



Your Town Audit: Kilwinning

November 2016

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Report produced by:



Audit Date: 06/10/2016

Draft report: 24/11/2016

For: North Ayrshire Council

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1. Understanding Scottish Places Summary

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

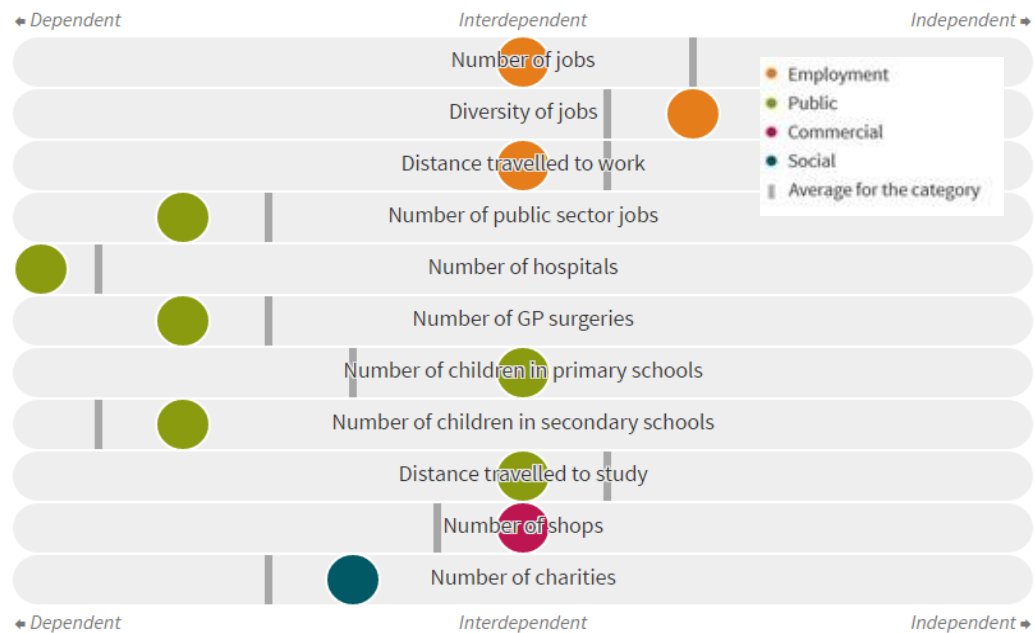
The YTA was developed to provide a framework to measure and monitor the performance of Scotland's towns and town centres using a series of Key Performance Indicators. It provides a comprehensive audit of Newton Mearns with data on up to 180 KPIs across seven themes – Locality, Accessibility, Local Services,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

The [Understanding Scottish Places](#) (USP) data platform provides a summary analysis for Kilwinning and identifies two comparator towns that have similar characteristics, Viewpark (Uddingston) and Bo'ness. The USP platform – www.usp.scot – describes Kilwinning in the following general terms:

Kilwinning's Interrelationships: an '*interdependent to dependent town*', which means it has low number of assets in relation to its population. Towns of this kind have some diversity of jobs; and residents travel largely longer distances to work and study, although some travel shorter distances. They are reliant on neighbouring towns for some assets and jobs.

Kilwinning's Typology: this type of town is extremely mixed in terms of demographics. There is a particularly wide range of people, housing and activities. The number of older couples with no children is higher than average. There is a mix of professional and non-professional jobs, and part-time and self-employment are both important for a significant proportion of residents. Socioeconomic status is higher than in other kinds of town and there is a mix of professionals and non-professionals, those with higher and lower educational attainment.

Comparing Kilwinning to towns with similar USP typology and interrelationships shows it has a similar number of charities, GP surgeries, hospitals, children in school, jobs, public sector jobs, and shops. It also has similarities in the diversity of jobs, the distance travelled to work, and the distance travelled to study.



Building on the USP, this report presents the results of our detailed analysis of Kilwinning 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.

The report is designed as an audit of existing assets – physical and social – and concludes with a set of key findings and issues that could improve the future performance of Kilwinning. The audits and issues arising can be used to feed into the development process of a future LDP.

2. Accessible Town Centre

Kilwinning is a town of just over 17,000 in North Ayrshire, located three miles north of Irvine. The town is located centrally in Ayrshire, giving rise to its nickname, the “Crossroads of Ayrshire”. The town centre is based around a traditional high street, and then extends to include the railway station and college.

Kilwinning has good public transport connections, with its station situated on the railway lines to Ayr, Largs and Ardrossan. There are up to 6 or 7 trains per hour to Glasgow, taking 40 minutes. Approximately one million rail journeys begin or end at Kilwinning railway station each year. Around four trains per hour operate to Ayr, taking 25 minutes. The town is therefore well connected to employment opportunities and services.

15 mile radius around Kilwinning



Both Glasgow International and Prestwick Airports are easily accessible by road and rail/bus. Regular buses connect Kilwinning with the Three Towns, Kilbirnie, Beith, Irvine and Glasgow.

Car parking is available in a number of car parks around the town centre, totalling 500 spaces. There is also a 300 space Park and Ride facility at the station, which was expanded in 2013. All car parks are free, although a 3 hour limit was recently introduced at the council-owned Oxenward car park (beside the Co-op).

The council's parking strategy (2014) notes that on-street parking in Kilwinning is low. There is no capacity for parking on the Main Street, which is semi-pedestrianised and has limited one-way through traffic. Demand for off-street car parking is high during the day, with the 2014 study finding occupancy of between 70% and 100% and average stays exceeding 5 hours, suggesting high levels of usage by commuters travelling outwith the town to access education and employment in the accessible major centres (primarily Glasgow and Ayr).

The town centre is generally accommodating to pedestrians, with crossings at appropriate points and pavements of adequate width. Main Street is semi-pedestrianised and its public realm was renewed in 2010, with new surfaces and

seating added. There may be opportunities to link this more closely with the surrounding area, including Lauchlan Way. This would help provide a clearer connection between the town centre and the Ayrshire College campus, which Main St backs on to.

Funding was put aside recently to improve cycle infrastructure in the town, focused between Woodside and Dalry Road. There are some cycling facilities in the town at present, including sets of three racks at two points on Main St, 12 sheltered stands at the railway station, and six racks in the car park by the college. NCN 7 takes cyclists along Main Street, bringing them into the heart of the town centre.

Kilwinning has excellent mobile connectivity and fibre optic broadband has been rolled out in recent years. There is no town centre wide WiFi although some bars/restaurants do have networks available. Mobile connectivity in the town is good.

3. Active Town Centre

3.1 Population and Housing

Around 800 people live within the town centre area in Kilwinning¹, 5% of the total settlement population. Over the decade to 2015, the population of the town centre decreased by 0.5%, compared to 4% growth in the town as a whole. This compares to a 0.7% decline in North Ayrshire over the same period, and a 5% increase in Scotland.

The decline in town centre population is at considerable variance from other YTA audited towns (including other NAC towns) where there has typically been an increase in town centre population (6% over 31 towns). The only other YTA audited towns that have had a decline in town centre population over the past ten years are Millport, Largs, Eyemouth and Stornoway. The average ten year change across the 11 NAC towns has been 4% increase in town centre living.

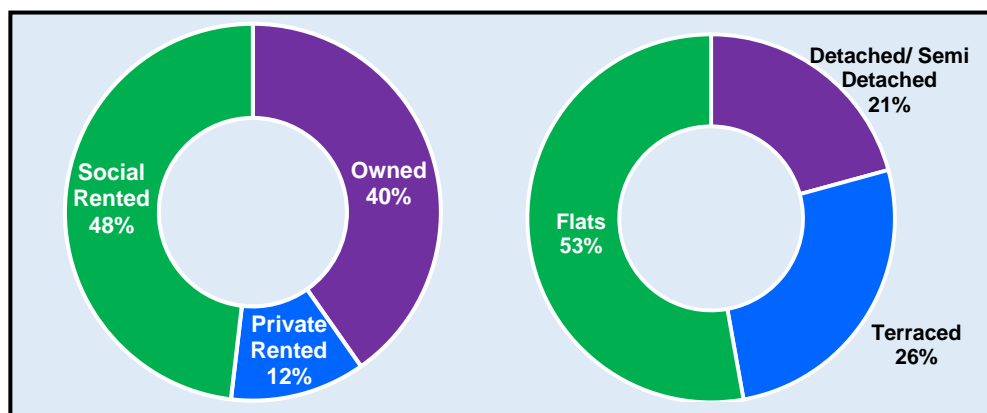
Housing in the town centre is a mix of flats (53%), terraced (26%) and detached/ semi-detached (21%). The wider town is a mix of a detached/ semi-detached (44%), terraced (34%) and flats (22%).

House prices in Kilwinning increased by 22% in the decade to 2013, averaging at £110,000. However, more up to date data from Zoopla states that from 200 sales in the KA13 postcode over the past 12 months (to October 2016), the average price paid was £102,000. In the town centre, prices increased by 32% to £73,000. Both the price and the uplift are considerably lower than other YTA audited towns where the average sale price (33 YTAs) is £120k and uplift is 44%. The average across the 11 NAC towns is £81k and 43% increase.

The housing stock in the town centre is a mix of social rent (48%), private ownership (40%) and private rent (11%). In the whole town, most houses are privately owned (62%) or socially rented (31%).

¹ 2011 Datazone S01011294 (2001 datazone S01004450)

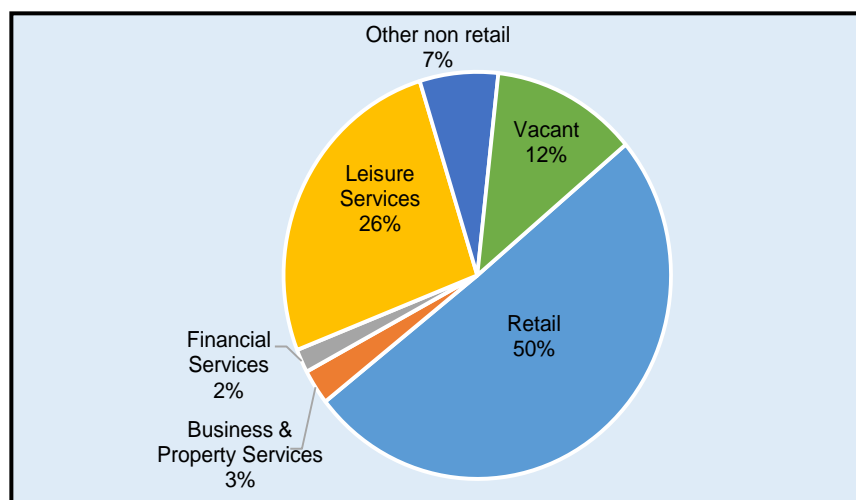
Kilwinning Town Centre Housing Mix



3.2 Businesses and Employment

Around 33% of the 2,450 jobs in Kilwinning are located in the approximate town centre area². The YTA street audit located 94 business units in use within Kilwinning town centre and these are provided with the relevant UPRN codes in a separate document. Of these, 54 are retail businesses.

Town Centre Unit Mix



Other uses in the town centre include the medical centre, housing office, dentist (2), bank and estate agents (2).

² Employment data derived from ONS Business Register & Employment Survey, nearest fit town centre datazones S01011325 & S01011326

3.3 Retail

Kilwinning town centre is focused on a traditional high street, which contains most of the town's retailers and local services. There is a mix of independent shops and national chains, although the latter are largely chemists, charity shops and banks. Kilwinning has 300 residents per retail unit, compared to Largs (105), Ayr (156), Alloa (180) and Kirkcaldy (274). This lower ratio of shops is likely due to Kilwinning's proximity to the larger centre of Irvine.

The retail unit vacancy rate in Kilwinning town centre is 12%, similar to Irvine (12%) and Saltcoats (11%), but higher than Largs (6%). The average for North Ayrshire town centres is 9.9%, and for audited town centres nationally, 9.3%.

Shops in Kilwinning town centre operate fairly standard opening hours, typically 9am to 5.30pm. The Tesco Express (6am – 11pm) and Co-operative Food (7am – 10pm) have extended opening hours. A larger Morrisons supermarket is located in the retail park that sits on the road between Stevenston and Kilwinning.

300 residents per town centre retail outlet

54 town centre retail units in use

13 vacant town centre units

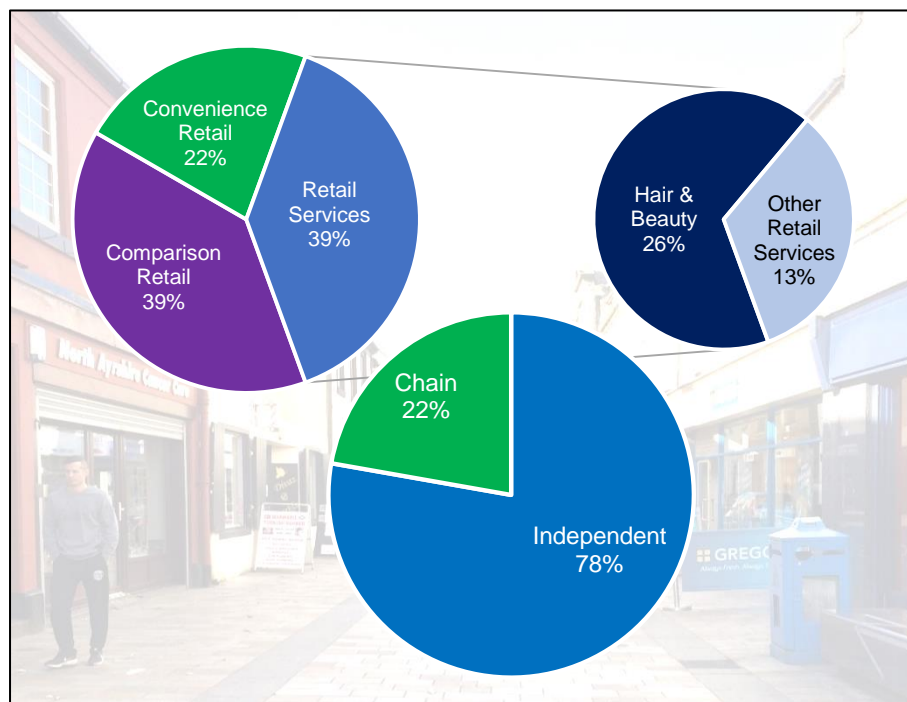
Retail forms the largest town centre unit use, amounting to 50% of all units. The YTA analysis is based on the following retail definitions:

- **Comparison Retail:** all other retail purchases comprising goods bought at infrequent intervals where consumers will compare and contrast products and prices – *21 comparison retailers identified in Kilwinning town centre;*
- **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. – *12 convenience retailers identified in Kilwinning 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. – 21 retail service operators identified in Kilwinning town centre.



A high proportion (78%) of retail units within Kilwinning town centre are independent, slightly higher than other towns of its size. Notably, in nearby Irvine just 48% of traders are independent (lower rates are typical in larger towns with indoor shopping centres); the town's proximity to Kilwinning means that comparison multiples will choose to locate there, in a cluster of similar stores, serving a wide catchment population.



4. Attractive Town Centre

Kilwinning underwent a significant programme of public realm improvements in 2009-10, overseen by the Irvine Bay Urban Regeneration Company. This provided a major boost to the town centre and the project won a national award for its design. As part of the project, local school students were



involved with creating a tiled mural in a lane connecting Main St with the Lauchlan Way car park. However, the appearance of the 'back' of Main St – on Lauchlan Way – could be improved, notably the Co-Op building which faces the college.

The public realm around Main St is well maintained and provides an attractive and safe walking environment for residents and visitors. The area is well lit with new white lighting installed.

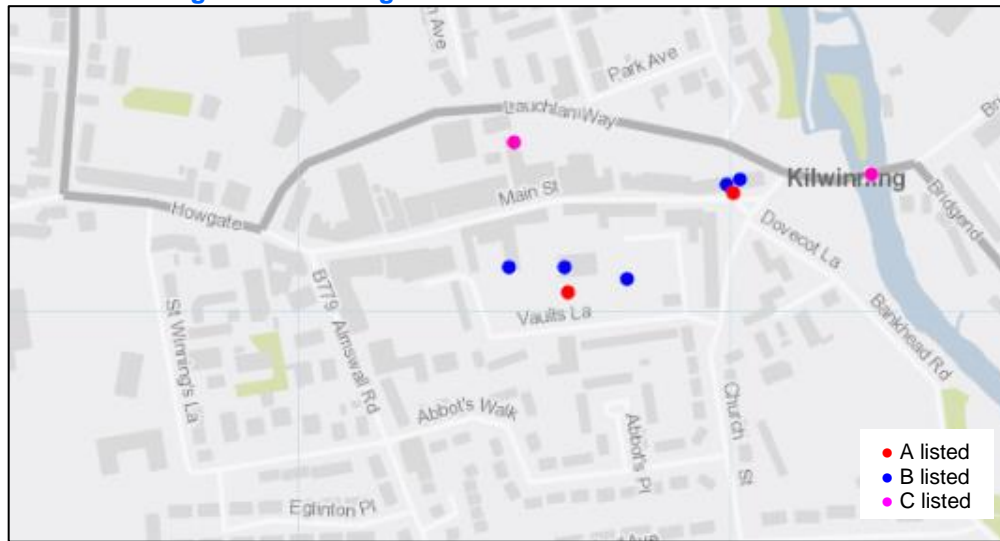
4.1 Events and Attractions

The ruins of Kilwinning Abbey, which date from the 12th century, are located centrally in the town, just off of Main St. The clock tower, which dates from 1816, has a Heritage Centre within it – owned by North Ayrshire Council, the centre is managed by volunteers from Kilwinning Heritage.



The Kilwinning Community Archaeology Project took place between 2010 and 2012, a programme of different excavations and projects around the Abbey. This sought to engage local residents with the town centre in a new way, and increase interest in the area's history. There is also a heritage trail through the town, with a downloadable mobile app (<http://www.naheritagetrails.co.uk/>). With the Abbey at the centre of the town, this takes visitors through the core retail area, increasing spend opportunities for nearby businesses. There are nine listed buildings in Kilwinning town centre – including the Category A Abbey and Mercat Cross.

Listed Buildings in Kilwinning



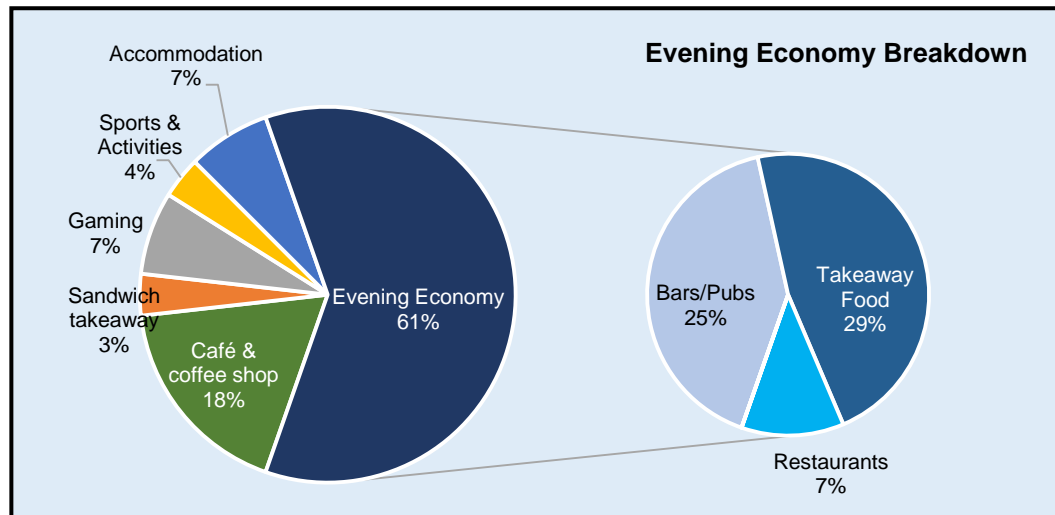
The renewal of the public realm on Main St provided a sizeable area suitable for events. For a time, the Ayrshire Farmers Market had Kilwinning as one of its regular stops, although this is no longer the case, indicating that footfall may not have been sustainable. This area remains a good location for one-off events, markets and so on and represents an opportunity to attract more town centre activities/events.

Key attractions in Kilwinning and the surrounding area include the Museum of Ayrshire Country Life and Costume at Dalgarnen Mill, 1.5 miles north of the town. This is rated four stars by VisitScotland and opens Tuesday-Sunday throughout the year.

A number of community events are held each year, including a fireworks display on Guy Fawkes Night and the Segdoune Carnival each summer, both held in McGavin Park. A Christmas lights switch-on is held each November in the town centre. Each of these events are organised by the community and local businesses, on the basis of grant funding and donations.

4.2 Leisure Mix

Leisure units in Kilwinning town centre are largely comprised of food and drink and evening economy uses, with pubs, restaurants and hot food takeaways.



The Corner House restaurant, operated by Ayrshire chain Buzzworks, opened in summer 2016 in a prominent building on the corner of Almswall Road and Howgate. A former pub, the build was vacant and semi-derelict prior to undergoing a major facelift. The restoration of the external fabric of the building, which was supported by Irvine Bay URC and North Ayrshire Council, has significantly enhanced the visual appearance of this part of the town centre, and created new footfall.



This private investment in Kilwinning town centre, particularly the renewal of a dilapidated building, is an encouraging sign and evidence of the lasting legacy of the public investment that took place six years ago.



A sports hall and gym, operated by KA Leisure, is located at Kilwinning Academy, where there are also sports pitches. Further indoor leisure facilities are located at the Magnum Centre in Irvine (a new centre is opening in 2017) and Auchenharvie Centre in Stevenston.

Kilwinning Community Sports Club, established in 2000, is based towards the south of the town. Facilities include synthetic and grass pitches, gym, golf range and bike hire, open 8am-10pm on weekdays and until 5pm at weekends.

A junior football side, Kilwinning Rangers, play at Abbey Park, close to the town centre.

Kilwinning Library is located just to the south of the town centre, and opens Monday to Saturday.

4.3 Attractiveness Review

The YTA includes an independent review of place and quality impressions. Business confidence in the town centre was gauged from a small sample of interviews undertaken with independent traders. Scores averaged at 6.9 / 10, higher than the average of 27 other YTA audited towns, at 5.7 / 10.

Individual unit fronts and shop window displays were graded out of ten during the on-street audit, with a town centre average score of 6.6 for the condition of unit fronts and 7.0 for quality of window display. This is slightly above the average



across other audited town centres in North Ayrshire, of 6.9 (windows) and 6.8 (buildings).

5. YTA Summary and Key Points

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

5.1 Accessible Town Centre

- Kilwinning is strategically located in North Ayrshire between the other main settlements, with key road and rail links passing through the town – one million journeys originate or end at the station each year;
- with recent public realm improvements, the town centre is pedestrian friendly and within walking distance of the key transport links and the College. While the public realm on Main Street is in good condition, there may be opportunities to link this more closely with the surrounding area, including Lauchlan Way. This could help draw in footfall from the College to the town centre, which would boost trade for businesses; and
- car parks are spread through the town centre and appear well used.



5.2 Active Town Centre

- a number of community events take place in Kilwinning each year, including a Christmas lights switch-on and a fireworks display. These events are generally for and by local residents rather than aimed at drawing in people from elsewhere, but are important in maintaining civic pride and drawing trade to local businesses;
- 13 vacant units were recorded in Kilwinning town centre, giving a vacancy rate of 12%. The majority of these units are dotted along Main Street, with a cluster at its eastern end. While the vacancy rate is not out of control, any worsening of it would risk creating a negative impression of the town centre. 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/ properties and thereby generate interest and attract businesses to these vacant units;

5.3 Attractive Town Centre

- Kilwinning has a range of shops and services typical for a town centre of its size – while the number of units occupied by multiples (22%) is limited, this is a reflection of its size and proximity to the regional centre, Irvine;
- Kilwinning has a rich heritage – recent public projects in the town have sought to draw on this and deepen residents' understanding of the town's past, through projects such as the archaeological dig at Kilwinning Abbey and development of a town heritage trail;
- business confidence in the town centre is relatively high, likely reflecting the investment which has taken place over the last few years; and
- there may be ways in which traders can work together to promote the town centre on a more formal basis, whether in a BID model or otherwise, helping to raise funds for marketing and holding events (including those which are presently dependent on donations or grants).

