

An aerial night photograph of a city, likely Salt Lake City, with a blue color cast. A wide, brightly lit street, Union Street, runs diagonally from the upper left towards the lower right. The city is densely packed with buildings, many of which are illuminated with lights. In the background, a range of mountains is visible under a dark sky. The overall scene is a high-angle, wide-area view of an urban environment at night.

WHITE PAPER 2

# OUR UNION STREET

ACTION AREAS

# A WORD FROM BOB

**Cities have the capability of providing something for everybody, only because, and only when, they are created by everybody.**

This is the wisdom of Jane Jacobs, one of the world's best-known and respected urbanists, and her words are as true today as when she first said them in 1961.

Because even as trends come and go, shops open and close, and economic fortunes ebb and flow, city centres are fundamentally about one thing; people.

When we took on the task of reversing the fortunes of Union Street, there was only one place we could start, and that was with the citizens who call this city home.

Since we launched in March, your response has been overwhelming, with over 10,000 ideas submitted to our team.

Those 10,000 ideas became 17 themes – and today those themes have become five action areas that we will spend the next few years delivering against.

This whitepaper – our second – sets out our initial thoughts on how together, as a community, we can regenerate, repopulate and reinvigorate our Granite Mile.

These actions are explained in detail later in this paper, but in essence they boil down to five very simple aims.

## **We want to:**

- 1.** Brighten the street;
- 2.** Fill the units;
- 3.** Use the space;
- 4.** Tell the story; and
- 5.** Engage the city

In line with the Jane Jacobs vision, a new Union Street will have something for everybody. But it is going to take everybody to deliver it.

Every single resident of this city has a part to play, whether that contribution be big or small.

It could be as big as donating your time, or equipment, to support our efforts to tidy up the street and buildings.

It could be as simple as supporting the new businesses we hope to attract in the months and years ahead.

Or your contribution could be as small as holding back on that negative social media comment, choosing instead to talk up our city centre.

All of these things can, and will, make a difference.

However, fundamentally, our success will be based on getting your shoe leather on to Union Street.

While we have a challenge to attract tenants to the 40+ vacant units, we must not lose sight of the fact that three-quarters of the street is occupied.

These businesses need your support, and simply paying a visit to Union Street is the most meaningful contribution we can all make.

I hope you find this paper interesting, and I hope it inspires you to join the hundreds of people who have already volunteered to play a part in what comes next.

**Bob Keiller**

September 2023





# THE STORY SO FAR...

**Our Union Street was launched in March 2023 to re-energise Aberdeen's Main Street. We started by listening to what concerns people had and what changes they wanted to see. This produced over 10,000 ideas and suggestions that were collated into 17 themes.**

We held a meeting in the Music Hall on June 7th to share the themes.

The meeting was a great opportunity to answer questions from attendees. Around 400 people came to the meeting and there was no shortage of questions.

At the meeting, we asked attendees to consider volunteering as theme leaders or theme members. Around 80 people offered to lead specific topics and a further 130 were willing to help.

We asked people to nominate which theme they wanted to be involved in.

- Some people specified a single theme.
- Some specified multiple themes.
- Some specified no themes.

## Following the meeting

Thankfully, we had a natural spread of leaders and volunteers across the themes. Every potential leader who nominated only one theme was allocated to that theme. Others who had nominated several themes were allocated to one of their choices. Those who had not specified any preference were allocated randomly to balance up the numbers across each theme.

We held a meeting for the group leaders in the Union Pavilion in Union Terrace Gardens on 13th June.

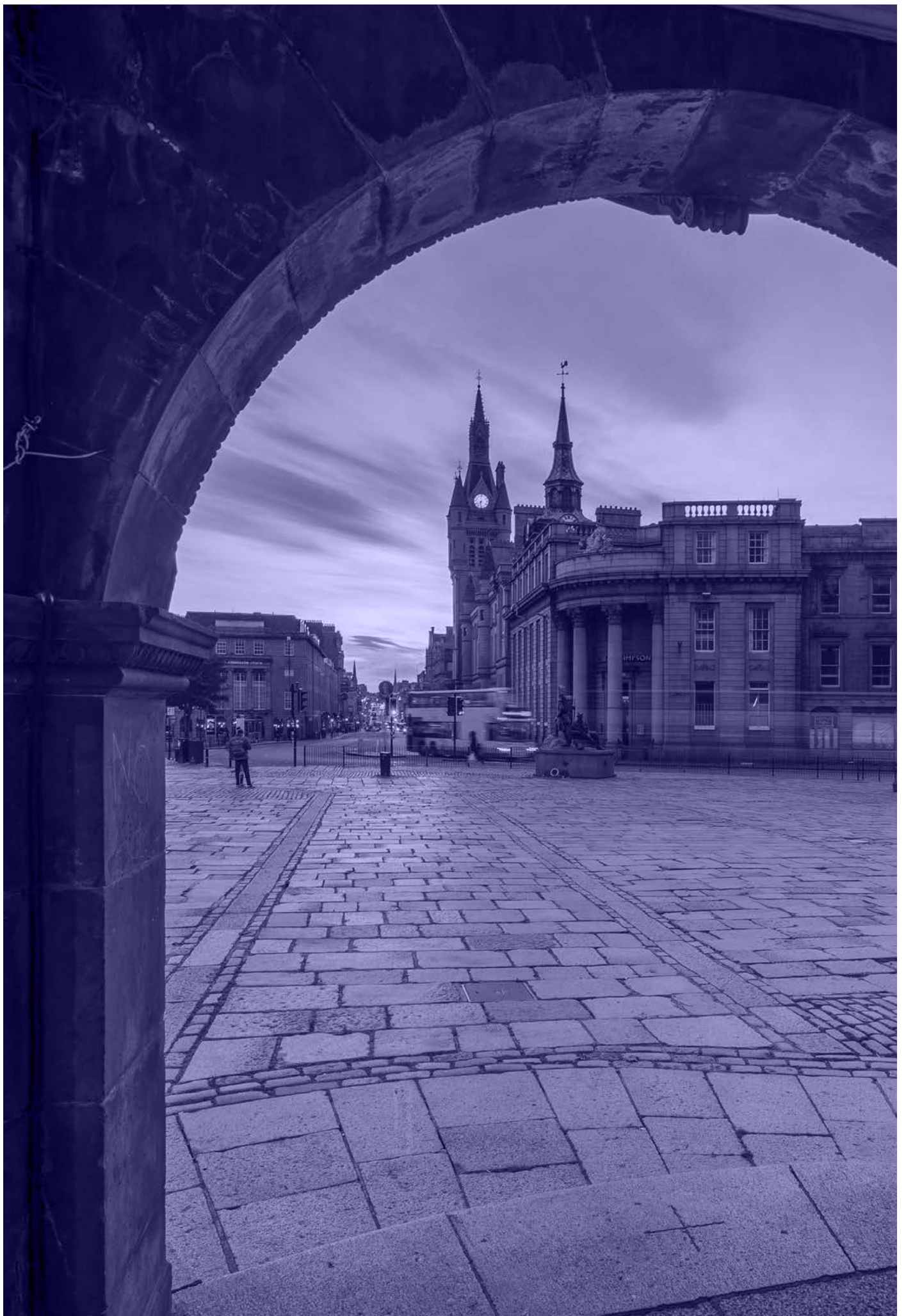
This is where we clarified our objectives and expectations and answered any further questions.

We wanted groups to study the issues in their theme and come up with recommendations on the next practical steps we should be taking in these areas. We asked that they reach some conclusions by 14th July and that they should be ready to present their findings the following week.

During the following week, 16 of the 17 groups came to the Union Pavilion to provide feedback – some came mob-handed, others sent a delegation and one or two were solo or duo efforts.

We recorded each group presenting their feedback so that this could be shared with a second wave of 200 new volunteers (review panel). Three days were spent reviewing and discussing the feedback with the review panel.







# Breakdown of the 17 key themes

## Theme 1: Activities and events

The primary concern of this group was the common perception that city centre events are very difficult to plan and get approved – and that this is a major disincentive for potential event organisers. There is a belief that events are much easier to organise in Aberdeenshire than Aberdeen City.

They cited that guidance notes for smaller events on Aberdeen City Council website runs to 19 pages while the guidance for bigger events is half the size.

The team feels that the guidelines could be made clearer and simpler – making them feel less of a barrier. They would like to work alongside officers in the council's events team to discuss how this could happen.

They also suggest creating a series of "how to" videos that could help people navigate the appropriate processes.

The idea of having an expert from the council's event team available to give advice at regular drop-in sessions was an interesting option too.

The team understand that any simplified processes will need to be strongly marketed to encourage people to come forward with their ideas.



## OUS Team reflections

How do we ensure that the cost of piloting smaller events does not become a barrier?

How do we create a rich and integrated calendar of events that works around larger events and marries in with the schedule of visitors from cruise ships? We need to be joined up with other groups involved in events planning and manage to avoid overlaps and gaps.

The OUS team feel strongly that developing skills in Augmented Reality has the potential for Aberdeen to build uniquely fascinating tours and attractions that tap into rich storytelling for education, entertainment, and enjoyment.

Aberdeen has the most complete set of historical archives of any city in the world and a myriad of fascinating stories of events and people that are not well-known. We need to harvest and craft these stories for re-telling to a modern audience.

## Theme 2: A one-stop information source

This team started considering the practicalities of making sure that any and all Union Street events were easy to find. They concluded that existing sites are incomplete, and some are not kept up to date – it is difficult to find what is going on across different venues without visiting several web sites.

It soon became clear that “Union Street” was not a practical scope limit for this group and that any system would have to include all “City Centre” events and be open for events across the city and beyond. (The brand “Our Union Street” would not be suitable for the system they plan to develop.)

They considered the ability to book events through a single system but soon realised that many restaurants, theatres, and cinemas have their own booking systems. The need to link to these systems is important but the need to duplicate their functionality is not needed.

The team also recognised that the site they are planning should be the go-to reference for other information about the city centre that is not easily found today e.g. which retailer operates from which unit and what do they provide?

### OUS Team reflections

We think the platform should include information on empty retail units along with narrative content about the attraction of North-east Scotland, Aberdeen City and Union Street.

The site would, among many other things, provide a simple map to show the numerous car parks and street parking areas around the city centre.

Part of Theme 15’s recommendation is to share stories collected about activities by those who visit or work on the street including retailers, visitors and locals – the proposed site could host these stories after they were shared on multiple social media channels.





## Theme 3: Parking Concerns

There is a widely heard perception that it is difficult and expensive to park in Aberdeen city centre. Many people have suggested periods of free parking or reduced cost parking to stimulate footfall. Others have suggested better data capture and sharing of parking space availability would help – including electronic signs and smart phone apps.

Detailed studies of parking provisions across a range of Scottish towns and cities does not support the perceptions around availability and price. There are plenty of city centre parking spaces available in Aberdeen, in fact 1821 more than in Edinburgh. They are reasonably priced compared with Edinburgh and Glasgow and similar to those in Dundee and in most cases more accessible.

There is no obvious evidence to suggest that changing parking prices would increase city centre footfall. Indeed, reducing prices could reduce precious revenues for Aberdeen City Council that help to pay for essential services.

There is no strong business case for further investment in apps or data gathering technology and a potential opportunity for the council to save some maintenance costs by removing unreliable and misleading parking availability signs at various points across the city.

A modest change in city-centre parking duration limits could help to stimulate increased footfall on or around Union Street e.g. changing the 1-hour limit in some areas to 2 or even 3 hours.

## OUS Team reflections

Similar to parking concerns, there are many areas where widely held perceptions are incorrect – the perception that business rates on Union Street are prohibitively high for instance – or that the Low Emission Zone (LEZ) will prevent cars from coming into the city.

Simply telling people “you are wrong” won’t work – but we need to share what we have found out and what we now know in many ways that allows people to make their own minds up based on new information.

We have anecdotal examples that the one-hour limit on some city centre parking discourages visitors and will be asking ACC to consider a change – we believe that this presents no realistic threat to parking revenues.



## Theme 4:

# Accessibility by Taxis and Buses

This team spoke with bus and taxi operators to understand if there is a problem and what might be done to address it?

Their conclusion so far is that with upcoming infrastructural changes in the city centre, that there is not enough data to highlight or underpin recommended changes in any current bus services at this moment in time.

Conversely, there appears to be a serious under-supply of taxis that seems to have a negative impact on the local economy – especially the night-time economy. The inability of people to get away from the city centre also contributes to increased anti-social behaviour and makes the city centre less safe.

The lack of taxis at the airport – especially for flights arriving late at night – creates a very negative experience for visitors and damages our reputation.

There is no simple recommended action, however further discussion is needed.

## OUS Team reflections

Interesting to understand why Uber would not solve the problem. All Uber drivers need to be properly licensed, and we don't have enough licensed taxi drivers in the city. It might be part of the mix in future.

The local geography test that potential drivers need to pass is very demanding with a low pass rate. We need to understand the rationale behind previous decisions around this.

We suggest that further discussions are held off-line with relevant people. We need to listen to taxi companies, drivers, councillors on the licensing committee, business owners and many more.



## Theme 5: Café Culture and Pedestrianisation

The team recognised that a café culture is only likely to happen if we have cafes with seating areas that can realistically spread onto paved areas. The completion of the ACC City Centre Masterplan will create much wider pavements and should be a good starting point.

They also recognise that work by Theme 11 on street aesthetics could improve the likelihood of a café culture developing.

The team considered some of the practical challenges about managing shared spaces and pedestrianised zones that need to allow vehicle access at times.

### OUS Team reflections

We accept that trying to accelerate plans in central Union Street could be wasteful if Masterplan works are starting early next year. We would, however, be keen to explore whether some of the measures taken during lockdown on the West End of Union Street could be replicated or adapted to change the use of that end of the street ahead of the Masterplan development which could be several years away from delivery.

## Theme 6: Cleaning the Street

This team considered the practicalities of cleaning pavements, kerbs and street furniture and are keen to get started.

There are several layers of activity required.

Identifying and prioritising the work that should be done.

Securing the equipment required to complete the required work.

Booking the volunteers who will carry out the work.

Executing the work safely.

Recording the work progress and completion.

### OUS Team reflections

Getting started with a communal Sunday morning litter sweep as suggested by Theme 11 feels like a relatively easy way to get people involved, do some great work and build a sense of pride and ownership.

Discussion with ACC's Environmental Manager was very positive, and we can learn so much from the experts and even work alongside them to understand what OUS longer term requirements might be. For instance, the council use van-mounted hot water pressure washing equipment to clean pavements and remove stickers and graffiti from street furniture – but with only 2 units for the whole city – they are constantly in use.

Is there a business case for OUS to hire or purchase a Union Street dedicated unit?

Having a prominent cleaning team on the street 5-days a week would get noticed and could help to change opinions.



# Theme 7:

## Cleaning Upper Levels of Buildings

This team had a difficult challenge to unlock. How to improve the appearance of the upper-levels of Union Street buildings and find a way of funding this work.

They recognised that there are different scopes that would improve the appearance of buildings:

Removal of weeds and shrubs makes a clear improvement, but, in some cases, they might grow back if underlying drainage problems are not addressed.

Repainting window frames that are flaking and poorly maintained is another obvious area of improvement.

Removing stains from stonework is the final part of this challenge. The team recommend that this work can only be done using the services of professional contractors who would expect to be paid normal rates.

The team considered the creation of a comprehensive service that could be offered to landlords to address these areas but have not, so far, worked up indicative costs.

The proposal for potential funding involves new public sector grants, contributions from building owners and potential sponsorship by third parties.



## OUS Team reflections

We are not convinced on the likely success of the funding model and feel that a different approach is required. If we focus on a campaign of weed removal initially can the team develop a plan that is more affordable and therefore more likely to be supported by building owners? Can we test the viability of painting window-frames (safely) from inside the building for example?

We need to keep exploring the “full scope” option and work out what the true costs and funding challenges would be for stone cleaning on blocks or individual buildings.

The working assumption is that we can only clean entire blocks of buildings to avoid any unsightly “piano-key” look. Union Street has many buildings that are architecturally unique and interesting – many of these are different from less-interesting neighbours and cleaning these as stand-alone targets may provide a more realistically affordable approach.



## Theme 8: Improving the look of empty retail units

Some of the empty units are not well maintained.

Cleaning windows, repairing broken panes, washing stone columns and facias would all help. Some empty units have had shop signs removed leaving bare, ugly plinths adding further to their negative impact. To top it all off, most have a large "To Let" board to ensure that everyone knows that this unit is dead.

Theme 10 is covering the creation of an on-street gallery across the empty unit windows. This would go a long way to making empty units look better.

Theme 13 is covering the need to create a compelling offer for empty units, and this could be linked to work to improve the appearance of empty units. If, for instance, landlords commit to longer rent-free periods for potential tenants, or rents that are very competitive, OUS could offer to refresh paintwork and clean windows.

Example: What an empty unit currently looks like and what it could look like when cleaned, painted, and included in the on-street exhibition



## OUS Team reflections

Theme 8, Theme 10, and Theme 13 can be amalgamated into a single action group.

## Theme 9: Improve the appearance of existing shops

This team considered a methodical approach to classifying the severity of work needed on existing units and the potential costs in completing such work.

They discussed how unit tenants or owners could be approached with proposals to complete recommend work and take pride in the upkeep of their unit. It was, however, recognised that this could be challenging.

The idea of more tightly defined standards around signs and signage was discussed although it was recognised that persuading existing traders to change shop signs would not be easy.

It was felt that cleaning and repairing flaking of faded paintwork would be the best place to start and that this could be part of the scope of Theme 6.

The team felt that greater clarity around planned infrastructure upgrades (by ACC) and the various roles of council departments, Aberdeen Inspired, Chamber of Commerce etc would help future actions.



## OUS Team reflections

We agree with team's conclusion – let's concentrate on cleaning activities initially.

# Theme 10:

## The on-street gallery

The team identified various uses of the potential exhibition space.

These were categorised around art, promotion and culture.

This is a great starting point but there are many other aspects that still need to be developed.

Quantifying the available display space.

Developing a consistent method for hanging standard-sized display boards in the various empty units.

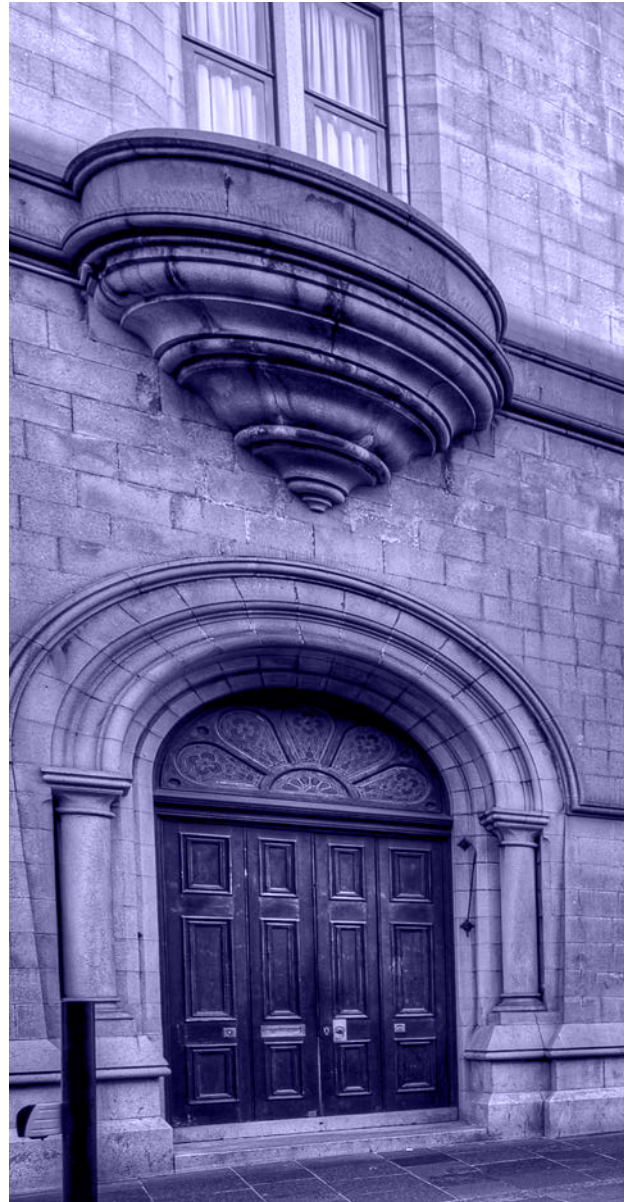
Creating a process that turns “themes and concepts” into fascinating and enthralling content.

Developing supplementary material that can be accessed via QR codes – supporting stories, links to websites, perhaps audio and videos too.

Allocating specific items to individual units.

Arranging printing and hanging.

Marketing and promotion of all new exhibitions.



## OUS Team reflections

We don't feel that promotional material is the best use of the available space. Advertising products, services or events is unlikely to attract footfall or be deemed fascinating and enthralling (even if it is accurate and informative).

Art can be very subjective – some people love it, others “don't get it”. If we use art-based themes, can we share the story of the artist, the artwork – what it means, what inspired it

We also feel that there is so much potential for other themes and ideas that could bring people to the street:

If, for instance, we had local primary schools providing stories and pictures there is no doubt that parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles would all be “brought” to Union Street to enjoy the exhibition.

What if we displayed pictures of the panels of the Great Tapestry of Scotland across multiple windows along with which aspect of Scottish history or society each panel depicts.

Or an exhibition that covers the unsung heroes (male and female) of the North-east – the story of James Blythswood from Marykirk for instance – the first person in the world to produce electricity from wind power in 1887.



# Theme 11: Aesthetics of the street

This theme considered what could be done to not just restore the street to a clean condition, but what could be done to make it even better.

They recommend a weekly, Sunday Morning social event where volunteers walk the length of the street removing all litter.

They also recommend using window-boxes, planters and hanging baskets to enhance specific buildings or blocks on the street.

## OUS Team reflections

We would encourage this team to join with Theme 6 and to define specific initial proposals for both the street clean and bringing more colour and foliage onto the street.

The idea of a weekly clean-up is exciting – we are confident that we could attract sponsorship and support for this (lots of tea will be needed). Hopefully it will become a social event that people enjoy taking part in.



# Theme 12:

## Volunteers

The team looking at the issue of volunteers had a difficult remit given that potential scopes of work were fluid and unclear.

We now understand the groups of people that need to step forward to support our collective efforts and we can re-engage with the initial 1,100 volunteers and hopefully many more.

Group 1: Street Union. We need people who will work as part of the Street Union – an army of volunteers and support staff who will help with litter picking, graffiti removal, pavement cleaning, watering hanging baskets, removing weeds from planters, touching up paintwork, making shopfronts look better etc.

If, for instance, we hope to have four teams of four people on the street each week – day morning and afternoon, we need 32 volunteer Street Union members and probably 4 coordinators to support them, welcome them, provide tea, make sure work is allocated and recorded etc. That is 36 people each working day. If we assume that we only ask each volunteer to turn up for one shift each month, we need over 800 volunteers minimum.

Group 2: Special Trade Forces. People that have specific relevant skills – Drain Jedi's, Shock Jockey, Colour Conjuror, Timber Titans and Granite Guru's, could all be especially valuable to our efforts – we should identify these people if we can.

Group 3: OUS Detectives. People with an eye for detail – regularly walking the street and looking for jobs that need to be done, taking pictures where necessary and capturing them on the to-do list system.

Group 4: Making History. Events, tours, window exhibitions and potentially museum displays can all benefit from tapping into local history and stories. We will need volunteers to harvest and translate historic stories for a modern audience.

Group 5: Leading Lights. People who like learning, teaching and talking. Initially targeting cruise ship passengers but more generally as we develop the routes and materials.

Group 6: The Arty-zans . The creation, curation and management of material, exhibits, supporting notes and stories for the on-street gallery will take a lot of creativity and effort we need a team of volunteers to make this happen and do the hard (but fun) work of coming up with and delivering on, regularly changing exhibition themes. Part of the work in creating the above exhibitions will involve liaisons with schools – we will need a few people who are happy to do this.

Group 7: Story Harvesters. A lot of the future success of Our Union Street will rely on our ability to attract people and companies to our cause – we can only do this by capturing and telling lots of stories across different channels. We need people with digital marketing skills including video capture and editing, podcasting, blog-writing etc to step forward and help.

Group 8: The Vision People. And finally – our ability to showcase potential changes to individual retail units, inside and out, will be greatly enhanced if we can use a common model in an easily shareable format such as Blender. We need to engage keen and talented people who are keen to improve their 3D modelling skills.

We will need recruitment campaigns for each category of volunteer.

## OUS Team reflections

OUS will need to have full-time volunteer coordinators. Recruiting, booking people in, making sure that they always have an enjoyable experience and recording all the work they do will take a considerable organisational effort.



# Theme 13:

## Compelling Offer for Empty Units

The team considered the best way to create a commercial offering that is attractive for empty retail units on Union Street. They also considered the broader challenge of attracting companies to relocate into the city centre and how this could be achieved.

There are various factors that are making the commercial terms for Union Street empty retail units more attractive.

Until recently, most empty units were not claiming Empty Property Relief (EPR), this would have prevented tenants qualifying for Fresh Start Relief (FSR). This is no longer the case and can now be used as a key feature for marketing the units with tenants getting 12 months rates-free.

Rateable Values (RVs) for all empty units on Union Street have dropped – some by over 50% and on average by around 25%. So compared to March 2023, the cost of occupying an empty unit has fallen.

In April this year, EPR on empty units fell from 100% to 10%. Owners are now paying 90% of their rates while the units are empty. There is now an economic advantage to renting units at lower rates than would have previously been considered.

Aberdeen City Council has introduced an Empty Shop Grant for empty Union Street retail units that could provide up to £35k of support for an owner or tenant to refurbish a retail unit. This is new. Grants to support work that improves energy efficiency of up to £30k are available too, although this is not unique to Union Street.

Awareness of these, and other, benefits is not high – we need a way of engaging with owners, letting agents and potential tenants.



## OUS Team reflections

We can offer additional financial and business support benefits to potential tenants and to provide focussed marketing support to targeted audiences.

In the last 18 months over 150 retail units in Edinburgh, Glasgow and Dundee have been filled with new tenants – retail, food and drink and activity companies.

There may not be a strong demand specifically for empty units on Union Street at present, but this can be stimulated with energetic and persistent marketing and providing a compelling commercial offering.

Further work is needed in this area.



# Theme 14: Other Options for Retail Units

(beyond retail, food and drink etc)

Team 14 thought that there should be a document created for newcomers to Union Street as well as a centralised platform to publicise the information. They also liked the idea of a drop-in centre for people to find out about opportunities and units on Union Street. They also thought about 23 possible options for the Union Street empty Units which include a bikery, a shared art space and a circular economy shop. Out of all the suggestions the team thought that the shared art space would be the quickest to deliver as designs and set up could be replicated from places like the Scottish Design Exchange (SDX) set up in Edinburgh and Glasgow.



## OUS Team reflections

We need to connect with various organisations to consider the best joined-up approach. We should talk with Peacock, Outer Spaces and others on ways to use empty units in a way that is sustainable, generates footfall and defibrillates an empty unit (or more).

We can facilitate meetings and discussions with the founder of SDX but we need people to lead the concept in Aberdeen to take it beyond an idea. We also encourage the Theme 14 team to identify a specific empty unit that could be a good site for their plans.

Subsequent discussions with Aberdeen Manager of Outer Spaces creates the potential to build from the unit they already have in use on Union Street at No. 105.

We would encourage the team to keep working on the other ideas for different ways of filling empty units:

Circular Economy Hub – define what it is, how it would operate, who would lead it.  
New museum attraction – a multi-themed city-centre museum that could cover diverse topics, potentially with rotating exhibitions that could include Aberdeen Football, Police, Medicine, Civic History etc.

Third Sector/Support Hub – We are also keen to hear more about the concept of a third-sector support hub in the city centre that has been spoken about by a few people. There is also the potential for this to transform into a multi-agency support hub at night.

# Theme 15:

## Marketing the Street

The team took a systematic approach to setting out the challenge for marketing the street and recommended that capturing and telling stories from people on Union Street, about what is happening on Union Street, will be vital. They recognised the considerable effort that this would take.

They came up with three action areas for marketing campaigns :

- Destination framing: “Why Visit?” – that would group together events, experiences, cultural activities and landmarks.
- Local stories: “The people who make it” – on visual media to present positive happenings, transformations, and successes. From Aberdonians, Business Owners and city stakeholders & partners.
- Our Union Street Groups: “Passionate people making the difference”. They want to ascertain which group actions/ activities can be packaged, presented, and amplified.

The content would be dependent on relevant activity e.g. A group out hanging baskets could be sharing the story of why they are helping and what difference their contribution makes.

The team is reaching out to RGU Digital Marketing course leaders as OUS could provide excellent real world project opportunities for many aspiring students. They recognise that professional marketing support may also be needed for OUS. The potential complexities of creating and executing multi-channel marketing strategies should not be under-estimated.

### OUS Team reflections

We agree with the team’s assessment but feel that on-street activities become the turning point for storytelling.

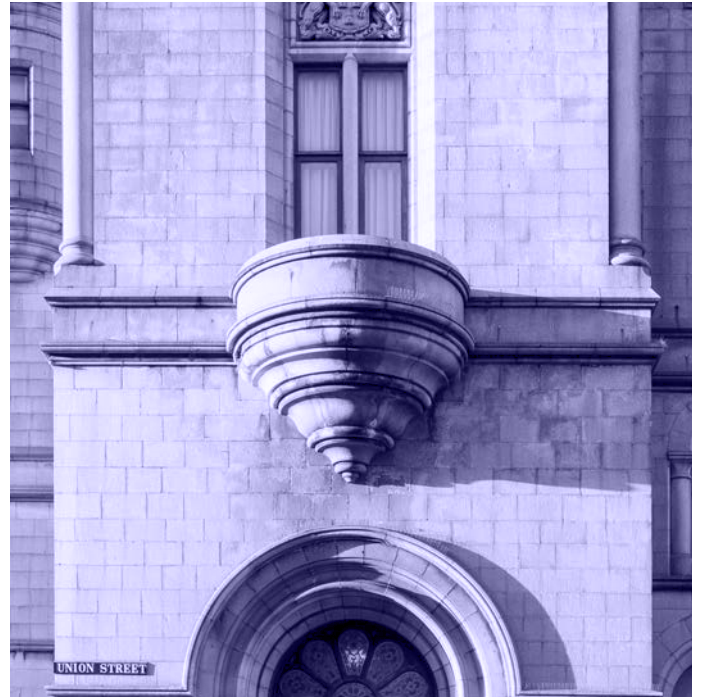


# Theme 16:

## History and Culture

This team examined and sampled the existing cultural and historic offerings and concluded that there are layers and layers of interesting stories and fascinating history that is difficult to access. There are multiple walking tour routes already identified and produced in brochures by Visit Aberdeenshire, but they could be easier to find and made available in a digital interactive form.

There are over 100 historic plaques around the city centre and many stories from Aberdeen History that need to be told.



### OUS Team reflections

We would encourage the team to develop a specific Union Street walking route that can be made available digitally.

We also recognise that mining local history and culture has huge potential benefits to other groups that are looking at city centre apps, exhibitions and museum spaces.

The six NUART Festivals in Aberdeen have created a wonderful collection of stunning street art (51 large murals and many smaller ones). We need to make more of this asset and turn it into a must-see experience for locals and visitors.

Can the Trinity Hall building on Union Street be enhanced to become a historical asset that might link to the grave of Dr William Guild in the St Nicholas church yard?

Can we get new signs made for the graveyard and look to bring more of the stories of the people in there to life using interactive technology?

Can we assign some of our Street Union volunteers to tidying up the graveyard?

Can we work with Pound for Piper charity to enhance the memorial displays in the St John's chapel section of the church?

How do we capture the history and ongoing stories of St Mary's Kirk to make it a tourist "must see"?

How do we uncover the story behind the Union Street Buildings that are architecturally significant?



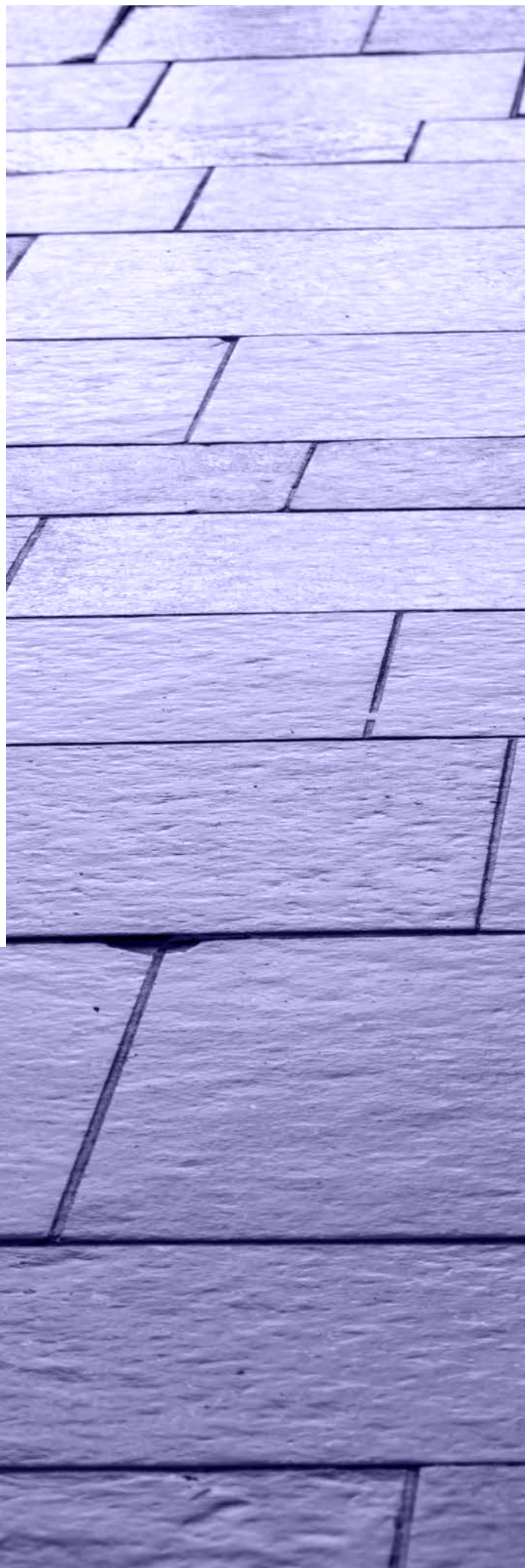
# Theme 17:

## Learning from Other Places

The team looked closely at city centre transformations in places such as Liverpool, Kirkwall and Belfast. The examples provided are fascinating and show what can be done with the right effort and support. What was less clear is the specific concepts that could be adopted in Aberdeen city centre.

### OUS Team reflections

We loved their idea of the “best shop front award” from Kirkwall to encourage the community to look after their streetscape. For now, we feel that their efforts can be amalgamated with Theme 8. We will continue to take on board ideas from other cities as they present themselves.



# MOVING FROM 17 THEMES TO 5 ACTION AREAS

We have assimilated the feedback from the theme leaders and the feedback from the review team to create a simpler set of priorities for Our Union Street.

## THEMES



## ACTION AREAS

1. Activities and events
2. A one-stop information source
3. Parking Concerns
4. Accessibility by Taxis and Buses
5. Café Culture and Pedestrianisation

6. Cleaning the Street
7. Cleaning Upper Levels of Buildings
8. Improving the look of empty retail units
9. Improve the appearance of existing shops

10. The on-street gallery

11. Aesthetics of the street

12. Volunteers

13. Compelling Offer for Empty Units

14. Other Options for Retail Units

15. Marketing the Street

16. History and Culture

17. Learning from Other Places

BRIGHTEN THE STREET



FILL THE UNITS



USE THE SPACE



TELL THE STORY



ENGAGE THE PEOPLE



**Going forward, we will have five action areas which our efforts will focus on.**

**They are as follows:**

## **BRIGHTEN THE STREET**

This is about getting the street clean then bringing extra colour and interest to it.

## **FILL THE UNITS**

Create and market a compelling offer then attract great businesses to occupy them and bring them back to life.

## **USE THE SPACE**

Use the empty shop windows as a fascinating and often changing street gallery that attracts people to the street and brightens up empty retail units.

## **TELL THE STORY**

Creating a single reliable source of information about what's happening in the city centre and creating lots of attractions and events.

## **ENGAGE THE PEOPLE**

Recruiting and deploying the volunteers we need to deliver the four action areas above.

**We also have a number of background themes that we will keep working on but that are not yet clear enough or mature enough to define clear actions for.**

The impact of more or fewer taxis on our economy and what options are available.

Finding cost-effective ways of cleaning the upper floors of buildings and a commercial model that can be funded.

Investigating all available spaces on Union Street above street level to identify development and conversion opportunities and options.

Further discussions with property Letting Agents on the best way to present incentives to attract businesses toward to come to Union Street.

Engaging better with all of the current occupants of Union Street – the retailers, the café owners, the bar managers etc.



# What next?

Many people stepped forward in June and July across the 17 Themes. Nearly 400 people were involved to different degrees. We need to secure the support of those that are enthusiastic to continue and assign people to teams and sub-teams.

The previous phase was necessarily chaotic – everyone was a volunteer, none of them had worked together before – some teams gelled, others less so. Some people were deeply involved, others less so – some groups engaged all the volunteers for their theme – others only made fleeting contact.

The next phase needs to be more structured.

We will appoint team leaders for each team and agree project milestones and timing with them.

This will give us an outline plan and clarity on the deliverables we need to produce.

We will provide shared online workspaces for the teams and ensure that any and all volunteers for a specific area are properly engaged and have regular meetings with the team leaders.

We will re-engage with existing volunteers and seek to recruit new help in the areas described in Theme 12 above.

We will keep communicating and capture new stories from the people involved and everyone else with an interest in Union Street.

Finally, and fundamentally, we need more people to live and work in the city centre to ensure it remains vibrant and attractive for the long-term.

However, before we can focus on these areas, we need to address the immediate issues that the public have told us matter most to them. And that is what we will do.







