



Your Town Audit: Millport

December 2016

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1. Understanding Scottish Places Summary

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

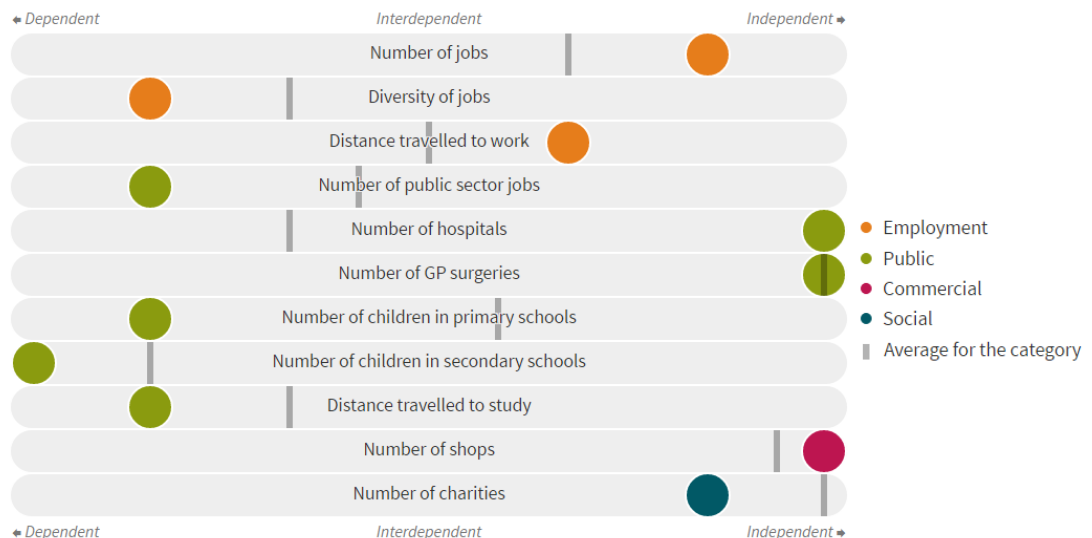
The YTA was developed to provide a framework to measure and monitor the performance of Scotland's towns and town centres using a series of Key Performance Indicators. It provides a comprehensive audit of Millport with data on up to 180 KPIs across seven themes – Locality, Accessibility, Local Services,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

The [Understanding Scottish Places](#) (USP) data platform provides a summary analysis for Millport and identifies five comparator towns that have similar characteristics, with these being Dufftown, Scalloway, Strathpeffer, Fochabers and Beaulieu. The USP platform – www.usp.scot – describes Millport in the following general terms:

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

Millport's Typology: this type of small town is extremely mixed in terms of demographics. There are particularly wide ranges 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 types of town and there is a mix of professionals and non-professionals, those with higher and lower educational attainment.

Comparing Millport to towns with similar USP typology and interrelationships shows it has a similar number of charities, GP surgeries, number of children in secondary school (albeit children travel to Largs for secondary schooling), and number of shops. It also has similarities in the distance travelled to study, but differs in terms of the number of hospitals and number of primary school age children (albeit primary schooling is available on Millport).



Building on the USP, this report presents the results of our detailed analysis of Millport 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 Millport, Active Millport and Attractive Millport.

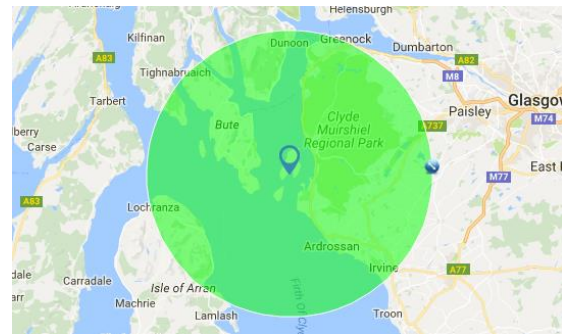
The report is designed as an audit of existing assets – physical and social – and concludes with a set of key findings and issues that could improve the future performance of Millport. The audits and issues arising will be used to feed into the development process of the future Local Development Plan for North Ayrshire.

2. Accessible Town Centre

Millport is the principal settlement on the Isle of Cumbrae, a small island which is located around 1.5 miles off the coast of mainland North Ayrshire. Millport has a population of 1,370, 93% of the island total, and is built around a wide bay at the south of Cumbrae.

The town centre area in Millport takes in the housing and commercial buildings along the seafront. This is the location of most of Millport's retail, leisure and service offering.

15 mile radius around Millport



The Isle of Cumbrae is connected by ferry to Largs, where the ferry terminal is a short walk to the railway station. Ferries run up to every 15 minutes in the summer and every 30 minutes in the winter. A bus service (running in line with the ferry service) connects Millport with the ferry terminal at the north of the island.

The core retail area of Millport is focused on Glasgow Street, and Guildford Street two busy

roads on the south side of the island. The town centre offers a good range of services and retail outlets, in what is otherwise a residential area.

There are six bus stops located throughout the town centre area of Millport, four of which are located on Glasgow Street. There are direct bus connections from the ferry terminal to the town centre of Millport which take around 10 minutes

There is generous on-street parking within the town centre, with a number being found along the promenade on Guildford Street and Glasgow Street, and unrestricted parking on adjacent residential streets.

The town centre provides access to local services which, alongside a mix of retailers and financial/ business services, includes a police station, dentists, and a community centre.

There is good 3G and 4G throughout the town, and although there is no town-wide free WiFi, superfast broadband is available. There is a website for Millport (www.millport.org), which gives information on the town, transport links, what shops and services can be found, and suggestions of what visitors can do on their visit to Cumbrae. The website is kept up-to-date and so it is relatively reliable.

The town centre area is accessible to pedestrians with pavements and walking routes being clear and in good condition. Walking routes into the town centre from nearby houses are safe, with good street lighting. As well as this, access for cyclists is across Cumbrae is unlimited, and visitors are encouraged cycle. There are a number of bike hire shops throughout the town centre, and many visitors bring their own onto the ferry. The island is well connected for cyclists, with many visitors choosing to tour Cumbrae by cycling its 10.25 mile circumference.

Being an island, Millport is unlike most seaside towns in the sense that it is rural and a final destination. Most visitors to the island – holiday and day trip – primarily do so during the warmer seasons, meaning that businesses are heavily reliant on a relatively short period for footfall and spend.

3. Active Town Centre

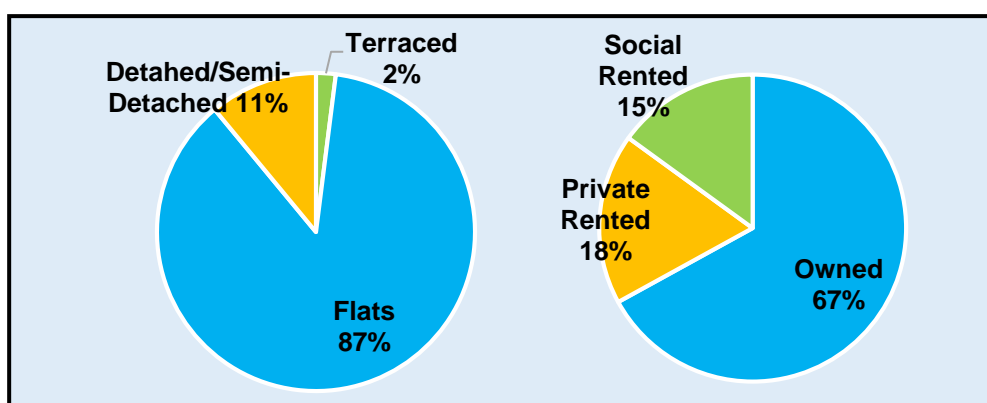
3.1 Population and Housing

Just over 370 people live within the immediate town centre area in Millport¹, around 27% of the total settlement population. At c. 650, the population of the wider town centre decreased in the decade to 2013 by 7%, with the population of the whole settlement decreasing by around 5% over this time. This compares with a 0.7% decline across North Ayrshire and 5% increase in Scotland over this ten year period.

Most of the YTA audited towns have seen a marked increase in town centre living over the past ten years, averaging 4% for North Ayrshire and 6% for our wider town average (31 YTAs); with Millport being significantly contrary to these averages.

In terms of housing, the percentage of homes that are permanently occupied has decreased from 54% in 2010 to 49% in 2016, reinforcing the population decline in the decade to 2013. However, it was also found that the percentage of second/holiday homes in the town centre has increase during this time by 9 percentage points, from 36% in 2010 to 47% in 2016, whereas, the percentage of vacant houses within the town centre has actually decreased, from 10% in 2010 to 4% in 2016. This would suggest that the uptake in holiday home ownership has taken up some of the slack in the housing stock, which might otherwise have been vacant.

Millport Town Centre Housing Mix



The majority of housing in the town centre² is comprised of flats (87%), with 52% of properties having three or four bedrooms, which is somewhat unusual for a town centre area. The majority of properties (89%) are in council tax bands A, B and C.

¹ Scotland Census 2011 output zones S00122678, S00122677, S00122679, S00123047 and S00122800.

² For accessing the most up to date data, this is datazone (2001) S01004503.

The streets surrounding the retail area in Millport are almost solely residential and, with an island population of just under 1,400 people, this provides a rather small catchment population for the retail and service businesses, which when compared to other YTA audited towns produces the lowest rate of 49 residents per retailer. This suggests that the retail trade in Millport is reliant on visitors rather than residents.

The average purchase price of a town centre dwelling in Millport (£80,100) is lower than that of the town as a whole (£110,429)³. Prices in the town centre increased 66% in the decade to 2013, and by 57% across the whole of Cumbrae. The housing stock in the town is largely privately owned (67% in the town centre; 71% in the wider town), or privately rented (18% in the town centre; 15% in the wider town).

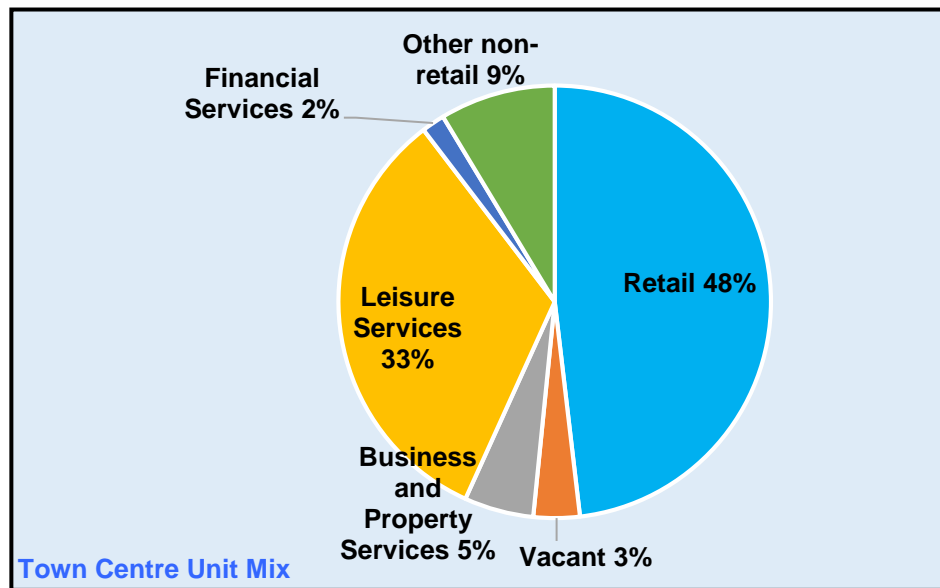
As reported, almost half of all houses in the town centre (47%) are second/ holiday homes, which is slightly higher than the whole settlement where 40% are second/ holiday homes. This again highlights how Millport is a somewhat seasonal settlement, with the majority of the houses on the island possibly lying vacant for large parts of the year, leaving the town centre business and retail area with an even smaller catchment population to sustain itself with.

3.2 Employment and Business

Just under two-thirds (64%) of the 350 jobs in Millport are located in the town centre area. It is estimated that there are approximately 75 businesses on Cumbrae – official data is unavailable at this level and includes the Central Largs area.

The YTA street audit located 58 units in use within Millport town centre, of which two are vacant – this was in line with the UPRN data provided by North Ayrshire Council prior to the audit.

³ Scottish Statistics, 2013



Of the 58 units:

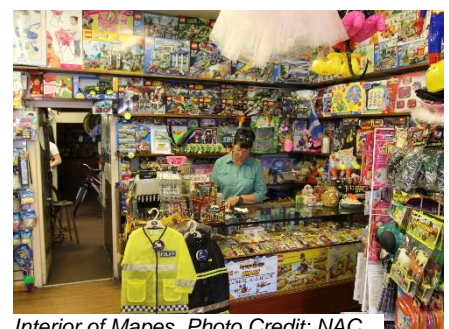
- 28 are occupied by retail businesses;
- 5 are other non-retail – library, medical centre, bus depot, community hall and council office;
- 19 are leisure uses – including fourteen food and drink, two museums and two amusements; and
- two units are vacant, both retail units.

3.3 Retail

Retail units in Millport are clustered along Stuart Street, Glasgow Street, Guildford Street and Cardiff Street.

For a small town centre, the range of shops and retail services within is somewhat limited. During the audit two vacant retail units were recorded, producing a retail vacancy rate of 4.3%⁴, much lower than the 9.9%

average retail vacancy rate across other North Ayrshire audited towns, and 9.3% average from 33 YTAs.



Interior of Mapes, Photo Credit: NAC

⁴ Note: this is the retail vacancy rate (2 vacant of 47 retail units) and differs from the 3% vacancy rate in the chart above which relates to all commercial town centre properties (2 of 58 properties).

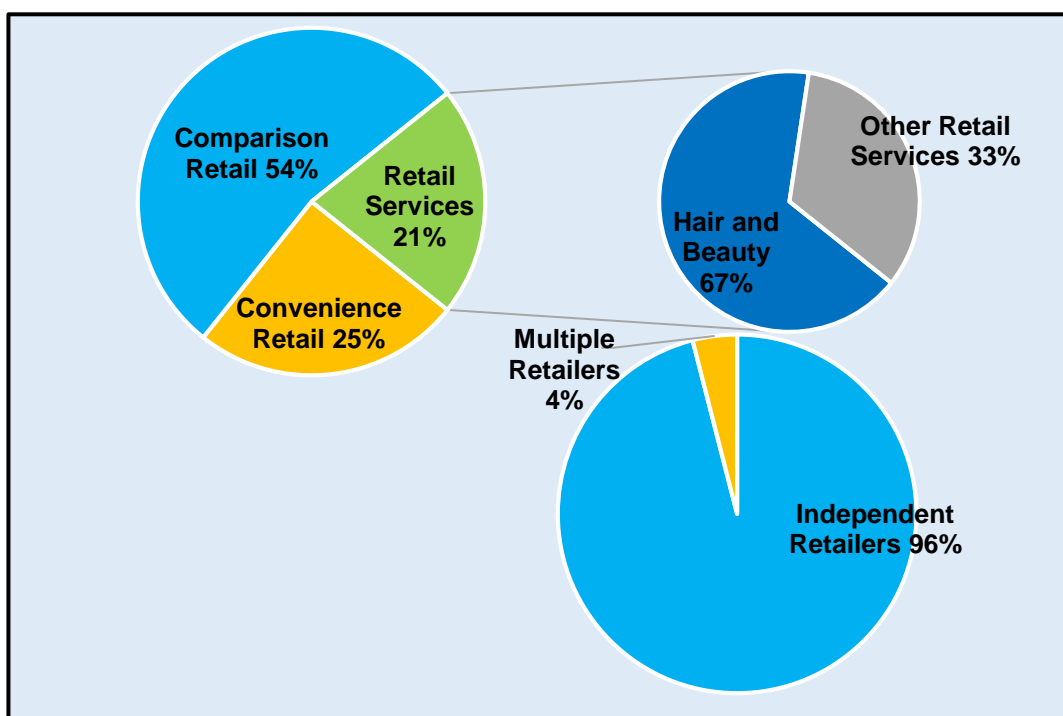
Most shops in Millport town centre operate standard opening hours of around 9am to 5.30pm but there will be significant variations over the peak summer and low winter seasons. However, the Premier Supermarket on Guildford Street has longer hours – 7:30am to 6pm during the week, as do the pubs in the town for example the Kelburne Bar on Guildford Street is open every day from 11/11:30am to 11pm.

49 residents per town centre retail outlet

28 town centre units in retail use

2 vacant town centre retail units

Retail forms the largest single town centre unit use but, at 48%, is slightly higher than the 45% average across the other North Ayrshire towns. Millport's retail rate is similar to other audited towns such as Irvine (48%), and Kilwinning (50%) and will be largely reliant on the spending of tourists and visitors.



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. – 7 convenience retailers were identified in Millport town centre;

- **Comparison Retail:** all other retail purchases comprising goods bought at infrequent intervals where consumers will compare and contrast products and prices – *15 comparison retailers were identified in Millport 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. – *6 retail service operators were identified in Millport town centre.*

All but one of the town's retailers are independent (96%) – this is the highest score across the other North Ayrshire towns, and much higher than the 34 YTA average score of 74%.

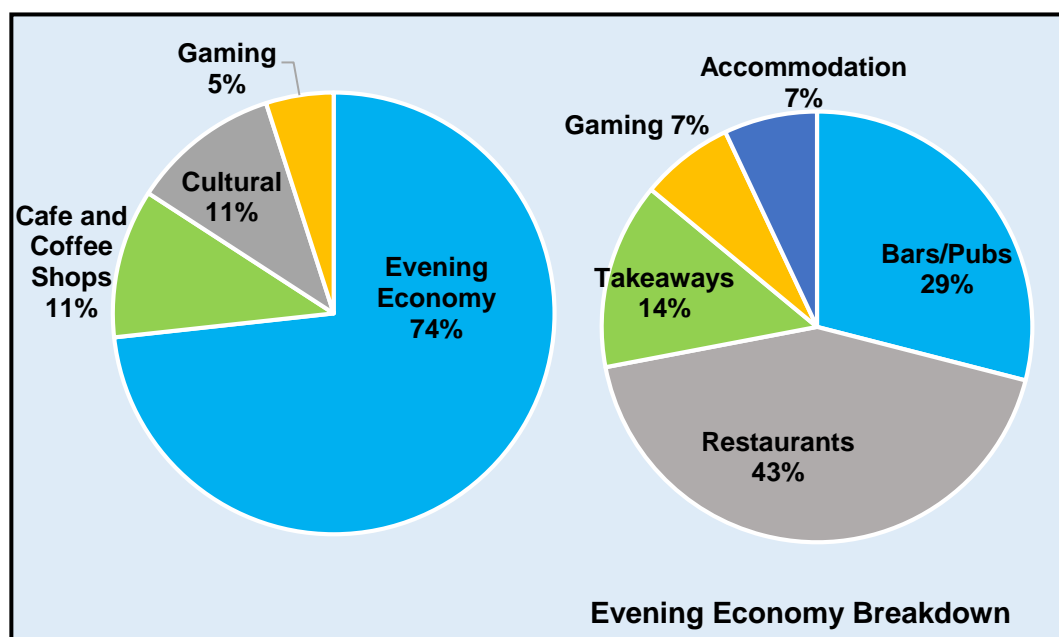


A large proportion of the town's retailers are geared toward the day visitor and tourist trade for their turnover, with three bike hire shops, six craft/ gift shops, and two sweet/ confectioner shops (not including the two newsagents).

4. Attractive Town Centre

Millport is an historic seaside town with an attractive townscape setting within a Conservation Area. There are a number of large detached and semi-detached sandstone villas on the edge of the town, dating from its dominance as a Victorian seaside resort for wealthy West of Scotland families.

4.1 Leisure Mix



The mix of leisure businesses in Millport town centre sees evening economy dominate, accounting for 74% of all leisure business activity. With a town population of just over 1,300 people, Millport has a low proportion of evening economy business activity at 124 residents per outlet (34 YTA average of 1,088) and is lower than the NAC average of 741. Again, this confirms the importance of tourists and day visitors to the town's economy.

The evening economy in Millport is comprised of two hot food takeaways, five restaurants, one cafe, four bars, one amusement arcade and one hotel. Some of the bars in the town centre include Frasers on Cardiff Street and the Tavern of Glasgow Street. Some of the restaurants include The Harbour on Stuart Street and the Golden Dragon on Glasgow Street, and the cafe open late is the Ritz Café on Stuart Street. The two takeaways in the town centre are the Crocodile Chip Shop on Glasgow Street and Deep Sea Chip Shop on Quayhead; some of the restaurants will also provide take-away food service.

The amusement arcade open in the evenings is the Family Amusements Centre on Stuart Street, and the hotel open late is Royal George Hotel on Quayhead and hosts a weekly live music event on Saturday nights.

4.2 Leisure Facilities and Attractions

The Garrison House, built in 1745, has been restored and transformed into a hub for a number of Millport's services and leisure facilities both within and nearby. These include: a medical centre, library (see below), café, model railway located in the cabins behind the Garrison (see below), and museum (see below also).



The Millport Library, located inside Garrison House, is open to the public every day apart from Wednesdays, Thursdays and Sundays, typically from 1pm-5pm. The library provides public with reading services and access to the internet.

The National Sailing Centre Cumbrae is located out with the town centre area, on the north-east side of Cumbrae. This SportScotland centre focuses on water sports and has both teaching and training facilities within. Some of the courses on offer at the centre include: dinghy sailing, paddlesports, windsurfing and powerboating.



Another leisure facility is Millport Golf club, again located outside of the town centre area. The golf club was formed in 1888 and has an 18-hole golf course. Other facilities include a clubhouse, bar, and restaurant.

A visitor attraction located within the town centre area is the Museum of Cumbrae, located inside Garrison House. The mix of permanent exhibits and temporary displays highlight the history of the island and include: the Goldie ethnography collection, Mary Ann Woodrow's diaries, and a 4000 year-old stone cist. The museum is free to enter for all visitors and open year round.

The Garrison Model Railway is another visitor attraction within the town centre, which is located behind The Garrison. The model railway was built by members of the Garrison Model Railway Club, formed in 2006 by community members. There are three railway layout on show for visitors, one of which has a number of features and landmarks of the island incorporated into the design. The attraction has been

open to the public since 2007, and is free to view year round, although visitors are encourage to make a small donation to support running costs.

Other attractions which can be found around the island are the three rock structures: Crocodile Rock, Lion Rock and Indian Rock. The Crocodile and Indian rocks have had faces painted on them by local residents and over time all three have become visitor attractions with many tourists enjoying having the picture taken with them.



4.3 Cumbrae Community Development Company

The Cumbrae Community Development Company (CCDC) is a local independent charity which works alongside other public, private and third sector organisations, to achieve their aim of developing sustainable regeneration of the local community by targeting a range of economic, social, environmental and cultural issues.

All of the CCDC's strategies are driven by their 2020 goal of having the visitor economy be the top contributor to the social, cultural, and economic life of Cumbrae and its residents. CCDC aims to do this by developing and promoting the Great Cumbrae product; its leisure and business offerings to visitors, and by making it known as a lively cultural year-round destination.

The charity aim to achieve this by:

- positioning Great Cumbrae as an attractive destination (through promotion and effective marketing of the attractions and services within);
- improving the quality and appeal of Cumbrae as a product (through improving and assessing visitor experience and satisfaction levels, increasing digital connectivity to appeal to the aged 18-35 market, and by supporting and creating a distinctive 'sense of place' which plays upon the islands sporting and cultural strengths);
- enhancing the capacity for social, cultural and economic growth (through demonstrating the value of 'visitor economy' on Cumbrae to increase support for it and drive interest from private sector organisations, as well as developing and supporting both existing and new opportunities for products and services for residents and visitors - through new attractions and better packaging of those which currently exist);

- maintaining and developing existing cultural and heritage assets (through creating conservation areas of special historical or architectural interest); and
- creating a place where people can live and work (through promoting and enhancing Cumbrae as a place which hosts a number of business, cultural and social happenings, and by hosting events which support the brand and values of the Great Cumbrae product).

4.4 Community Events and Activities

Photo Credit: NAC



The Millport Country Music Festival is an event which began in 1995, and takes place across several venues throughout the settlement. Visitors are able to camp for the weekend, with a camp site being set up within the grounds of Garrison House. The festival showcases a number of country and western performers across the weekend,

with other attractions including: a Wild West demonstration, lasso lessons, bucking bronco and face painting. The festival runs over the course of a weekend in September, and in 2016 the event cost £5 for day visitors and £10 for those attending the whole weekend.

Another annual community event in Millport is the Sandcastle Competition held within the town centre area on the beach. The event has been taking place on Cumbrae for a number of years and sees both visitors and residents entering into the competition to show off their creative sand sculpting abilities.



In 2016, the annual Millport Festival of Light was focused on celebrating two of Cumbrae's most historic buildings as part of Scotland's 2016 Year of Innovation, Architecture and Design –The Cathedral of the Isles and Garrison House. The event took place across the 23rd and 24th of September, and saw both buildings illuminated with graphics projected onto them, and a 'heritage light trail' formed between the two sites which incorporated other light installations made by local people. The event was free to attend, and was well received by the local community.



All these events and others, for example the Millport Scooter Rally, help to extend the tourist season for the settlement and create as much footfall and subsequent spend as possible.

4.5 Cumbrae Community Council

Cumbrae Community Council meets in the Garrison House on the 1st Monday of each month at 3pm. Meetings are open to the public and involve discussions about issues and topics regarding the local area. There are currently four community councillors and three office bearers involved in the community council. However, no recent minutes have been recorded, and so it is unclear how active the Community Council is.

4.6 Attractiveness Review

At the time of the audit it was noted that the streets were clear with little to no litter present. Throughout the town centre area there is ample street lighting and bins. There are plenty of resting places in the town centre, especially along the promenade, which helps to encourage visitors and residents to take time and enjoy the views and their surroundings.



During warmer months this would help to create a sense of place as many people would choose to spend time in the town centre and therefore extra spend for the local retailers. There are, however few and relatively basic plant boxes spread along this area, and although the street audit was undertaken in October when not much planting would be expected, more flower displays (i.e. few planting beds, tubs and hanging basket poles) would enhance the town's setting.

North Ayrshire Council recently received a Charette grant from the Scottish



Government of £10,000 in order to assess a flood protection scheme on Cumbrae. A new scheme and subsequent flood protection measures would be welcomed by the settlement and town centre, which during periods of bad weather is susceptible to flooding.

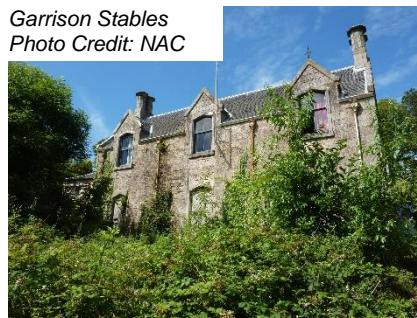
Two historic buildings within the town centre area which have been identified as being in need of repair and restoration are the Town Hall and the Garrison Stables, both on Clifton Street.

The Town Hall was identified as the building that was previously used by the local community as a facility in which to provide indoor and wet weather activities for residents and visitors alike. In the past it has acted as hub for local fairs and events and provides a large adaptable space for community groups to meet.

*Millport Town Hall
Photo Credit: NAC*



*Garrison Stables
Photo Credit: NAC*



The Garrison Stables has been vacant since at least 2007, and is included on the Buildings at Risk register for Scotland, which has recorded a decline in the condition of the fabric of the building. Although set back from the main promenade, it is still located prominently. However, planning permission to convert the stables into three flats was approved in July 2016.

Restoring and generating interest and use in both of these historic buildings could provide the town centre and wider settlement with much needed indoor activity space and help promote and will help to maintain the historic landscape of the settlement.

5. YTA Summary and Key Points

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

5.1 Accessible Town Centre

- for an island, Millport is reasonably well connected with transport links and a range of services. Public transport links are good with regular ferry services to Largs;
- the town is connected by bus service to the ferry terminal with journeys to and from taking again 10 minutes;
- the island is very well set-up for cyclists, with visitors being encourage to bring their own, or rent bikes – given the volume of cyclists, drivers are very aware and roads are typically safe for those choosing to cycle;
- while there is no dedicated car park, parking in Millport town centre appears – at least during the time when the audit was undertaken, a weekend daytime – to be adequate;
- Millport has good 4G mobile coverage and access to superfast broadband; and
- there is accessible information available for residents or visitors as to events and activities in Millport and the town website seems to be up to date.

5.2 Active Town Centre

- despite losing population, Millport has maintained a good level of business activity on the back of day visitors, tourists and second/ holiday home owners;
- Millport has a reasonable range of retail and services and a very high level of independent retail businesses – it is important that these are supported and protected (where possible) to maintain the town's sense of uniqueness;
- increasing the number of day visitors and tourists would help to bring further spend and turnover for the business base;
- two vacant units were recorded during the audit of Millport town centre, both of which were retail units;

- the two vacant units are both located on Guildford Street - #9 which used to be a small grocer's shop which is understood to have closed only recently, and #11 which was the Cumbrae card and gift shop; and
- there are a number of events held in the settlement including the Millport Country Music Festival, the Sandcastle Competition, and Festival of Light. All events seem to be well supported by the local community and help to create a sense of activity and culture on Cumbrae. Events such as these should be supported and maintained as they help to attract outside interest in the island and visitors coming to attend such events help bring added footfall and subsequent spend; and
- the town would benefit from more wet weather indoor family friendly activity facilities – the Town Hall was previously used for this but is no longer fit for purpose and needs major restoration.

5.3 Attractive Town Centre

- Millport has retained a traditional sea-side village feel due to the majority of retail units being small and independent and located on the promenade which looks out onto the seafront;
- the Cumbrae Community Development Company is currently working to maintain and improve the Great Cumbrae product through a number of strategies and has an overall aim of having visitor economy be the primary driver of growth in all respects on the island;
- overall the town centre area of Millport is attractive, and most buildings are well maintained with plenty of resting places provided for visitors and residents. The promenade creates an area where visitors and residents can relax and enjoy themselves; and
- there are, however, a number of prominent buildings and structures that, if repaired/ improved, would significantly enhance the appearance of the town. The Town Hall and Garrison Stables have been identified, as well as the Pierhead area at the George Hotel. Addressing these, and other key buildings as identified by NAC, would help to preserve the historic character of Millport for the future. It should be noted that planning consent has been granted to convert the Garrison Stables building into flat accommodation.