

Evaluation of Inverkeithing Heritage Regeneration -Interim Report Year 3

Report for Fife Historic Building Trust



Social Research



Service Design & Innovation



Strategy & Collaboration



Evaluation Support



Social Impact Measurement

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1: Introduction

Evaluation of Inverkeithing Heritage Regeneration Scheme

This report is the first of three annual reports to be produced as part of Social Value Lab's evaluation of the Inverkeithing Heritage Regeneration Scheme.

This is a five-year scheme running until March 2024 investing £3.6m in the town of Inverkeithing. It is managed by the Inverkeithing Core Project Group, consisting of FHBT and Fife Council. Key projects of the scheme include:

- The repair and refurbishment of the A-listed Inverkeithing Town House to create a multi-use community hub, which will be managed by a new community organisation.
- A Building Repair Grant Scheme to help private owners of traditional buildings to carry out external repairs or improvements to their properties using traditional materials and skills. Owners can also access advice on how to look after their historic property and improve energy efficiency.
- A major uplift to the High Street and the Market Square will include new paving and street furniture and the restoration of historic features, including the moving of the Mercat Cross (public realm improvement).
- A programme of activities to raise awareness of Inverkeithing's heritage and promote good practice in looking after traditional buildings for the general public and professionals.

The overall aim of the evaluation is to understand and evidence the impact of the scheme, with detailed objectives to:

- assess the extent of which the scheme has achieved its stated outcomes;

- evidence the impact of the project on community members, participants, volunteers, businesses, volunteers and other stakeholders;
- comment on the project delivery; and
- make recommendations to ensure the legacy of the scheme.

This interim report, undertaken at the end of Year 3 of the project, provides analysis of the views of delivery partners and key stakeholders on progress to date.

Owing to the stage the project is at and interruptions to planned project activities due largely to the pandemic, there is less data on outcomes and impact at this point than might have been anticipated at the outset of the project. Therefore, the focus of this interim report will be on the delivery of the programme until now and the lessons that can be learned from the first three years of the project.

The report will examine delivery partners' and stakeholders' views on the main successes/challenges so far, management of the project, the outlook for future progress, and any conclusions to be drawn from these reflections.

Method

Fieldwork was undertaken between April and June 2022 and consisted of in-depth interviews and focus groups with delivery partners and key stakeholders:

- 4 Fife Historic Buildings Trust (FHBT) staff members (Core Project Group)
- 4 Fife Council officers (Core Project Group)
- 2 Elected Members from Fife Council
- 2 representatives from local community groups

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- 6 members of the Town House Management Group
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- Interview with a representative of the Fife Coast and Countryside Trust
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These reports will be more extensive and involve a wider examination of performance against each of the scheme's funded outcomes, as outlined by the National Lottery Heritage Fund – Townscape Heritage (NLHF-TH) and Historic Environment Scotland - Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme (HES-CARS).

Future Reporting

A further interim report is planned for the end of Year 4 of the project, with a final evaluation report to be delivered at the end of Year 5.

2: Challenges and Successes

This section describes the key challenges that arose during the first phase of the project, how they were overcome, and the successes that have been delivered so far.

The delivery partners have encountered a number of foreseen and unforeseen challenges since the inception of the Inverkeithing Heritage Regeneration Scheme. Common themes that arose in interviews were:

- Delays caused by the Covid-19 pandemic and other factors.
- Rising costs of materials and inflation in the U.K.
- Communicating effectively with the local public.
- Building effective partnerships between organisations.
- Matching the ambitions of the delivery partners with the funding requirements.

The perceived successes of the project so far were often linked to these challenges, and the ways they had been minimised or overcome at this stage of delivery. In particular, interviewees mentioned:

- Maintaining momentum over the course of the pandemic.
- Successful collaboration between organisations.
- The involvement of the community.
- Community events.
- Delivery of the Activities Programme .

Challenges:

Delays to the programme

The timeline of the project was impacted by internal and external factors. Unsurprisingly, the Covid-19 pandemic slowed the rate of delivery over the first three years, even halted progress to certain elements of the programme completely. Stakeholders viewed this as an unavoidable set-back, which nonetheless was managed in an efficient and positive way.

Internally, administrative delays were also seen as somewhat inevitable, though stakeholders reflected that greater foresight and communication at the outset could have helped accommodate these delays into the initial timeframes. For example, one stakeholder spoke about the process of getting funding applications approved, which was seen as holding up project delivery, but was in fact not taking longer than is typical.

"I think there was a general lack of understanding regarding how long it takes for funders to move through this process."

Delays in one area of the project had a knock-on effect across the entire delivery process, as resources and attention were diverted, and contingent building work was unable to start until the previous work had been completed. These delays also had financial implications, because the price of materials and fuel increased over the course of the delay, and contractors were engaged (and paid) for longer periods of time than initially budgeted for.

Rising Costs

Inflation and the rising costs of construction that the U.K. is experiencing has impacted the delivery of the elements of the programme involving construction: the Town House, the

public realm improvements and the Building Repair Grant Scheme. The regeneration of the town centre and Town House depend on materials that are historically endemic to the local area's architecture and acquiring these and other building materials will be up to 30% more expensive than anticipated when the project's budget was created.

"The supply problems and costs that we thought we were going to have are even worse than we predicted."

Delivery partners reflected that using authentic and high-quality materials was a key objective of the project, and not an area in which costs could be reduced by using cheaper materials.

The pandemic and the rising cost also had a detrimental effect on the uptake and implementation of the Building Repair Grant Scheme. The scheme only part-fund the work and home/business owners need to make a significant investment from their personal funds. The pandemic and lockdowns have made people unsecure about the future and more risk-averse. This has led to a slower uptake of the investment grants than expected. The pandemic also delayed the start of the work and increased cost made the projects less viable.

Communicating with the Public

A similarly crucial aspect of the delivery of this project is the continued involvement of the local community. In interviews, key delivery stakeholders spoke about the importance of communicating with the public firstly about what changes they want to see and what would benefit them, and secondly about the process of the regeneration project, and what they could expect to be happening in the town centre in the short- and long-term. This was achieved through various methods, including door-to-door visits, a newsletter sent out by email, and focus groups with representatives from the community.

Delivery partners expressed that it was difficult to maintain channels of communication through lockdown.

It is often the case with regeneration projects at planning and development stage that the same limited number individuals were engaging with the programme. It can be

difficult to keep the wider community interested in something that, in their view, may or may not happen in the future, without any visible progress. This led to challenges in ensuring true representativeness of the views expressed through early community consultations.

"It tends to be the same individuals who often come up across these organisations, so you end up talking in a bit of an echo chamber and it's difficult to broaden the net really widely and gather as diverse a range of opinions as possible. They don't necessarily reflect the views of everyone in the town."

The challenges for different strands of the project were also highlighted. For example, by its nature the activities programme is varied and is therefore better placed to reach a cross-section of the community. Whereas engagement with public realm improvements might more readily come from those who are already civic-minded and/or regular contributors to public consultations.

Organisation partnerships

The regeneration project is supported by a variety of funders and delivery partners. The breadth of knowledge and skills brought by this collaboration was seen as largely positive, but nonetheless brought some difficulties. These challenges are discussed further in Section 3.

Funding requirements

Stakeholders reflected that at this stage, the requirements of the funders were well understood by all groups involved and aligned with the ambitions of the project overall. However, in getting to this stage, they had encountered challenges around bringing people's ideas together and delivering on the community's needs and wants while working within the funders' framework. One stakeholder described different groups' interests as distinct but overlapping:

"Historic Scotland is very specific about having historic and authentic materials, something that would have been there that is reinstated or something that is already there that is being conserved. [...] On the other hand, Lottery Fund –

their objectives are more about reinforcing character, but not necessarily in such an authentic way; they would probably be more interested in enhancement, just vibrancy and improving it for the people that live there. The community on the other hand, would be looking for a safe place for pedestrians, cyclists, more greenery planting, fewer obstacles for older people and people with disabilities."

Bringing these elements together under one project was a new approach for some of the delivery partners, who in the past had worked on projects with a narrower focus. At the same time, it was important to demonstrate impact across each element of the project, which included very localised outcomes. Providing this evidence to the funders was a challenge throughout the initial phase of the project.

"We're in a slightly different place to where we were when we started this project – it took a while to bring those polar opposites together."

Successes:

Maintained momentum during Covid-19 lockdowns

Stakeholders reflected on the positive outcomes that were achieved during lockdowns. Overcoming the challenge of maintaining contact between all partnership organisations, as well as with the local community was seen as an indication of the strength of the relationships between groups involved.

"In many ways, we've made a positive out of a negative."

The delivery partners relied on creativity and enthusiasm to keep the local community interested while activities and building were paused, as they saw community interest as the first step towards getting local people involved, contributing and providing feedback.

"The feedback I've got from some of the community groups is that despite [the pandemic], it's been quite a success."

Delivery partners maintained strong connections with primary and secondary schools throughout lockdowns, which helped to cement their presence in the local community.

Similarly, stakeholders commented on the positive relationships that were developed and maintained between partner organisations, despite restrictions. The success of their continued commitment meant that some activities which would otherwise have been delayed or cancelled were still carried out, such as the activities programme (in restricted or online formats), and additional activities that were more suited to the context of lockdowns were added.

The overall success of their adaptability and motivation was recognised and commented on by funders.

Successful collaboration between partners

Interviewees described the positive outcomes that were achieved through successful collaboration between all partners involved. The regeneration project is managed by the Fife Historical Buildings Trust and Fife Council (within which a number of different departments are involved) and delivers a variety of projects that are carried out by community groups, construction companies, private owners, and the IHR project team.

"We're all singing from the same hymn sheet about the practical management."

It was felt that these groups have successfully worked together to move the project forward towards a common goal and created a sense of cohesion between the disparate elements of the project. In particular, interviewees described how each group was able to bring their particular skills and expertise, and this improved the overall quality of the outputs of the project at every level.

"I'm really pleased with the quality that they bring to it, they're obviously highly skilled, and that is something that will help us meet our objectives in terms of doing something that is very bespoke, very distinctive, and really works to reinforce the heritage value of the project."

The collaboration also led to groups and individuals learning new skills and diversifying their approach. The focus on heritage in the regeneration of the town centre in particular led to Fife Council seeking new sources for building materials and making connections for instance with a local quarry. This in turn resulted in financial savings, as Fife Council worked directly with the supplier rather than a contractor. This was reflected as a new and positive experience overall, and the beginning of a potentially long-lasting partnership.

"I think it's a really good example of productive and creative partnership working."

The strong partnerships between organisations created flexibility for adapting and appending activities and management as the project developed. This was most successfully utilised as a means of engaging with the community. One interviewee described how the Council relied on community events hosted by other groups to increase the number of people who engaged with the regeneration project and to establish a recognised presence in the community.

"It's allowed us to launch other activities and other initiatives, building on the back of the initial funding applications."

The involvement of the community

Engaging the local community is a recurring challenge for regeneration projects such as this one, particularly over a long period of time in which the project is being planned but not yet delivered. Despite this, and the added setback of Covid-19, all partners felt that they had successfully overcome a number of barriers to community engagement, using imaginative and varied approaches to establish strong communication.

"It's been quite a success and they've found really effective workarounds with things happening online."

Some of the stakeholders that were interviewed expressed that the perceived relevance of a project affects the level of community engagement. For instance, moving

the Mercat Cross to a more visible and central location in the town was understood as highly relevant, as it would have a visual impact for everyone who lived there. This easily recognisable change was seen as a way of drawing in community interest, and initiating greater engagement in the project, for instance by encouraging the local public to:

"Find out more about the town, research Inverkeithing, engage more with the history and with their heritage."

Community groups also engaged primary school children in the project through a range of activities (discussed below), with more planned. The involvement of young people helped to broaden the age-range of the locals involved and was an effective means of reaching families and other members of the community who would have heard about the events and activities from their children. These are in many cases not the same people who would have heard about or been involved in the regeneration project through their own initiative, and therefore a demographic that the project managers were keen to target.

Community events

The community events that took place over the past year were highlighted as a significant indication of the success of the regeneration project. Those that were delivered as part of the Activities Programme are discussed below.

The regeneration project hosted events initiated by the Core Project Group. These included an interpretation workshop, the results of which will be incorporated into the final regeneration of the town centre. The archaeological dig has been a successful means of bringing together community groups and generating interest in the local area:

"People were wandering by the garden area and having a look down at the hole the archaeologists and volunteers were digging away at, and that was generating some interest and some conversation in the local area."

Interest in local history and culture also emerged in the community's ambition to emphasise and reinstate culturally significant aspects of existing annual events. For

instance, the Lammas Fair takes place in the town centre every August (except when it was paused during Covid), but will need to be relocated while public realm works are taking place. The IHR has contributed to greater interest in its historic significance, and how the event could be used to generate wider interest and knowledge about Inverkeithing's heritage. The community's ambition is to incorporate more culturally significant events alongside the modern aspects of the fair such as the rides and stalls.

"The local community council and other community groups are keen to take it back down that route, finding a balance."

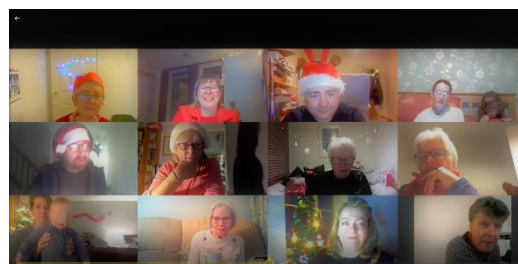
IHR held a stall at the 2021 Winter Fair, raising awareness of the project amongst the 400+ people who attended. The Fair was run by the Community Council, who reflected that its success was directly related to previous developments that had taken place in the town centre. The improved physical setting incentivised them to deliver a high-quality event that they hope will become an annual occurrence. This is an example of the tangible impact that the public realm works planned as part of the IHR project will have for local people.

"If we hadn't improved that area, it wouldn't have happened the way it did. It gave the Community Council the necessary enthusiasm and vigour to undertake that piece of work."

Delivery of the Activities Programme

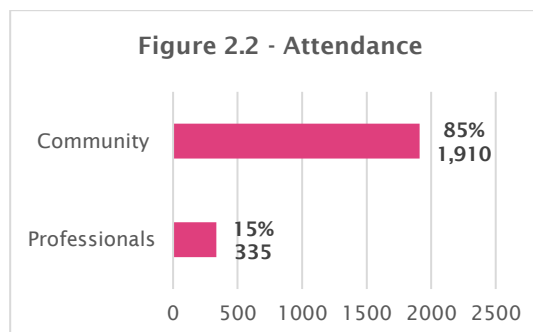
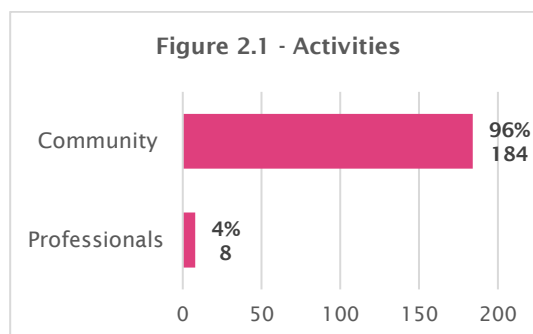
The reach and variety of the Activities Programme was commonly mentioned by interviewees as a success of the project so far.

In particular, project staff have been adept in changing the delivery of the Activities Programme to online formats during the pandemic. In the first three years of the programme 192 sessions attended by 2,245 participants¹ have been delivered by the programme.



1 Online Zoom party for participants in the Burgh Community History Project, Dec 2020

The focus of the Activities Programme during the pandemic has been on sessions for community members and groups, and less on professionals as can be seen in Figures 2.1 and 2.2.



2 Panels produced as part of the textile artwork project

¹ Activities log Oct 2019 – May 2022

As mentioned, the project has also been successful in engaging with local primary and secondary schools. As of June 2022 a range of activities have already taken place, including a whole school heritage craft day, heritage walks, and archaeological dig, and a Children's Gala. Further activities are already planned, including the upcoming creation of a time capsule to be placed under the Mercat Cross.



3 All school craft day, June 2021

Feedback has been collected by project staff from a limited number of activities, which is presented in Figure 2.3.



All participants found the sessions enjoyable (100%); the vast majority reported an increased knowledge and awareness of heritage (96%) and nine out of ten learned new skills (88%).

All participants appreciated heritage more after the session (100%) and four out of five believed that Inverkeithing would become a better place to live, work or visit as a result of the session (82%).

"That history will be there for ever [the stories told in the panels]."

"Every time you look you see something different."

"A most interesting project that helped me connect to my new home area and engage with folks of similar interest."

"It has helped me understand the importance of the Friary and other historic buildings to Inverkeithing."

"I really enjoyed learning about the history of the Friary and would be interested in learning more and being involved with the restoration."

"I didn't think it was possible to be taught stitches on Zoom."

3: Management of the Project

This section explores views on key aspects of project management in the first three years of the project.

There was a consensus that the project has been well managed so far. Key stakeholders noted that for the most part the project had been able to deal with (mostly Covid related) setbacks and no significant issues were uncovered.

A few individual stakeholders did highlight some minor issues and these are discussed under the relevant areas of project management below.

Partnership Working

Core Project Group

Prominent in interviews was the positive partnership established between FHBT and Fife Council around the Inverkeithing Heritage Regeneration project. Interviewees from the Council and FHBT were unanimous in agreeing that a strong working relationship exists between the two organisations and that this partnership had been enhanced through regular meetings and frequent communication.

"I think it [partnership with Fife Council] has been very good on Inverkeithing. I think having the core group meetings on a regular basis where we come together with Fife Council, which is more regular than we've done on previous schemes, has been really good to keep the lines of communication going. I think it works well."

On the Council side there is a wide range of departments and officers involved in different

aspects of the Inverkeithing project – e.g. Business and Employability, Town Centre Development, Planning, Communities and Neighbourhoods, Transportation. However, this has not posed any significant issues to the smooth running of the project and there is a general sense that all members of the Core Project Group are taking responsibility for and ownership of the project.

There were some issues that arose from time to time with the Council's centralised finance/procurement services. These services tend to have an approach that is not necessarily attuned to this kind of project and, while they have been overcome, they have ultimately led to delays in progress.

These issues, though relatively minor, are not new and unlikely to change without intervention from senior management in the Council.

Funders

Members of the Core Project Group view their relationship with project funders positively. Generally, both key funders were viewed as highly supportive towards the project and the flexibility of both funders in relation to Covid enforced delays was appreciated.

Interviewees highlighted the positive input from Historic Environment Scotland in particular in its dual role of funder (e.g. showing flexibility in the face of challenges with the Building Repair Grant Scheme) and regulator of the A-listed Town House (being enthusiastic and proactive in conversations with the Core Project Group and architects).

The strong partnership developed with funders was underpinned by clear and frequent communication from both sides. While funders have required regular updates and approval on certain elements of the project, this was not viewed as onerous by Core Project Group members. It was also felt that the quality of communication and information provided to funders by the project had helped to keep them on-side:

"The level of communication, the rigor that has been applied, and the reports and the detailed information that [FHBT staff] have supplied to the funders, and more recently, continued in face-to-face meetings. I think that's a benefit"

Involvement of the Community

As discussed above, several interviewees outlined the inherent issues in trying to engage in meaningful consultation with the community. For example, the difficulties in reaching certain groups or the tendency to always have strong involvement of 'usual suspects' but not others.

General Public

Despite these challenges, the view of most was that the project has been reasonably successful in casting a wide net and getting word of the project out to the community. Interviewees were positive about the work done in the early stages of the project around consultation events with the general public.

"[We did a lot of] good practical work, in terms of getting local people involved and interested in the project and just getting people through the door when we were having these consultation events."

"Compared to a lot of projects that we do this, there's been a high level of engagement with the community."

The potential negative impact of the move to mostly online engagement during the pandemic had been mitigated by the development of a strong social media presence and good reach with other online activities, evidenced by the interest in the project from around the world.

However, it was also felt that involvement of the community had not been consistent enough so far, with the suggestion that many groups had been overlooked (e.g. older people, sheltered housing residents, residents of the new housing scheme and people without regular internet access). A particular concern was the business community, that have engaged with the programme in a limited way so far but will be impacted by the potential disruption caused by the construction works, in particular the public realm improvement programme.

There were fears that inconsistencies in community involvement would lead to locals being uninformed and frustrated about temporary disruptions once the main construction phase starts. Increased traffic while construction vehicles operate in the centre of town, and changes to bin collection locations and timetables to accommodate the regeneration project were mentioned. There was also a concern that this posed a problem for overall buy-in of the project:

"They need to get their act together and get the community involved, otherwise for a vast number of the community it will just be another thing that has been thrust upon them."

There is also evidence that community interest in the project had dipped somewhat following strong initial engagement prior to funding bids going in. This is partly due to nature of the process - the general public are less interested in the steps involved in the funding process and there is a generally a gap between the awarding of funds, realising of the regeneration and evidence of impact for the community. In this case the dip in interest has also been exacerbated by Covid. However, there is still more to do to re-engage with some who had been initially interested in the project.

Project staff are conscious of the blind spots for engagement with the community so far and several commented on how the Core Project Group had already begun reflecting on how they might address this in future.

"We tend to use the same methods all the time, which is, you know, develop and email contact list and then just send out updates, bulletins and things"

to that list. You're talking to the same audience all the time that way, and I think maybe we need to get smarter, or just try and think outside the box a bit more in terms of how we engage more widely."

More paper communications and a permanent physical presence in the town (e.g. a shop front) were specific improvements suggested by interviewees to improve involvement from the community.

Community Groups

Some community group representatives said that they felt communication from the Core Project Group could be improved in general, particularly on the Fife Council side. They suggested that information hadn't always been forthcoming and there had delays in getting promised information to them (e.g. updated plans/designs).

One community group representative said that they would welcome more proactive communication around plans for beyond the end of the funding period – e.g. more discussions around expectations, future roles and ongoing budgets.

Involvement of Elected Members

The common view was that the project had good relationships with Elected Members and that councillors were supportive of the project.

Though Elected Members are not involved day-to-day at an operational level of the project, there was agreement that they are kept well-informed of progress through regular, scheduled updates from the Core Project Group.

Some initial challenges when it came to involvement of local councillors were mentioned. For example, it was noted that most Elected Members are accustomed to a different approach when it comes to regeneration. Their focus can be more on the economic side of things (e.g. increasing footfall), with less regard for the building element – especially where there are specific heritage considerations.

These challenges may be partially explained by the view of one councillor who felt that Elected Members hadn't been particularly well informed at the beginning of the project. This meant that councillors only became involved once plans were more or less fixed, leaving little room for their input.

4: Looking Ahead

This section outlines the outlook for progress, and the barriers to this, in the remaining years of the project

Contribution to local strategic objectives

Stakeholders were clear that the Inverkeithing Heritage Regeneration project can make a positive contribution to local policy objectives.

The regeneration of town centres is a priority for Fife Council and the project helps to address an historic lack of funding for this purpose in Inverkeithing, which has often lost out on this due to the absence of a regeneration plan for the town.

A further priority for the Council and the South West Fife Area Committee is the development of tourism locally. Interviewees mentioned Inverkeithing's struggles in this area owing to an image problem as a post-industrial town. There was an expectation that the project will provide a much-needed facelift to Inverkeithing that would draw in more visitors.

It is also anticipated that the project would give more prominence to the heritage sights and experiences that are particularly attractive to walkers on the Fife Pilgrim Way and Fife Coastal Path. Inverkeithing is of strategic importance to both paths but has previously struggled to establish itself as a regular stop for walkers on either route.

The knock-on effect of this impact on local policy objectives would be a boost to the local economy. As well as making the town a more desirable place for visitors and tourists, interviewees mentioned the impact of the anticipated reduction in traffic on increasing footfall, and addressing Inverkeithing's status as a 'rat run' into Edinburgh.

However, several stakeholders commented that caution was required around the expectations on economic impact and that

sustained improvements to local finances would be contingent. For example, stakeholders mentioned the need to complement the impact of the project with an ongoing strategy for regeneration, further promotion of Inverkeithing as a destination and a sustained programme of events and activities.

Outcomes stakeholders would like to see

We asked key stakeholders what additional outcomes their organisation would hope/expect to see as the project progresses. Responses included:

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- **Physical improvements to the appearance of the town** – Inverkeithing becoming a more attractive place to live through more greenspace, more civic spaces and fewer cars (it should be noted that these outcomes mostly fall outside the scope of the project).
-
- **Increased community cohesion** – more focal points (such as a permanent community notice board) and opportunities for the community to come together in public spaces
-
- **New and more varied community groups in the town** – emerging as a result of the new community space formed by the refurbished Town House.
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- **A positive social impact on individuals** – more opportunities for residents to meet each other and more activities aimed at tackling social isolation.
-
- **Ongoing opportunities for people to develop skills**
-

Barriers to achieving project aims

Despite the challenges described above and the continued impact of the pandemic, the view of interviewees generally was that the project was now beginning to make good progress on the Town House and Public Realm strands of the project.

The enforced delays earlier in the project have, of course, had an impact on overall timescales, meaning that the planned amount of work would need to be completed in a shorter period to stick to original deadlines. Interviewees were generally confident that the completion date of March 2024 could still be met, though given the tighter timescales there is much less flexibility to deal with more unforeseen setbacks.

While there is provisional agreement with both funders for an extension of project deadlines, neither currently have indicated that they would be willing to offer additional grants alongside any extension. Pushing project deadlines back also has implications for staffing: while Council officers could continue to work on the project beyond March 2024, others on the Core Project Group are on fixed-term contracts, meaning there is an imperative to finish by the original deadline and making any extension undesirable.

Interviewees were unanimous that rising costs were a potential barrier to achieving project aims. As discussed, the project has not been immune to wider increases in the prices of goods and services and the costs associated with the project have increased significantly since the funds were awarded.

"Increasing costs, that's already a bit of a worry for us. Not only for this project, but other projects across the local authority, within my service, other capital projects. We're having to really look at our budget availability."

With funds not going as far as previously anticipated, there are implications particularly for the Town House, Public Realm and the Building Repair Grant Scheme strands of the project. Responses to the tender for works on the Town House has given an indication of how significant this barrier might be, with the full scale of the problem likely to be clearer

once tenders had been received for the public realm works (which were about to go out as fieldwork was being conducted).

Core Project Group members noted that tentatively they had begun exploring alternative sources of funding to mitigate any potential shortfall. It was also clear that discussions were already underway as to potential alterations that could be made to plans to accommodate budgetary constraints. However the prominence of the planned public realm works in the town and the heritage considerations included as part of the funding meant that reductions in standards (and therefore costs) were limited:

"We're going to have to look at trying to make savings, but we can't ever skimp on quality, particularly when it comes to the public realm. The quality of the built surface that we put down - the public have an expectation there, but also the funders have as well."

In addition to the cost implications, there are ongoing concerns about interest in the Building Repair Grant Scheme. The unwillingness of some building owners to be involved has been unexpected and this is not likely to be improved as a result of the increased cost of any repairs (though a couple of interviewees noted that additional funds were being explored to complement the main grant scheme). This, coupled with the slow uptake so far, could have implications for this strand of the project being able to meet its intended aims and/or being completed by the planned deadline.

Another potential risk that was identified as the project progresses is that council officers will be drawn away from the project to work on other priorities:

"I feel sort of like I'm being pulled away a little bit to work on other things, and I can't do that really. You know, I need to maintain the momentum with Inverkeithing and it's difficult to do that. So that is a worry."

This risk could be mitigated by getting as many council officers involved in the project as possible, ensuring continuity and beginning to think about succession planning.

A few interviewees suggested a potential barrier to the success of the refurbished Town House due to the lack of clarity about what the longer-term goals were. For example, currently data is lacking on what people want or need from the Town House, without which it could be difficult to make it financially viable, and without an agreed mission statement it is more difficult to get people interested in what they are doing.

5: Conclusions

This section summarises key lessons learned from the findings and offers recommendations for project staff going forward.

Lessons Learned

1. The regeneration project faced some challenges that were regarded as typical of this type of project, and some that were less predictable.
2. That the delivery of the project was delayed was seen as inevitable, but the extent of the delays were greater than anticipated (mostly a result of Covid-19), and had knock-on effects, particularly on costs and community engagement.
3. The project has exceeded the initial budget, because of rising costs of materials and other unforeseeable factors. At this stage, the outlook on completing all aspects of the project is largely positive, and other sources of funding have been accessed.
4. The working relationships between the different organisations involved in the regeneration project, and between the project delivery team and the local community were highlighted as key successes of the project so far.
5. A number of new community events such as the Winter Fair have been attended by the project delivery team and facilitated by the regeneration that has taken place so far. The community has ambitions to reinvigorate more community events in the future.
6. Despite significant challenges caused by the pandemic, the Activities Programme has been a considerable success. The programme has been extensive and varied in the first three years of the project.
7. The project has proven adaptable in the face of significant setbacks and has been characterised by sound management throughout.
8. All of the successes of the project identified in this report have been underpinned by strong communication. The commitment from delivery partners to frequent and clear channels of communication throughout has fostered, for example, the formation of strong partnerships among members of the Core Project Group, positive relationships with funders, an increased profile for the project and healthy participation in the Activities Programme. Robust communication has also ensured that the project did not stagnate during Covid lockdowns.
9. However, there is scope to improve communication in some areas, particularly in reaching certain underrepresented groups (e.g. older people, sheltered housing residents, non-internet users) in the community and ensuring that community groups, businesses and the wider public have timeous access to relevant information about the project (and any upcoming disruption) in a format that suits them.
10. It is clear that the project can make a welcome contribution to local policy objectives and key stakeholders are positive about the potential for wider outcomes around community building and place-making. Also evident, though, is the stakeholders' caution around the scale of the anticipated impact of the project and the need to view it as a step among many in the regeneration of Inverkeithing.

11. Increasing costs due to wider inflation and contracted timescales as a result of Covid are the two main barriers to the project delivering on its remaining aims. However, the Core Project Group are clear about what the barriers are and have demonstrated a flexibility in addressing them. Contingencies, including extended deadlines, additional sources of funding and alterations to construction plans, have already been considered and may give the project additional room to manoeuvre in the final two years.

Recommendations

12. The Core Project Group should continue to consider how engagement with the community can be broadened to include even more people and better target those groups that have so far been underrepresented in the process. Some of the missing element of community engagement have been identified by stakeholders in this report, and project staff have demonstrated a level of awareness of them. However, it may be worthwhile to conduct an 'audit' of engagement so far to form the basis of a new/refined communication plan for years 4 and 5 of the project.
13. The success and impact of the Activities Programme could be better evidenced, as feedback from participants - though extremely positive - was relatively limited and not always consistent in format. Project staff could ensure that feedback gathering around activities is more routine and uniform. The introduction of standardised feedback forms (currently being finalised by project staff and evaluators) will assist with this.

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