



# Your Town Audit: Ardrossan

November 2016



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## 1. Understanding Scottish Places Summary

This report presents a summary of the Your Town Audit (YTA) for Ardrossan, conducted by Scotland's Towns Partnership and EKOS. The detailed YTA Framework and Data Workbook are provided under separate cover.

The YTA was developed to provide a framework to measure and monitor the performance of Scotland's towns and town centres using a series of Key Performance Indicators. It provides a comprehensive audit of Ardrossan with data on up to 180 KPIs across seven themes – Locality, Accessibility, Local Services, Activities + Events, Development Capacity, Tourism, and Place + Quality Impressions.

The [Understanding Scottish Places](#) (USP) data platform provides a summary analysis for Ardrossan and identifies 12 comparator towns that have similar characteristics, with the most similar being Blantyre, Airdrie, Grangemouth, and Bellshill<sup>1</sup>. The USP platform – [www.usp.scot](http://www.usp.scot) – describes Ardrossan in the following general terms:

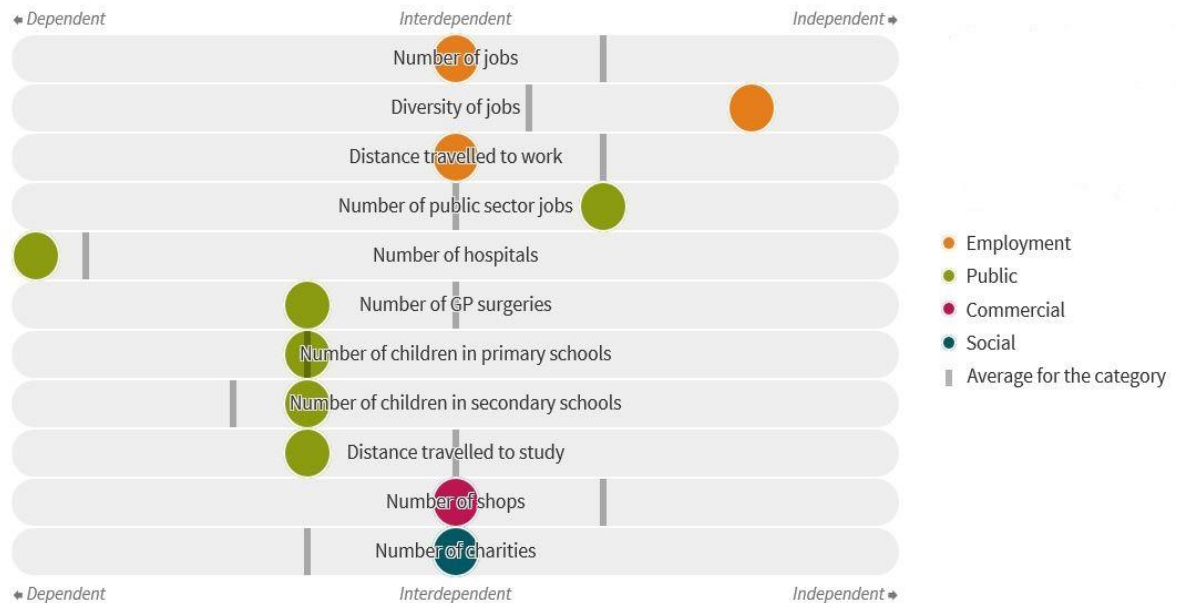
**Ardrossan's Interrelationships:** Ardrossan is an '*interdependent town*', which means it has a medium number of assets in relation to its population. Towns of this kind have some diversity of jobs; and residents largely travel a mix of long and short distances to work and study, although some travel longer distances. These towns attract people from neighbouring towns to access some of their assets and jobs, but they are also reliant on neighbouring towns for other assets and jobs.

**Ardrossan's Typology:** Social and council housing are the norm in these large towns. Manufacturing and construction are the dominant forms of employment. Health and social work services are particularly active. There is a relatively high level of unemployment. Educational attainment is low. Car ownership is low, meaning that many residents in these towns are reliant on public transport.

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<sup>1</sup> The other comparator towns are identified as Rutherglen, Larkhall, Johnstone, Wishaw, Port Glasgow, Irvine, Alexandria, and Dumbarton.

## Inter-relationships i



Comparing Ardrossan to towns with similar USP typology and interrelationships shows it has a similar number of children in primary school, and a similar number of hospitals. It differs in its diversity of jobs (more independent) and distance travelled to work and to study (more dependant). It is also more dependent on other towns for access to retail outlets than comparable towns.

Building on the USP, this report presents the results of our detailed analysis of Ardrossan based around the Scottish Government's [Town Centre Toolkit](#) – an online resource available via the USP website which provides advice, guidance and case studies across three thematic areas: accessible, active and attractive.

## 2. Accessible Town Centre

Ardrossan is a coastal town located in North Ayrshire, to the south west of Glasgow, with a population of around 10,000 people. The core retail area of the town is focused on Glasgow Street and Princes Street, two busy B-class roads. Glasgow Street leads through the residential area of the town into the Harbour area.

### 15 mile radius around Ardrossan



The town centre offers a good range of services and retail outlets, in what is otherwise a residential area.

### 2.1 Public Transport Connectivity

There are three railway stations located within the settlement – Ardrossan Harbour, Ardrossan Town, and Ardrossan South Beach. The nearest station to the town centre is Ardrossan Town which is located on Princes Street, although the others are very close with Ardrossan Harbour being only a six minute walk (0.3 miles), and South Beach being a thirteen minute walk (0.6 miles).



Ardrossan South Beach is the only station in the town which has park and ride facilities. Train journeys from Ardrossan into the centre of Glasgow take roughly 45 minutes, and also connect Ardrossan to other settlements in North Ayrshire. Journey times to West Kilbride, Largs and Dalry from Ardrossan South Beach take 7, 20 and 35 minutes respectively. Journeys from Ardrossan Harbour to areas such as

Saltcoats, Irvine and Kilwinning takes 8, 25 and 15 minutes respectively, and those from Ardrossan Town to Largs, Stevenston, and Irvine take 30, 7 and 21 minutes respectively.

There are around five bus stops located throughout the town centre area of Ardrossan, three of which are located on Princes Street. There are direct bus



connections from Ardrossan to the centre of Glasgow which take around 1 hour and 20 minutes. There are also direct bus journeys to other settlements across North Ayrshire, including: Largs (40 minutes), Kilwinning (25 minutes), Beith (45 minutes), and Irvine (30 minutes).

The Caledonian MacBrayne ferry terminal is located on the edge of the town centre area, bringing significant volumes of through traffic, but is somewhat hidden from view. Ferries from Ardrossan travel to two ports:

- Brodick (Arran): journeys time of around 1 hour, running at least four times every day year round; and
- Campbeltown: journey time of 2 hours and 40 minutes, running a summer service from March to October.

Facilities at the ferry terminal include: a 500 space car park, toilets, and waiting areas with seats and tea/coffee outlet. There is a covered walkway from the ferry terminal to Ardrossan Harbour train station but no clear walking route from the harbour to the town centre.



## 2.2 Car Accessibility

The M77 motorway is around twenty miles west of the town and is easily accessible by the A78, A71, and A759 roads, which provide fast road access into the centre of Glasgow (with drive times of around one hour) and beyond.



There are a number of free on-street parking spaces to be found in the town centre, including those on Glasgow Street, Princes Street, and Princes Place. There are also off-street car parks located in the town centre at the Library on Princes Street (40 spaces), outside the ASDA supermarket on Harbour Road (120 spaces), and at the Ferry Terminal (500 free spaces).

## 2.3 Walking and Cycling Accessibility

Ardrossan is a small town centre and key retail and service provision will be legible to walkers and cyclists once they reach the centre, but the walking/ cycling connections into the centre – and from the harbour in particular – could be enhanced to encourage more visitor trips to use the town's retail and service offer.

The audit did not identify any cycling infrastructure within the town centre (paths or bike parking racks) – or signage on distances/ walking times. This is somewhat surprising given the likely high volume of pedestrians and cyclists that pass through the town.

## 2.4 Digital and Service Accessibility

There is excellent 3G and 4G throughout the town, and although there is no town-wide free WiFi, superfast broadband is available.

The town centre provides access to local services which, alongside a mix of retailers and business services, includes the Ardrossan Library, an Ayrshire Community Trust centre, two dentists, and a Stagecoach Western bus depot.

### 3. Active Town Centre

#### 3.1 Population and Housing

Just over 330 people live within the immediate town centre area in Ardrossan<sup>2</sup>, around 3% of the total settlement population. At a slightly wider TC defined area<sup>3</sup>, population has increased in the decade to 2013 by 24%, with the population of the whole settlement remaining the same over this time. This compares with a 0.7% decline across other North Ayrshire towns and a 5% increase in Scotland over this ten year period.

Most of the North Ayrshire YTA audited towns have seen a marked increase in town centre living, averaging 4%; with Ardrossan being well above this NAC town average, and the second highest of 31 YTA audited towns (only 1% point behind Kirkcaldy at 25% increase). At the settlement level there has been a mixed position on population change across North Ayrshire – with Ardrossan, Kilwinning and Saltcoats (0.1%, 4% and 4% respectively) recording increases, and the other eight towns<sup>4</sup> recording declines from -1% to -5%. The average settlement level population change across North Ayrshire has been 0.7% decline over the past ten years; compared to an average 0.6% increase across 34 YTA audited towns.

The majority of housing in the town centre<sup>5</sup> is flats (89%), with 70% of properties having one or two bedrooms, and the majority of properties (86%) in council tax bands A, B and C. The streets surrounding the retail area in Ardrossan are predominantly residential and, with a settlement population of just over 10,500 people, this provides a sizeable catchment footfall for the retail and service businesses.



Ardrossan does, however, have a very high number of residents per retailer and, at 529, is the third highest rate across 34 YTA audited towns and more than double the average of 226 residents per retail outlet (average of 258 residents per retailer

<sup>2</sup> Scotland Census 2011 output zones S00122225, S00122226, S00122859, and S00122858.

<sup>3</sup> Datazone level used to obtain ten year change.

<sup>4</sup> Beith, Dalry, Irvine, Kilbirnie, Largs, Millport, Stevenson and West Kilbride.

<sup>5</sup> For accessing the most up to date data, this is datazone (2001) S01004421.



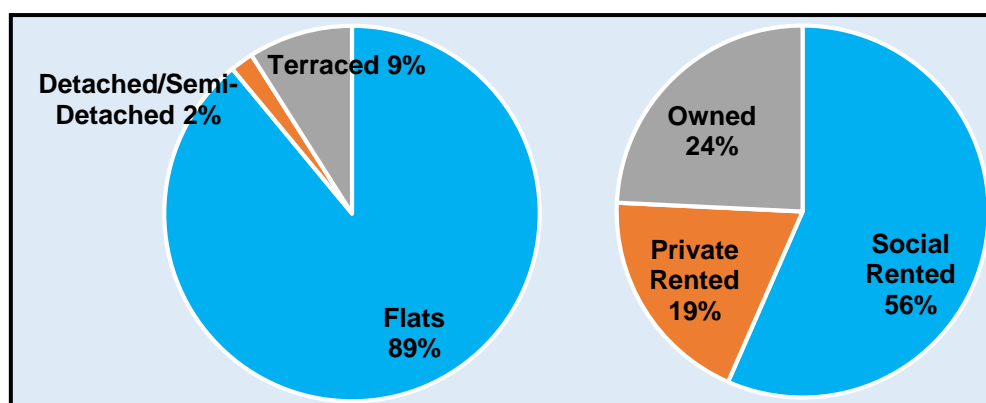
across 11 NAC towns). Towns with lower rates of residents per retail outlet include Millport (49), Moffat (51), Sanquhar (81), Stornoway (88) and Eyemouth (88). This low rate in Ardrossan is somewhat surprising given its position as a major transport hub for the Arran ferry service.

The average purchase price of a town centre dwelling in Ardrossan (£68,333) is considerably lower than that of the town as a whole (£103,220)<sup>6</sup>. Ardrossan has the third lowest TC house price across the 11 North Ayrshire YTA towns (after Beith and Largs) lower than the NAC average of £81k. Prices in the town centre increased 52% in the decade to 2013 – this compares with a NAC average of 43% and wider YTA average of 44% increase – and by 14% at the wider Ardrossan settlement level.

The housing stock in the town is largely socially rented (56% in the town centre and 35% in the wider town), or privately owned (24% in the town centre and 54% in the wider town). The town centre has a recorded house vacancy rate of 2.7% (15 units) but this is likely to significantly underestimate the total as some commercial premises will have unused upper floors that are not recorded as residential.

Similar to neighbouring Saltcoats and Stevenson, Ardrossan has a very low level of second or holiday home ownership, at only 0.7% of the total stock. Across 33 YTA audited towns the average is 3.3% but with large variances from zero to a high of 44% in Millport. Other towns with high levels of holiday home ownership include Alloa (7%), Largs (11%) and Wanlockhead (19%).

#### Ardrossan Town Centre Housing Mix



With a large vacant site at the North Shore, there is potential to develop a significant volume of new housing in Ardrossan – this could expand housing choice for local

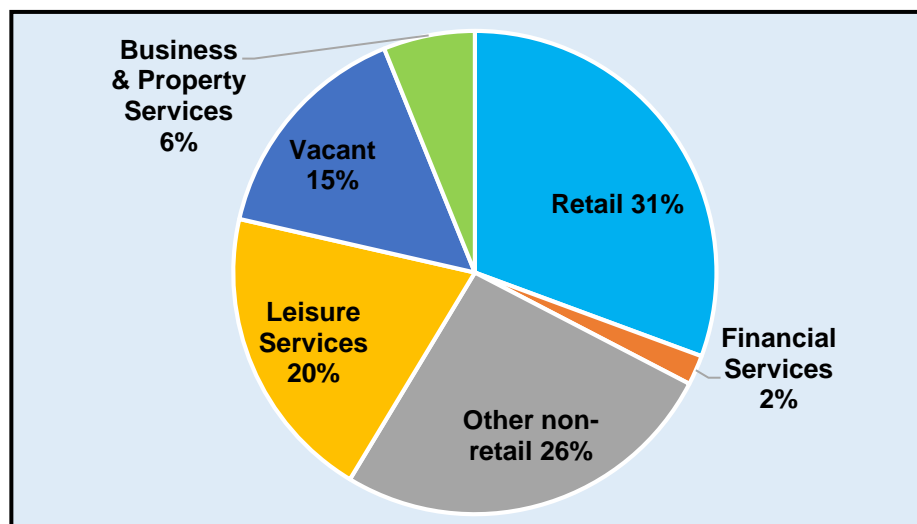
people, both in type of house and in ownership structure – and would significantly increase the potential catchment footfall for the town's retail and service businesses.

There may also be potential to develop a small number of second or holiday homes as part of this mix and thereby attract more visitor spend.

### 3.2 Employment and Business

Almost two-thirds (63%) of the 1,975 jobs in Ardrossan are located in the town centre area. National statistics record 255 businesses within the settlement. The YTA street audit located 65 business premises within Ardrossan town centre – this was in line with the UPRN data provided by North Ayrshire Council prior to the audit.

#### Town Centre Unit Mix



Of the 65 business premises, 20 are occupied by retail businesses and ten units are vacant (eight retail and two workshops). There are two Estate Agents, three hot food takeaways, two restaurants, two coffee shops and two bars, plus two bookmakers. The town centre also has two dentists, a library, an art gallery, a fire station, and a Council office.

### 3.3 Retail



Retail units in Ardrossan are clustered along Glasgow Street, Princes Street, Princes Place, Harbour Street, Harbour Road and Harbour Place. For a settlement with quite a large population the town centre area is small, however, there is a reasonable range of shops and services within it.

The large Asda supermarket provides a wide range of retail choice for local people, but its location – and particularly the car parking – does not encourage linked trips to the town's other businesses.

During the audit ten vacant units were recorded (eight of which were retail units), producing a retail vacancy rate of 16.3%<sup>7</sup>, higher than the 9.9% average retail vacancy rate across the other 11 North Ayrshire audited towns, and higher again than the YTA average (33 YTAs) of 9.3%.

**529 residents per town centre retail outlet**

**20 town centre units in retail use**

**8 vacant town centre retail units**

Most shops in Ardrossan town centre operate standard opening hours of around 9am to 5.30pm. However, the ASDA Supermarket on Harbour Road has longer hours – 7am to 11pm during the week, as do the pubs in the town for example Charlies Bar on Glasgow Street is open from 9am-Midnight/1am Monday to Saturday, and from 11am-Midnight on Sundays.

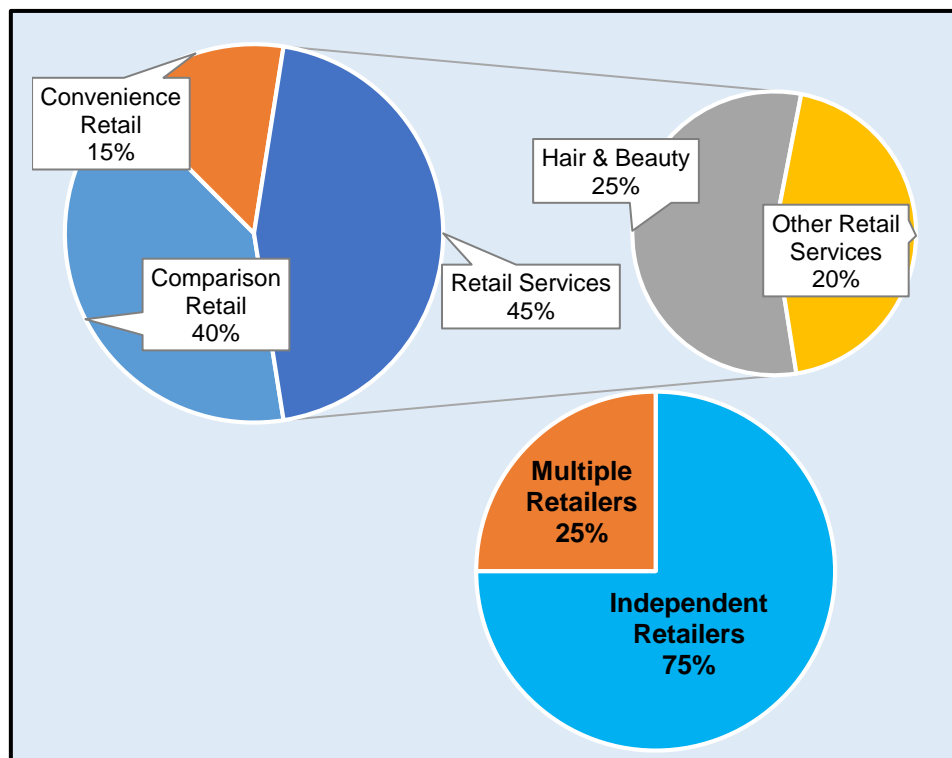
Retail forms the largest single town centre unit use but, at 30%, is considerably lower than the 46% average across the other 11 YTA audited North Ayrshire towns. Ardrossan's retail rate is the lowest across all 34 YTA audits, marginally below Eyemouth and Upper Nithsdale<sup>8</sup> (both 31%) and Stevenson (32%).

<sup>7</sup> Note: this is the retail vacancy rate (8 vacant of 49 retail type premises) and differs from the 15% vacancy rate in the chart on the previous page which relates to all commercial town centre properties (10 of 65 properties).

<sup>8</sup> Comprising Sanquhar, Kirkconnel, Kelloholm and Wanlockhead.

The YTA analysis is based on the following retail definitions:

- **Convenience Retail:** primarily low cost goods that are typically bought out of habit or on impulse i.e. food, drink (alcohol and non-alcohol), news, tobacco, etc. – *3 convenience retailers were identified in Ardrossan town centre;*
- **Comparison Retail:** all other retail purchases comprising goods bought at infrequent intervals where consumers will compare and contrast products and prices – *8 comparison retailers were identified in Ardrossan town centre; and*
- **Retail Services:** services that consumers would expect to find in a town centre including hairdresser, beauty salon, repair of goods, hire of specialist clothing, health clinics, post office, travel agent, etc. – *9 retail service operators were identified in Ardrossan town centre.*



The majority of retail traders within Ardrossan town centre are independent (75%). This is slightly above the 74.5% average for the other North Ayrshire towns – similar to Beith (74%), Largs, and Kilbirnie (both 76%) – and the YTA average of 70% across 34 towns.

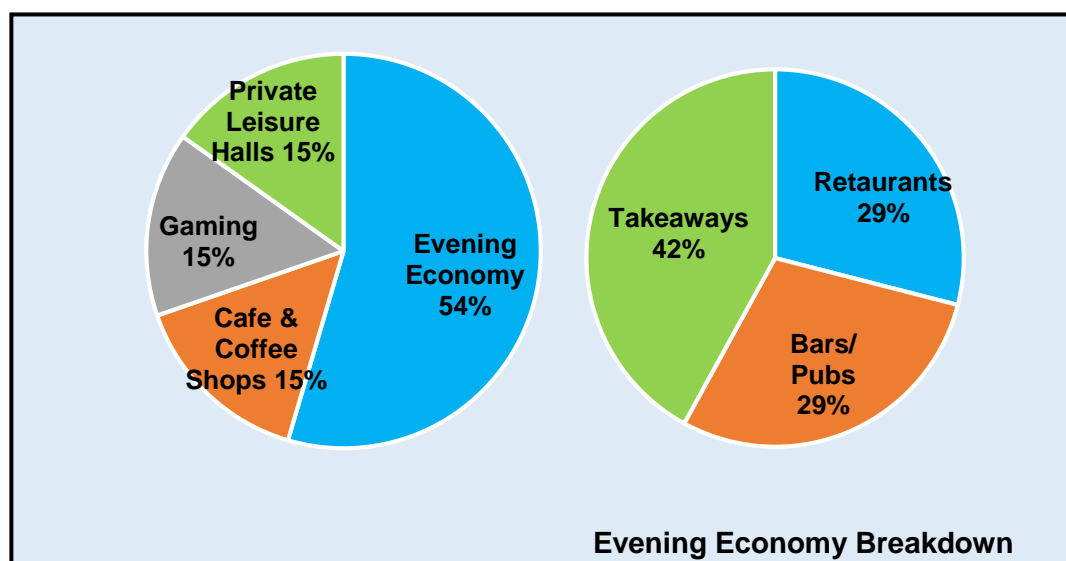




## 4. Attractive Town Centre

There is a large and busy marina located on the edge of Ardrossan town centre with c. 280 floating pontoon berths, and potential to expand. The marina is located adjacent to the ferry terminal and adds a level of activity and attractiveness to the town, but it is somewhat hidden from view from those arriving by car and train.

### 4.1 Leisure Mix



The mix of leisure businesses in Ardrossan town centre (13 businesses) sees evening economy account for 54% of all leisure businesses. The evening economy in the town is comprised of three hot food takeaways, two restaurants and two bars/pubs. The takeaways include the PJ Buttercups on Glasgow Street and the Spicy Hut on Princes Street. The two restaurants in the town centre are the Jaipur Indian Restaurant on Glasgow Street (also offers hot food take-away) and Garfields Tapas & Wine Bar on Princes Street. The two bars/pubs are Charlies Bar on Glasgow Street and the Castlehill Vaults on Princes Street.

The audit did not identify any places of worship, cultural, sporting, education or accommodation uses in Ardrossan town centre, although these activities are spread across the rest of the settlement, including the wider Stevenston and Saltcoats areas.

## 4.2 Leisure Facilities and Attractions



One educational and cultural facility within the town centre is Ardrossan Library, which is located on Princes Street, and opens every day apart from Wednesdays and Sundays, typically from 10am-1pm and 2pm-5pm during the week and from 10am-12:30pm on Saturdays.

The audit identified one hotel in Ardrossan (not town centre), the independently owned Lauriston Hotel on South Beach. At the date reporting the hotels has a 4/ 5 star rating on Trip Advisor (of 145 ratings) and is marketed as a family friendly establishment with bar/ lounge and restaurant facilities.

Ardrossan Civic Centre, is a leisure facility located just out with the town centre area, on Glasgow Street. The centre is used for a number of events and private functions throughout the year. Facilities in the venue includes: a main hall, bar area, commercial kitchen and a car park.

The Ardrossan Indoor Bowling Club is located next to the civic centre. The club opened in 1974 and participates in Junior, Senior, Open, League and Qualifying Scottish League Bowling. Facilities include: seven rinks with electronic scoring, a restaurant and a function suite with a capacity of 120 guests which can be hired for private functions. The club currently has a membership of around 600 people, with full membership costing £40 for the first year and £80 thereafter.

There is also an outdoor bowling club located in Ardrossan, located near the South Beach, a ten minute walk from the town centre. The club was formed in 1842, and facilities include: two greens and a large hall which can be hired by members and non-members for private events.

The ruins of Ardrossan Castle are an attraction in the settlement, which is a ten minute walk from the town centre. The castle dates back to 1100s, and is located on Castle Hill, which, when climbed, provides visitors with a view over the town.

### 4.3 Ayrshire Community Trust

The Ayrshire Community Trust (TACT), is a charity based in Ardrossan town centre, on Princes Street. The Trust was established over fifteen years ago and engages with over 800 community and voluntary organisations.

The charity aims to 'Promote, Support, Develop, and Connect' the community and voluntary sector in the Ayrshire region. They achieve these aims through a number of different services:

- employability training to help people find a job;
- training for local organisations and businesses;
- promoting volunteering and youth work opportunities to young people and encourage them to work towards a Saltire Award; and
- helping to develop social enterprises which provide other work opportunities for local people.

### 4.4 Community Events and Activities

A community event which has taken place for the past two years in Ardrossan is the Ardrossan Music Experience. Held over a weekend in June with music from 7pm, the event runs for two nights, and plays host to a number of blues, rock and pop bands from across Scotland.

The event is marketed as family-friendly, and hosts other related events during the weekend such as art exhibitions and song writing workshops. The event is supported by a number of organisations including: North Ayrshire Council, Awards For All Scotland and The Ayrshire Community Trust.

### 4.5 Attractiveness Review

The YTA includes an independent review of place and quality impressions, with Ardrossan scoring below average both in comparison with other North Ayrshire towns and with the wider YTA average.

Individual unit fronts and shop window displays were graded out of ten during the on-street audit, with a town centre average score of 6.1 for the condition of unit fronts



and 6.0 for quality of window display. This compares with the North Ayrshire YTA average of 6.8 for window displays and 6.7 for building fronts, and the 33 YTA average of 7.1 for windows and 7.0 for buildings.

While there have been improvements to some town centre properties in the past, the town would clearly benefit from further improvements to enhance its appearance and attractiveness. This could be co-ordinated with a business support programme for retail/ service operators that includes visual merchandising alongside standard toolkits (marketing, business/ financial planning, staff management, etc).



Ardrossan also scores significantly lower than averages for business confidence – through the in-street audit businesses are asked about their recent performance and confidence for the future. Businesses in Ardrossan rated future confidence at 4.7 / 10 – this compares with averages of 5.1 for other North Ayrshire towns and 5.7 average for 27 YTAs.

## 5. YTA Summary and Key Points

The following are offered as final comments on the Your Town Audit of Ardrossan within the framework of the Scottish Government's Town Centre Toolkit.

### 5.1 Accessible Town Centre

- Ardrossan is well connected with good public transport links – train, bus and ferry connections – service levels will, at least in part, be maintained by the ferry traffic, and good road connectivity. Although car ownership in the area is quite high, public transport links are good with regular train services taking about 45 minutes into the centre of Glasgow, ensuring access for local people for a wide range of employment, education and leisure opportunities;
- the town benefits from having three train stations which provides direct connection to the key physical assets of the town – South Beach, Ferry Terminal and Town Centre – but this somewhat detracts from the town's potential as visitors (to the beach and ferry) have no way of knowing the short distances between these key points and therefore retail and service businesses in the town centre may lose out on potential visitor spend;
- the ferry service is an important asset for Ardrossan (and for the wider area), bringing significant passenger footfall and potential visitor spend, and helping to sustain the level of public transport (rail and bus) connectivity that helps to maintain service levels for local people. With the introduction of the RET on the Ardrossan to Arran ferry service there has been significant growth in passenger numbers, and further growth forecasts with a new/ larger ferry;
- the town (and particularly its retail/ service business base) would benefit from enhanced connectivity between the ferry terminal, the marina, the south beach and the town centre – clearer and safer walking routes (finger post signage with distances/ times, good quality lighting, off-road pathways, etc) would help to encourage more visitor trips and therefore spend that would increase footfall and support the town's business base;
- parking in Ardrossan town centre appears – at least during the time when the audit was undertaken, a midweek daytime – to be adequate; and
- Ardrossan has good 4G mobile coverage and access to superfast broadband.



## 5.2 Active Town Centre

- while small in absolute numbers, Ardrossan has a reasonable range of retail and service activities and a fairly high level of independent retail businesses – given the high retail to population score (double than double the 33 YTA average) the town is likely to already have a high level of retail leakage, and it is therefore important that the small independent business base is supported where possible to maintain an active town centre;
- some key services/ activities are missing from town or located on the edge therefore miss out on the potential linked spend
- ten vacant commercial units were recorded during the audit of Ardrossan town centre, of which, eight are retail units and two are vacant workshop premises;
- of the ten vacant units there is one main cluster – five on Glasgow Street (# 2, 4, 6, 24-26, and 28); plus three on Princes Street (#41-43, 69, and 86) one of Harbour Street (#2), and one on Harbour Places (#30) – there is a need to understand whether there is an issue with the properties themselves and/ or with the areas to identify if any remedial actions could be taken to improve the area/ the properties and thereby generate interest and attract businesses to these vacant units;
- there is an opportunity to expand the marina, and to secure residential development at the North Shore site – both of these would significantly expand activity in the town and create new catchment footfall that could support the local business base; and
- the town has hosted the Ardrossan Music Experience for the past two years, which seems to be well supported by the local community. The success of this event suggests that there may be scope to deliver more events over the course of the year to embed the sense of community and culture within the town centre.

## 5.3 Attractive Town Centre

- given the potential for new development activity – increased ferry traffic, marina expansion, new residential at North Shore – and the issues/ constraints identified around connectivity, Ardrossan would benefit from the development of a Masterplan or Development Framework to ensure that

developments enhance the attractiveness of the town and build better links with the existing business base;

- the town centre does not score favourably in relation to other YTA audited towns in relation to the quality of building fronts and shop window displays, businesses also recorded low levels of confidence for the future – any masterplan for the town should therefore consider the need/ opportunity to work with businesses and property owners through a co-ordinated support programme that addresses physical as well as business issues; and
- the marina and harbour are somewhat hidden from view and the town is therefore unable to fully exploit their potential – creating new walking/ cycling pathways could help to open up views and enhance the attractiveness of the town, and would encourage more visitors to use the towns retail and service business offering.