

Physical Development Support Progress Report

Economic Development Committee

8 March 2011

1 Purpose of report

- 1.1 To note the progress of the **Physical Development Support (PDS)** Team against the objectives set out within the Economic Development Unit (EDU) Plan since the last committee cycle. The team leads on supporting £500m in new developer investment over three years from 1 April 2009.

2 Summary

- 2.1 In the last cycle the PDS team supported a further £12.7m in new investment into the city.
- 2.2 The property market continues to improve, particularly in the city centre. There have also been a number of property transactions in Craigmillar.
- 2.3 A town centre strategy has been completed which seeks to build on the results of the recent survey. Three new town centre co-ordinators are to be recruited to drive forward town centre action plans.
- 2.4 The newly appointed Zone Managers have begun work. They are tasked with producing business plans for their zones by 30 June.

3 Main report

Market and Management Information

- 3.1 The PDS team has supported £12.7m of new investment into the city between November 2010 and January 2011. This takes total investment supported, to £378.2m or £73.2m above target. Additional target information is included in the Key Performance Indicators Progress Report to be considered separately.
- 3.2 The retail market remains reasonably strong with the food and restaurant sector particularly active. Newcomers include Strada which is looking to open up on Castle Street, in a former bank building; as is Nandos at Chambers Street. Prezzo is looking at premises in the Old Town.

- 3.3 Office take up in the city centre and west Edinburgh has also exceeded expectation with the following key deals announced: Baillie Gifford has taken 25,000 sq ft at the Cube; Virgin Money is under offer on 15,000 sq ft in the city centre and Tesco Bank has purchased 110,000 sq ft at South Gyle. Prime office yields have stabilised over the course of the year.
- 3.4 There is strong interest in the hotel sector. The PDS team has been in discussion with Citizen M hotels who also recently located in Glasgow. Base 2 Stay is also investigating an Edinburgh presence. Meanwhile, Grosvenor is refurbishing its hotel at Haymarket. The closing date for the Scotsman building has also been set and the majority of the interest is from developers working in partnership with serviced apartment operators.

The Priority Investment Zones

City Centre

- 3.5 The PDS team has assisted colleagues in Culture and Sport with the plans to transform the Assembly Rooms into an events hub. This received Council approval in December 2010. The plans will see the ground floor returned to its original use but with retail units and a restaurant included.
- 3.6 The construction of the £85m expansion of the EICC is continues. The development represents the last, remaining segment of Edinburgh's Exchange Masterplan. It will be ready for occupation by 2013. The extension will feature a 20,000 sq ft multi purpose hall and will also deliver 186,000 sq ft of Grade A office space. The Scottish Power site which is adjacent, at Dewar Place, also has the potential to unlock a previously blighted site, creating a commercial mix of uses. The proposed development will reconnect the area with adjoining parts of the city.
- 3.7 The Tron Kirk, a prominent landmark building on the Royal Mile, has lain vacant for many years. The PDS team together with colleagues from Planning and Corporate Property is working with the Edinburgh World Heritage Trust to bring forward appropriate, imaginative and financially viable proposals which would bring this building back into use.

South Edinburgh

- 3.8 In Craigmillar, PARC's financial position continues to improve with a number of recent land sales. These developments are expected to create a more balanced mixed tenure neighbourhood. In a new role for the company, PARC is increasingly acting as a facilitator for private sector developers rather than directly delivering sites itself. There are ongoing discussions with Scottish Government officials who recognise the effectiveness of this approach in the current environment.
- 3.9 An agreement has been reached with Cruden Homes to sell the Wauchope 2B site. This will bring a substantial receipt into PARC and remove the development risk from the company. Construction of 93 houses on this site is due to commence in April and will be built in five phases in line with the planning consent.

- 3.10 Discussions have now been completed with New City Vision which has resulted in proposals that would see further private sector residential development of both the former Niddrie Mill Primary School and Cairntows Park site. This is in tandem with efforts to unlock the future development of the Taylor family site. These are all prominent sites on Niddrie Mains Road and the agreement reached should also allow for the retention of the former school building. By disposing of these sites, PARC will receive a considerable receipt, remove the development risk from the company and facilitate private sector development activity.
- 3.11 At the BioQuarter, the Committee is reminded that there is currently potential for more than 460,000 sq ft of academic research space and 850,000 sq ft of commercial research-based space located adjacent to the modern 900-bed Edinburgh Royal Infirmary teaching hospital. Over the next five years, the existing research community of 1,200 scientists at the quarter will be joined by the Scottish Centre for Regenerative Medicine (2011), the Edinburgh Children's Hospital (2015) and the Scottish Mind and Body (Neurology) centre (2016). The completion of an additional 110,000 sq ft office and laboratory building in late 2011, will create one of the world's largest and highest quality concentrations of medical research and scientific talent.
- 3.12 Following completion of the Potterrow development for the world leading School of Informatics, the University of Edinburgh is progressing with a £200m development programme in the George Square area. In addition, the University will be looking to advance the recently endorsed master plan for its Holyrood site which will deliver 410,000 sq ft of mixed educational space.

Waterfront

- 3.13 Waterfront Edinburgh Limited (WEL) has recently agreed to look at refreshing and updating its existing planning strategy for the area.
- 3.14 Work has been underway since early January on the next phase of the Edinburgh Promenade with a planned completion date by May 2011. This phase will run between Granton and Granton Beach, with a destination point located at Granton Beach. This node will feature block paving and include seating, litter bins, cycle racks and interpretation boards. Designs for the next phase between Granton Beach and Granton Harbour are now underway. The Promenade is a 30-year key strategic project which has been led, funded and delivered by PDS in association with colleagues from Transport.
- 3.15 The PDS team is working in partnership with Scottish Natural Heritage, Edinburgh Biodiversity Partnership, Neighbourhood Community groups and Scottish Business in the Community to create a biodiversity trail to complement the Promenade development. A number of interpretation boards will be located along the coast to narrate the story of historic and current maritime uses. Capital Skills will site the boards to ensure cost efficiencies and to create work experience opportunities for the team.
- 3.16 Work continues on environmental improvements to WEL's Madelvic 7 site. The Capital Skills team has cleared the site, planted new rockeries, built seating areas, provided litter bins and improved cycle path signage.

- 3.17 PDS has commissioned Jones Lang Lasalle to carry out a fixed term piece of work to assist in the letting and marketing of the former WEL properties which now sits with COUNCIL. The intention is to maximise the value from existing assets. Any income realised will be reinvested in the development zone.
- 3.18 Finally, in Leith, Great City Attractions (GCA) continues to discuss plans to bring a giant Observation Wheel to Leith Docks. A planning application has yet to be submitted and until such time the PDS team will continue to work closely with Forth Ports (the landowner) and GCA to help bring the tourist attraction to the Waterfront.

West Edinburgh

- 3.19 Since the last committee cycle, the PDS team has continued to contribute to the West Edinburgh Development Partnership (WEDP) and is working with Scottish Enterprise and landowners to inform the implementation plan. When this is finalised it will be presented to the Scottish Government's Finance Secretary, John Swinney. The plan will unlock development for the International Business Gateway (IBG).
- 3.20 A key component is a Transport Infrastructure Study. The first draft of this has just been completed and identifies key pieces of transport infrastructure and an indicative costing. An early task for the PDS's West Zone Manager will be to work with partners to identify funding and delivery mechanisms for this infrastructure.
- 3.21 Further work has been carried out to investigate the potential for the development of a multi-use music and events venue for Edinburgh. Such a venue would bring considerable economic benefit to the city and the case for supporting it is compelling. An assessment of three potential venues has been carried out and the results of this will be reported to Policy and Strategy Committee, along with the steps required taking the proposals to the next stage. A site close to the airport offers the most advantage from an economic, planning and transportation point of view and would act as a catalyst to the development of the master plan for West Edinburgh.
- 3.22 Finally, missives are expected to be completed this month with the preferred developer for the Pentad Business Park at South Gyle.

Other Developments

Town Centre Regeneration

- 3.23 Building on the results of the town centre survey and health check indicators, which were reported at the previous committee cycle, the PDS team has now produced a strategy for Edinburgh's town centres in partnership with other COUNCIL departments, the Chamber of Commerce, Federation of Small Business, Essential Edinburgh, BIDS Scotland the Scottish Government.
- 3.24 The objective is a holistic delivery model which still accommodates the individual requirements of each centre. Individual visits to over 900 businesses

have already helped develop new and existing relationships between the Council and town centre traders.

- 3.25 Individual action plans will now be produced which will contain a small number of low cost, high impact initiatives that will revitalise the centres and strengthen the sense of community which was one of the major, consistently valued attributes of all those who participated in the surveys. As visible 'on the ground' improvements are delivered, this should further improve stakeholder relationships.
- 3.26 Through close working with the City Collaboration Group, three town centre co-ordinators will be recruited by the Chamber of Commerce to deliver improvements across the centres. This will be partly focused on the tram route. These co-ordinators will be managed by the PDS team and cover the entire city split into three sectors, East, West and City Centres.
- 3.27 Longer term, there may be additional Business Improvement Districts in Edinburgh but certainly some form of town centre management will be delivered in each of the city's nine designated town centres to ensure the co-ordination of local improvements on the ground. These activities will enable Edinburgh to be recognised as an exemplar of best practice for Whole Town Centres strategy to delivery stage.

Strategic direction and arms length companies

- 3.28 Each of four priority zones for the city will have its own Business Plan and Zone Manager to lead on delivery of these plans. Production of the zone business plans is underway with a target completion date of 30 June 2011, before reporting to Economic Development Committee. This will include an element of stakeholder consultation.
- 3.29 This initiative is linked closely with the future of the Council's arms length companies. The aspiration is to create a single united governance framework through one arms length company which will have overall control of all Council sponsored physical development activity. A study has just been completed by Deloitte and CBRE and the results of this are expected shortly.

Canal

- 3.30 The Union Canal is a unique asset in West Edinburgh and offers considerable opportunities for development, recreation and enhanced place-making. COUNCIL has been working as part of the Canal Development Group(CDG) to ensure that the development of canal moorings and canal side developments both maximise the potential of the canal and take place within an Edinburgh-wide context. A Canal Strategy is currently being developed and is out to consultation. The PDS team will work closely with British Waterways and other partners in taking this forward.

4 Financial Implications

- 4.1 The actions detailed in this report have been met from within the PDS budget for 2010/11.

5 Environmental Impact

- 5.1 The actions reported in this paper are directly drawn from the EDU Plan (2009-2012), approved by the Economic Development Committee in December 2008. The Plan commits to sustainable development and has set out a number of principles for achieving these.

6 Conclusions

- 6.1 There continues to be an active property market particularly in the city centre and across the hotel, retail and office sectors.
- 6.2 The conclusion of a number of property deals in Craigmillar with private developers reflects the continuing regeneration of the area.
- 6.3 Agreeing a Town Centres Strategy for Edinburgh supported by action plans and dedicated town centre coordinators demonstrates the commitment of a range of partners to improving the vitality of Edinburgh local centres. With the right investment all of the centres should be strengthened to sustain new and existing businesses, therefore protecting Edinburgh's unique array of local shopping High Streets and communities.

7 Recommendations

- 7.1 a) To note the progress of the PDS team against the EDU Plan since the last Committee cycle;
- b) To agree Town Centre Strategy and note the recruitment of town centre coordinators to be employed by the Chamber of Commerce;
- c) To note the timetable for the completion of Zone Investment Plans.

Dave Anderson
Director of City Development

Appendices Appendix 1: Town Centre Strategy

Contact/tel/Email Steve McGavin / 529 6237 /steve.mcgavin@edinburgh.gov.uk

Wards affected Citywide

Single Outcome
Agreement

Background
Papers

Town Centre Strategy

Building Stronger Town Centres for Edinburgh

Background

Town centres provide a broad range of services, facilities and activities. They serve as a focus for employment, the community and public transport. Attractive, well designed town centres boasting a diverse shopping choice, residential, arts and cultural uses, entertainment, amenities and good transport connections are engines for sustainable economic growth. They provide a focal point for business and social interactions.

Vibrant town centres are drivers for business and for sustainable local communities. They create and retain jobs, attract new investment and generate income. They also create a feeling of civic pride, help to define the area and attract people from near and far.

They are also very important to a city's tourism offer, by contributing to the city's diversity of destinations to visit.

In August 2009 Edinburgh Council's Economic Development Committee approved the "Building Stronger Town Centres for Edinburgh" report which recommended the production of a Town Centre Strategy to provide direction, guidance and practical solutions to build upon and complement the work of the existing Urban Centres Programme and to guide future town centre investment, linked to the emerging public realm strategy.

The Scottish Government supports town centres through Business Improvement Districts (BIDs), a small business bonus scheme and through planning policy. Scottish Planning Policy (April 2009) – Town Centres and Retailing provides the key policy guidance and advises that the Scottish Government is committed to land use policies which secure vital and viable town centres. This commitment was demonstrated by the Town Centre Regeneration Fund (TCRF), a £60m capital fund created to regenerate and grow town centres from April 2009 to March 2010. Crucially, the Government website on town centres states that 'issues of towns and town centres are at the heart for local authorities to lead on with local private and public sector partners.'

Edinburgh submitted a joint TCRF application with partners and received two awards. Craigmillar received £2 million for the regeneration of the White House at the centre of the PARC regeneration project and to contribute towards the development of the surrounding streetscape. Portobello received £582,015 to improve pavements, crossing points and kerbs along Portobello High Street from Bridge Street to Pittville Street and to improve connectivity to the Promenade. The grant was also used for improvements to street furniture, lighting and signposting with the day to day works managed by Services for Communities' (SfC) regeneration team.

The TCRF application process highlighted that Edinburgh's approach to improving its town centres was in some cases small scale, incremental and uncoordinated. The creation of a Town Centre Strategy would not only build on the successes of SfC's urban centres programme but also ensure that the City is prepared and equipped to capitalise on future funding opportunities.

Edinburgh's Town Centres

Edinburgh's nine designated town centres employ over 25,000 people in the immediate area and circa 198,000 people live within 800 metres of one or more of these centres. The centres are the heart of their local community, even as changing economic circumstances and cultural practices alter that remit. The Council recognises that investment in and some form of town centre management is required in Edinburgh's high streets to secure future thriving communities. It is recognised that good quality centres, like high quality retailers and businesses, are constantly adapting and responding to customers' needs and preferences.

Accordingly, Edinburgh's Local Plan identifies nine town centres. These are:

- Corstorphine
- Gorgie/Dalry
- Leith Central
- Leith Walk
- Morningside/Bruntsfield
- Nicolson Street/Clerk Street
- Portobello
- Stockbridge
- Tollcross

The Edinburgh City Local Plan describes the nine town centres as follows:

'consisting mainly of traditional units, under tenement flats and fronting busy roads. They tend to be set within high density residential areas and are well served by bus services. They do however tend to suffer from a poor pedestrian environment and a lack of parking. Development opportunities are seldom available'.

Each centre has distinct characteristics, history and provides a focus for residents, shoppers and public transport.

Edinburgh has more than 80 other local centres and depending on budgetary and resource constraints, the Council will continue to work with centres such as the West End, Grassmarket and South Queensferry as they all contribute to Edinburgh's sense of identity and vibrancy. It is worth noting that after Brighton, Edinburgh is the least 'cloned' 'principal centre' or medium-sized city in CACI's categorisation of British Shopping centres with its range and mix of independent and speciality retailers.

Purpose of a Town Centre Strategy for Edinburgh

The negative impact on communities and businesses by the general decline in town centres has been recognised by the Scottish Government, Scottish Centre for Regeneration, Scottish Planning Policy, Edinburgh City Local Plan, Community Plans and the Urban Centres Programme.

There are several factors which have contributed to the decline of some town centres. These include: the current economic climate; increased competition from out of town retail parks and large supermarkets; a change in purchasing patterns such as the increase in e-tailing or on-line shopping. Price comparison service U-switch forecasts that by 2020 40% of UK retail sales will be made online – up from 2% in 2002. (Scotland does not analyse this data but Scottish Government projects an annual 12% growth in on-line shopping).

To remain competitive, attractive and sustainable, town centres need to be responsive to local needs and to strike the correct balance between choice and sustainability. The requirements and improvements will appear different from place to place because of the diversity of Edinburgh's town centres, which is in itself a major strength and attraction.

Although there is no 'one size fits all' model capable of revitalising neighbourhoods, it is clear that a positive direction, management, local solutions and partnership working between public and private sector bodies are all essential elements. This supports the requirement for a strategy document with individual action plans. In order to accommodate the unique identities and needs of the nine town centres, the Council recognised the importance of evidence based data to inform the strategy.

The Council wished to take a lead role in helping to shape the direction, investment and future management of Edinburgh's town centres and established a Steering Group with key city stakeholders (Chamber of Commerce, Federation of Small Businesses, Edinburgh Trams, Essential Edinburgh, Scottish Government BIDs) to ensure a co-ordinated approach is adapted to plan and deliver public realm improvements, promotion, cleansing and other services. This partnership approach will achieve economies of scale, negate duplication and improve standards and the quality of offering in all town centres.

Town Centre Surveys

To ensure that the Council is continuing to deliver what communities require, the largest survey of town centres in the UK was organised by the Physical Development team in Economic Development, working in partnership with SfC's Neighbourhood Partnerships and external partners.

The surveys were conducted in July 2010, and gathered key statistics from three sources, namely: businesses with high street frontages in the centres;

on street surveys and an online survey. A high response level of 2,066 returns provided a wealth of evidence-based data of: likes, dislikes, suggestions for improvements and an audit of vacancy rates to inform the strategy and action plans.

The surveys have delivered powerful data from: 839 shops and businesses, i.e. over 50%; 697 footfall measured on Tuesday and Saturday afternoons and 530 electronic responses.

The top three “likes” across all nine town centres are:

- 28% rate the Shops and Businesses (i.e. variety of independent stores)
- 21.5% for General Area (sense of community & atmosphere)
- 10.6% for General Location (proximity to The Meadows, the beach, Water of Leith etc.)

The top three “dislikes” are:

- 24.9% for Private Transport (lack of parking, too much traffic)
- 24.3% for Environment and Public Realm (litter, waste and dog fouling)
- 17.8% for Shops and Businesses (number of vacant units, too many charity shops, limited variety)

The top three suggested improvements are:

- 36.5% for Environment and Public Realm
- 20.8% for Private Transport related matters
- 13.8% for Shops and Businesses

A full summary of the Town Centre Surveys is available from Caryn Elder, Economic Development Assistant on 0131 529 6166 caryn.elder@edinburgh.gov.uk or Lindsey Sibbald, Project Manager 529 4258 lindsey.sibbald@edinburgh.gov.uk

Healthchecks

To test out some of the survey findings, the Town Centres Steering Group agreed a number of indicators to conduct a health check of each centre. The indicators were:

- Vacancy Rates (based on number of empty units)
- Range of Uses
- Market Analysis
- Public Transport Accessibility
- Population Catchment (walking)
- Car Park Provision

These key indicators contribute to a successful town centre and whilst each individual centre has its unique identity and sense of place with varying rankings of the indicators, these are all essential, common elements to the

overall health of all centres. The findings from the healthchecks will be used to shape local Action Plans.

Vacancy Rates

As at July 2010 only two centres, Leith Central (18.6%) and Leith Walk (15%) had rates above the Scottish average of 14%. However, even participants from Bruntsfield/Morningside with the lowest vacancy rate of 5.6% regarded vacant units as an important indicator of perceived decline. This finding will encourage Action Plans to develop projects to animate empty shop windows with art work, news of community or promotional activities, as has been successfully implemented in Leith Walk.

Range of Uses

The range of uses was audited in all of the town centres and the importance of diversity substantiated the survey findings. There are however local anomalies, which may shape local Action Plans. One such anomaly is that whereas the survey in most centres stated that too many charity shops indicate a decline in an area, in Stockbridge survey participants view the higher than average number of charity shops as a positive indicator. This characteristic may encourage the Action Plan to stage promotions and or events to single the centre out as a 'specialist' charity shopping destination.

Market Analysis

Jones Lang LaSalle provided an overview of the market within each centre, highlighting retail mix, demand and rental trends. In Bruntsfield/Morningside and Stockbridge there is an upward trend in rental, suggesting a healthy centre. Corstorphine has a diverse range of national retailers and independent operators, where demand remains healthy and rent levels are stable, whereas Tollcross has poor lower market tenant mix, a high number of vacancies and rents face a downward pressure.

Public Transport/Accessibility/Catchment

There are over 2,000 parking spaces available in the nine town centres. Almost 25% of those surveyed listed their top "dislike" as the lack of parking provision. In Bruntsfield/Morningside 50% listed parking as a major problem, when this centre has the highest number of spaces (636 in total - 340 public bays, 260 Shared Use/Greenway and 36 Loading Bays). In the past this centre has published leaflets which detail car parking provision to encourage usage levels. This initiative could be refreshed and promoted as an early action to raise awareness of and to improve uptake of existing parking in Bruntsfield/Morningside. Likewise it could be extended to other centres to advise of parking provision and restrictions.

Walk-in distances based on simple buffer zones around each town centre also provide a valuable indicator to ascertain local catchment 'reach' and shopping patterns. Awareness of these indicators will inform the Action Plans to enable retailers to plan day to day promotional activity, specialist marketing drives, production of 'where to park' and/or public transport information leaflets etc.

Additional Health Check Survey

The Council's Planning Information team is currently undertaking a city-wide shop occupancy survey. This will yield long-term trend information on all the town centres, in terms of mix of uses, amount of floorspace, vacancies, charity shops etc., as well as the wider picture on town centre comparisons with out-of-centre retailing. The team is currently analysing the data and the findings will be available by April and the results could help to shape the detailed Action Plans.

Actions

A partnership approach to remediate further decline and to strengthen town centres is required by Steering Group members to ensure a co-ordinated approach which will maximise the impact of limited resources.

The Physical Development Support (PDS) team has reported on the survey findings to the Neighbourhood Partnership Managers, the full Steering Group and to the Economic Development Committee (14 December 2010).

Working with the Neighbourhood Partnerships, individual Action Plans will be devised for each town centre. PDS has allocated a budget of £45k for all nine town centres to pump prime the Action Plan activities. This initial funding will be used to lever in complementary funding from project partners. The aim is to concentrate initially on a small number of deliverable, high impact, low cost improvements. These might include:

Promotional activities:

- branding for neighbourhoods such as banners, bunting, roundels on railings and directly on pavements (already delivered in Leith and West End)
- small window roundels for businesses (already piloted in the West End Village)
- uniformity of paintwork (like Portobello street furniture)
- parking maps showing availability (as produced for Morningside)
- flyers showing the range of shops available in the area (as produced for the West End and Grassmarket)

Events:

- seasonal campaigns for example: Christmas, Easter etc.
- sectoral for example "Dine Arouds"; Farmers, Continental and Fair Trade markets; fashion shows
- extension of opening hours (similar to Newcastle's "Alive after Five" which has been introduced all year round with the shops open until 8pm)

- collaboration with Edinburgh's suite of Festivals to consider alternative uses/income generation for shops, restaurants, halls etc as festival venues throughout the year (pilot launched with Leith January 2011)

Property related activities:

- an audit of Council owned properties within each town centre and appropriate action to improve appearance
- libraries – consider roll out of the Leith Business Hub model (provision of free Business Gateway workshops for start-ups and existing businesses) and further development of “Libraries mean Business” initiatives

Animation of empty units:

- artworks to showcase new and established Scottish artists (as demonstrated in Queensferry Street and on Leith Walk)
- authorised advertising project (AAP). The AAP project is run at zero cost to the Council (or may incorporate income generation from advertising) and includes a free clean down and graffiti removal service (as trialled and tested on Leith Walk)
- pop up shops for established brands or new products to be market tested.

Animation of Gap Sites:

- to hoardings - authorised advertising project, murals/community projects

Improved Environment and Public Realm

- AAP also provides initial deep clean of site with fly posting, litter and graffiti removal and thereafter ongoing cleaning of a 5 metre zone around each site. This is at zero cost to the Council
- renewing old or provision of new benches and seating / picnic areas
- cycle racks
- creation of "Trails" for example Bio-diversity, charity or other similarly themed shops

Artworks:

- temporary (pop up) & permanent in collaboration with the community (as delivered by Big Things on the Beach in Portobello)

Business Improvement Districts (BIDs)

- Continued support from Economic Development in the formation and development of local BIDs (West End, Grassmarket and South Queensferry)

Outputs

Working in partnership with the Neighbourhood Partnerships and the Steering Group of external stakeholders, the Physical Development Support team will devise nine Action Plans, one to meet the individual requirements of each town centre with a suite of deliverable actions and projects, within the context of the Town Centre Strategy.

These Action Plans will complement the activities of the recently created City Collaboration Group, a partnership consisting of Economic Development, Edinburgh Trams, Essential Edinburgh, Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce and Edinburgh Marketing. This group will fund three town centre co-ordinators to assist in the delivery of the town centre Action Plans, which will include ongoing assessment of the different town centre's appetite for the development of additional Edinburgh BIDs.

Outcomes

This project will return numerous benefits for Edinburgh's nine town centres. Individual visits to over 900 businesses have already created and improved new and existing relationships between the Council and town centre traders. As visible 'on the ground' improvements are delivered, this should further improve stakeholder relationships, in addition to the obvious boost to vitality and vibrancy.

The Council recognises the importance of ongoing partnership working to minimise duplication of effort and resources and strengthen a co-ordinated approach to an holistic delivery model which still accommodates each town centre's individual requirements.

Low cost, high impact initiatives will revitalise the centres and strengthen the sense of community which was one of the major, consistently valued attributes of all those who participated in the surveys.

Interventions at a local level will also reduce vacancy rates as already demonstrated by Leith. In July when the survey was conducted, the Leith Walk vacancy rate stood at 15% and Leith Central 18.6% (The only two of Edinburgh's centres who recorded vacancy rates above the Scottish average of 14%). In November the vacancy rate for Leith Walk stands at 8.4%. This reduction in vacant units can be partly attributed to the projects delivered by the Leith Development Group. These projects include: the (over-subscribed) programme of business workshops delivered in the Leith Business Hub, animation of empty units with artwork and animation of gap site hoardings, erection of street banners, Christmas trees, environmental clean up (graffiti and fly posting removal) and ongoing projects to drive footfall and attract new investors into the area.

Longer term there may be additional BIDs in Edinburgh but certainly some form of town centre management will be delivered in each of the City's nine

designated town centres to ensure environmental improvements on the ground. These activities will enable Edinburgh to be recognised as an exemplar of best practice for Whole Town Centres strategy to delivery stage.

In conclusion, in the majority of cases Edinburgh's town centres are performing well and are major assets for the city with vacancy rates below the Scottish average. However, with the right investment and strategic direction (in the form of partnership working and low cost, high impact improvements) all of the centres will be strengthened to sustain and support new and existing businesses and to protect Edinburgh's unique array of local shopping High Streets and communities.