



Cupar CARS and THI Programme 2014 – 2019

*The Difference
It's Made*

BACKGROUND

Cupar is the former county town of North East Fife and has many listed buildings and a large Conservation Area but there was concern that many of the soft sandstone buildings were deteriorating and in need of repair and restoration. Further, with the high numbers of older and listed buildings locally, and throughout North East Fife, the necessary skills to maintain them are needed.

It was also widely recognised that Cupar town centre needed a boost if it was to continue to successfully service local users and attract visitors. Additionally, traffic congestion was having a negative impact on the town centre and its attractiveness to users.

A heritage led programme of improvements and regeneration for Cupar town centre was decided to be the best way to tackle the issues. This multi-themed programme was developed by Fife Council, in partnership with Fife Historic Buildings Trust, and the local community and groups, such as Cupar Development Trust, Cupar Heritage, and the Royal Burgh of Cupar and District Community Council.

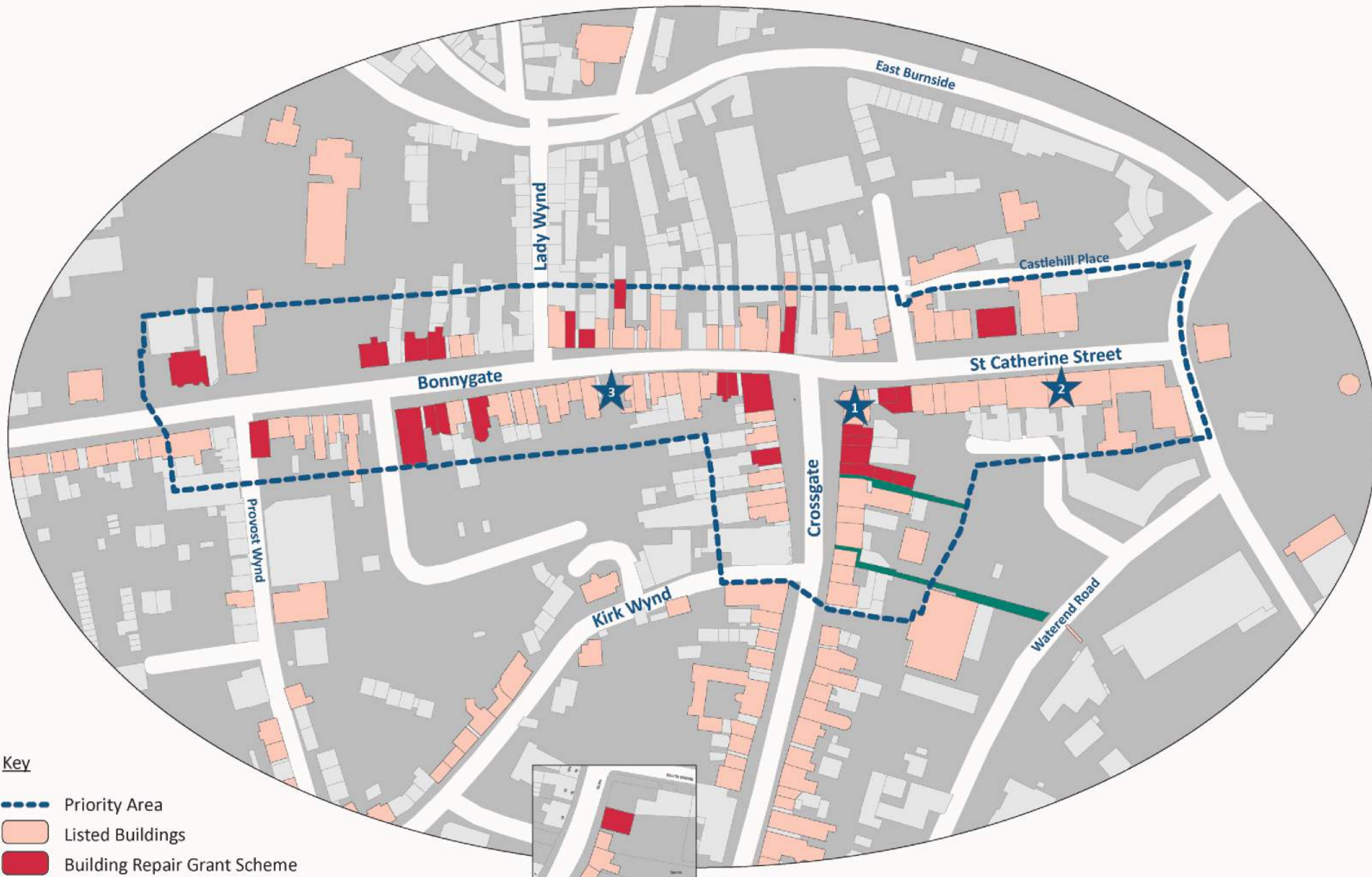
Historic Scotland (now Historic Environment Scotland) awarded £1m to Cupar under its Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme (CARS) and £550,000 was awarded by the Heritage Lottery Fund (now the National Lottery Heritage Fund), under its Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI). Fife Council was also able to provide over £4m for projects in Cupar town centre and there was an expectation of other match funding, including from private property owners.

This substantial package of over £7m investment was delivered during 2014 – 2019 through the Cupar CARS/THI Programme, which was led by Fife Historic Buildings Trust. The map shows the priority area for Programme and the location of the priority buildings/projects and private properties benefiting from grant assistance.

The Cupar CARS/THI Programme aimed to

- Improve Cupar town centre through a range of public realm projects.
- Restore and repair key historic buildings and bring back them back into productive and sustainable use.
- Enable and encourage private owners to carry out urgent repairs on traditional and older properties.
- Improve the local skills and knowledge base through a range of training activities.
- Increase people's understanding and appreciation of heritage.





Key

- Priority Area
- Listed Buildings
- Building Repair Grant Scheme
- Steele's Close & Speedie's Close
- ★ 1 Burgh Chambers
- ★ 2 County Buildings
- ★ 3 Bonnygate Gap Site Interpretation

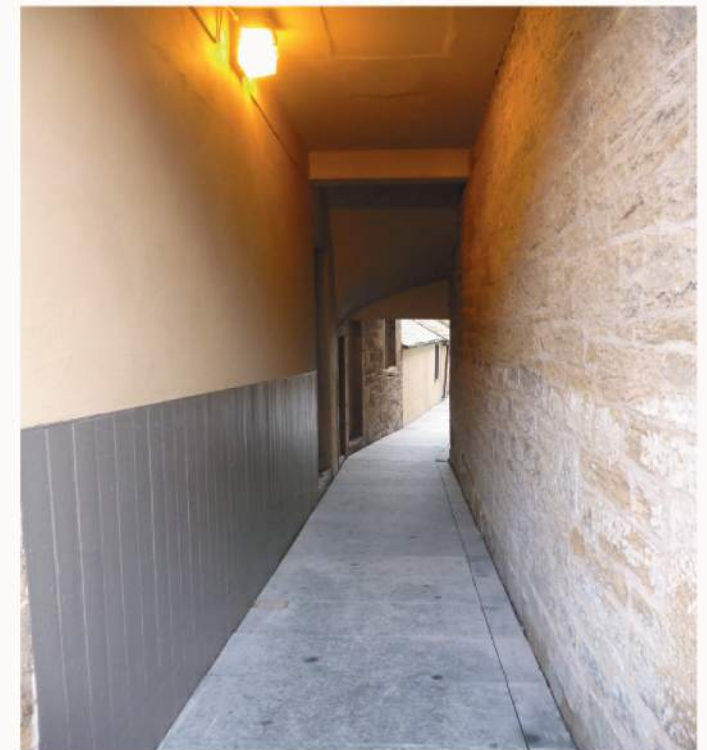


STREETS AND TRAFFIC

Early in the Programme, Fife Council undertook a range of streetscape works, including reconfiguring the St Catharine Street T-junction and Crossgate junction. This project cost around £1.5m and included the relocation of and conservation repairs to the Mercat Cross and upgrading pavements with a high quality Caithness stone surface in St Catherine Street and Crossgate.

BONNYGATE GAP SITE

The privately owned buildings at 26-32 Bonnygate were demolished by Fife Council in 2011 after structural issues and disrepair were identified. This resulted in a large and prominent gap site in the heart of the Conservation Area. It had been hoped to redevelop this site as part of the Programme, but it proved more complex than anticipated. The majority of the grant funding earmarked for the gap site was transferred to other projects, ownership has been consolidated under Fife Council and an attractive interpretative hoarding has been installed.



CLOSES

Steele's Close and Speedie's Close are two well used thoroughfares off the Crossgate but were shabby and uninviting. New high quality paving, improved lighting, and repairs to walls and ceilings, along with proper signs and interpretation, now make these closes attractive for users and give a better impression of Cupar town centre.



Two B-listed priority buildings were brought back into use through the Programme.

The Burgh Chambers is highly visible and one of Cupar's most recognisable town centre landmarks. It is a Common Good property but was vacant, with no obvious use or user, and was on the Buildings At Risk Register. Securing a new use was exacerbated by the poor accessibility of the building but after options were explored, the best solution was identified as a holiday flat for let.

The conservation, and redevelopment through the Programme has transformed the Burgh Chambers, both externally and internally. The high quality holiday flat has been available for rent since July 2018 and is exceeding expectations in terms of occupancy. The holiday flat should prove a real asset for Cupar town centre, attracting new visitors and their associated local spend and a new post of custodian has been created. The Programme facilitated vacant space being brought back into productive use and the Burgh Chambers has been removed from the Buildings At Risk Register. It remains a Common Good property and occasional public access is still possible, such as on Doors Open Days. The Burgh Chambers includes a permanent interpretative heritage display, developed by volunteers from Cupar Heritage.

RICS Awards
2019
Shortlisted



"We love that this is a historic building and enjoyed the snapshots of the location's history. So good to know our rental is preserving local history, a wonderful, smart and meaningful project. We hope it grows and prospers."



The vacant space in the west wing of County Buildings has been brought back into use as Fife Council affordable, social housing. THI funding was used to ensure traditional features were retained, repaired or reinstated e.g. cornices, and sash and case windows. The appearance of County Buildings has been significantly improved through the removal of an unsightly and inappropriate dormer and all redundant lighting. The exterior was completely repainted, with some additional funding from Fife Council.

BUILDING REPAIR GRANT SCHEME

The Building Repair Grant Scheme has successfully delivered improvements to many more buildings than it originally proposed, 23 as opposed to a maximum of 15 anticipated i.e. around a one third more. Both original target buildings – 7 St Catherine Street and the YMCA/YWCA - received grants for improvements. Some clusters of buildings at the Crossgate/Bonnygate junction and on both sides of the Bonnygate benefited from grant and this has increased the overall and visual impact of the investment provided through the Programme.

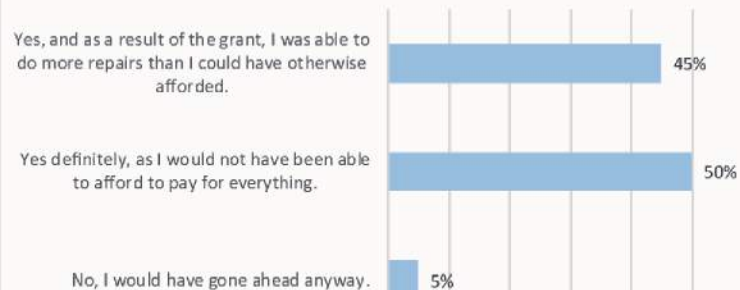
- 49 owners benefited
- 240 sqm of vacant space brought back into use
- Total grant awarded £571,000
- Average grant awarded £24,830
- Biggest grant £40,327
- Smallest grant £1,145
- Owners contributed almost £800,000 or 58% of the overall cost

Owners overwhelmingly said the availability of grant had encouraged them to undertake works, and 59% indicated that they had undertaken some additional non-grant aided works, ranging from relatively minor decorating, and energy efficiency measures to replacing roofs. Almost three quarters of owners responding to a survey indicated that the grant was 'a great help' and there was now a much better appreciation of the need for regular maintenance.

"The project money enabled us to do work we had long wanted to do but could not afford."



Did the availability of grant encourage you to undertake works to your property?



Has the CARS/THI programme/grant made a difference to how you will approach building maintenance in the future?



Several local contractors and building professionals were involved in the implementation of Building Repair Grant projects and gained valuable experience, knowledge and understanding of working on older buildings as a result. Some also enhanced their skills through the traditional skills training that was on offer through the Programme.

Local building professionals indicated that the Programme had a positive impact on their businesses by giving them experience in dealing with more complex projects in traditional buildings and enhancing their profile locally.

"The experience gained in Cupar CARS/THI has helped to build my portfolio, with a view to eventually becoming Conservation Accredited." Local architect

The Building Repair Grant Scheme has been well received and has secured significant improvements and investment but, has also revealed the scale of remedial works that are required. Many comments have been received recognising that ways of encouraging further investment are required and to ensure that owners that have received grants maintain their properties in the future. The Programme offered property owners a 'Stitch in Time' service using a cherry-picker to tackle gutter clearing and small scale, but difficult to access repairs.

"This grant enabled me to carry out repairs which otherwise might have taken years to afford. I have benefited and so has Cupar."

"My building has transformed from an eyesore to one of the nicest buildings in the street."



An ambitious and wide ranging programme of training and community activity was delivered through the Programme, including traditional building skills training for the construction sector, activity with schools, property owners and the local community, along with heritage and awareness raising projects.

A part time Training Development Officer promoted the traditional skills training opportunities to the local construction sector, including building professionals. Three local building firms were supported to take on apprentices, with another three apprentices taken on by Fife Council's heritage team. People participating in employability projects also benefited from traditional building skills training sessions. Technical seminars, Continued Professional Development sessions and hands-on traditional skills training opportunities aimed at local people, property owners, the construction and public sectors were all provided and generated good interest and positive feedback.

Activity with Bell Baxter secondary pupils included energy efficiency in older buildings, hands-on activity at Scottish Lime Centre Trust and a visit to a local traditional joinery business in Cupar. A Careers in Technologies Day was very successful in delivering taster sessions in traditional building skills to high numbers of senior pupils and is now being used as a best practice model elsewhere. The school has made some very valuable contacts for the future.

The CARS/THI Project Team interacted with local groups and there was a presence at several community events throughout the Programme, aimed at reaching a wide local audience, including hands-on taster sessions at the 2017 Summer Fayre. Hard hat tours took place at the Burgh Chambers during its redevelopment and Doors Open Day events took place prior to works and after completion. Cupar Heritage was able to refresh its publications and also instigated research into traditional shop fronts. A Cupar Stone and Slate Audit is a valuable reference point for property owners and will have long lasting benefit.





The community dig at Moat Hill in October 2018 uncovered what is thought to be an Early to Middle Bronze Age cremation pit. The dig generated very good community interest, with a follow up session attracting around 80 people. Another session was held with 86 Castlehill Primary School pupils, who were very engaged and asked the archaeologists lots of questions.

The Programme has supported Fife College to pilot and develop teaching and learning materials for a new Conservation unit, which is transferable and will have long lasting benefit.

Some activity, including mentoring, was not as extensive as planned but was still valuable and worthwhile and provides a basis to build on in the future. The energy efficiency activity is the only aspect which really did not work out as anticipated, as it proved challenging to engage with some of the target audiences.

"All pupils were extremely positive about the CARS/THI activities and really enjoyed the hands-on sessions."

Teacher Bell Baxter

"Comprehensive yet not overwhelming."

"Very knowledgeable and approachable speakers."

"This event has been very worthwhile – a real eye opener in my regard."

Technical Seminar participants

"What a brilliant set up and range of activities you had. We would absolutely love if we could confirm you to attend again next year!" Summer Fayre Committee



OVERVIEW AND ACHIEVEMENTS

BUILDINGS

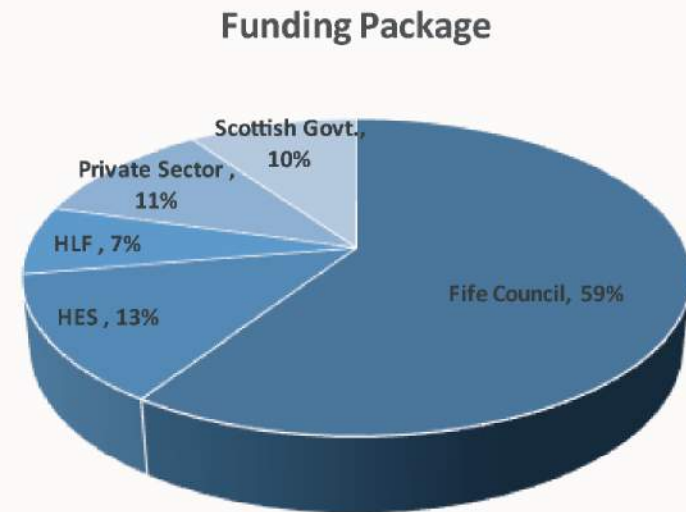
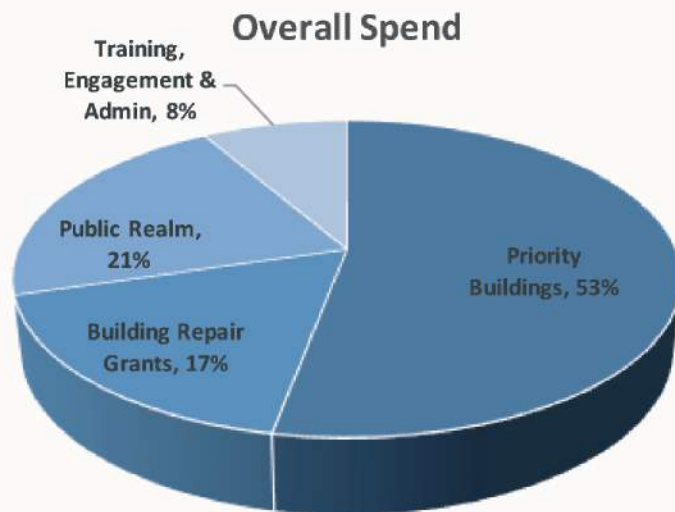
- 2 priority buildings repaired and restored
- 1,075 sqm of vacant space now in productive use
- Burgh Chambers removed from BARR
- 18 new affordable houses created
- 1 high quality holiday flat created
- 1 new part time job created
- Economic impact of Burgh Chambers guests
- 23 buildings and 49 owners benefited
- 3 shopfronts improved

PUBLIC REALM

- 3 public realm projects
- Mercat Cross restored and relocated
- 2 closes (392 sqm) improved
- 2,400 sqm of new high quality paving
- Gap site more attractive

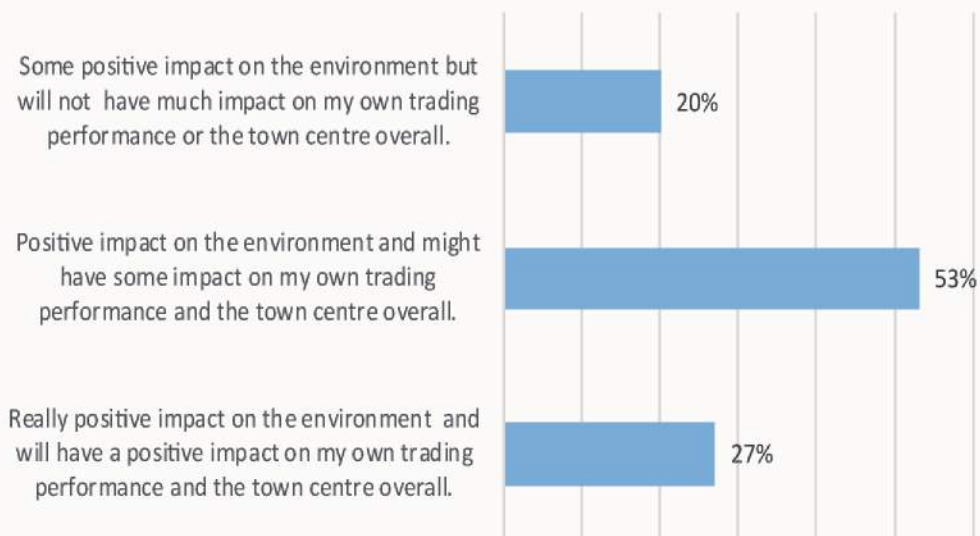
TRAINING AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- 143 contractors and professionals took part in training
- 7 apprentices supported
- 269 school pupils participated in activities
- Over 2,216 people participated in activities
- Stone and Slate Survey
- New traditional building skills course materials developed

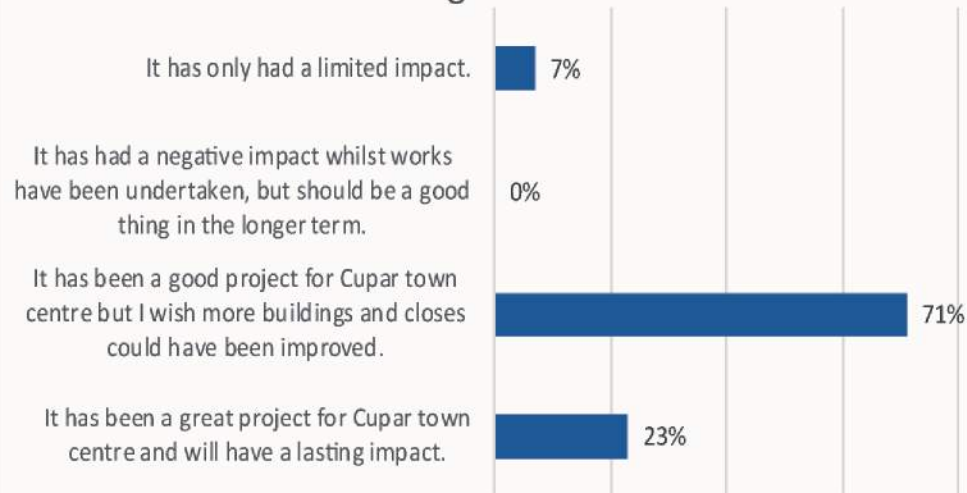


"Given Cupar a much needed lift and given it back its character and style."

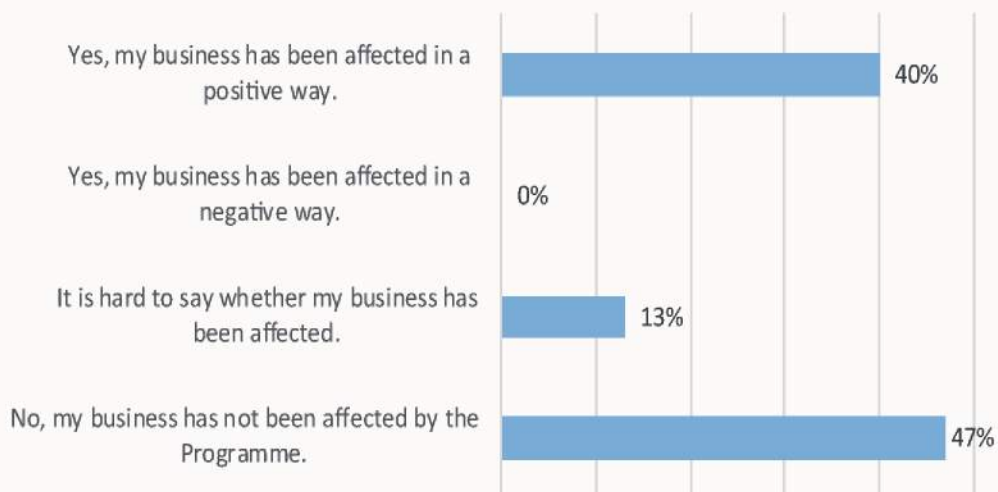
Business Views?



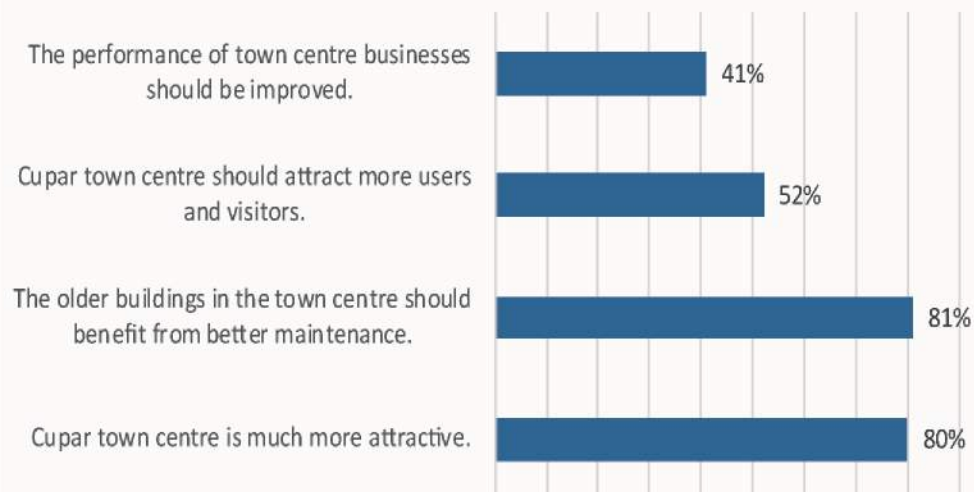
Overall assessment of the Cupar CARS/THI Programme?



Has your business been affected by the CARS/THI Programme?



Longer term impact of CARS/THI on Cupar Town Centre?



WHAT PEOPLE THINK?

Fife Council and FHBT are already putting into practice what has been learnt in Cupar and in previous CARS/THI Programmes in the development of a similar programme for Inverkeithing.

This includes:-

- A full time Training and Development Officer, employed by FHBT – in recognition of the different skills sets required to deliver a CARS/TH Programme and to reflect the importance of training and community engagement.
- Establishment of Owner's Associations as part of the Building Repair Grant Scheme – so there is a mechanism to ensure a more formal approach to maintenance in buildings in multiple ownership in the future.
- More scope for community input and involvement in both the development and implementation phases, through very widespread consultation and representation on the Programme Stakeholder Group.

For more information about Cupar CARS/THI, please contact

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HISTORIC
ENVIRONMENT
SCOTLAND

ÀRAINNEACHD
EACHDRAIDHEIL
ALBA

