

South Ayrshire Council

**Report by Director of Communities and Transformation
to Service and Partnerships Performance Panel
of 22 April 2025**

Subject: Update on Business Relief Programme Approved in 2024

1. Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the Business Relief Programme approved by the Cabinet on 12 March 2024.

2. Recommendation

2.1 It is recommended that the Panel:

2.1.1 reviews progress and notes achievements in relation to the implementation of the programmes that were approved by Cabinet on 12 March 2024; and

2.1.2 endorses the approaches and activities set out within the report.

3. Background

- 3.1 On 28 November 2023, the Cabinet agreed to utilise £750,000 of former Covid 19 discretionary funds originally received to support businesses affected by Covid 19 and any subsequent economic uncertainty, to fund various activities and a business relief programme to deliver support to Ayr town centre following the fire at the former Station Hotel in September 2023.

- 3.2 On 12 March 2024, the Cabinet approved the allocation of the remaining balance of £417,000 business relief programme funding to be used to support a range of town centre projects.

- 3.3 Approval was given to support the following Ayr town centre projects:

- Gateway to Ayr Town Centre Shopfront Improvement Programme £222,000;
- Burns Statue Square – Merlin Cinema £70,000;
- Newmarket Street Regeneration/ Business Support £90,000; and
- Cutty Sark/ Grain Exchange £35,000.

- 3.4 The projects are aligned with the core town centre regeneration objectives within the Ayr Town Centre Framework, which was also approved on 12th March 2024.

***Gateway to Ayr Town Centre Shopfront Improvement Programme (GATCSIP)
£222,000***

- 3.5 The Gateway to Ayr Town Centre Shopfront Improvement Programme offers grants for eligible businesses, property owners, and tenants, with priority given to projects that enhance both the shopfront and surrounding streetscape. Eligible businesses must meet specific criteria and comply with any Conservation Area requirements.
- 3.6 Following approval of this programme a shopfront design guide was created in collaboration with SAC Planning, together with applicant criteria, an approvals process and an Officer recruited to develop and progress this initiative.
- 3.7 The GATCSIP was opened on 3rd February 2025. Applications for grant support from £1,000 to £12,000 are invited from eligible business property owners and tenants within the 'Gateways' to Ayr Town Centre (See [Appendix 1](#) for defined areas). The grant will cover 100% of the cost of improvements, depending on the size and scale of the work and the benefits of making the improvements. Applications cannot be made retroactively for works already undertaken.
- 3.8 Full-scale shopfront renovations and creative signage – especially hand-painted – are encouraged, as these improvements can greatly enhance the area's character, civic pride, and community wellbeing. A Shopfront Design Guide (see [Appendix 2](#)) has been developed in coordination with Planning to provide guidance and will be used as an assessment tool for applications. There is no guarantee that all applicants will be successful in securing funding, but the aim is that funding will support those businesses looking to invest in the town centre by making it a more attractive place.
- 3.9 An information session, with eligible businesses invited, was held at the Cutty-Sark on 19 March. A significant number of businesses attended the session, where business and property owners were given the opportunity ask questions and get more information about the grant and processes involved.

Burns Statue Square – Merlin Cinema - £70,000

- 3.10 £70,000 was provided to Merlin Cinemas Limited as a contribution towards the cost of external refurbishment of the former Odeon cinema facility. Work was successfully completed in July 2024. The Cinema has since gone on to trade successfully, with the owners reporting better than forecasted performance. The project has served to enhance the visual appearance of the main gateway to Ayr.

Newmarket Street Regeneration/ Business Support - £90,000

- 3.11 As identified in the Ayr Town Centre Framework Newmarket Street Regeneration/Business Support is being developed in the form of 'Town Centre Dressing' proposals. Proposals have been presented to Newmarket Street Traders to identify and prioritise improvements.
- 3.12 Feedback and priority projects from Newmarket Street Traders, a Consortium Cooperative with a regeneration focus, were identified in 2024, including a deep clean of the street, decorative street lighting, street furniture, signage, etc.

- 3.13 The development of decorative lighting design work is in progress in collaboration with Ayrshire Roads Alliance.
- 3.14 A deep clean of the surface materials/paving, including weed removal, is being advanced through Thriving Communities and Neighbourhood Services.
- 3.15 Projects for Newmarket Street are expected to be implemented by Summer 2025, subject to any statutory processes that may be required.

Cutty Sark/ Grain Exchange – £35,000

- 3.16 The approved funding supported the delivery of several events in Cutty Sark and Grain Exchange, throughout 2024-25.
- 3.17 Events and activity generated a 100% increase in footfall through the Cutty Sark seeing an increase from 15,000 to 30,000 visits.
- 3.18 The funding allowed the space to deliver a summer holiday programme of engagement activities, including collaboration with local partners to deliver crafts, film workshops, the Glasgow Science Museum on Tour, circus workshops and outdoor adventure. This was duplicated in the Grain Exchange during the October holidays with Halloween Crafts and activities.

4. Proposals

- 4.1 It is proposed that updates are provided to Members on progress made against planned activity in regard to the GATCSIP and Newmarket Street Regeneration/ Business Support projects by Responsible Officers on a bi-annual basis now reporting from the Housing, Operations and Development Directorate.

5. Legal and Procurement Implications

- 5.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.
- 5.2 There are no procurement implications arising from this report.

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1 In regard to the GATCSIP, £2,950 has been spent to develop the Shopfront Design Guide and to hold the information session with local businesses. £219,050 remains available to be distributed through the grant programme.
- 6.2 In regard to Newmarket Street, £5,400 has been spent to develop concept designs and £84,600 remains available to implement priority projects.

7. Human Resources Implications

- 7.1 Not applicable.

8. Risk

Risk Implications of Adopting the Recommendations

- 8.1.1 There are no risks associated with adopting the recommendations.

8.2 ***Risk Implications of Rejecting the Recommendations***

- 8.2.1 Rejecting the recommendations will have a negative impact on the town centre regeneration programme related to the Ayr Town Centre Framework.

9. **Integrated Impact Assessment (incorporating Equalities)**

- 9.1 The proposals in this report allow scrutiny of performance. The report does not involve proposals for policies, strategies, procedures, processes, financial decisions, and activities (including service delivery), both new and at review, that affect the Council's communities and employees, therefore an equality impact assessment is not required.

10. **Sustainable Development Implications**

- 10.1 ***Considering Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)*** - This report does not propose or seek approval for a plan, policy, programme or strategy or document otherwise described which could be considered to constitute a plan, programme, policy or strategy.

11. **Options Appraisal**

- 11.1 An options appraisal has not been carried out in relation to the subject matter of this report.

12. **Link to Council Plan**

- 12.1 The matters referred to in this report contribute to Priorities 2 and 3 of the Council Plan: Live, Work, Learn/ Work and economy (Outcome 2); and Civic and Community Pride/ Community Engagement (Outcome 2).

13. **Link to Shaping Our Future Council** Yes ☐ No ☒

- 13.1 Not applicable re benefits.

14. **Results of Consultation**

- 14.1 There has been no public consultation on the contents of this report.
- 14.2 Consultation has taken place with Councillor Bob Pollock, Portfolio Holder for Economy Development, and the contents of this report reflect any feedback provided.
- 14.3 Consultation has taken place with Local Members and the contents of this report reflect any feedback provided.

Background Papers **Report to Cabinet of 28 November 2023 – [Business Relief Programme](#)**

Report to Cabinet of 12 March 2024 - [Business Relief Programme – 2024 Funding Proposals](#)

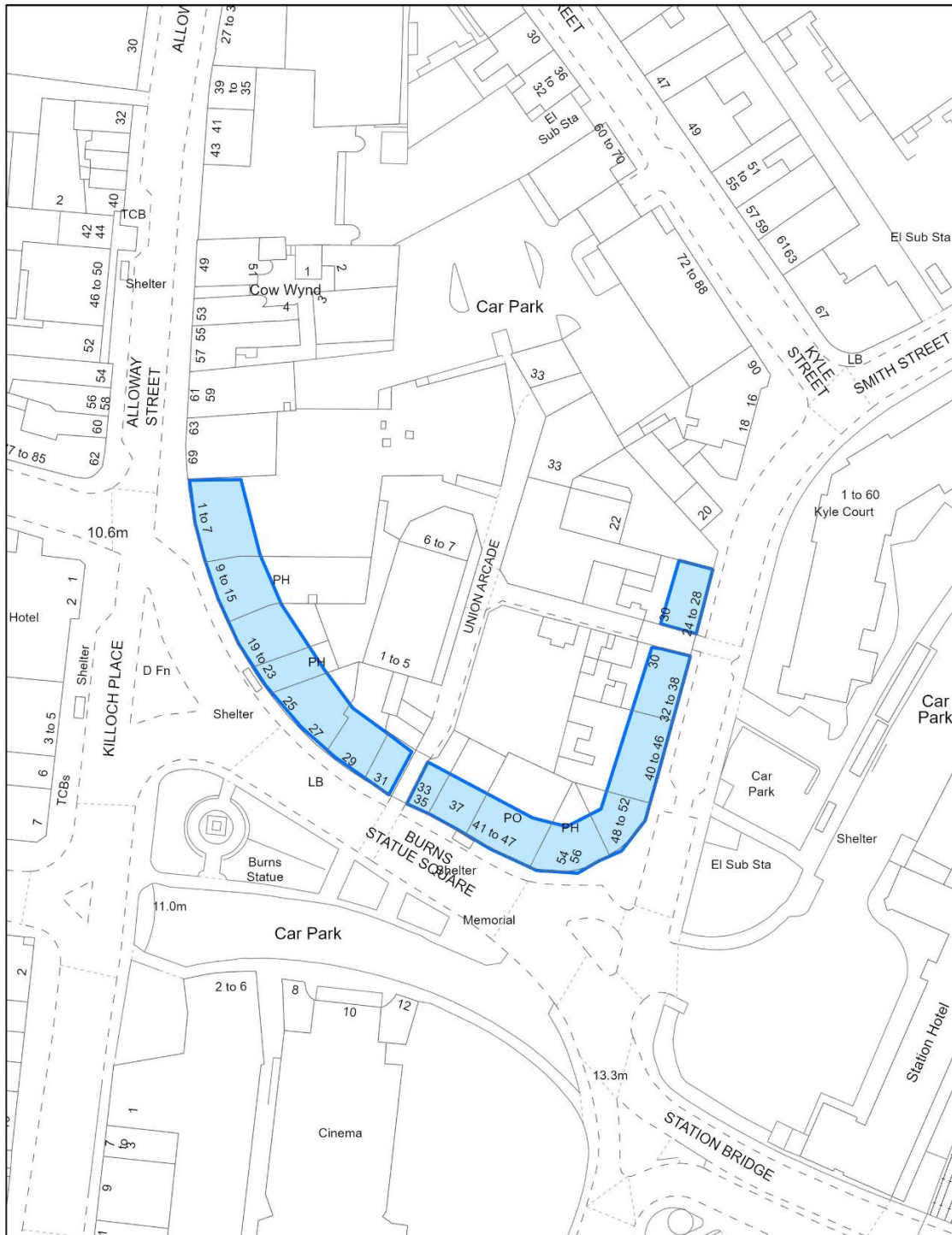
Report to Cabinet of 12 March 2024 – [Ayr Town Centre Framework](#)

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Date: 8 April 2025

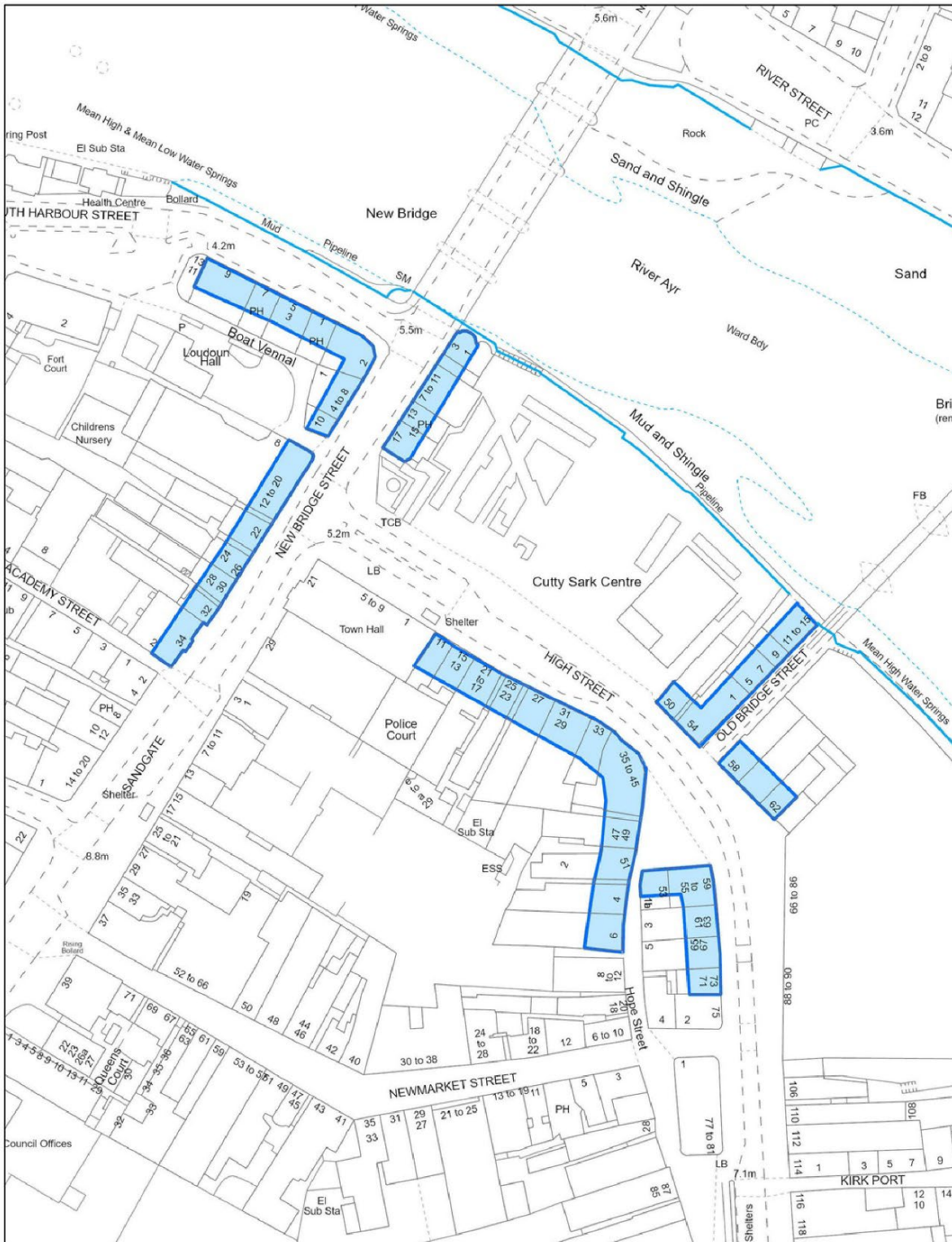
Appendix 1 – Gateway to Ayr Town Centre Shopfront Improvement Programme



Shopfront Improvement Programme in Ayr

Scale 1:1,000





Shopfront Improvement Programme in Ayr

Scale 1:1,250



Appendix 2: Ayr Town Centre Shopfront Design Guide

The design guide can be found here: [Ayr shop front design guide final-31012025.pdf](#)

Extract from the design guide:

Good examples of this approach can be seen at The Grain Exchange at Nos. 77-81 High Street, and No. 71 Newmarket Street, where decorative detail is sparing, but proportions, colour and use of traditional materials is tastefully used. While there are few properly Art Deco frontages surviving in Ayr, these normally make use of granite and Vitrolite, and often have zig-zag decoration and splashes of bright colour.

THE COMPONENT PARTS OF A SHOPFRONT

Since shops on main shopping thoroughfares normally occupy the ground floors of taller buildings (quite often, tenements), there is usually a strong horizontal subdivision between the retail unit and the floors up above. This is typically expressed in the form of a **fascia**, which might have some decoration above (called a **cornice**) and brackets at either end (called **console brackets**). The console brackets often

correspond to a vertical feature called a **pilaster** (effectively a column). **Fascias** are important since it is here that lettering and branding can be displayed: they are high enough to be visible from a distance. Traditional shopfront **fascias** are mostly timber, and often the **fascia** will incorporate an **awning**, or sunblind, to protect the goods on display from sunlight and shoppers outside from inclement weather.

There will be an entrance door, sometimes with a **fanlight** (often designed to be openable for ventilation). These are normally recessed but can be flush, such as designed during the Georgian era. Where set back from the frontage, there are sometimes attractive lobbies that are decorative. The windows next to an entrance door provide display areas: following the invention of plate glass in the 1830s, these tended to become larger and with fewer subdivisions, allowing for a greater opportunity for promotion of goods and services (not to mention more daylight

