



Carlisle City Council

Report to Place Panel

Report details

Meeting Date:	13 October 2022
Portfolio:	Economic, Enterprise and Housing
Key Decision:	No
Policy and Budget Framework	No
Public / Private	Public
Title:	High Street Taskforce
Report of:	Corporate Director of Economic Development
Report Number:	ED 28/22

Purpose / Summary:

The purpose of the report is to provide members of the Place Panel with an update on the recent of visit from the High Streets Task Force.

Recommendations:

Members of the Place Panel are asked to:

1. Consider the details of the 'Unlocking Your Place Potential' report included in Annex A and provide feedback on the analysis and recommendations included therein.

Tracking

Executive:	
Scrutiny:	Place Panel 13 October 2022
Council:	

1. Background:

- 1.1. The High Streets Task Force (“HSTF”) has government funding to work with 152 local authorities during its programme of support, which runs to 2024. In February 2022, the HSTF announced 68 local authorities to receive direct support, with Carlisle being included in this list.
- 1.2. The HSFT provides expert advice, training and data to support local authorities and their partners and stakeholders to make the best decisions on the future of their high streets and how they best serve their communities.
- 1.3. In July 2022 the High Streets Task Force (“HSTF”) undertook an ‘Unlocking Your Place Potential’ diagnostic visit in Carlisle. Following this visit, the HSTF has issued a report to the Council outlining the main barriers to high street transformation in Carlisle and setting out a number of recommendations to support the high street to adapt to the economic changes and challenges it faces. The full report is included in Appendix A.
- 1.4. The report identifies the key strengths the Carlisle has, including its unique heritage and history, events and festivals, affordable housing and housing growth, engaged public sector and strategic location and size – all of which is a significant advantage and underpins the city’s role as a sub-regional hub.
- 1.5. The report highlights the extent of transformational regeneration opportunities for Carlisle in the pipeline, which include the projects forming part of the Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal, Future High Streets Fund, and Town Deal programmes. However, it also highlights the importance of ensuring that **short-term interventions** are in place to support these key projects and ensure the city achieves its longer-term regeneration objectives.
- 1.6. The report outlines key barriers to change. These are:
 - **A lack of activation:** There is an urgent need to stimulate the heart of the city centre through a wide range of activation measures as a key immediate requirement to support transformation in Carlisle.
 - **Requirement for enhanced partnerships:** the council can enhance partnership working to help optimise the regeneration activities within the city. Building stronger partnerships between the council, businesses and the wider community will also provide more capacity for making change happen in the city and reduce the reliance on the council. A fully coordinated approach will ensure more impact from the investment and interventions, whether they are initially led by the public, private or voluntary sector.

2. Recommendations of the report:

2.1. To improve the activation of the city the HSTF recommends a strategy of reinvention to help stimulate the city and drive viability and vitality. The report outlines the following recommendations:

1. Share the diagnostic report with everyone that attended the Unlocking Your Place Potential meeting.
2. Arrange an away day with the local authority, business and community leaders to review challenges facing the city and feedback from the Unlocking Your Place Potential visit and consider how these may inform the ongoing plan for the city going forward.
3. Devise a programme of activation measures, which sits alongside existing activities and events. Consider trialling new events, pop up and meanwhile uses, experiment with a bold art and culture offer. Considerations for using empty units for temporary incubation hubs or community uses. Consider engagement with younger people (i.e., through teenage market) Also consider activities around developing the evening economy. The temporary repurposing of retail and public space might point to more permanent opportunities.
4. Expand and empower your Task Force Board, or similar, of place leaders across from council, business and the community to shape the strategy for the city, oversee key projects and coordinate plans and activity. This should be focussed on the needs of the city, rather than being council-led, business-led or community-led.
5. The partnership could have key subgroups focused on workstreams. For example, consider setting up a landlord and property agents forum to look at new uses for empty units and to ensure a consistent approach to the repurposing of the city's estate. This group could take a leading role in putting forward innovative proposals for the repurposing or redevelopment of key sites such as Hoopers, Debenhams or other strategically significant spaces. Likewise consider activities to lead on the art and culture offer of the city that can feed into point 3.

2.2. Building on this, the Regeneration Team has also proposed the following recommendations:

- Consider the role for a new City Centre partnership group, to drive forward the economic growth of the city / city centre. With the onset of Local Government Reorganisation, and the dissolution of Carlisle City Council, partnership working focussed on the city area's growth would particularly benefit Carlisle, given the Cumberland Council's larger geographical remit.

- Consider undertaking a City Centre land ownership survey, as raised by taskforce members at the July session, this would support knowledge building, help identify opportunities, and engagement with land owners in the city centre.

3. Prescribed services from the taskforce:

Product Prescribed	Rationale
Expert Support	<p>Support from one of the Institute of Place Management experts who specialises in place activation to help stimulate the city centre.</p> <p>Opportunity to also focus on partnership development, with an Expert within the field of governance and place management structures.</p>
Workshop	<p>Carlisle would benefit from a Place Making Programme workshop for up to 70 delegates, focussing on place leadership and collaborative capacity.</p> <p>Focus on both quick wins as well as strategic recommendations.</p>
Teenage Market	<p>A popular and specific place activation measure comes in the form of a Teenage Market.</p> <p>The Task Force can help support you with the development and running tools of a market that is tailored to and run by young people.</p>
Online learning/resources	<p>Reinventing: making vital and viable multifunctional hubs</p> <p>Restructuring: building capacity, partnerships and assessing the need for spatial change</p>

4. Conclusions and reasons for recommendations:

- 4.1 The HSTF acknowledges the city centre regeneration ambitions of the Council and its partners, which are highlighted by the wide range of planned large scale capital transformational projects. However, it highlights that these projects will take time to come to fruition.
- 4.2 However, it highlights that these projects will take time to come to fruition. To ensure city centre vibrancy and vitality, the HSTF recommends that Carlisle would benefit from an activation programme, running and curating a wide range of non-retail activities.

4.3 Members of the Place Panel are asked to:

- Consider the details of the 'Unlocking Your Place Potential' report included in Annex A and provide feedback on the analysis and recommendations included therein.

5. Contribution to the Carlisle Plan Priorities

- 5.1. The support from the High Streets Task Force and the assessment and recommendations contained within 'Unlocking Your Place Potential' report, will support and add value to the projects currently being developed and delivered through the Town Deal and Future High Streets Fund regeneration programmes. Therefore, this activity will directly support the delivery of the vision set out in the Carlisle Plan, which is to enable Carlisle to grow and prosper as the capital of the Borderlands region. It also contributes directly to the priority of delivering inclusive and sustainable economic growth, by making Carlisle a more attractive place for investment.

Contact details:

Contact Officer:
Steven Robinson

Ext: 7535

Appendices attached to report:

- Appendix 1 - 'Unlocking Your Place Potential' diagnostic report

Note: in compliance with section 100d of the Local Government Act 1972 the report has been prepared in part from the following papers:

- None

Corporate Implications:

Legal -

Property Services -

Finance -

Equality -

Information Governance-

Unlocking Your Place Potential



Carlisle City Council. July 2022.

Table of Contents

About the visit and this report.....	2
Carlisle Strengths	3
4Rs Framework and our method	4
Applying the 4Rs to Carlisle	5
Fishbone Analysis	7
Diagnosis of main barrier to transformation	8
Recommendations	9
High Streets Task Force Product Prescription	10
Appendix 1 – List of attendees.....	12

About the visit and this report

The High Streets Task Force visited Carlisle on 28th July 2022 to undertake an *Unlocking Your Place Potential* diagnostic visit. I was the High Streets Task Force Expert undertaking the visit. The attendees representing the city can be found in Appendix 1.

The purpose of the visit was to diagnose the main barrier to your transformation. In other words, what problem, if not resolved now, will make it difficult for the city to change. To do this, the Expert wanted to understand more about the challenges facing the city, your plans for transformation, meet key stakeholders, ask questions and tour the city.

As a result of the diagnostic process, the Expert has identified a lack of activation as one of the main barriers to increasing footfall and encouraging vitality within the centre.

The rest of this report identifies the strengths of the city, the main barrier to transformation, as well as clear recommendations the Local Authority and partners can action now to accelerate the transformation process. The report ends with a list of High Streets Task Force Products that we have prescribed.

On behalf of the High Streets Task Force, may I take this opportunity to thank attendees who gave up their time to attend the meeting, and who contributed to a frank and positive discussion. Thank you to Jane Meek and Zoe Sutton for organising the session and for taking me on an informative tour of the city centre.

I felt that you have a lot going for you in Carlisle – and many strengths both in the city and in your people. The High Streets Task Force is here to help you build on those strengths, and I hope you find it useful.

Matt Colledge

High Streets Task Force Expert and Executive Director

Carlisle – Strengths

- ✓ Wonderful architectural heritage
- ✓ Historic city centre with links going back 2,000 years
- ✓ Proximity to an area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
- ✓ Unique location in terms of proximity to Scotland
- ✓ Excellent road and rail links and connectivity with the rest of the country
- ✓ Largest urban centre in Cumbria
- ✓ Significant population catchment size within 2 hours of the centre
- ✓ Affordable housing relative to other cities
- ✓ Major house building programme
- ✓ Ambitious array of funding bids and strategic plans to transform the city centre
- ✓ Excellent public space potential in what is currently the central retail area
- ✓ Compact and easy to navigate city centre
- ✓ Indoor market provides significant opportunity for activation
- ✓ Events and festivals
- ✓ Evidence of some partnership working
- ✓ Evidence of some community engagement
- ✓ Committed council officers and partners

Carlisle is a charming compact city steeped in history going back over 2000 years. It has a very attractive centre with remarkable heritage and wonderful countryside, not to mention the world-renowned Hadrian's Wall, right on its doorstep.

As the largest urban centre in Cumbria, and with its unique location in relation to Scotland, impressive national transport connectivity, wonderful heritage and ambitious redevelopment plans, Carlisle now has a great opportunity to further optimise its success.

Much of the centre retains the original streetscape with significant architectural assets remaining from its past. In summary, the city has many strengths and although it is facing challenges, these strengths put the city at a significant advantage in relation to other parts of the region.

4Rs Framework and our method

The aim of the Unlocking Your Place Potential workshop is for our High Streets Task Force Experts to identify the key barrier(s) to the improvement of your high street and recommend an appropriate strategic response. To enable our experts to do this in an evidence-based way, the High Streets Task Force uses the '4Rs Framework'.

Research has identified 237 factors that impact on the success of the high street. However, it is too overwhelming to think of all these at once, so we have developed the '4 Rs' framework to provide some structure to the incredibly complex practice of place transformation. Without a framework, it is easy to be drawn into so much detail that you cannot see the big picture.

When you simplify the process of renewal, the reasons why so many regeneration plans do not result in the changes people expect fall into 4 categories:

- The problems facing the centre were not accurately identified
- The plans were good but not enough changed
- The place changed but people's perceptions didn't
- There were fundamental issues with governance or the spatial layout of the place

We looked at these problems and identified 4 strategies to address them, *repositioning*, *reinventing*, *rebranding*, and *restructuring*. So, the framework distinguishes between the processes of analysis and decision making (repositioning), effecting change (reinventing), communication (rebranding) and governance/spatial planning (restructuring). More detail on each of the '4R's' is set out below.



Figure 1: 4Rs Framework

Applying the 4Rs to Carlisle

Although the city and its people have many strengths, we did identify a number of weaknesses. We have grouped these using the 4Rs framework – see below.

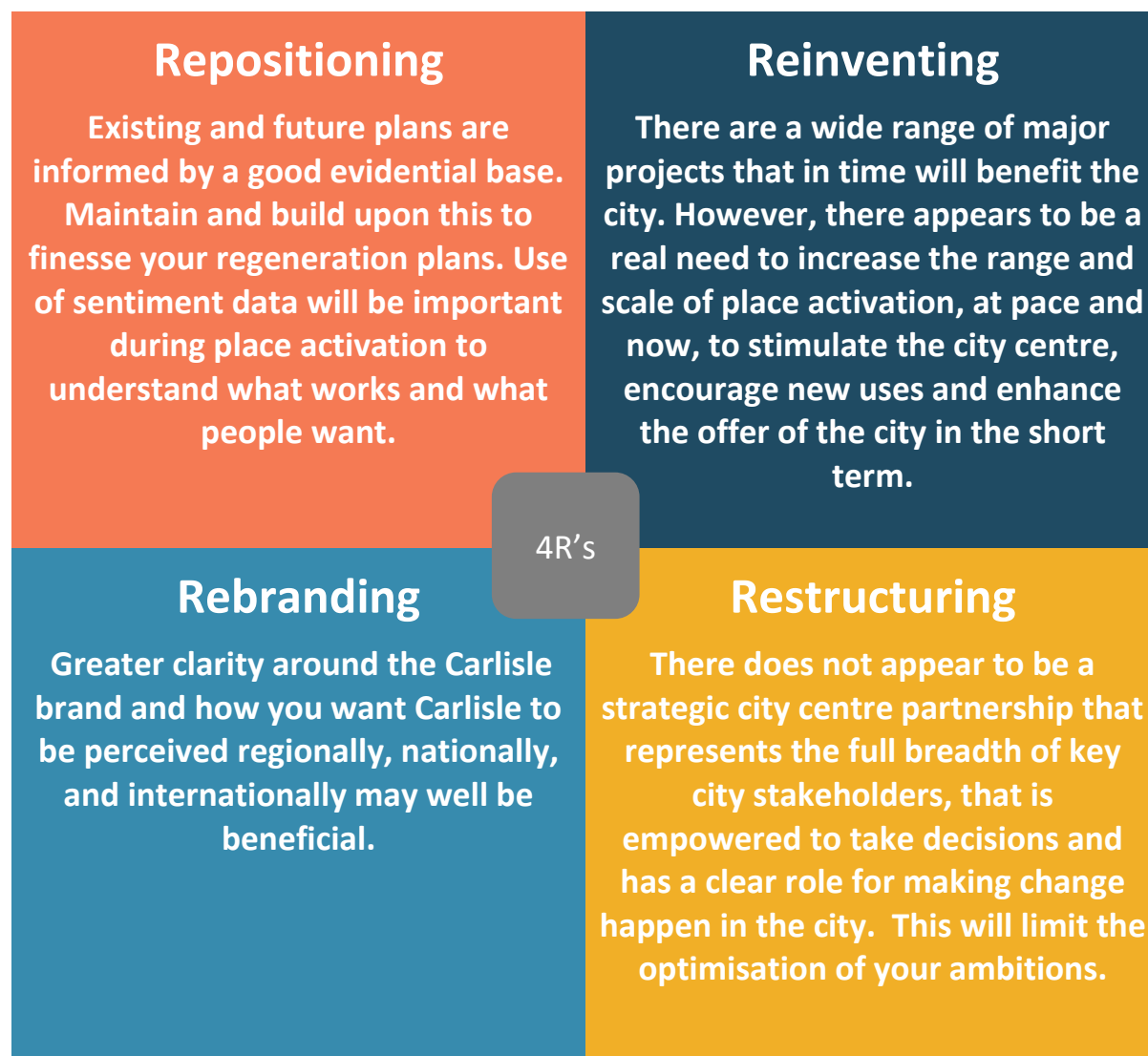


Figure 2: Applying the 4Rs Framework to Carlisle

We used all the information we had to identify which of the descriptions above fitted the evidence we had collected. We collected this evidence from looking at your strategic documents, the Unlocking Your Place Potential visit, including our meeting, discussions, exercises and the in-person city tour. We also included the information we found out about Carlisle from our desk research.

We then grouped each piece of evidence under the 4R headings of Repositioning, Reinventing, Rebranding, and Restructuring. You can see our working on the Fishbone Sheet included in this report.

By classifying every clue, we could see how these are grouped and where Carlisle is facing barriers. This then allows us to recommend suitable strategies to overcome these (see Figure 2). These strategies are *ways of working*, rather than ‘magic bullets’ relating to any particular intervention in your city. As mentioned at the start of the Unlocking Your Place Potential visit, you are the experts in Carlisle.

You can see the major barriers to your transformation in the next section.

Fishbone Analysis

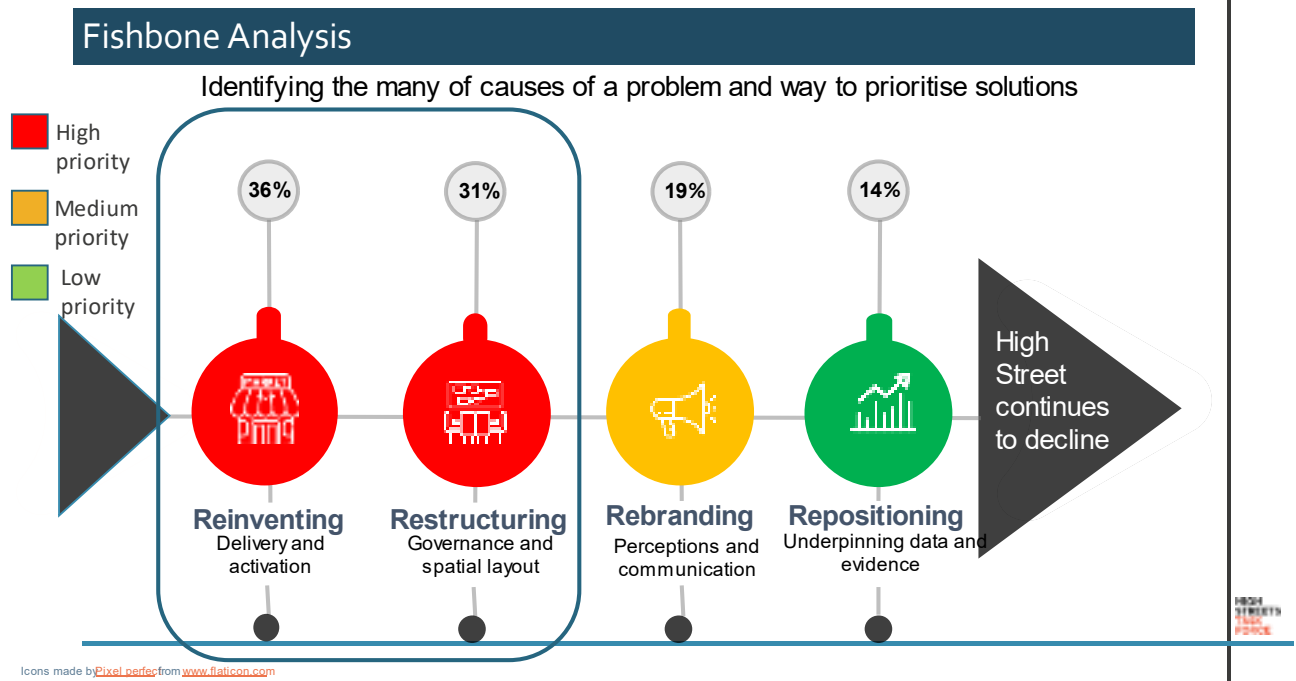


Figure 3: Fishbone analysis

Diagnosis of main barrier to transformation

As a result of the diagnostic process, we have identified a lack of activation as one of the main barriers to increasing footfall and encouraging vitality within the centre. There is an urgent need to stimulate the heart of the city centre through a wide range of activation measures as a key immediate requirement to support transformation in Carlisle.

The ambition of the council(s) and its partners is clear to see, highlighted by a wide range of planned large scale capital transformational projects. However, these projects will take time to come to fruition. Alongside this, the city appears to be overly reliant upon retail as a primary activity within the city.

To combat this, Carlisle would benefit from undertaking a rigorous activation programme, running and curating a wide range of non-retail activities. We think that a lack of this activity within the city centre may present a barrier to driving the vitality of the city. Furthermore, such a programme can help to reconnect people to their city and to help with trialling and experimenting a range of new offers that could become a permanent part of future city life.

We also believe that the council can enhance partnership working to help optimise the regeneration activities within the city.

Building stronger partnerships between the council, businesses and the wider community will also provide more capacity for making change happen in the city and reduce the reliance on the council. A fully coordinated approach will ensure more impact from the investment and interventions, whether they are initially led by the public, private or voluntary sector.

It was very clear from our meeting that there is a huge amount of enthusiasm and support for the city from both the council and business leaders. More frequent and open communication is needed, and we recommend restructuring your governance systems to facilitate a team approach to transformation, with council, business and the community.

Recommendations

To improve the activation of the city we are recommending a strategy of *reinvention* to help stimulate the city and drive viability and vitality.

1. Share the final version of this report with everyone that attended the Unlocking Your Place Potential meeting.
2. Arrange an away day with the local authority, business and community leaders to review challenges facing the city and feedback from the UYPP visit and consider how these may inform the ongoing plan for the city going forward.
3. Devise a programme of activation measures, which sits alongside existing activities and events. Consider trialling new events, pop up and meanwhile uses, experiment with a bold art and culture offer. Can empty spaces be repurposed to house some of these things, or indeed as temporary incubation hubs or other community uses? How can young people be encouraged to be involved in events and activities, for example you might want to consider running a Teenage Market (see below). Consider also activities around developing the evening economy. The temporary repurposing of retail and public space might point to more permanent opportunities.
4. Expand and empower your Task Force Board, or similar, of place leaders across from council, business and the community to shape the strategy for the city, oversee key projects and coordinate plans and activity. This should be focussed on the needs of the city, rather than being council-led, business-led or community-led. Find a structure to work together in.
5. The partnership could have key subgroups focused on workstreams. For example, consider setting up a landlord and property agents forum to look at new uses for empty units and to ensure a consistent approach to the repurposing of the city's estate. This group could take a leading role in putting forward innovative proposals for the repurposing or redevelopment of key sites such as Hoopers, Debenhams or other strategically significant spaces. Likewise consider activities to lead on the art and culture offer of the city that can feed into point 3. As stated above, this activity could be led by subgroups of your Task Force Board, with particular focuses on retail, food and drink, events and entertainment to name just a few.

We hope these recommendations are useful. As we explained in the Unlocking Your Place Potential visit, you are the experts in Carlisle not us. Nevertheless, we have experience of working with many towns around the country that face similar challenges – so when we undertake a diagnostic visit we are well trained in looking for strengths and weaknesses in the town's offer, as well as the structures and processes that manage and change the city.

High Streets Task Force Product Prescription

Based on our recommendations, we would like to offer you the following products. This has been decided after considering your key barriers to transformation and what we have concluded as the best way to help you achieve your transformation goals.

High Streets Task Force Products Prescribed:

Product prescribed	Rationale
Expert Support	<p>We are recommending the provision of support from one of our IPM Experts who specialises in place activation to help stimulate the city centre.</p> <p>If you wish to focus on partnership development, we will be able to offer an Expert within the field of governance and place management structures.</p> <p>Further detail regarding this support can be found in the attached product summary/guidance documentation.</p>
Workshop	<p>I have recommended that following the above Expert support, Carlisle would benefit from a Place Making Programme workshop.</p> <p>This is for up to 70 delegates invited to participate in a workshop to develop place leadership and collaborative capacity. It identifies quick wins as well as strategic recommendations and often benefits places when activation is needed – in other words needs to start taking some action now.</p> <p>The above Expert will be able to further discuss this product with you, to ensure that it is something that you will benefit from. If during the Expert visit the need for the workshop is agreed, arrangements will begin to put this in place, and further guidance supplied.</p>

<p>Teenage Market</p>	<p>A popular and specific place activation measure comes in the form of a Teenage Market. The Task Force can help support you with the development and running tools of a market that is tailored to and run by young people. It is also an excellent way to engage with younger people and, at the same time, perhaps collect their views as to what they want from their city.</p>
<p>Online learning/resources</p>	<p>We also recommend a number of other on-line resources that will help assist you in Carlisle.</p> <p>Reinventing: making vital and viable multifunctional hubs - this webinar helps place leaders to consider the role of their local high street in a broader context and look at approaches to reinvent places with economic and social vitality. You can access this online resource here.</p> <p>Restructuring: building capacity, partnerships and assessing the need for spatial change – this webinar helps place leaders to consider the role of partnerships and capacity building for high street transformation. You can access this online resource here.</p> <p>Advanced Dashboard – The High Streets Task Force Advanced Dashboard is designed to help those engaged in place management to understand the performance of their town centre or high street. It is available to any place management organisation in England that collects footfall data in a town centre or high street, using Springboard's automated footfall counting technology. If you would like to move forward with this, please register your interest here.</p>

Next steps:

Please liaise with your Operations contact to make arrangements for the delivery of the next stage of your support. The Operations team are available to assist with any queries relating to the delivery of the above support, so please do not hesitate to get in touch if any aspect is unclear.

More information about all of these products can be found on the HSTF website [here](#).

Appendix 1 – List of town attendees

Simon Harrison	Harrison Northern
Rev. Keith Teasdale	Former Vicar, St Cuthbert Church.
Alison Hatcher	Cumbria County Council
Catherine Coulthard	Prism Arts
Cllr Marilyn Bowman	Carlisle City Council
Paul Walker	Carlisle City Council
Louis Sleighton	Nelson Thomlinson School (work experience)
Jane Meeks	Carlisle City Council
Zoe Sutton	Carlisle City Council
Matt Colledge	High Streets Task Force