



Your Town Audit: West Kilbride

December 2016



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Direct enquiries regarding this report should be submitted to:

Liam Turbett, EKOS, 0141 353 8327 liam.turbett@ekos.co.uk

Rosie Jenkins, EKOS, 0141 353 8322 rosie.jenkins@ekos.co.uk

1. Understanding Scottish Places Summary

This report presents a summary of the Your Town Audit (YTA) for West Kilbride, 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 West Kilbride with data on up to 180 KPIs across seven themes – Locality, Accessibility, Local Services, Activities + Events, Development Capacity, Tourism, and Place + Quality Impressions.

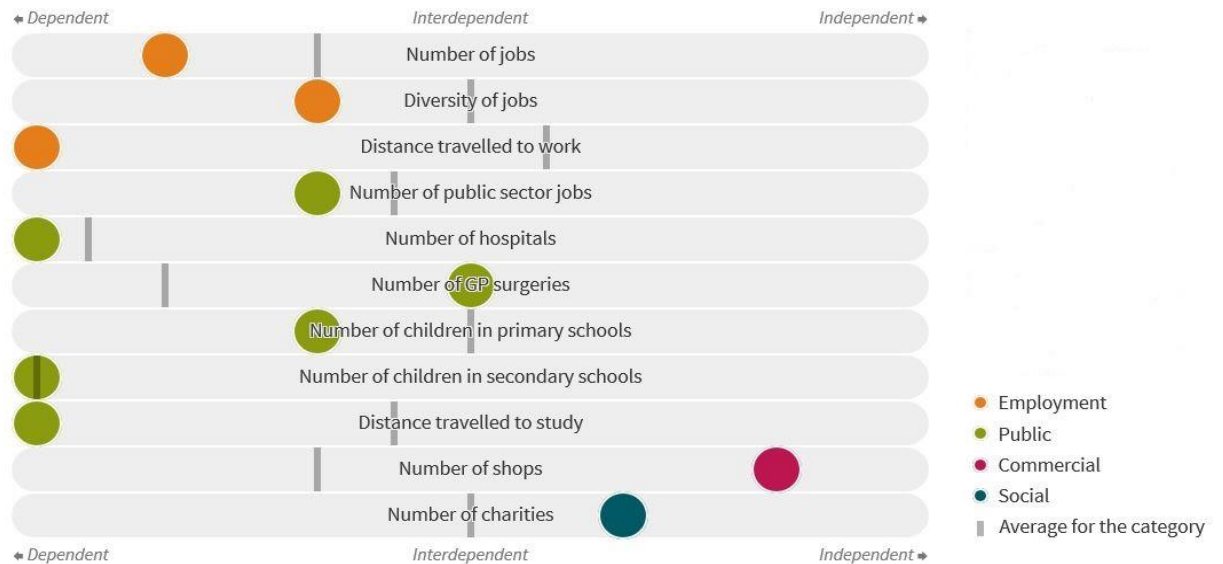
The [Understanding Scottish Places](#) (USP) data platform provides a summary analysis for West Kilbride and identifies 14 comparator towns that have similar characteristics, with the most similar being Stepps, Peterculter, Dalgety Bay and Inverkip¹. The USP platform – www.usp.scot – describes West Kilbride in the following general terms:

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

West Kilbride's Typology: This type of medium-sized town is a suburban or commuter locality with a prevalence of higher income and private housing. A large proportion of the population are over 45, and many are retired. Many people own their home. There is also a high proportion of people in professional employment and a high proportion of residents are educated to HNC level or above. Many residents own two or more cars.

¹ The other comparator towns are identified as Eaglesham, Bishopton, Westhill (Highland), Brightons, Kingswells, Cove Bay, New Scone, Kintore, Kilbarchan, and Newport-on-Tay and Wormit.

Inter-relationships



Comparing West Kilbride to towns with similar USP typology and interrelationships shows it has a similar number of children in secondary schools (albeit children travel outwith the town to access secondary school education), and number of public sector jobs. It differs in the distance travelled to study (more dependent) and number of shops (more independent).

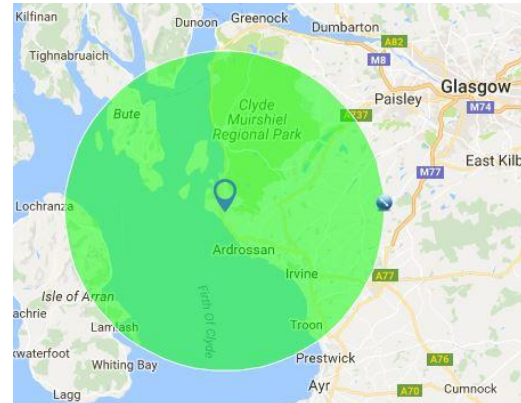
Building on the USP, this report presents the results of our detailed analysis of West Kilbride based around the Scottish Government's [Town Centre Toolkit](#) – an online resource available via the USP website which provides advice, guidance and case studies across three thematic areas: accessible,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

2. Accessible Town Centre

West Kilbride is a small town located in North Ayrshire, to the south west of Glasgow, with a population of around 4,500 people.

The core retail area of West Kilbride is focused on Main Street, a busy B-class road leading into West Kilbride from Fairlie in the North. The town centre offers a good range of services and retail outlets, in what is otherwise a residential area.

15 mile radius around West Kilbride



The railway station in West Kilbride is located just outside of the town centre area, and only a four minute walk away. The station, located on Curbieshaw Street, has park and ride facilities, with 23 spaces, as well as passenger waiting rooms and a cafe. Journeys from West Kilbride into the centre of Glasgow take roughly 50 minutes. Services from this station connect West Kilbride to other settlements in North Ayrshire, with journey times to Irvine, Largs and West Kilwinning taking 30, 10 and 15 minutes respectively.

There are two bus stops located within the town centre area of West Kilbride, both of which are located on Main Street. Bus journeys from West Kilbride to the centre of Glasgow take around 1 hour and 50 minutes, and involve a change of service in Prestwick. There are direct bus journeys from West Kilbride to other settlements in North Ayrshire, including: Largs, Ardrossan (both 20 minutes), Irvine (44 minutes), and Saltcoats (25 minutes).

The M8 motorway is around twenty-five miles north east of the town and is accessed via the A737 road, which provides fast access into the centre of Glasgow and beyond.

On-street parking spaces are limited within the town centre, with limited spaces being found on Main Street and Ritchie Street, however, drivers are able to park in the surrounding residential streets. There are also two free off-street car parks one of which can be found on Glen Road (12 spaces), and one on Main Street (28 spaces). There was some evidence of parking on double yellow lines during the audit but it is not possible to say whether this is a regular occurrence.

The town centre provides access to local services which, alongside a mix of retailers and business services, includes two dentists, a library, museum, and town hall.

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 West Kilbride (www.westkilbride.co.uk), which gives information on the town and its history, the weather forecast for the area, events and places to visit in the settlement. However, it should be noted that the website is not up-to-date and so it is unclear how reliable it is.

The town centre area is accessible to pedestrians with pavements and walking routes being clear and in relatively good condition, but they are narrow in width and would benefit from some repair and maintenance. Walking routes into the town centre from nearby houses are safe, with sufficient street lighting. However, access for cyclists is poorer, as there are no cycle lanes on the roads and no cycle racks within the town centre. There may be potential to attract more cyclists to West Kilbride from the nearby National Cycle Route 735 which passes by the south west edge of the settlement.



There is an ongoing consultation regarding the possibility of a one-way system road system within the town centre area of West Kilbride. North Ayrshire Council have been consulting with various community groups and members of the public on the proposal of an east to west one-way road system, along Main Street, Ritchie Street and part of Yerton Brae. There is also the possibility of this being replicated on Well Street and Hunterston Road. The introduction of this system, could help to reduce the current levels of traffic congestion found on these roads.

3. Active Town Centre

3.1 Population and Housing

Just over 280 people live within the immediate town centre area of West Kilbride², around 6% of the total settlement population. Taking a slightly wider datazone level for comparison purposes, the population of the town centre increased in the decade to 2013 by 5%, with the population of the whole settlement decreasing by around 1% over this time. This compares with an average 0.7% decline across North Ayrshire overall 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 West Kilbride being significantly higher than the North Ayrshire average.

Housing in the town centre³ is a mix of detached/ semi-detached properties (54%) and flats (42%), with almost half of all properties (46%) having three or



four bedrooms, which is somewhat unusual for a town centre area. The majority of properties (59%) are in council tax bands A, B and C.

The streets surrounding the retail area in West Kilbride are almost solely residential and, with a town population of just over 4,500 people, this provides a reasonable catchment population for the retail and service businesses that is broadly in line with other YTA audited towns (115 residents per retailer, compared to a 34 YTA average of 226).

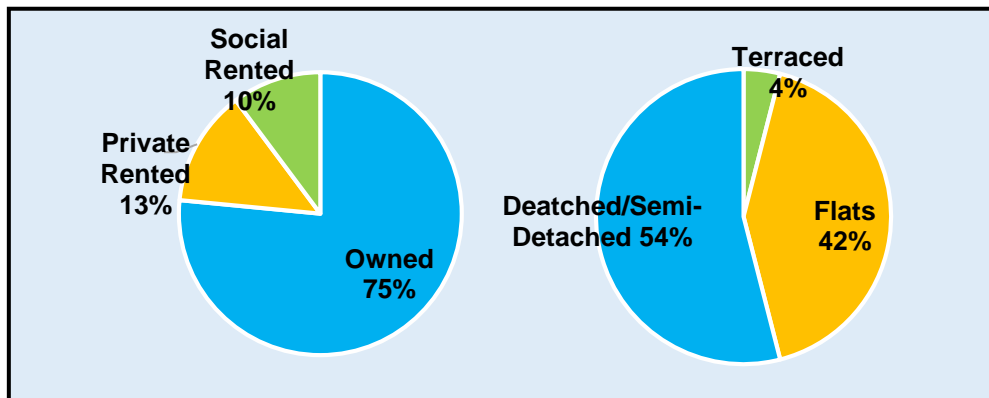
The average purchase price of a town centre dwelling in West Kilbride (£117,530) is lower than that of the town as a whole (£158,475)⁴. Prices in the town centre increased 63% in the decade to 2013, and by 61% across the town as a whole. The housing stock is largely privately owned (75% in the town centre; 78% in the wider town), or socially rented (10% in the town centre; 13% in the wider town).

² Scotland Census 2011 output zones S00122030, S00122522, and S00122524.

³ For accessing the most up to date data, this is datazones (2001) S01004477 and S01004476.

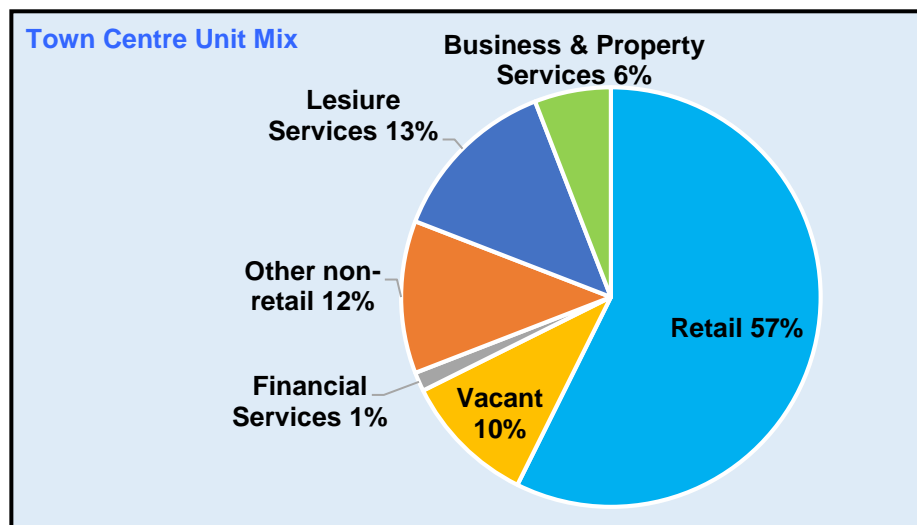
⁴ Scottish Statistics, 2013

West Kilbride Town Centre Housing Mix



3.2 Employment and Business

Half of the 600 jobs in West Kilbride are located in the town centre area. National statistics record 150 businesses within the settlement. The YTA street audit located 68 commercial units within West Kilbride town centre – this was in line with the UPRN data provided by North Ayrshire Council prior to the audit.



Of the 68 units:

- 39 are occupied by retail businesses;
- 8 are other non-retail – two dentists, a doctors surgery, library, museum, funeral directors, town hall and community based charity;
- 9 are leisure uses – 8 food and drink, and one bookmaker;
- 4 are private businesses;

- 1 is a bank; and
- 7 units are vacant, of which four are retail units.

3.3 Retail

Retail units in West Kilbride are clustered along Main Street, Orchard Street, and Ritchie Street. For a small town centre, there is a reasonable range of shops and services.

During the audit 7 vacant units were recorded, four of which were retail units, producing a retail vacancy rate of 7%⁵, lower than the 9.9% average retail vacancy rate across other North Ayrshire audited towns, and the 9.3% average from 33 YTAs.



115 residents per town centre retail outlet

39 town centre units in retail use

7 vacant retail units

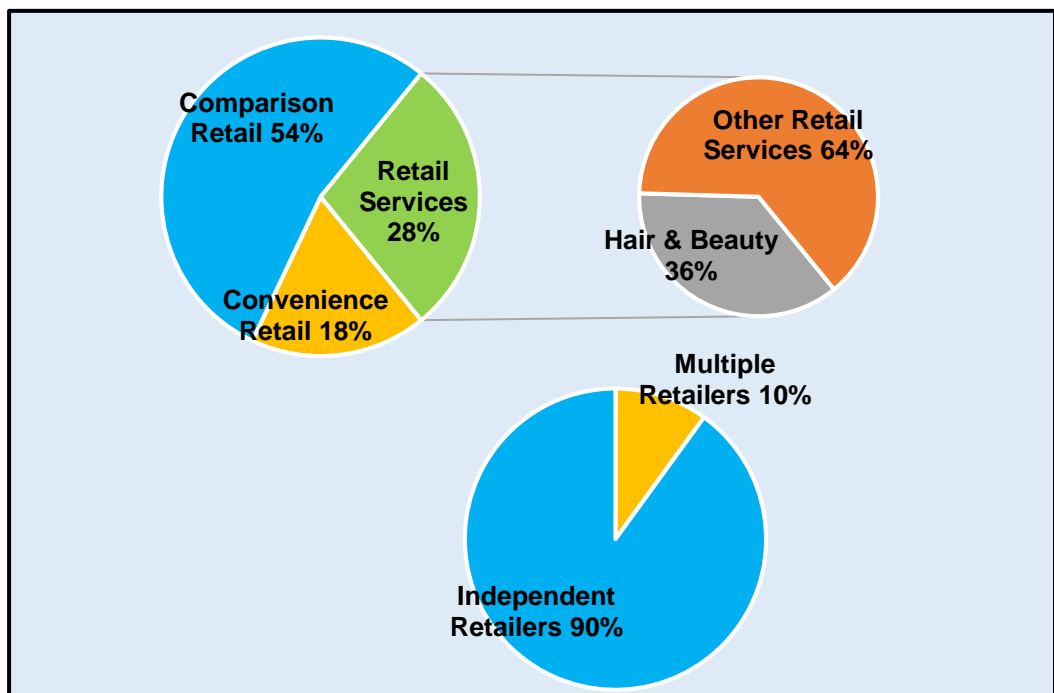
Most shops in West Kilbride town centre operate standard opening hours of around 9am to 5.30pm. However, the Key Store on Main Street has longer hours – 8am to 10pm during the week, as does the Village Tavern bar on Main Street which is open every day from 11/11:30am to 11pm.

Retail forms the largest single town centre unit use but, at 57%, is higher than the 45% average across the other North Ayrshire audited towns (46% at 34 YTA average). 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 West Kilbride town centre;*

⁵ Note: this is the retail vacancy rate (4 vacant of 57 retail units) and differs from the 10% vacancy rate in the chart above which relates to all commercial town centre properties (7 of 68 properties).

- **Comparison Retail:** all other retail purchases comprising goods bought at infrequent intervals where consumers will compare and contrast products and prices – *21 comparison retailers were identified in West Kilbride 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. – *11 retail service operators were identified in West Kilbride town centre.*



The majority of traders within West Kilbride town centre are independent (90%) – this is above the 74.5% average for the other North Ayrshire towns, and the 70.4% average for 34 YTAs; similar to Eaglesham (87%), Moffat (82%) and Neilston (92%).



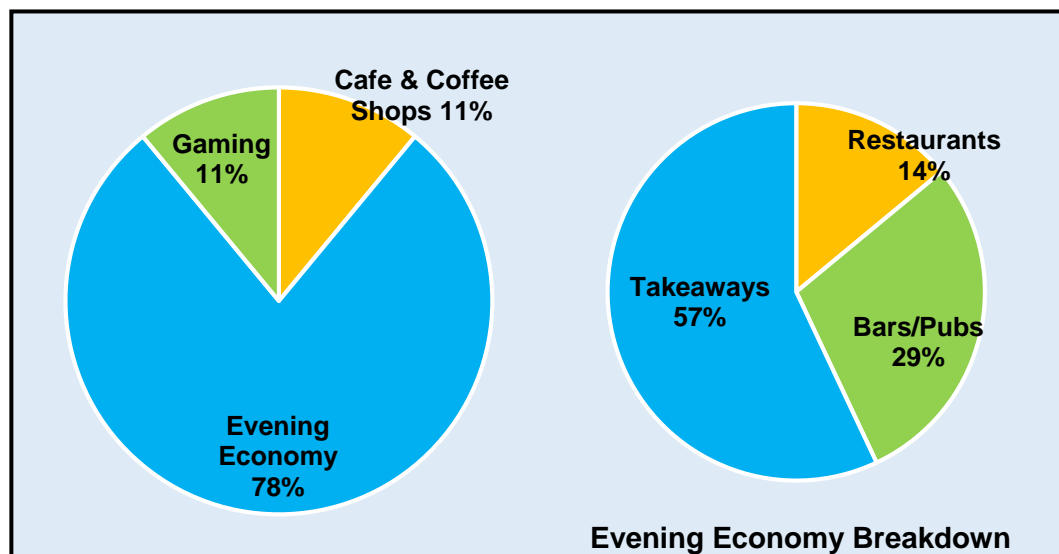
4. Attractive Town Centre

4.1 Craft Town Scotland West Kilbride

West Kilbride Community Initiative Ltd (WKCIL), was set up in 1998, with the aim of regenerating the town centre area of West Kilbride and creating a lively, dynamic and financially stable community. One project of the WKCIL was to establish 'Craft Town Scotland' to promote crafts at grass-roots level and embed makers and artists into the community.

Craft Town Scotland supports and promotes the work of makers across all disciplines, and has created a focus on craft and design through the provision of affordable studio accommodation for professional makers. Studios are open to the public, which creates retail spend and encourages visitors to the settlement. These independent craft shops and studios have therefore helped to transform the vibrancy of a town centre area that previously had very high levels of vacant shop units.

4.2 Leisure Mix



The mix of leisure businesses in West Kilbride town centre sees evening economy dominate, accounting for 78% of all leisure business activity. With a town population of just over 4,500 people West Kilbride has a very high proportion of evening economy business activity at 643 residents per outlet (34 YTA average of 1,088) but only slightly lower than the NAC average of 741.

The evening economy in the town centre is comprised of four hot food takeaways, one restaurant, and two bars. The two bars in the town centre are the Village Tavern and Kings Arms, both of which are on Main Street. The restaurant is the Rare Flour on Ritchie Street, and some of the takeaways in the town centre include the India Cottage on Main Street and the Regent Chinese Takeaway on Ritchie Street.



The proportion of hot food outlets in West Kilbride is also very high at 1,129 residents per outlet – this compares with NAC average of 1,655, and a 32 YTA average of 2,892.

4.3 Leisure Facilities

West Kilbride Library is also located within the town centre area, on Halfway Street. The library is open every day apart from Wednesdays and Sundays, typically from 10am-1pm and 2pm-5pm during the week and from 10am-12:30pm on Saturdays.



Another leisure facility located within the town centre area is The Barony Centre out of which the West Kilbride Craft Town Scotland initiative operates. The centre is an event, exhibition and education venue, which opened in 2012 and has an exhibition area, activities centre, gallery shop, and

café. The centre is open seven days a week, Monday to Saturday 10am-5pm, and Sunday from 12noon-5pm and draws visitors to the town.

Just outside of the town centre area is West Kilbride Bowling Club, located on Weston Terrace, and West Kilbride Golf Club which is located less than a mile from the town centre area. The golf club which opened in 1893, has facilities which include: an 18-hole golf course, practice areas, two putting greens, a chipping green, a long hitting area as well as lounge area and restaurant.

Another leisure facility within the settlement is the West Kilbride Community Centre, located just outside of the town centre area on Corse Street. The centre is maintained and owned by North Ayrshire Council and operated by a volunteer group from West Kilbride Community Association. There are a number of groups and clubs which take place in the centre throughout the week, some of which include: line dancing, Pilates, art classes, foreign language lessons, boxing, and nursery/ mother and toddler classes. Some facilities within the centre are available for private hire, and the centre is open Monday to Friday 7am-10pm and Saturday and Sunday 9am-12:30pm.

4.4 Visitor Attractions

One visitor attraction within the settlement is the Ayrshire Coastal Path which runs a total of 134km from Glenapp in the South to Skemorie in the North. The path follows along the coast and meets at Seamill, with it then running adjacent to the golf course and beach area, continuing towards Portencross. The stretch of the path from Portencross to Largs is 11.5km in length and takes around 3.5 hours to walk, with walkers being able to enjoy views of Arran and Cumbrae along the route.

The West Kilbride Museum is another visitor attraction, which is located within the town centre area. The museum portrays what life within settlement has been like for residents over the past 400 years. There are exhibitions and displays on a number of themes and topics including: farming, weaving, and fishing. The museum is managed by volunteers, has no entry fee and is open Tuesdays, Thursdays and Sundays from 10:30am-12:30pm and 2pm-4pm.

Another attraction in West Kilbride which is of interest to visitors is Kirktonhall Glenn, an area of woodland which leads from West Kilbride to Seamill. Within the Glenn there is the Hunterston Brooch Garden which commemorates the finding of the 1200 year old Celtic brooch, and the Marsh Garden which was designed and created by locals with the help of BBC Scotland's Beechgrove Garden.

4.5 West Kilbride Civic Society

The West Kilbride Civic Society (WKCS) was established in 1971 to provide a united forum for the residents of West Kilbride, Seamill and Portencross. The WKCS aim to inspire interest in the character, history and attractions of the local area and therefore encourage the preservation, development and improvement of features within the settlement. Although their website provides information on some of their projects completed, there is no more up to date information. It is suggested though that the WKCS is still active as they held committee elections in September of 2016.

4.6 Community Events and Activities

One community event which takes place within West Kilbride on an annual basis is the Scarecrow Festival. The events started as a way to help promote civic pride and community spirit within the settlement and celebrate their early history of being an agricultural community. The event sees many residents and business owners make and display their scarecrows around the town. Those who enter the scarecrow competition must pay a small entry fee which goes toward the running of the festival. Other attractions of the festival are held in the Glen park, where in previous years there has been a number of attractions on offer including: live music, a licensed bar, face painting stalls, a bouncy castle and trampolines.

There are also a number of events held throughout the year at The Barony Centre some of which include a Christmas Craft Fair, various other craft fairs, and a Yuletide late night shopping event.

4.7 West Kilbride Community Council

West Kilbride Community Council meets in the Village Hall on the 2nd Monday of each month at 7.00pm. Members consist of seven community councillors and four office bearers. Meetings are open to the public and involve discussions about issues and topics regarding the local area, however, no recent minutes have been recorded, and so it is unclear whether the council have disbanded.

4.8 Attractiveness Review

The YTA includes an independent review of place and quality impressions, with West Kilbride scoring slightly above average in comparison with other towns.

Individual unit fronts and shop window displays were graded out of ten during the on-street audit, with a town centre average score of 6.9 for the quality of window display and 7.0 for condition of unit fronts. While higher than the North Ayrshire average (6.8 for windows and 6.7 for buildings), these scores are similar to the YTA average (30 towns = 7.1 windows and 7.0 buildings).

At the time of the audit it was noted that the streets were relatively clear with not much litter present but pavements, which are typically narrow, would benefit from some repair and maintenance at key points. There also appears to be plenty of street lighting spread throughout the town, but relatively few bins.



4.9 West Kilbride Conservation Area

North Ayrshire Council designated a conservation area within West Kilbride in 2006, following an appraisal of the settlement. The conservation area includes the town centre area of the settlement, running along Main Street and Ritchie Street. The aim of creating a conservation area within West Kilbride was to encourage improvements to all aspects of the street frontages, such as shop fronts, windows, roofs and building decorations. The completion of such works throughout this conservation area has helped to improve the overall attractiveness of the town centre, and ongoing works will only continue to do this.

5. YTA Summary and Key Points

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

5.1 Accessible Town Centre

- West Kilbride is well connected with transport links and a range of services. Public transport links are good with regular train services taking about 50 minutes into Glasgow;
- parking in West Kilbride town centre appears – at least during the time when the audit was undertaken, a midweek daytime – to be adequate with two off-street car parks, but there was some evidence of parking on double-yellow lines which, with narrow streets and pavements, could adversely affect pedestrian safety;
- West Kilbride has good 4G mobile coverage and access to superfast broadband;
- the information available for residents or visitors as to events and activities in West Kilbride on the town website does not seem to be up to date; and
- cycling infrastructure into (directional signage) and within (cycle racks) the town centre could be improved – this could help to attract cyclists from the nearby Nation Cycle Route 735 which would generate more spend and turnover for the town centre businesses.



5.2 Active Town Centre

- West Kilbride has a reasonable range of retail and services and 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;
- seven vacant units were recorded during the audit of West Kilbride town centre, of which four are retail units;
- of the seven vacant units there is one main cluster – five on Main Street (#51, 57-59, 73, 87, and 126) – one on Headrigg Street (#2), and one on Glen Road (#1). 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; and

- the Scarecrow Festival is a community event held in the town which helps promote a sense of culture and brings the community together. The event is well supported each year.

5.3 Attractive Town Centre

- Craft Town Scotland operates from West Kilbride, and is a project which has helped promote the settlement as one which supports and promotes craft and design at levels. The provision of affordable studio accommodation for professional makers within the town centre that are open to the public has helped to transform the town centre area, increasing both retail spend and visitor interest in the settlement;
- West Kilbride has retained a good village feel due to the majority of retail units being small and independent; and
- the scores West Kilbride received for the quality of the building fronts was similar to the average of all YTA audited towns, this suggests that town centre retail units are generally in good condition but there are a number of key properties that would benefit from improvement.

