

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of the Paisley Town Centre Asset Strategy is to understand and value Paisley's unique heritage offer that lies largely undiscovered. Heritage, character and story draw people together, strengthen community capacity and play an important role in the economic regeneration of town centres. The historic assets, together with a consideration of more contemporary cultural activities, such as sculpture and performance arts, hold the potential to attract additional visitors and increase spend. The focus is therefore to harness this potential and prepare a realistic, deliverable and integrated asset strategy that plans a route to regenerate and revitalise the town centre.

PLACES THAT HAVE SHOWN THE WAY

Heritage driven regeneration strategies have transformed the economic fortunes of towns and cities throughout the UK.



Derry/Londonderry, the UK's City of Culture 2013 has many similarities to Paisley. It hosts some of the most deprived communities in Northern Ireland, has an existing unemployment rate of 8.9% and has a struggling retail and town centre economy with high vacancy

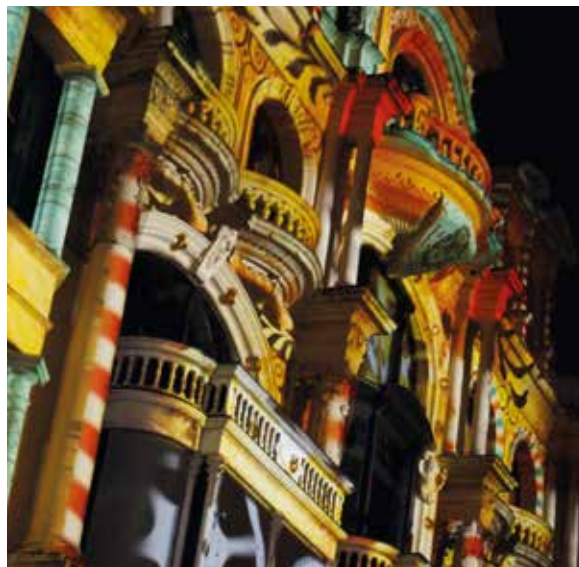
levels. The UK City of Culture year was forecast to deliver an additional 1,300 jobs by 2013 and 2,800 by 2020, with 900 and 2,000 respectively in the direct creative industries and tourist sectors. Apart from this, the bid process has transformed the international image of the town from one associated with conflict and division to one of an internationally branded destination.

Hull has been designated the UK's 2017 City of Culture. Hull is a city that faces challenges in terms of employment, educational attainment, health and external perceptions, very similar in many ways to Paisley. Hull's City of Culture programme tackles these challenges and aims to establish major step changes in cultural regeneration, growing the size and strength of the cultural economy, transforming attitudes and aspirations for Hull as a place while increasing public participation and learning.

The city's cultural strategy will create jobs, increase tourism and develop skills with the ambition to make Hull a world class visitor destination known for its culture, heritage and festivals.

Dundee was one of four cities shortlisted for the UK 2017 City of Culture bid. Dundee has a reputation for effective partnership working and has been developing its culture strategy as a central element of its regeneration over the last few years. This has underpinned the successful development of its cultural assets. For many years the Dundee Cultural Agencies Network (CAN) has acted as a powerful mechanism for harnessing and coordinating the work of the sector. The City Council used the website, We Dundee, as a way to show the tremendous imagination and enthusiasm of people from all walks of life across the city.

Derry-Londonderry Lumiere 2013



1. Paisley – The Unsold Story

The town of Paisley has a built heritage that dates back at least a thousand years. Much of the building stock and the story which it embodies is based within its town centre, a walkable highly accessible location for both national and international visitors.

The quality of the built heritage, and in particular, its buildings that roughly date between 1750 and 1930 are in an exceptional state of preservation. The town boasts a series of distinct architectural styles including late 19th century French [Free] Renaissance and French Gothic Grandeur, and early 20th century Art Nouveau and Art Deco.

These built heritage assets together with museum collections are underplayed and have significant capacity to redefine the role and image of the town. This strategy is the result of a process which sought to fully understand this potential and devise a plan that would leverage assets more effectively to the benefit of those who live, work and visit there.

‘the Paisley streetscape is distinct and altogether unique’

2. Priority Assets

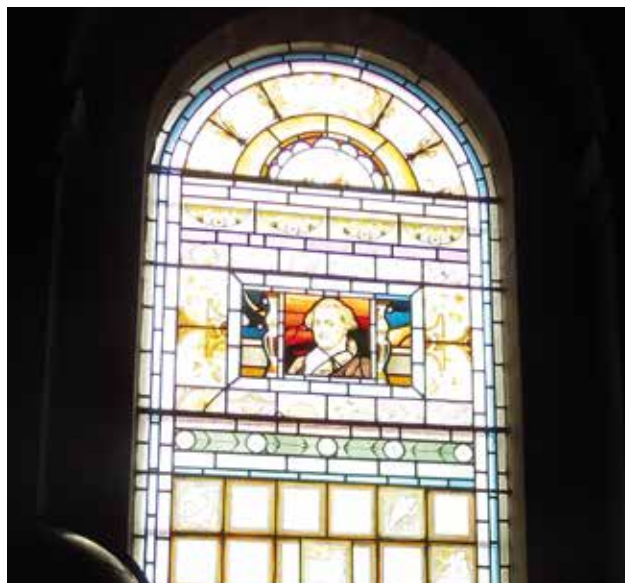
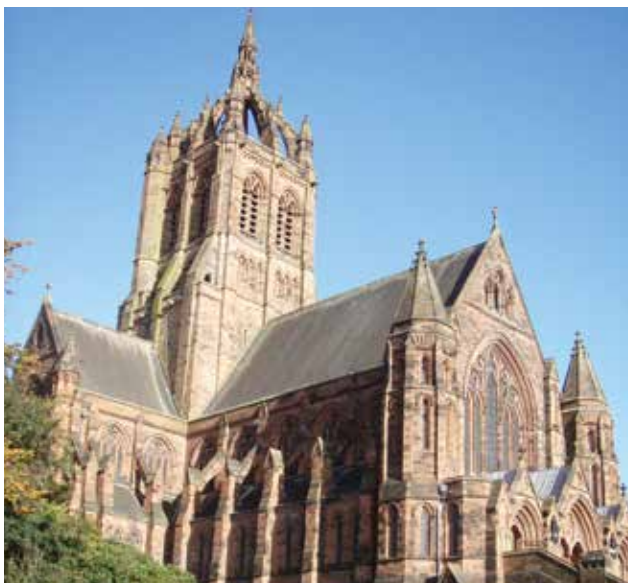
The **Paisley Museum and Art Gallery** was founded in 1871 and was intended for the ‘intellectual improvement of the whole community’, using collections built up since the early nineteenth century by the Paisley Philosophical Society and the Paisley Arts Institute. The building itself is integral to the Paisley story and was designed by the well known Glasgow architect John Honeyman and paid for by Sir Peter Coats of the famous Coats thread manufacturing family.

Renfrewshire Council museums have one of the best museum collections in Scotland. The National Audit of Scotland’s Museums and Galleries (2002) identified Renfrewshire as being 7th in the list of organisations with the largest collections of international, UK and national significance.

The Museum is in possession of over 350,000 objects and there is a general consensus that these collections are greatly underplayed. The Museum boasts a wide variety of collections including:

- Textile collections (shawls, design and pattern books, costumes, textile technology)
- Art collections (fine and decorative arts)
- Studio ceramics
- Contemporary art
- Natural history
- American Ornithology by Alexander Wilson
- Medieval History (manuscripts)
- Ancient civilisations

The textile collection is a case in point. The story of the shawls and Paisley patterns is not fully exploited according to its significance. By displaying and interpreting this collection to the full, Paisley Museum has the potential to be among the leading textile museums in Europe. Given its potential, the display, interpretation and demonstration of the traditional handweaving heritage of Paisley (and of Scotland) in the most complete and authentic manner could be considered central to this strategy.



Top L-R: Thomas Coats Memorial Church, Coats Observatory
Bottom L-R: Town Hall, Paisley Abbey

The **Thomas Coats Memorial Church** was designed by architect H. J. Blanc, constructed in 1894. Internally, there is a wealth of decorative fixtures and fittings, many in the Arts and Crafts style including rare wallpaper and stencil patterns (on wood). Also present is a fine example of a gothic style pulpit and baptism bath made from marble. It enjoys a hugely impressive ornate frontage with stepped approach, is a dominant feature within the West End streetscape and is regarded as one of NW Europe’s most impressive non-conformist churches.

This asset is considered vulnerable in terms of the number and age of trustees, operating deficit, level of public liability and cost of upkeep.

The purpose built **Coats Observatory** comprises a planetarium and observation platform and boasts a number of important architectural fixtures and fittings including dedicated stained glass panels, ornamental insignia and distinctive moulded door and window casements. The Observatory houses a collection of late Victorian scientific apparatus relating to astronomy, meteorology and seismology.

Access to the observatory is now via Paisley Museum only and visitors can explore the Observatory through organised tours. This is a key asset and visitor attraction within Paisley.



Paisley Abbey concert, image used with kind permission of PACE Theatre Company

Paisley Town Hall is a late 19th century civic building, designed in the French Gothic Grandeur style by architect W.H. Lynn (Belfast) and sculptor James Young (Glasgow). The building is a landmark within Paisley and makes an outstanding contribution to the streetscape. In terms of current use it provides important space for social and official functions and is used for a wide cross section of events, meetings and social occasions.

Paisley Abbey is a large monastic building located east of the River Cart dating from the 12th century with a series of architectural building phases incorporated. Both the Abbey and the neighbouring 17th century Place of Paisley are the most prominent buildings (along with the Town Hall) within the Paisley townscape.

This is a highly significant building in terms of the town's profile and visitor offer. Visitor numbers are estimated at approximately 10,000 per annum. The Paisley Abbey Church Business Plan 2012 to 2019 was prepared to address the Abbey's medium to long term financial sustainability and recognises its potential to contribute more significantly to the wider regeneration of Paisley and Renfrewshire.

The Alexander Stoddart Collection comprises the sculptural work of Alexander Stoddart who has been Sculptor in Ordinary to The Queen in Scotland since 2008. He is best known for his civic monuments, including bronze statues of David Hume and Adam Smith, philosophers in the Scottish Enlightenment, on the Royal Mile in Edinburgh, and also for his monument to John Witherspoon, a signatory of the United States Declaration of Independence, unveiled by HRH The Princess Royal in Paisley.

Sandy's studio is at the UWS in Paisley and he is currently seeking a location that will house his studio and casts of his work completed to date as part of a publically accessible exhibition. There are approximately 200/300 pieces within this collection varying in size, each with an inscription confirming its creation in Paisley. A new home would require a studio scale entrance so that the larger works can be accommodated.

3. People Power

Creativity and a rich, dynamic performing arts sector form the bedrock of Paisley's cultural offering. There is a clear appetite in Paisley for opportunities to develop and expand this sector, validated by the success of organisations such as PACE and LOUD 'n' PROUD. The sector comprises a diverse range of stakeholders, including performers, promoters and those who provide back-stage technical input and administration; and it is sustained by a range of social and physical assets unique to Paisley.

Organisations such as **PACE** have been a key catalyst in the growth and popularity of the performing arts in Paisley. PACE formed in 1987 has been touring and performing theatre-in-education projects for the past twenty-five years, each year touring on average to 100-200 schools throughout Scotland, both primary and high schools, and mounting over 50 other unique performances annually. Equality of access is at the heart of PACE's vision and education is also an essential part of its remit. Its constituted ethos is to provide a service to all of the community but particularly young people, using theatre, in its broadest terms, to educate and entertain.

LOUD 'n' PROUD is a youth charity which has, for over a decade, established itself at the forefront of the development of young musicians in Scotland. Led by esteemed vocal coaches and professional musicians, the programmes provide a bespoke platform for performers to improve their performing skills and develop their vocal abilities.

West College Scotland Centre for Performing Arts provides a variety of courses in the performing arts from their base in New Street, in the heart of the town centre. The college convenes both full and part time classes in the area of drama, acting and performance, technical theatre skills, dance and music programmes and video production courses.

Established in 2012, initially as a pilot project, **Renfrewshire Witch Hunt** (RWH) 1697 is a social enterprise who promote re-enactment street theatre, exhibitions, tours (including virtual app tours) and information sources projects centred on developing Paisley's unique collection of cultural resources, archive materials and artefacts. RWH's resources are open to everyone but the organisation specialises in providing learning opportunities and support services, connected to its cultural focus.

Paisley's performing arts sector is supported by the work of the **Creative Renfrewshire Network** (CRN), which currently boasts in excess of 150 members. CRN's objectives are to facilitate communication between groups and individuals in the cultural sector; and facilitate the development, promotion and delivery of events etc., to promote participation in existing cultural activities.

Paisley's cultural sectors are hosted in a range of buildings spread throughout the town centre. There is an identified demand required to justify a 300 plus multi-purpose theatre in Paisley.

One of the strongest and most benevolent assets within Paisley is its people. Indeed many of the most vulnerable building assets and attractions namely the Sma' Shot Cottages and Thomas Coats Memorial Church rely heavily or solely on volunteer time and expertise to maintain momentum. There are key individuals from various organisations who promote the cultural sector and help to activate the town centre. Of particular note is the unique expertise provided by Dan Coughlan Curator of Textiles at the Paisley Museum, who currently offers practical weaving demonstrations using the technology and material within the collection.

Delivery of the asset strategy will require an appropriate decision making structure that facilitates recognition and support of key individuals, active partnership and participation, especially for locally based events.



Paisley Cross

4. Potential Market Size & Audience Development

Having considered the strategic context and presented detailed analysis of the assets within the town centre, we now summarise our findings on the potential audiences for these assets. Based on stakeholder engagement and analysis of published data pertaining to tourism, Paisley's existing tourism audience includes:

- primarily domestic;
- older; and
- with strong elements of international interest in key areas (e.g. the Wallace Window in the Cathedral, descendants of Robert Tannahill, and American visitors which include those with Scottish ancestry and those interested in weaving).

A conservative estimate of the total size of the market available to Paisley is in the region of 4.4 million visitors.

Having conducted 'market demand' research among a variety of end consumers, intermediaries and suppliers our research would conclude the following:

- There is a 'warm' feeling towards Paisley among those who know it, its fine history and heritage are acknowledged and appreciated;
- But this is tinged with sadness: "I remember what Paisley used to be like and seeing it now, breaks my heart...";
- There is a lack of general awareness of the riches Paisley has to offer;
- Influencing operators' itineraries will take both time and persuasion;
- VisitScotland is a key partner and there needs to be closer engagement with the national agency;
- Influencing the domestic market is key; and
- Ultimately there is potential to develop Paisley's tourism market but it will take time and investment.



5. The Asset Strategy

The Paisley Town Centre Asset Strategy is focused on key economic drivers and the latent potential of Paisley's cultural and heritage offer which is one of the most important elements of Scotland's tourism offering. Indeed, it's popularity is on the increase with Historic Scotland, Scotland's biggest operator of visitor attractions, reporting an increase of 14.8% on 2012 figures. Across the agency's 78 ticketed attractions, records were broken at flagship sites such as Edinburgh Castle, Linlithgow Palace, and St. Andrews Castle.

Whilst not setting out to deliver a complete tourism or destination visitor strategy, this document sets out the framework for such a strategy with a view to growing Paisley's tourism market. There are two routes via which Paisley might increase visits:

- Firstly based on its proximity to Glasgow, it must look to 'steal share' from Glasgow's staying visitor market; and
- Secondly, it must encourage existing and lapsed visitors to re-visit and act as advocates for others.

The second point of principle is that Paisley needs to monetise its offer. Currently, there is little economic value to be gained by generating increased visitors to Paisley's attractions as:

- there are no admission charges and therefore no ticket revenue;
- people stay in Glasgow overnight as there are so few bed-spaces in Paisley so their accommodation budgets are spent elsewhere;
- the retail offer is restricted at the Abbey, the Museum and especially the Sma' Shot cottages; and
- only the Abbey has a permanent catering offer, the café at the Sma' Shot has limited opening hours.



Sma' Shot Cottage

In order to succeed, Paisley must:

- celebrate its Victorian, and older, past;
- develop its visitor offer based on its heritage assets... but make this an integrated approach;
- fill in the gaps between the heritage sites;
- improve the public realm;
- add points of attention to hold people's interest along the way and fill in gaps in knowledge;
- update the interpretation;
- improve visitor facilities and market these to specialist groups, both directly and indirectly; and
- attract the domestic market.

THE VISION FOR PAISLEY

The vision for the asset strategy is to harness the town's potential, develop its product or USP and then monetise this offer in the form of a realistic, deliverable and integrated asset strategy that regenerates and revitalises the town centre, but also creates a framework that helps to address Paisley's underlying socio economic issues.

A vision statement is proposed as a means of developing consensus over future action:

Paisley will use its outstanding architecture and its wealth of cultural assets and collections to drive its economic regeneration and establish itself as an international destination for Scottish culture and contemporary performing arts. The town will build a new vibrancy by developing sustainable uses within the historic core of the town centre to rebuild its high street economy using the audience power of its rich legacy to bring all its historic buildings into use for the ultimate benefit of the community of Paisley and Renfrewshire.

Strategic objectives have been developed to structure delivery, focusing on key drivers for growth and matching markets with existing assets and their potential offer, which in Paisley's case is an authentic and unique visitor experience that is reflective of both contemporary and traditional culture.

The assets within Paisley clearly stretch beyond potential visitor attractions and embrace a wide range of forms which provide a link to the past and basis for future regeneration. These assets should be coordinated according to Paisley's unique story of weaving and textiles. They include:

- Collections – the Museum collections in Paisley;
- Archaeology – above ground and below ground archaeological remains in Paisley are a significant form of heritage which also relate back to the Museum collections;
- Human-influenced landscapes – Paisley has a rich heritage associated with the River Cart, canal, surrounding hills and public spaces together with buildings that are evidence of industries and philanthropists of the past; and
- Historical figures – Many important historical figures are associated with Paisley and these are aspects of heritage as they provide an important insight into the town's social and political history.

As part of the Strategy, a shortlist of signature projects have been selected to advance each of the strategic objectives set out on the following page:

Paisley Town Centre - Framework for the Asset Strategy



THE SPATIAL STRATEGY

A spatial strategy has been developed to anchor both east and west ends of the High Street by identifying distinctive roles between assets and areas. Together with signage, consistent marketing and branding this approach improves legibility and delivers a coherent message to the customer.

The renaissance of Paisley town centre requires the delivery of a series of inter-related interventions. The success of each intervention will build upon the momentum to deliver others. To achieve its full potential it needs to embrace a series of transformational projects complemented by a programme of initiatives including the Paisley Town Centre Team and an ambassador programme to promote a regenerated Paisley.

The transformational area-based interventions have been defined as:

- The West End Cultural Quarter
- High Street and New Street
- Paisley Abbey and Town Hall

The West End Cultural Quarter

Drawing on Paisley's unique textile tradition and association with the Paisley pattern and shawl, the central aspiration is to create a flagship Museum of Textiles, Fashion, Costume and Design. This will comprise a 2,500m² extension to the existing 3,000m² museum complex. The strategy envisages that the new bespoke facility will provide a fitting structure to showcase the role of the textile industry in Paisley's development and its international reputation as a centre of the Scottish textiles industry.

Detailed design will define the exact configuration, phasing and full integration of the redevelopment proposals for the West End. The design should improve connectivity and access between the iconic new Museum complex, the former TA building and Thomas Coats Memorial Church; whilst also accommodating pedestrian access to the Coats Observatory from High Street.

High Street Area (Town Centre Core)

A new civic space will be the centrepiece of the town centre core. The space will be positioned at a key focal point of the town around the junction of High Street and New Street, and will feature local art work distinctive to Paisley. The strategy advocates active ground floor uses in this area and encourages the redevelopment of prominent buildings such as the YMCA building, with new access from High Street to enliven and animate this new civic space.

This initiative also links to the wider public realm and signage strategy to assist permeability, pedestrian movement and way finding. There is a need to develop a bespoke interpretative signage system to link up Paisley's heritage assets.

Abbey Quarter

The revitalisation of the Abbey Quarter is intended to reinforce the cluster of important heritage assets already located there, benefiting from good access to the railway station and ready access by car.

Interventions include:

- development programme to further enhance the Abbey as a focal point for the community, for educational activities, nursery/crèche, and for visitors;
- opening of the Abbey's medieval drain to visitors would be a complementary proposal within this area;
- consider feasibility of tours; and
- further redevelopment of the Town Hall as part of an integrated cultural offering.

THE ACTION PLAN

Successfully delivering this strategy will require effective partnership working that harnesses and coordinates the existing community asset base and the strength of the town's 'grassroots' organisations.

Whilst consultation with key stakeholders, including the Community Planning Partners, local and voluntary organisations, took place during the early stages of the strategy, a truly collaborative approach will require additional buy in from the community at every level including input into proposed delivery structures. Renfrewshire Council sits at the heart of this process, recognising the importance of and coordinating support from the following principal sectors:

- Central Government
- Museums Galleries Scotland
- Community & Voluntary Sector
- Private Sector
- Public Sector

It will also require strong leadership that will coordinate a multi-disciplinary approach involving many organisations and individuals with a wide range of expertise, experience and capacities.

Key tasks to be coordinated include:

- Aligning policy and resources in the delivery of the Paisley Town Centre Asset Strategy;
- The creation of a Regeneration Trust;
- Facilitate alternative funding models/approaches e.g. investment vehicles/receipts; and
- Pump prime infrastructure to attract private sector development.

There is an identified need to place responsibility and the means of delivery in one place and coordinate this delivery. Beyond the implementation of capital projects, the Council may need to frame an appropriate mechanism for dealing with this as part of a partnership approach with government departments and other key stakeholders.

The potential role of trusts will also be considered for the sustainable management of some of the more significant assets and in particular the:

- Thomas Coats Memorial Church;
- Paisley Museum; and
- wider collection of cultural assets

Delivery of this combined approach will ensure that Paisley's outstanding architecture and wealth of cultural assets and collections drive forward its economic regeneration for the ultimate benefit of the community of Paisley and Renfrewshire.