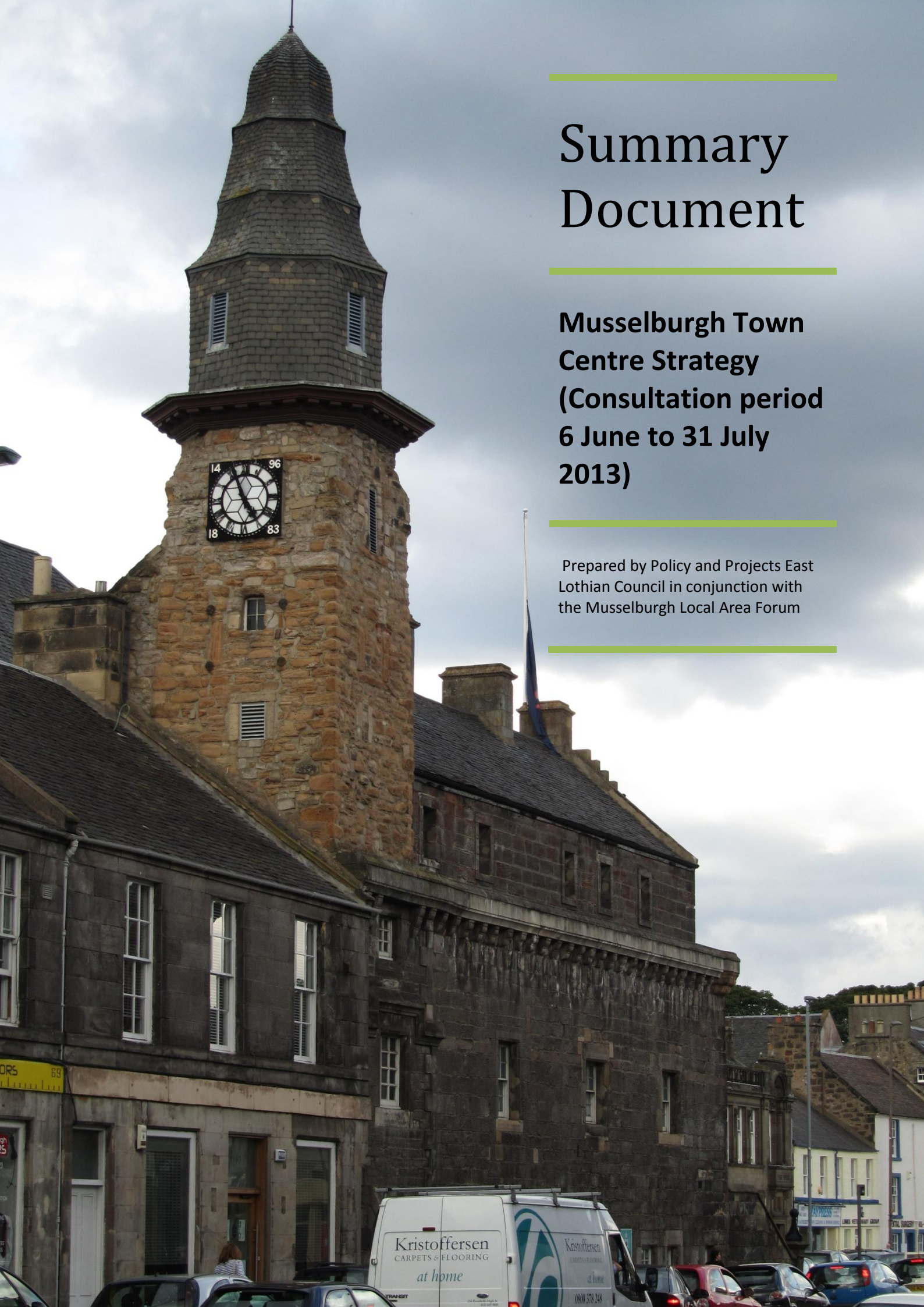

Summary Document

**Musselburgh Town
Centre Strategy
(Consultation period
6 June to 31 July
2013)**

Prepared by Policy and Projects East
Lothian Council in conjunction with
the Musselburgh Local Area Forum



Draft Musselburgh Town Centre Strategy - Consultation Summary

Background

- 1 A Draft Musselburgh Town Centre Strategy has been prepared by East Lothian Council in conjunction with the Musselburgh Town Centre Task Group, part of the Musselburgh Local Area Forum¹.
- 2 The task group undertook a comprehensive community consultation on Musselburgh town centre 2011. This involved the use of a large model of Musselburgh town centre that toured various locations within the town and a survey of town centre users. Over 1,200 people were involved in this consultation. The results helped in the preparation of this Town Centre Strategy.
- 4 The Strategy suggests ways in which all those who have an interest in Musselburgh town centre can undertake improvements that will help its economy and appearance. It has four aims which are outlined below.

Strategy Aims

1. *To keep Musselburgh town centre busy and vibrant whilst taking actions that promote additional business*
2. *To encourage improvements to support existing businesses and those who use the town centre and encourage investment*
3. *To improve the appearance of the town centre which is the unique selling point of the town.*
4. *To explain more of the town's history and heritage.*

Consultation on the Strategy

- 5 The Council is asking for feedback on the Draft Strategy and Action Plan for the town. You can have your say by completing the consultation questionnaire or by taking part in one of the workshop sessions being organised for local businesses, residents and other interested parties (see www.eastlothianconsultations.gov.uk for both the consultation questionnaire and for details of workshops).

This paper is a Consultation Summary. The full Draft Musselburgh Town Centre Strategy is available as follows:

- Paper Copies - Musselburgh and Wallyford Libraries; The Brunton and the Musselburgh East Community Learning Centre as well as at John Muir House in Haddington.
- On the web at http://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/homepage/231/have_your_say
- Or by phoning 01620 827264

The closing date for the completion of consultation questionnaires is Wednesday 31 July 2013.

¹ Members of the Task Group include local Councillors, officers of East Lothian Council, Musselburgh and Inveresk Community Council, Windsor Park Tenants and Residents Association, Musselburgh Business Association, Queen Margaret University, Musselburgh Conservation Society, Inveresk Village Society and others.

Limitations

- 6 A Strategy Action Plan has been developed which outlines the actions needed to deliver the Strategy, it also includes estimated costs for delivering each of these actions. It is important to note that not all of the actions proposed in the Action Plan are for East Lothian Council to undertake. The community and businesses have an important role to play too. The Strategy is intended to encourage partners to work together to keep Musselburgh town centre a lively and welcoming place.
- 7 It is also important to recognise that the Council does not have unlimited resources to resolve all issues in the town centre. Whilst the Council has identified a capital budget for spend in East Lothian's town centres, including Musselburgh, it requires this money to make a positive difference to the town centre and improve its economy.
- 8 The responses received to the consultation will therefore be used to help the Council determine its own priorities for investment in Musselburgh town centre.

Summary of Draft Strategy

8 The VISION

The VISION for Musselburgh Town Centre for the next five years is:

In 2018 Musselburgh town centre will be a clean and pleasant environment that attracts people to the town for shopping, business and leisure. Musselburgh's central streets will be attractive and well maintained and people will enjoy using the town's public spaces. The town's extensive history and heritage will be able to be better understood by its visitors and Musselburgh will be marketed as a destination with easy to find parking, a good range of cafes, pubs and restaurants, places to visit and be a pleasant place to visit and in which to spend time.

9 Main Issues

Among the main issues for Musselburgh town centre that were identified by respondents to the 2011 community consultation were;

- The whole town centre needs a facelift, both streetscape improvements to street furniture and pavements and smartening up the appearance of shops and buildings were mentioned.
- There is a need for a bigger and better range of shops in the town centre.
- It is difficult to find a parking space in Musselburgh town centre and more parking should be created
- The town centre is congested with traffic and alternative routes should be looked at. Improving walking and cycling routes to High Street.
- Community space should be created for events and activities outside the Town Hall and also outside the Brunton and by the river at Shorthope Street
- The town should make more of its history and heritage, highlighting the historic buildings around the Town Hall and making better links between High Street and the River Esk.
- There is crime and anti-social behaviour in the town centre at particular times especially at weekend evenings

10 The Draft Strategy looks at Musselburgh town centre's importance in the context of East Lothian; the diversity of the commercial businesses operating in the town centre; tourism and leisure; traffic and parking; its buildings and public spaces, community facilities and safety and the management of the town centre.

11 Musselburgh is the main town centre in East Lothian and the town is set to grow with new housing under construction and planned. As a growing town the town centre has the opportunity to do business with more residents in future. The presence of the 24 hour Tesco affects the town centre but since it opened the number of vacant premises in the town centre has fallen and footfall in the main streets has remained broadly steady.

The Different Land Uses in the Town Centre

- 12 Although the number of commercial units in the town centre remains the same, in the last 9 years the number of shops has reduced and the number of services (e.g. dry cleaners, hairdressers, banks) and leisure units (cafes, restaurants) has increased. The licensed trade sector has suffered a number of closures of both pubs and hotels in recent years some of which have changed to other uses. These general changes are also national trends.
- 13 The Strategy Action Plan suggests that vacant property above shops be identified and owners encouraged to bring them back into residential use to encourage more residents in the town centre.

Tourism and Leisure

- 14 Whilst Musselburgh may not be a recognised tourist town it has a range of attractions, including the racecourse, and could encourage more visitors. People come to Musselburgh for many different reasons (including ice cream) and the town's history and heritage has recently become better known through the town museum and various interpretation boards throughout the town.
- 15 The Strategy Action Plan suggests close working between community and businesses to market Musselburgh including as a destination for a day out; a review of existing heritage information and developing a town trail from the museum, guiding visitors around the history and heritage of Musselburgh; identifying improvements to paths including signage to the town centre; and encouraging more community and commercial events in the town centre.

Transport and Parking

- 16 The town centre has a high volume of traffic because there are very few alternative routes but there is little likelihood of being able to significantly reduce the traffic in the town centre in the next five years. However, it is important that vehicles are able to stop to use the town centre which means that parking needs to be more available throughout the day. Town centre car parks should be clearly signposted. Car parks could also offer businesses a marketing opportunity.
- 17 Musselburgh town centre is very well served by buses but the number of people waiting at the existing bus stops can cause congestion on the pavements.
- 18 The strategy action plan suggests reviewing Musselburgh town centre car park operation to introduce short stay to increase turnover and parking availability at some car parks; to review car parking enforcement and to review the number and location of bus stops to reduce bus stop congestion and build up of buses at a single stop. Air quality in the town centre will continue to be monitored and traffic flow improved through adjustment to the traffic lights in the town centre.

Development Opportunities

- 19 There are few redevelopment opportunities in Musselburgh town centre and those that there are small or awkwardly shaped sites. Every opportunity that brings new

residents or employment or supports the town centre in other ways should be encouraged.

- 20 One development opportunity outlined in the Strategy Action Plan suggests that East Lothian Council reviews the potential use of the vacant Millhill Stables site off High Street which could be suitable for either housing, employment use or parking.

Built Environment and Public Spaces

- 21 In response to concern that the town centre was looking shabby, a street clutter blitz was undertaken identifying and dealing with small scale problems in the town centre; for example, sign poles that are no longer required, accumulations of litter or weeds, loose paving slabs, unauthorised banner signs etc. It is suggested that this is an annual exercise.
- 22 The Strategy Action Plan suggests that East Lothian Council prepare detailed planning guidance for owners and occupiers of commercial buildings to help improve the external appearance of commercial buildings, including signage. Some buildings, particularly those that are painted, either have a poor appearance or are in poor condition. New colour scheme guidance could be prepared and made available to owners to consider.

For that part of Musselburgh town centre that is in the Conservation Area, a character appraisal should be prepared by East Lothian Council with support from Musselburgh Conservation Society.

- 23 The Strategy Action Plan suggests other improvements to specific streets within the town centre as follows:

North High Street

- Coordinating the look of street furniture as it needs replaced; all lamp posts, bins, railings and traffic sign poles to be in black.
- Provision of small blisters on both sides of the road between parked vehicles to provide a place where it is safer to cross between parked vehicles (this would not be a formal zebra or pelican crossing as it would be between the existing formal crossings). The blisters could also accommodate a small tree to help soften the appearance of the street.
- Re-branding North High Street as either Fisherrow High Street or North High Street, Fisherrow with new street signs.

Bridge Street

- Encourage the restoration of the original front boundary stone walls at the privately owned 18-20 Bridge Street
- Coordinating the look of street furniture as it needs replaced; all lamp posts, bins, railings and traffic sign poles to be in black.
- The Brunton had a £3.7m makeover internally in 2012. The area outside the Brunton could be the subject of a major environmental improvement project involving repaving in more attractive materials, a ramped access to the

theatre, artwork and new street furniture such as a bus shelter, bollards and seating. (you can view draft plans at www.eastlothianconsultations.co.uk) .

High Street, Kilwinning Street to Rennie Bridge

- Coordinating the look of street furniture as it needs replaced; all lamp posts, bins, railings and traffic sign poles to be in black and having the same style of seat outside the Hollies day centre. Lighting columns could be fitted with arms to allow community or promotional banners.
- Plant two small street trees in the wide pavement outside the row of shops on the south side to soften the appearance of the street.
- At the war memorial beside the Hollies it is suggested that ideas are developed for disabled access to the riverside and repairs to its steps and wall along with path improvements by the river towards the Store bridge.

Shorthope Street

- Shorthope Street links the riverside to the High Street and has two small town centre car parks and the public toilets. It is a well used street particularly by pedestrians. The car park on the south side would benefit from some tidying up and provision of boundary railings or wall to help to screen the recycling bins. The older buildings in the street would benefit from being repainted in new colour schemes to freshen up the appearance of the street.

High Street, East of the Tolbooth/Town Hall

- Most towns have a public gathering place where civic ceremonies are held and markets and other commercial activity takes place. These can be a focus for a town and a defining image for a place. Musselburgh town centre does not have such a space at the moment but the area that originally created for that function in the 18thC is still there around the mercat cross, though currently used for parking. A new permanent pedestrian only space could be created at this area with the parking relocated to underused road space towards the Pinkie Pillars. This has the potential to change both the appearance and the image of Musselburgh town centre. It also has the potential to attract more people to the town centre, to be of economic benefit to shops and businesses and to encourage the reuse of empty buildings in the area.

A detailed plan for this area has been prepared (it can be viewed at www.eastlothianconsultations.co.uk) and shows a pedestrian area around the mercat cross, between the Town Hall/Tolbooth and the former Post Office building. This would either be provided with a wall or railings to provide a sense of enclosure from the road, or kept more open. The space would be paved with high quality materials such as stone setts or slabs, contain seating, wi-fi and trees and would be designed to allow markets, civic gatherings and events to take place. Artwork is suggested possibly in the form of a statue of a Roman soldier to refer to Musselburgh's past and create interest and information on a town trail would be provided. The area between

the old Post Office building and the Pinkie Pillars by Loretto school would be redesigned to include additional parking as well as a service bay, taxi rank, relocated bus stop and motorbike and disabled parking.

Management of the Town Centre

- 24 Much of the town centre environment is managed by East Lothian Council and it is important that stakeholders and the public know who to contact to report issues therefore the Strategy Action Plan proposes to develop and publicise a key contacts list for issues with regard to the management of Musselburgh town centre.

Conclusions

- 25 Musselburgh town centre is still busy and vibrant. However, much of the traffic and associated activity that contributes to its busy feel is traffic passing through the town and therefore may not be contributing to the town centre economy. Passing traffic needs to be encouraged to stop and use the town centre which means having available parking space.
- 26 The Tesco supermarket has an influence on Musselburgh town centre, so far the town centre appears to be coping. This could be because some of its customers who may have previously shopped outside Musselburgh can now find what they want within Musselburgh and people can walk easily between the supermarket and the town centre. For the town centre to thrive it needs people to be in it who can then be tempted by the businesses which they are passing by. The number of people in the town centre has remained broadly steady since 2008. However, the trend throughout the UK is of decreasing footfall in town centres so Musselburgh should not be complacent.
- 27 Musselburgh town centre is not doing too badly but can be made better. This is important if Musselburgh town centre is to continue to be a vibrant town centre long into the future. Town centres need to adapt and be locations where activities other than retailing can take place to continue to attract people into them and to participate in the daily life of the town. Space for people to undertake these activities is important and Musselburgh has the benefit of its open spaces at the riverside but as the strategy identifies, currently lacks any kind of multi-functional pedestrian gathering place.
- 28 The challenge for the town centre is therefore to make itself more appealing to people to use it. The town has many advantages - day visitors to the races, Levenhall Links, golf, the theatre for example, plus those who are attracted to the town for walking or cycling and for its particular form of retail – Musselburgh has more large stores and discount stores than the other towns in East Lothian and attracts people from other parts of East Lothian. Its small independent shops also attract people for their particular goods and services. A further challenge is to ensure that more of the traffic that is in the town centre is encouraged to stop rather than just pass through.
- 29 The Draft Town Centre Strategy suggests actions to make the town more attractive such as repainting buildings; coordinating street furniture; removing street clutter and making improvements to spaces in the streets. It also proposes to improve parking and to market the town centre better. If these opportunities are taken then over the next five years Musselburgh town centre should continue to perform well and keep its ground floor shops and services in business, contributing to a lively local economy. The new residents that will be coming to live in Musselburgh will then provide further marketing opportunities for the town centre, where it will be important to encourage

them to make Musselburgh town centre their preferred shopping area rather than use other out of town facilities.

- 30 East Lothian Council would like your views on the proposed strategy. Not all the actions suggested are for the Council to do – the community, property owners and the business community have roles to play too, to support Musselburgh town centre. The Council is prepared to consider investment in Musselburgh town centre to support business and to help the town centre economy, but given current the financial climate, any expenditure needs to be very carefully considered.
- 31 It is unlikely that all of the suggestions in the Strategy will be able to be delivered, but their inclusion in a strategy will help to raise awareness of issues and actions and can help in future funding bids. It is important that the actions that have the most benefit for the town centre are given priority. This consultation exercise will help to inform the prioritisation process.