others are dominated by busy and fast roads. From the west, coastal and rural views are excellent, and the A985 provides an efficient and attractive approach to the town. From the south, the bridges provide scenic views while informing visitors of the areas heritage; the docks dominate the view of Rosyth (although not in a negative way) and show the industrial context that the town has. Approaching from the north or east is not as scenic, as it relies on using or passing the M90 which is not attractive infrastructure.

The town itself is laid out in a garden city design, and the buildings reflect this philosophy. There are many attractive and distinctive buildings, with the vast majority of the town characterised by the modernist planning style. Contemporary and late modern buildings tend to be poor-quality. Maintenance of buildings is mixed, although civic buildings tend to be well kept which makes them strong features that give a lot of character. This applies to buildings like the Parkgate Community Centre, Rosyth Parish Church and the Eats Rosyth Community Hub. Investment in the general upkeep of more standard buildings would improve the image of the overall town considerably.

There are no proper cycle lanes through Rosyth, which is a shame as there are many high-quality bike and mixed use paths nearby. Walking is still very attractive around Rosyth however, thanks to many of the arterial routes being tree-lined avenues. These trees provide shelter from the elements for pedestrians and wheelers, and create a barrier between the active transport realm and the traffic on the roads. Pavements tend to be wide, and there are plenty of places to sit or rest. The roads themselves are quite busy, and there are several places that roads and parking divide open space, so legibility could be improved. The modernist layout of the town also encourages car use, given houses are placed in a low-density fashion and permeability is often poor. This said, the streets being pleasant and attractive to walk on softens some of the more negative features/aspects.

The centre of Rosyth is very leafy, with streetscapes that have landscaping, avenues and front gardens; as well as larger open green spaces and parks. This compliments the public space greatly, and it too is in a good state of repair and quality. There is very little litter, and we did not see any graffiti; although rubbish collection is all done in public space and could be managed better. There was no obvious signs of investment in the public realm, although there was a good provision of public art and murals. There is a disused toilet block (the Parks Bothy) at one end of the centre, which is a shame but it has been used to provide space for local artists. One of the main issues facing the public realm is how disjointed the centre itself is. There is no true centre in Rosyth, more like 3 smaller, local centres; which means that the provision of shops and services is not contiguous. Not having a true centre means that there is no open public space directly created for walking and wheeling, and means that the traffic passing through the town dominates the centre.

The town does feel welcoming, with the main barrier being traffic. Flower planting and bench provision help to make this an attractive and inviting place to spend time, but as stated: the fact that

the town is a thoroughfare for other nearby settlements and areas means that traffic is constant. There is some evidence of community involvement with place, as seen in community noticeboards, the several community groups that are active, and planters; although there is clearly space for more community initiatives and projects.

The main thing missing from the built environment is cycle infrastructure. Bike parking is very limited in the town, and there are no segregated bike lanes on arterial routes. While most back streets are quiet enough that cycling is an option, these circuitous routes do not make it an attractive option for new cyclists. Overall, there were some people walking when we visited but the town does not feel especially busy or successful.

Outside of TC:

Low Decile: Houses are in good condition, and private gardens look well kept. The road was maintained recently, and the pavement was also in good condition. There was some left over space that was grassed over at the rear of the site, unusable green space; although some of this has been appropriated by residents who have added some plants and landscaped features themselves. There was some litter in the area, but overall it was clean and clear. Pedestrian connections to the centre were good, although permeability could have been improved: connections between subsequent developments are not good and it means communities can be cut off from one another.

High Decile: The houses in this area are well-maintained, although they are typical volume built, low density homes in a cul-de-sac layout; this said, the layout is better than standard cul-de-sac design as landscaping and provision of different grades of road improve the legibility of the development. Private gardens are cared for, and we did not see any litter or fly tipping. There were trees in most front gardens, and the landscaping attached to open, public green space was very high quality. The road and pavements were generally in a good state of repair, although there were some broken sections. Traffic calming measures were included along the main road, which combined with strategic grading will make sure that streets are usable for more than just traffic. Pedestrian connections to the centre are poor, it's ~1 mile to the local centre and requires walking along and crossing some fairly busy and unpleasant roads.

Inverkeithing

10.00am, Wednesday 6th of September. Cloudy but warm and dry.

TC notes:

(On NCN 1 and 76, traffic free routes outside the town but on road in the settlement itself) There isn't a bus station in Inverkeithing itself, but Ferrytoll Park and Ride bus station is just a short walk from the high street. Ferrytoll provides a large amount of car parking and has provides sheltered waiting areas, although is not especially attractive. Its location makes it very well served by buses however, and it is heavily used. The train station in Inverkeithing is also not quite in the centre, it sits on the Northern end of the high street, and down a fairly steep hill, which makes its accessibility and legibility fairly poor for visitors. The building itself is not particularly attractive either, a modern shelter for waiting and buying tickets, but it does have sheltered bike parking, a car park, and again its strategic location before the bridge makes it well used by travellers and served by trains. Arrival by road and train from the south gives a very good impression because of the bridges, which both provide excellent views of the Forth Valley and are scenic themselves. They showcase important

historic and contemporary engineering projects, giving the area character and facilitating its growth and development. Approach from the north isn't as attractive, as it is mostly characterised by motorway, although there are some nice rural and coastal landscape views from the east and west.

Inverkeithing contains a very wide mix of buildings. The centre itself is highly distinctive, and contains many high-quality historic buildings like the Hospitium of the Grey Friars and Inverkeithing Parish Church; both of which showcase local materials, skilled stonemasonry and distinctive details. There are some high-quality contemporary buildings as well like the Civic Centre, which recently received significant investment, and creates a nice contrast with nearby built heritage. Maintenance along the high street is a bit shaky in places however, and a number of buildings have weeds growing from them, look grimy, have peeling paint or other issues. In general though, historic features have been retained and reused well (like an old door turned into a window at the opticians, stone carving preserved atop a doorway on the yellow house, or one of Scotland's oldest Mercat Crosses).

Movement and active travel around Inverkeithing could be improved hugely. Pavements tend to be very narrow on and around the high street, which is exacerbated by clutter from street signs and furniture like planters and bins. One side of the high street has segregation from the road, but still has car parking and very little landscaping. There is space for trees, and these would make a major improvement by slowing traffic and making the high street itself more attractive. There are some very high-quality cycle routes around Inverkeithing, which is a real shame as the town itself is fairly hostile for bikes: roads are narrow and busy with traffic, and the only protection for cyclists is painted lines.

The public space in Inverkeithing is fairly leafy, although mostly on the periphery of the centre itself. As already mentioned, the high street would benefit greatly from trees, which it historically it had although they have been lost. There is a small green area past the church at the Church Street end of the high street that is quite good: it is landscaped well and has benches and trees for shelter, although it is small and not usable for activities like playing or dog walking. The state of the public realm in terms of maintenance is pretty good, there was very little litter, and weeds were generally not a problem. The quality of materials in some cases was not good, planters and the like used cheap plastic which has aged quickly and looks tired. This said, there is a good amount of investment planned and undertaken for the public space in Inverkeithing which will improve issues like this. Heritage has received a good amount of funding from the Inverkeithing Heritage Regeneration Project 2021, although this mostly missed out public space. Inverkeithing is currently receiving Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme (CARS) funding though, its part of Round 8 (from 2019-2025) and will be awarded £1,007,700 with total scheme cost of £3,772,839; a good portion of this funding is ringfenced for public space improvements.

The town itself does feel quite welcoming, it has a quaint, small-town feel to it. It's hard to argue that it's inviting, as it is not major retail centre that attracts a lot of visitors, the high street itself feels more like a thoroughfare than anything else. This said, it serves the local community well, and is clearly an asset to nearby groups. There is some evidence of engagement with place by these local communities, with several community noticeboards present and planters and flower displays arranged by the local business community. One of the planters had an advert for how to get involved with the scheme, which is very positive.

The built environment is missing cycle infrastructure, in terms of paths as well as bike parking which is fairly limited in the centre itself. There is also no larger supermarket, although there is a fishmongers, butchers, grocers as well as some other speciality shops; and given the size of the settlement a large supermarket might be inappropriate. The centre did not feel busy when we

visited, although it was a Wednesday morning, so that must be considered for context. It was very busy with traffic however.

Outside TC Notes:

Low Decile: Gardens are a mix, with some especially well looked after, although most average. None were in a total state of disrepair or covered in litter. There is a green space with play park nearby that was in good condition and looked usable. Landscaping around the area was quite poor, and there were a lot of hard surfaces. The road was broken up, although pavements were in fine condition. Houses were generally poorly maintained, with lots looking in need of minor repairs and cleaning/painting. Access to the centre was good, there is a hill but it is only a short distance. Permeability could have been better.

High Decile: mostly late 20th century volume houses that were very well-maintained. Green space and gardens also very well maintained. Pavements were poor here, but roads were in good condition. Views were fantastic, as the area overlooks the town and nearby hills, fields and wooded areas. Pedestrian and wheeling access was very poor, it's quite a distance from the centre, and up a very steep hill. The route was very indirect, and the street layout is clearly designed with cars in mind. Overall, a fairly unexciting area in terms of architecture and layout, but nice with views and general atmosphere.

Kincardine

2.00pm, Wednesday 6th September. Sunny and warm weather.

TC Notes:

(No train or bus station, on NCN 76 where a small section is traffic free) Approach by road is fairly good to Kincardine, although there is a tendency for the village to turn into a thoroughfare as much of the traffic passes through the town just to use the Kincardine Bridge. The bridge does provide a good connection to the Falkirk side of the Forth, as well as showcasing good built heritage, but it has negative implications for the village as well. The overall landscape setting of Kincardine is attractive though, with good rural views of fields, hills and woodland; as well as coastal views of the Forth. Grangemouth is very obvious when approaching from the east, which is not attractive, although the scale of it does give a good impression of the industrial context that the area sits in.

Buildings in Kincardine are generally very well maintained, which presents a good impression of its historic centre. The layout of the centre itself is distinctive, showcasing how dense urban layouts can be used to efficiently use the space available in a rural context. It supports a pleasant streetscape, with nice public space complimented by the consistent scale and massing of buildings. The two to three story terraced streets support the legibility between private and public space, while allowing taller landmarks like the chapel tower to stand out.

Arterial routes around Kincardine tend to be fairly fast and heavy with traffic because of the bridges, but walking in the centre itself is quite attractive. The roads are relatively quiet, and pavements are in good condition while being wide enough to be comfortable. Bollards are well used to separate the traffic from the pavements, and there is some good landscaping in the streetscape which again separates cars while providing an attractive backdrop. There is no cycle infrastructure in the centre, making this a less attractive option. Permeability in the centre is very good, and many of the terraced

streets have wynds or alleys cutting through them to provide better access. There are no major barriers to pedestrian movement.

Kincardine itself is very leafy, there is good provision of trees in the village itself which coordinates with the nearby Devilla Forest, reinforcing the impression of the local landscape. There are several large green spaces near the centre of the village as well, providing usable green space with provisions like a football pitch and skatepark. The landscaping on the high street is very high quality, making it attractive while providing shelter with the trees, however there are no benches provided to take advantage of this. The state of the public realm is generally very high quality, and there were very few weeds and no litter on the day we visited. There is little to no sign of investment in the public realm, there were due to be improvements undertaken (the Imagine Kincardine project) but they were unable to go ahead due to rising materials cost and changes to funding schemes.

The village itself does feel welcoming, it has a quaint atmosphere from the wide streetscapes, outward looking buildings and shopfronts. These features also help to make the layout and design feel safe. In terms of community engagement, there were several features that showed an interest in place. There were plenty of planters throughout the village, as well as a community council notice. The Kincardine Community Centre has a prominent position in the urban form, at the top of the high street and nearby to the Coalfields Regeneration Trust.

Other than cycle infrastructure and general active travel improvements, there is little obviously missing from the built form of Kincardine. Overall, it did not feel busy but the centre itself feels successful in its local context.

High Valleyfield/Airth

High Valleyfield

1.45pm, Friday 23rd June. Overcast but warm weather, raining earlier in the day.

TC Notes:

(No bus or train station and on NCN76) Perception when arriving by road is mixed, with single track roads and roads through settlements nearby being the main access points. The A985 passes by to the North, but does not connect the settlement in a meaningful way. Road quality is generally very poor, both to access the village and in the settlement proper. The surrounding landscape itself is very attractive, with surrounding wooded areas to the west, north and east, and the Firth of Forth to the south (although there are no views of the river from the settlement).

The buildings that make up High Valleyfield are not distinctive, very standard modern, colliery style semi-detached housing, with some bungalows and sheltered housing included. The maintenance of both buildings and gardens was generally good, with gardens being especially well cared for.

The village was fairly nice to walk around, and roads were quiet/slow enough that cycling would not have been an issue, we saw two young cyclists making good use of the street space on our visit. There were no major barriers to active travel movement throughout the settlement. There were very few shops or services in the village, and they were not clustered particularly well so this lead to a generally quiet feeling throughout.

There was little to no investment in the public realm. There was a community garden and centre, which had some landscaping and art, but beyond this and some art/information about the colliery there was little community engagement with place. The public realm was not in a bad state of repair overall, but there were sections that were deteriorating. The village was not unwelcoming, but visitors are unlikely to stop and there was nothing to attract them.

The main aspect that harmed the atmosphere were a lack of central focal space for community and business. There was no obvious employment uses local to the village, and play/green spaces were relegated to the edge of the settlement. There were some people walking or cycling, but it did not feel busy or successful.

Airth

2.00pm, Friday 30th June. Raining.

TC Notes:

(No bus or train station and not on NCN) Fairly attractive when arriving by road, typical Scottish village in the central belt. Nothing distinguishing about the landscape setting or surrounding area. Road quality was fine, with the A905 running directly through the centre of the village. Interesting traffic calming (zigzags cut into the road) and key sections of the village being pedestrianised made this not an issue.

Some very attractive buildings throughout the settlement, with most being fairly standard. One development of new-builds stood out for having some distinctive local design, although not especially unique materials and building practices.

There were no obvious barriers to pedestrian movement, and the layout of the streets made access possible and easy from everywhere. There were some cul-de-sacs, but these did not dominate the form. The quiet side streets and relatively slow main road made active travel in the village a possibility.

There was no obvious inclusion of green and blue infrastructure, although the settlement was fairly leafy. Wildflower planting was used in some areas, and one of the newer bits of investment had included trees to line the pavement. Maintenance of paths was mixed, and there was some litter/graffiti, but the village looked generally cared for and well looked-after.

The centre was fairly welcoming, although people passing through are very unlikely to stop; there are attractions nearby but very little in the village proper in terms of retail, community or heritage features. There was a community noticeboard near the pub, although no maps or signs for visitors.

There was no bike infrastructure of any sort (bike parking, cycle lanes etc.). There was very good service provision however, with a local school, health centre, care home etc. all within an easy walk of each other. There were a few people walking around, but it did not feel busy.

Outside of TC:

Lowest Decile: a large number of flags could create a strongly off-putting feeling for certain people. Generally however, the area was attractive and well cared for, without a hugely hostile atmosphere. Pavements and roads were poor, and there was derelict land; but there were also a good number of well-cared for and attractive buildings that clearly had deep heritage value. The flower planting in this area was excellent, and there was good green space and access to surrounding countryside.

Highest Decile: some new builds with traditional details to tie into local history and design, older buildings were generally well-cared for as well, integrated nicely with the settlement. Gardens were well cared for generally, with a few exceptional and poor mixed in. The community noticeboard was in this area, as was the community centre and pub. The mercat cross showed signs of investment (~2010) and created a very attractive space, pedestrianizing a key section of road and including trees and updated paving.