

Hamilton Town Centre

“Our Town, Your Voice”

Report



Angela Crawley MP
Lanark and Hamilton East



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Christina McKelvie MSP
Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse

Hamilton Town Centre
“Our Town, Your Voice”
Report

Angela Crawley MP and Christina McKelvie MSP

**To the late Councillor Lynn Adams –
for all the work we still have to do.**

Produced by:

Rhona McCormick
Sean McLaughlin
David Russell
Josh Wilson

Picture credits:

David Hunter

Production allowable under expenses of the UK and Scottish Parliaments.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

FOREWORD BY ANGELA CRAWLEY MP	4
FOREWORD BY CHRISTINA MCKELVIE MSP	5
CONSULTATION RESULTS	6
<i>Q1: What best describes you?</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Q2: How satisfied are you with Hamilton Town Centre?.....</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>Q3: What is your opinion of parking charges in Hamilton?</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>Q4: What is your opinion of the one way system currently operating in Hamilton?</i>	<i>13</i>
<i>Q5: What is your opinion of business rates in Hamilton Town Centre?</i>	<i>16</i>
<i>Q6: What changes would most improve Hamilton Town centre?.....</i>	<i>18</i>
ACCESSIBILITY.....	21
<i>Parking charges in Hamilton.....</i>	<i>21</i>
<i>Traffic management</i>	<i>22</i>
AFFORDABILITY	23
<i>Business rates</i>	<i>23</i>
PROJECTS	25
<i>Open spaces.....</i>	<i>25</i>
<i>Events</i>	<i>25</i>
<i>Premises and social enterprise</i>	<i>27</i>
ASPIRATIONS FOR THE FUTURE	29
HAMILTON BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT.....	30
HAMILTON: THE UNIVERSITY TOWN	31
CONCLUSION.....	32

Foreword

By Angela Crawley

Member of the UK Parliament for Lanark and Hamilton East constituency, SNP Westminster spokesperson for Women, Equalities and Children

I grew up in Hillhouse and have lived in Hamilton all my life. For that reason I have a real stake in the future of the town.

This project stemmed from a special investigation conducted by the Hamilton Advertiser, citing 45 empty business premises in the town – 15% of the available shops.

Empty business premises help no-one and offer nothing. If a business premises lies empty, no-one is paying business rates, no staff are employed, and no profits or taxes are generated. It also means no new shoppers are attracted, the image of the town centre has changed over the years, and the morale of the residents is reduced.

Without action, our town centre will not reach its potential. That's why I joined with Christina McKelvie MSP in launching the "Our Town, Your Voice" consultation, have produced this report and have sought your views to find solutions.

I remember a town centre that had a purpose, full of independent shops and cafes. I remember people travelling from across North and South Lanarkshire to visit Hamilton Town Centre, spend money in our shops, eat in our cafes and ultimately invest in our local economy.

In more recent years the landscape has changed and some local, well established shops have either closed or are struggling for survival. This is mostly the consequence of internet shopping, out of town shopping centres, and new retail parks.

The problems we face in Hamilton are not unique. Town centres in Scotland, the UK and across Europe are struggling. Our recommendations will



not stop changes in consumer behaviour, but we will offer innovative, well thought out and structured proposals for local change.

If simple changes are made to parking, business rates and traffic management and our recommendations are taken on board, we will encourage more people to visit Hamilton, and allow businesses to flourish.

This process ultimately is about empowering our community to take control of our biggest asset, our town centre.

I am proud to come from Hamilton, proud to call it my home, and especially privileged to represent my hometown in Westminster. As a community, we should be proud of our town centre.

We have a great opportunity to make a success of our town and bring investment, jobs and sustainability back into our local economy. To do this we have created the Hamilton Town Centre Action Plan, and will work with key stakeholders in South Lanarkshire Council, with the BID and with all elected members in order to put its recommendations to work.

A local consultation on this scale regarding a town centre has never been undertaken in Hamilton. We are in unprecedented territory.

The case we set out in this report is simple: meet our recommendations, bring about reasonable change and let Hamilton flourish



Foreword

By Christina McKelvie,

Member of the Scottish Parliament for
Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse
constituency

This project is the first of its kind; the collective strength of two parliaments working together for the people of Hamilton. It is a unique collaboration for what is clearly a vital issue. The Hamilton town centre consultation, 'Our Town, Your Voice', was launched with the purpose to do one thing – improve our town.

The special investigation from the Hamilton Advertiser, which instigated this joint project, was a massive wake up call for us all. Having 45 vacant premises right in the heart of Hamilton spoke volumes.

This is why both Angela and I launched this consultation and have jointly produced this report – because actions speak louder than words.

The consultation showed there are many things that need attention. It's not one single issue – its parking, business rates, empty properties and the quality of what is on offer in general.

It's now time for us to build relationships and take direct action on what is needed.

The town centre does face challenges, there is no denying that. This report doesn't shirk those challenges, but instead offers recommendations to overcome them. These recommendations are

sourced directly from those who matter most in Hamilton – the people.

It would be far easier to accept that the town centre has fallen victim to modern times; that internet shopping and mass shopping centres have caused this decline. In fact, cities all across the continent are feeling this effect.

However, it simply isn't good enough to accept the decline of the town as a forgone conclusion.

As the constituency MSP for Hamilton, I have never accepted that the town centre is beyond 'saving'. Whilst there are people prepared to revitalise the town centre with the same amount of vigour and determination as I am, then collectively, we will do exactly that.

Being the constituency MSP for Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse continues to be one of the greatest privileges of my life, but I won't rest on my laurels. If adhered to, this report can offer simple, reasonable recommendations that will benefit everyone.

It is for that reason that this project was launched. Angela and I will continue to campaign for change - for our town centre - in order to bring prosperity and regeneration back to the people of Hamilton.

Consultation Results

The Our Town, Your Voice consultation ran from May to August 2016, and attracted a total of 1,816 respondents. The aim of the consultation was to find out the perception of Hamilton Town Centre from people within the community, and give residents, business owners, visitors and workers the opportunity to convey their opinions and thoughts on how to regenerate the heart of Hamilton.

In order to engage with stakeholders, a consultation questionnaire was designed and set up online, promoted by both Angela Crawley MP and Christina McKelvie MSP, a printed version of this questionnaire was sent to 318 town centre Businesses, and 2380 Hamilton residents to ensure access for those not online.

The questionnaire asked six questions which allowed for open ended, qualitative responses. The data from these responses will be discussed in detail for each question.

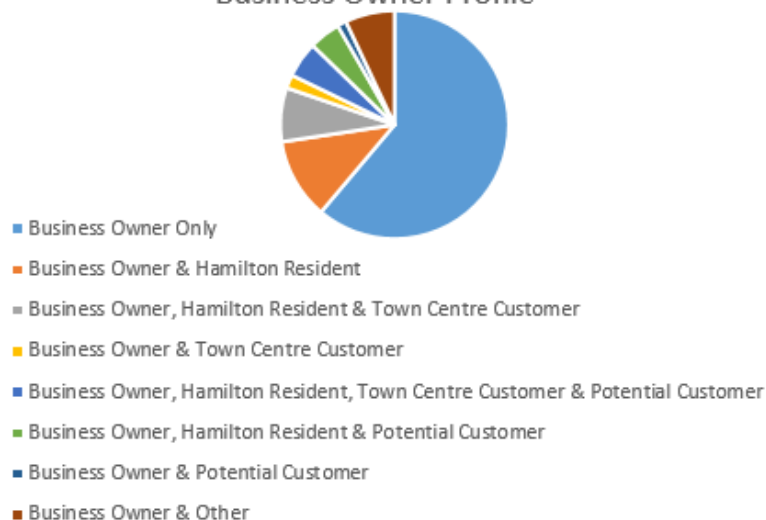
Q1: What best describes you?

What best describes you?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
a business owner in Hamilton	8.7%	157
a resident of Hamilton	69.3%	1253
a customer that frequents Hamilton Town Centre	30.5%	551
a potential customer that would like to shop in	14.4%	261
Other (please specify)	11.5%	208
answered question		1809
skipped question		7

The first question in the survey determined the status of the respondent within Hamilton, and the results showed that the majority of respondents were local residents, a total over 69%. Many respondents identified as more than one type, offering greater demographic insight.

To understand the profile of the business owners, it can be noted that 28% of them are also Hamilton residents, and 14% of business owners also

Business Owner Profile



described themselves as town centre customers. 10.2% of business owners also stated that they were potential customers who would like to shop in the town centre.

Business owners contributed to 12.7% of the “other” category; from this, 5.7 % of business owners provided further information on the nature of their business. Some of the other comments are as follows:

I was born, brought up and educated in Hamilton. I have worked here for 40 year. I live in Bothwell. I never shop in Hamilton town centre – *Euan, resident*

Been in Hamilton town centre for over 9 years. Unsure now whether to relocate as Hamilton not worth continuing to try and trade from – *Martin, business owner*

Born in Hamilton, grown up in Hamilton, attended school in Hamilton, have a business in Hamilton – *Antonia, business owner*

I would move from Hamilton if I could convince my wife but she is now thinking about it although she has lived here all her life – *Tim, business owner*

Hamilton residents make up the majority of the respondents, with a total of 69.3% of respondents staying locally. Out of the residents only 23.4% stated that they were customers of the town centre, and 9.8% indicated that they would be potential customers who would like to shop in the town centre.

7.98% of residents provided further information in the other category. Some of the comments are as follows:

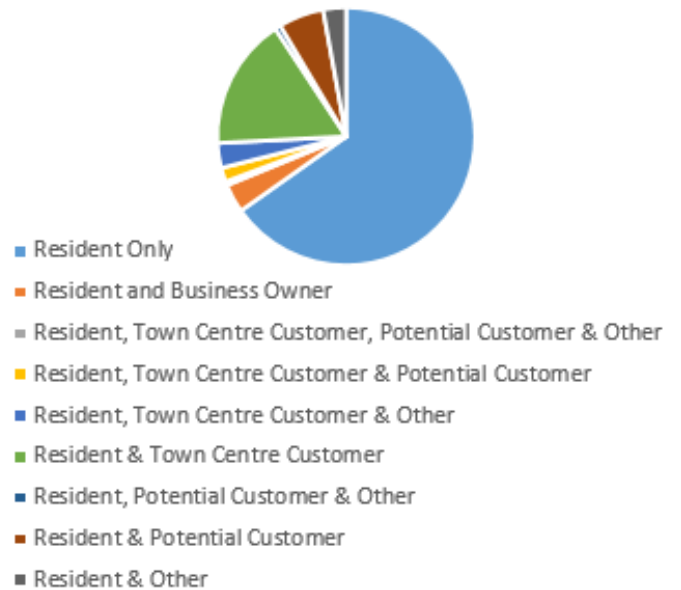
I would shop in Hamilton if it had better shops. I do try and shop locally but when there isn't much on offer it's difficult – *Karen, resident*

A resident who attempts to shop in the town, believing that my spending locally assists our town's development – *Archibald, resident*

Disappointed by the way Hamilton has gone downhill & the lack of high street stores available – *Lisa, resident*

Have worked in retail in Hamilton for 40 years and this is the worst it's ever been to shop and work - *Anon*

Resident Profile



I love Hamilton but it's a sad place now!! – *Sheena, resident, former business owner*

Look at Hamilton- it has a lovely housing area all around our town centre- beautiful homes and gardens right on our doorstep. In fact Hamilton housing is excellent, bring all our folks back and get rid of all parking charges and reinvent our shops – *Janet, resident*

Living in Hamilton, makes the deterioration more visible daily - *Anon*

A closer analysis of town centre customers highlights that 53.4% of respondents were also residents, 4% of customers were also Business Owners, and 8% also answered that they were potential town Centre customers. 12.5% selected "other" and some of the responses entered are as follows:

Town Centre Customer Profile



- Town Centre Customer, Resident, Business Owner, Potential Customer
- Town Centre Customer, Resident & Business Owner
- Town Centre Customer & Business Owner
- Town Centre Customer, Resident, Potential Customer & Other
- Town Centre Customer, Resident & Potential Customer
- Town Centre customer, Resident & Other
- Town Centre Customer & Resident
- Town Centre Customer & Potential Customer
- Town Centre Customer & Other

Go there very little although online shopping and large malls have taken over everywhere – *Clare, customer*

The once vibrant town is now like a ghost town – *William, resident*

I rarely visit the town centre now and would only do so for M&S but now that this is open at the fort I would chose to drive there – *Amv. Resident*

No shops suit me to far from bus routes, outlets to far bus stops I am nearly 77 years old – *Grizel, resident*

Have worked in Hamilton in the past, would always choose to shop there as it's closest to me – *Trish, customer*

Shop less and less in Hamilton due to lack of decent shops - Cake, charity and nail bars are all there is – *Anne, resident*

The next category of respondents is those who identified themselves as a Potential Customer of Hamilton town centre, a total of 261 people. 47.1% of Potential Customers were also residents of Hamilton. 16.9% of Potential customers stated that they were currently customers of the town centre, and 6.1% of Potential Customers owned a business in Hamilton town centre.

The “other” category was made of 13.8% of Potential Customers, and some of their comments are as follows:

An ex resident who would like to move back - *Anon*

Former Hamilton resident still living locally enough to benefit from improved services – *Claire, customer*

Business owner in another town – *Marianne, customer*

I live in Motherwell now, but still come to Hamilton occasionally for BHS, Marks & Spencer and the big Wilco, there isn't much else there really - *Anon*

Finally, 208 respondents answered “other” to Question 1, which equates to 11.5%. As mentioned above, several of the respondents ticked more than one answer to this question, but 3.4% of all respondents selected “other” only.

Of these 20 respondents stated that they work in Hamilton, 22 people stated they were former residents, and 6 individuals indicated they were former town centre customers.

Potential Customer Profile



- Potential Customer, Business Owner, Resident, Town Centre Customer & Other
- Potential Customer, Business Owner, Resident & Town Centre Customer
- Potential Customer & Business Owner
- Potential Customer, Resident, Town Centre Customer & Other
- Potential Customer, Resident & Town Centre Customer
- Potential Customer, Resident & Other
- Potential Customer & Resident
- Potential Customer & Town Centre Customer
- Potential Customer & Other

Some of the additional comments provided are as follows:

A human being who enjoys the flow of life in a town centre. Why is everything business consumer based? – *Stephen, resident*

Born and brought up in Hamilton but now live in Carluke – still travel to Hamilton for shopping – *David, customer*

I am a resident and a former business owner in Hamilton who had to close due to the state of the town centre and the ridiculous parking charges that put people off visiting – *Luisa, resident*

Previously lived in Hamilton still regularly visit and work there would like to have business there – *Abby, customer*

One significant conclusion that can be drawn so far from looking in more detail at the composition of the respondents is that out of 1,253 Hamilton residents, only 23.5% stated that they were also town centre customers. Some perhaps did not tick every box that applied to their status within the town, however, it is still a key statistic.

Q2: Overall, how satisfied are you with Hamilton town centre?

Overall, how satisfied are you with Hamilton Town Centre?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Extremely Satisfied	0.5%	6
Moderately satisfied	9.8%	123
Not at all satisfied	71.2%	891
Other (please specify)	18.5%	231
answered question		1251
skipped question		2

Question 2 asked the respondents to rate their satisfaction with the current state of the town centre, and 71.2% answered that they were not at all satisfied.

With 231 individuals selecting “other” as their answer, there were 231 comments provided. 32.0% mentioned the poor selection of shops was a key contributing factor to their dissatisfaction. 20.8% gave answers referring to Hamilton town centre as being unkempt, dilapidated and dirty. 19.5% of individuals made reference to the high number of empty shops and 16.9% of respondents stated that they were disgusted or extremely dissatisfied with the current state of the town centre. 16.5% referred to Hamilton town centre as a “ghost town”.

A selection of comments are as follows:

“Allowed to break down from a good, shopping centre to an unkempt centre that can't compete with other centres like East Kilbride, where money has been spent – *Amy, resident*”

A ghost town and nothing to entice people to shop there. Glasgow is only 30 mins away – *Lynn, resident*

Empty shops and low quality of product on offer degrade our town. Too many cheap & charity shopping offered. Dirty pavements – *Archibald, resident*

Ashamed! Too many derelict buildings – *Sandra, resident*

Considering Hamilton is (was) one of the major towns in South Lanarkshire it is shocking to see its demise – *Joan, resident*

Although a short distance away I rarely use the centre. Shops are not of quality I'd like and the number of street sellers (charity/utilities etc.) are frankly off putting! – *Tracey, business owner*

Quality of shops is poor and the amount of derelict buildings and unused shop premises etc. make it look run down, cheap, tacky and wastes the history and beautiful architecture - *Anon*

Q3: What is your opinion of parking charges in Hamilton?

Question 3 asked the respondents to rate their satisfaction with parking charges, and 78.8% answered that they were not at all satisfied. 54% people who answered this question provided further details.

What is your opinion on parking charges in Hamilton?



■ Extremely Satisfied ■ Moderately Satisfied ■ Not at all Satisfied

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Extremely satisfied	1.5%	27
Moderately satisfied	19.7%	343
Not at all satisfied	78.8%	1374
Please provide more detail		950
answered question		1744
skipped question		72

From the 27 individuals who expressed that they were extremely satisfied with parking charges, 37% provided more detail, and some of the comments are as follows:

Free parking without limits would cause chaos – *Alan, resident*

Parking charges are reasonable compared to other towns/cities – *Alan, resident*

From those who stated that in their opinion that they were moderately satisfied with parking charges, 26.2% provided further details.

As indicated by the charts above, the most popular comment provided in the more details section recommended allowing for free parking at certain times, a total of 28.9%. Quite a few respondents remarked that free parking could be more in line with East Kilbride, should be free on Sundays and after a certain time of day, and some suggested free parking all day.

Moderately satisfied with Parking Charges



15.6% of comments referred to the possibility of lowering parking charges in order to encourage more trade to the town centre, and 15.6% provided a comment that could not be typically categorised. 11.1% of respondents providing further details commented that the parking fees were acceptable when compared with other locations, and 8.9% thought the parking fees would be justified if there were better shops to be visiting.

6.7% of those providing further details were non-drivers, 5.6% recommended that parking fees should be applied on exit, rather than Pay and Display, 4.4% stated that they were blue badge holders therefore fees did not apply to them personally and 3.3% of respondents stated they had a parking permit.

Some of the other comments are as follows:

Free parking could be provided for those using the shopping centre possibly using a validation system – *Angela, resident*

From those who stated they were not at all satisfied with parking charges, 57.6% provided further details.

It's hard to tell how reasonable the parking situation is in Hamilton town centre. At the moment it's horrendous as there is little worthwhile in the centre. Perhaps if there was more there, the parking charges would be worthwhile. It should be relative to its content and services, so at the moment it's overpriced – *Antonio, customer*

At the moment this doesn't bother me as it's a case of get what you need and leave so never spend much time in Hamilton anymore, but if it was a place for hours to be spent shopping and having something to eat and generally having a walk about the shops then I would say that the parking fees are far too expensive – *Terri,*

While I appreciate the need for restricted parking, parking charges interfere with people's inclination to use facilities e.g. library and shops. Undoubtedly charges have influenced use of Regents Way compared to Asda/Sainsbury which has means that an unfair burden has been shouldered by small independent shops – *Dan, resident*

As indicated by the chart above, the most popular comment provided in the more details section was simply that the parking charges were too expensive, a total of 26.2%. 15.8% of comments referred to the possibility of introducing free parking at various times, and 13.7% provided a comment that it was cheaper to shop elsewhere. 13.5% of respondents providing further details commented that the parking fees were putting people off visiting the town centre, and 7.2%

Not at all satisfied with Parking Charges



- Lack of disabled spaces
- Non driver
- Recomends paying on exit
- Recomends free parking at various times
- Recomends lower parking charges to encourage trade
- Parking charges are too expensive
- Parking charges are disgraceful
- Not satisfied with charges due to lack of decent shops
- Other
- Cheaper to shop elsewhere
- Businesses and employees unhappy with high daily parking fees
- Issues with Town Centre Parking Permits
- Parking charges discouraging custom to the Town Centre

provided comments that could not be simply categorised. 6.7% commented that the parking charges were disgraceful or ridiculous.

5.7% of those providing further details recommended that parking fees should be applied on exit, rather than Pay and Display, 3.7% stated that they thought parking fees should be reduced to encourage more trade to the town centre, 3.5% referred to their dissatisfaction with parking charges to be caused by the lack of decent shops, 1.5% of comments related to town centre employees or businesses who objected to paying high rates on a daily basis for work, 1.4% stated that they have issues with parking permits despite being residents in the immediate town centre, 0.8% had issues related to disabled spaces and 0.4% of respondents who commented said they were non-drivers.

Respondents who provided more detail were mostly of the opinion that the current system is in place for short term financial gain rather than a long term solution to the drop in town centre footfall. This was considered a disincentive to shoppers and visitors. Alternative ideas offered included: a two-hour parking disc scheme; free parking for the first three hours; and short term

parking which would mean paying, for example, for 10 minutes rather than a full hour for short errands.

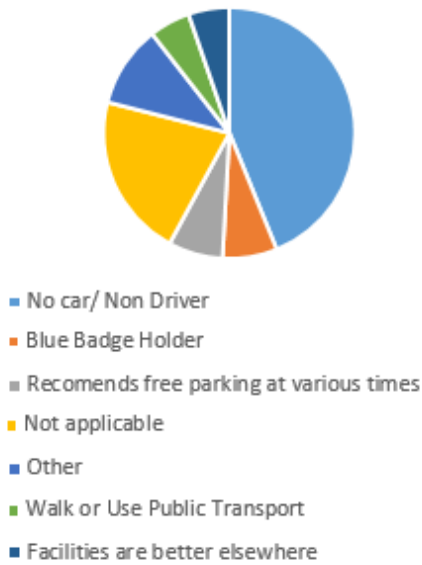
Further comments included the following:

Surrounding areas much more reasonable or even free parking. Big mistake changing to pay and display in multi storey car park opposite M&S. Previously I would browse and buy in other shops, bump into friends and go for a coffee. Now not possible as clock watching all the time – *Brian, resident*

As a Board member (voluntary) of Hamilton BID there have been many discussions on parking in the town over the years. SLC seem unwilling to consider any parking initiatives the BID has suggested. Customers indicate parking as a huge concern. The change to pay and display by SLC in July last year was completely unacceptable (there was no consultation with businesses before this was implemented). People 'clock watch now to ensure they are back to their cars in time, the visit the shops they planned to visit but have no time left to browse and see what else the town has to offer – *anon business owner*

As a prior shop owner, too many traffic wardens with no flexibility. Charge too high if town centre failing. Parking should be free some days per week – *Raymond, resident*

More Detail Only



6% of the respondents added a comment to the "Please provide more detail" section of the question on parking charges, without ticking any of the boxes. A breakdown of their demographics is provided in the chart above.

The majority of respondents here, 43.9% indicated that they were non drivers or had no car, and 21.1% stated that the question was not applicable to them. 7% stated that they were disabled and held a Blue Badge, and 7% said they would like to see free parking introduced for some periods of time. 5.3% specified that they use public transport or walk to the town centre and 5.3% indicated that facilities and charges were better elsewhere. 10.5% gave details that were a bit more in-depth and didn't fall into these categories.

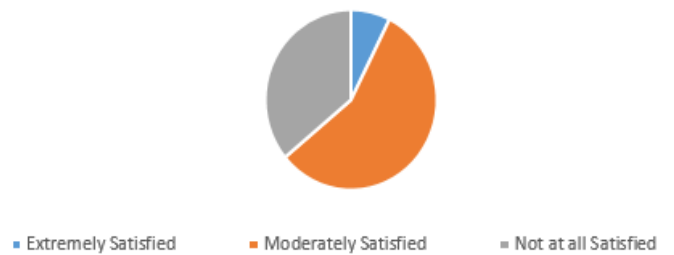
It's easier to go to out of town shopping centres like Silverburn, the Fort or Braehead where there are more spaces, better variety of shops and free parking. I don't think parking in Hamilton is particularly expensive but I don't always have change for machines to pay and display – *Leslie Anne, customer*

Too expensive, inconvenient having to use cash It's free to park at Asda and bypass the town centre entirely. Hamilton council have ruled the town centre through parking greed while enjoying acres of free parking themselves up at Almada Street – *Nicholas, business owner*

When it costs people to park coupled with the lack of real attraction it's just one more reason not to go. – *Thomas, customer*

Q4: What is your opinion of the one way system currently operating in Hamilton?

What is your of the one way system currently operating in Hamilton?



What is your opinion of the one way system currently operating in Hamilton?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Extremely satisfied	7.4%	129
Moderately satisfied	56.6%	985
Not at all satisfied	36.0%	627
Please provide more detail		588
answered question		1741
skipped question		75

Question 4 asked respondents to rate their satisfaction with the one way system currently operating in Hamilton, and the majority, 56.6% answered that they were moderately satisfied. 33.8% of respondents provided further details.

From the 129 respondents who stated that they were extremely satisfied with the one way system, 23.3% provided more details. Of these 30

respondents, 50% stated that they had no issues with the one way system, 23.3% indicated that the one way system eases congestion, 6.7% believe the one way system does not affect shopping in the town centre and 20% gave another response. Some of the comments are as follows:

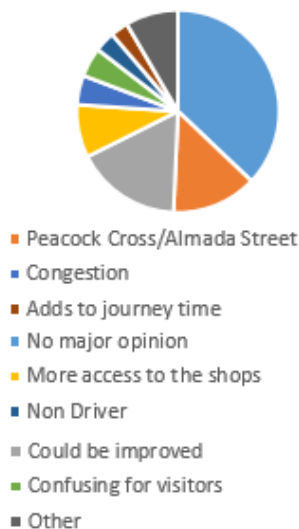
Causes congestion and difficult access to our street one way – *Andiba, resident*

Lived here most of my life so I am used to it, however visitors don't like it – *Lorna, resident*

The only area of issue is the big roundabout entering the town when you leave the motorway. Very congested – *Douglas, resident*

From the 985 respondents who stated that they were moderately satisfied with the one way system, 21.6% provided more details which are depicted in the following chart:

Moderately satisfied with one way system



Most respondents who stated that they were moderately satisfied with the one way system and provided further details had no strong opinions on

the current one way system, a total of 37.1%. 16.9% of these respondents stated that there was room for improvement, 13.6% mentioned their dissatisfaction with Peacock Cross or Almada Street, and 8.5% indicated that there was more need for cars to have further access to the shops, including suggestions of allowing all traffic to Cadzow Street, opening up Townhead Street or making Quarry Street accessible to traffic. 4.7% responded that the current one way system led to congestion, 4.7% stated that the system was confusing to visitors to Hamilton, 3.3% indicated that they were non-drivers, and 2.8% stated that the one way system added unnecessary journey time. 8.5% of these respondents gave another reason in the more details section of this question, and some of the comments are as follows:

2 way could operate better to give access to motorway from town centre – *Julie, resident*

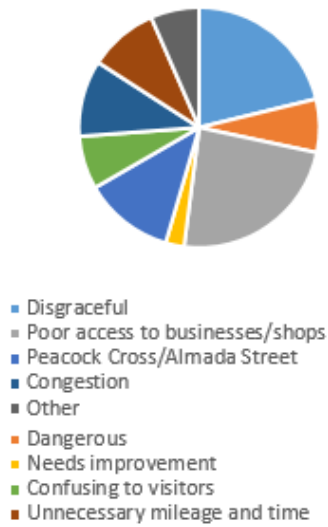
As a driver it's ok but as a business owner I wonder if it would be better to open up Quarry Street to traffic, or join make it easier to access A723 from Union Street – *Carla, business owner*

It's designed to keep as much through traffic out of the town centre but does not encourage short stop shopping - it's difficult to address both without major spending to reconfigure and provide suitable parking – *Brian, resident*

From the 627 respondents who stated that they were not at all satisfied with the one way system, 51.2% provided more details.

The most popular type of comment (23.7%) referred to there currently being poor access to the businesses and shops in the town centre, with many stating their opinion that Quarry Street should be re-opened to traffic, and others expressing dissatisfaction with Cadzow Street

Not at all satisfied with the one way system



being one way. 21.2% offered comments that the one way system is disgraceful. Although not directly impacting on the town centre area, 12.1% made reference to the problems at Peacock Cross and Almada Street, and 10.3% mentioned congestion in their response.

The most popular type of comment, 23.7%, referred to there currently being poor access to the businesses and shops in the town centre, with many stating their opinion that Quarry Street should be re-opened to traffic, and others expressing dissatisfaction with Cadzow Street being one way. 21.2% offered comments that the one way system is disgraceful. Although not directly impacting on the town centre area, 12.1% made reference to the problems at Peacock Cross and Almada Street, and 10.3% mentioned congestion in their response.

9.3% of these respondents stated that the one way system led to unnecessary mileage and time was wasted, 7.2% commented that the one way system was dangerous, 7.2% stated that it was confusing to visitors, and some residents, 2.5% specified that it needs improvement. 6.5% of responses did not fit into these categories of answers provided, and some of these comments are as follows:

Getting in and out of a traffic system that is more like a maze/rat run who in their right mind allowed this to happen – *Jim, customer*

Hamilton town centre has become a large roundabout - people drive round the main town centre area rather than through it. Allowing taxis to access Quarry Street would assist less mobile customers in accessing the shops. If I call a taxi for a customer from my shop in Lamb Street then the nearest place they will collect is the stairs at TSB bank which is hopeless. A taxi collection point near the top cross would help with this – *anon business owner*

I am a chartered town planner and believe that the one way system and pedestrianisation is likely to be the biggest factor in the low footfall and consequent decline in the town centre. There are countless examples across Scotland and the UK where towns have free flowing traffic through the main street, providing excellent access, short stay parking, vibrancy and increased footfall within town centres. Indeed, the more forward thinking towns (see Oxford) are removing segregation of travel modes realising that this has been a factor in town centre decline. For example, if you wish to visit the town for say an optician appointment, or a quick trip to the bank, it becomes a frustrating an inconvenient outing, navigating the one way system with its lights and indirect desire routes“, making sure you have exact change, navigating through a tired multi-storey parking area. Much less appealing than the convenience of out of town centres – *Andrew, business owner*

This system is totally incompatible with cycling – *Claire, resident*

3.6% of the respondents added a comment to the “Please provide more detail” section of the question on parking charges, without ticking any of the other options. 7 of these answers indicated that the respondent did not drive, 5 respondents had no particular opinion on the one way system.

Q5: What is your opinion of business rates in Hamilton Town Ccentre?

What is your opinion of business rates in Hamilton town centre?



■ Extremely satisfied ■ Moderately satisfied ■ Not at all satisfied

What is your opinion of business rates in Hamilton town centre?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Extremely satisfied	1.2%	16
Moderately satisfied	19.2%	254
Not at all satisfied	79.6%	1052
Please provide more detail		934
	answered question	1322
	skipped question	494

Question 5 asked the respondents to rate their satisfaction the business rates in Hamilton, and the majority, 79.6% answered that they were not at all satisfied. 70.6% of respondents provided further details.

From the 16 respondents who stated that they were extremely satisfied with the business rates in Hamilton town centre, 6 provided more details. Of these 6 respondents, 3 individuals stated that they did not know what the business rates were.

From the 254 respondents who stated that they were moderately satisfied with the business rates, 28.7% provided more details.

42.5% of those who provided further information on this question, commented that they were unaware of what the business rates were, similarly, 11% stated that business rates were not applicable. 11% of respondents stated that they

Moderately satisfied with Business Rates



■ Small Business Relief
 ■ Don't know what business rates cost
 ■ Rates are too high
 ■ Could be improved
 ■ Not Applicable
 ■ Other

were in receipt of some sort of small business relief, and 9.6% indicated that rates should be improved. 8.2% commented that the rates were too high, and 17.8% provided “other” answers. Some of these additional comments are provided below:

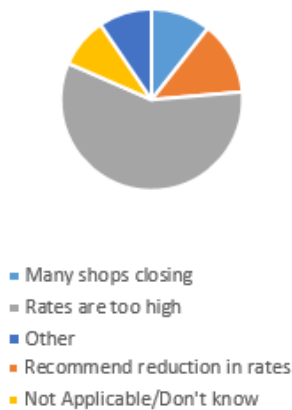
Our lease is up next year, possibly need to move out – *Anon, business owner*

The council should have a responsibility to create jobs and lift the local economy. Offer new businesses with limited funding a way to market by going rates free for a period – *Michael, resident*

You can keep up the rates/ reduce slightly if the council are actively dealing with other issues e.g. bringing more customers into the town – *Anon, resident*

From the 1052 respondents who stated that they were not at all satisfied with the business rates, 51.0% provided more details.

Not at all satisfied with Business Rates



57.9% of those who provided further details regarding business rates commented that the rates were too high, and a further 13% recommended that business rates were lowered. 10.6% of respondents remarked on the number of empty shops and how often shops are closing. 8.9% of those answering in this section stated that they didn't know what business rates were set at, or that they weren't relevant to them personally. 9.5% gave another reason, and some of the responses are outlined below:

Two years ago we took on premises that had been empty for several years. We spent thousands of pounds renovating the building inside and out. We are providing affordable funerals to the bereaved, trying to combat funeral poverty and have employed five local people and always source locally where possible for suppliers. Can we have a new business rates relief? No, your rateable value is too high. Can we get a review? Not this year I'm afraid – *Claire, business owner*

Again it's a knock on with the ridiculous parking charges. Business can't meet the rates and close as people aren't coming to Hamilton – *Gillian, resident*

As a small family business we've been trading in Hamilton for 100+ years, with the last 30yrs as a perfume shop - Business rates are our biggest monthly expense. The current scales were set at a time when Hamilton was a busy and bustling town centre, sadly this is no longer the case. SLC seem unwilling to consider any reduction – *anon business owner*

Rates are set in stone for at least 5 year. I'm a publican and business has changed dramatically in recent times – *Sam, business owner*

Business Rates should relate to the facilities and footfall of a Centre. Hamilton has very little of both. It is so depressing, no business can survive – *James, customer*

Reduce them to insignificant amounts and show you want to be open for business in the town centre rather than out of town industrial estates – *Gordon, resident*

South Lanarkshire needs to make decisions quickly on setting aside to address this issue to ensure vacant property rates do not continue to rise. Should be looking to offer more targeted support - bespoke workshops for traders through either the BID or Business Gateway models – *Fraser, business advisor*

Q6: What changes would most improve Hamilton Town Centre?

What changes would most improve Hamilton Town Centre?	
Answer Options	Response Count
	1676
<i>answered question</i>	1676
<i>skipped question</i>	140

Question 6 in the survey was an open-ended question, and therefore people gave numerous suggestions within their answers.

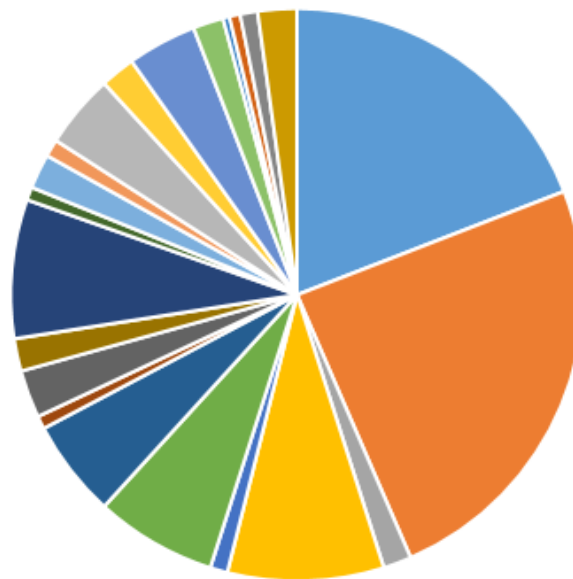
92.3% of respondents added a comment, however the statistics provided below are based on an analysis of 3264 individual comments rather than

as percentages of the total number of respondents. The chart below depicts the most common responses.

The most common suggestion for improving the town centre is to **increase the quantity and quality of shops available**, with 24.4% of all responses giving this recommendation, with some suggesting more well know brand names, and others focusing more on variety of shops and independent/niche retailers.

Parking was the next most popular comment, with a total of 19.1% mentioning either a reduction in parking charges, free parking, short stay parking, more parking or removal of Pay and Display.

What changes would most improve Hamilton Town Centre?



- Parking
- Events
- Late night shopping
- Fill empty shops
- Leisure facilities/Soft play/attractions for teens & families
- Lower rent and/or rates
- Re-introduce traffic to Quarry Street/Better access to Cadzow Street
- Incentives to attract new business
- Improved restaurants, bars and cafes
- Improve disabled access
- Introduce green space
- Improved selection of shops
- Improve Town Centre appearance
- Fewer charity shops/pound shops
- Market days
- Congestion/one way system
- Improved nightlife
- Under-cover development
- Develop Bairds building
- Reduction of 'chuggers'
- Introduce community/social enterprises
- Other

8.9% of comments made reference to **improving the appearance of Hamilton Town Centre**. Suggestions included making businesses responsible for keeping their shop facia up to standard, demolishing derelict buildings, a competition or community group similar to Bothwell in Bloom, general clean-up and revamping.

7.8% of the remarks referred to **the lowering of rent and/or business rates** to attract investment and new business. Similarly, 4.2% suggested **business incentives** to attract a range of business. Some suggestions referred to incentives to attract bigger, chain or department stores, and other were looking for incentives to attract bespoke shops such as gift shops or unique fashion stores.

6.9% of the comments remarked on there being **too many charity shops**, pound shops and stores such as pawn brokers/pay day loan businesses. Bookkeepers were also felt by many to be overabundant in the town centre.

5.5% of the answers given referred to their being **too many empty shops**, and that filling these would improve the Town centre. Pop-up shops were a popular suggestion, and also using bigger retail spaces such as the former BHS location to set up a series of attractive market style stalls. Several comments suggested turning empty retail units into social housing.

The rest of the comments were less popular but all responses and opinions are of interest going forward. 1.6% of comments referred to creating events to attract people to Hamilton, 1% suggested **late-night shopping**, 3.9% of comments suggested that an improved selection of **restaurants and bars** might attract more custom to the town centre, and 2.7% suggested the introduction of either **leisure facilities** or soft play activities for children, teens and families.

2% of the remarks stated that **removing the pedestrianisation of Quarry Street** and/or removal of one way from Cadzow Street would improve the town centre. 1.7% stated they were **too many charity workers** or salespeople ('chuggers'). 2% suggested **development of the**

Bairds building would improve the town centre. 1.8% remarked that **changes to the one way system** would help. 1% thought that extending the cover Regent Centre **roof covering** would be beneficial.

1% of responses included the suggestion of more **green spaces** within the town centre area. 0.7% suggested **market days**. 0.7% would like to see **improved nightlife**. 0.6% suggested community or social enterprise projects or centres. 0.4% proposed **improvements to disabled access**. There were also a number of other comments that did not fit into these broad categories, 2.2%.

With 1676 comments, it is difficult to give a completely accurate representation of the views of the respondents, however a selection of the comments provided are as follows, and some of the proposals put forward will be looked at in more detail in the "Recommendations: Projects" section further in the report.

There is not a great variety of shops, the main clothes shops now in Hamilton are Primark and new look, it would be great to get more big shops like Topshop etc. rather than small little boutique style shops that never last more than a few months – *Kimberly, business owner*

More variety of shops especially of a fashion nature. More events like market days, free sample stalls of local produce and fashion shows – *Lauren, resident*

Allowing the expansion of the surrounding retail parks has created the doughnut effect whereby the centre has collapsed resulting in occupation by short lived businesses and charity shops. I think it highly likely that the same people complaining also frequent the retail parks – *Damian, resident*

Suggestions and solutions:

Vision for the Future

The town is effectively split in half. Shoppers who come to Next and Asda do not tend to visit the Regent centre as there is not much incentive to do so. This has to be addressed with a clear link between the two areas – *Margaret, resident*

I would like to see more community activities for children and more seasonal activities like maybe a Christmas market or beer festival - *Cheryl, customer*

I'd have more litter wardens and less traffic wardens Fine people on the spot for dropping litter and cigarette doubts which would bring in more revenue. I adorn the outside of my pub with flowers, tubs and hanging baskets. More business owners should be encouraged to do likewise. We could have competitions and it would brighten up Hamilton as it does in Bothwell and Uddingston. – *Sam, business owner*

Improved toilets! A changing life's toilet would be far more appropriate than using a floor as well the lack of baby changing for an area so large and spread out, even certain restaurants struggle with this – *Lynn, resident*

Look at the investment in E. K. to improve the ice rink area which had become very run down. This is what forward thinking decisions can achieve – *Margaret, resident*

A drop in rent so it would entice people back. The money generated from a Wetherspoons would have made Hamilton a place to go (day or night) rather than a place to drive past as it offers nothing but holiday shops and pound places! And everywhere else is online so why pay parking when delivery charges are more convenient! – *Lynn, resident*

Bairds is an eyesore which is one of the first sights shoppers see on arrival in the town. Could a store like Primark not be given rates incentives to move to this larger building? The present Primark could be let to smaller market traders to provide affordable retail space. Hamilton council need to be proactive instead of sitting back and letting the town go rapidly downhill – *Margaret, resident*

Incentives for small business to open bespoke shops with unique offerings such as gift shops, unique fashion etc. and to have a fair ratio of these type of shops to big chains such as Primark, Boots etc. – *Aanes, resident*

Build new social housing in Bairds and on the site of Hamilton Town Hotel. – *Elsbeth, resident*

Better range of shops. Activities such as laser quest, crazy golf, puzzle room or soft play. More restaurants, particularly chains such as Pizza Express, or Wagamama – *Rhona, resident*

Accessibility

Parking charges in Hamilton

The most recurring theme throughout the consultation was the perception of South Lanarkshire Council’s use of parking charges as a barrier to trade.

As outlined in the result and findings section, parking charges in Hamilton have elicited an overwhelmingly negative response.

As displayed through the table opposite, 78.78% of all respondents stated they were “not at all satisfied” with the parking charges within Hamilton.

The evidence presented shows a demand for change and our recommendations seek to address their concerns.

While we accept that the Council is currently operating under tight financial constraints, we believe that the cost is too high not to address concerns around parking

Our recommendations do not seek to remove parking charges completely, but rather change South Lanarkshire Council’s approach to the provision.

We believe that the parking provision should be in place to attract the right customers to our town centre, rather than turn people away.

Recommendations:

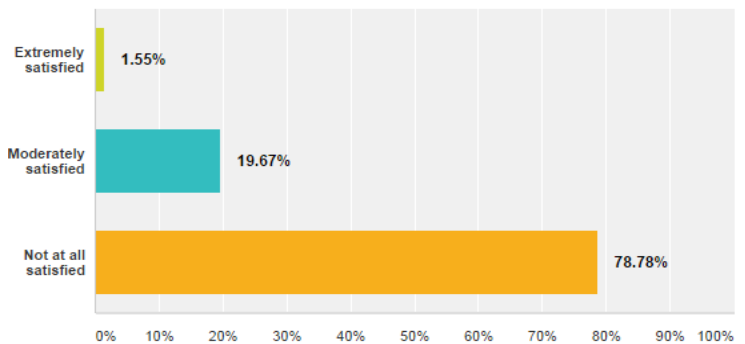
1. To allow for one hour free parking across Hamilton town centre.

We believe that if a grace period of one hour were allowed, it would encourage, at least, short-term visits to the town centre. These short-term visits would then encourage:

- Repeat journeys into the town centre
- Longer-term visits; grace period allowing for a reduction in cost output.

What is your opinion of parking charges in Hamilton?

Answered: 1,744 Skipped: 72



2. Pay on exit to be introduced in Duke Street car park

We believe this will allow the freedom to enjoy more time in the town without having to return within a regimented timeframe, and therefore increasing the length of stay during their visit.

We believe the introduction of pay and display in Duke Street carpark has been detrimental to the town.

We support the claim that reducing the cost of accessibility into the town centre will have a positive impact on its regeneration.

3. That all South Lanarkshire Council operated parking machines have change giving capabilities.

The survey results display show frustration over the lack of change given at South Lanarkshire Council parking machines

The evidence suggests that this acts as a hindrance to access to the town centre.

This report calls on all parking machines to give distributive change to customers.

We believes that in doing so, footfall would be increased into the town.

Traffic management

Within the consultation, we also asked respondents what their opinion is of the one way system currently operating in Hamilton.

The survey gathered 1,741 responses to the question, an answer rate of 96%.

As has been outlined in the results and findings section of this paper, the one way system operating in Hamilton has a 56.58% “moderately satisfied” response, with 36.01% of responses being “not at all satisfied”.

The evidence supports the claim that while the majority were “moderately satisfied” with the one way system, recommendations can still be presented for future consideration.

Recommendations:

- 1. That South Lanarkshire Council engage in a public consultation on opening Quarry Street to traffic.**

Evidence within the survey proves that the lack of access on Quarry Street is a barrier to increased trade within the town centre.

We believe a public consultation should be initiated by South Lanarkshire Council, in order to further canvass local business and residents’ opinions on the proposed change.

Any proposed expansion must allow for ample on-street parking on either side of Quarry Street.

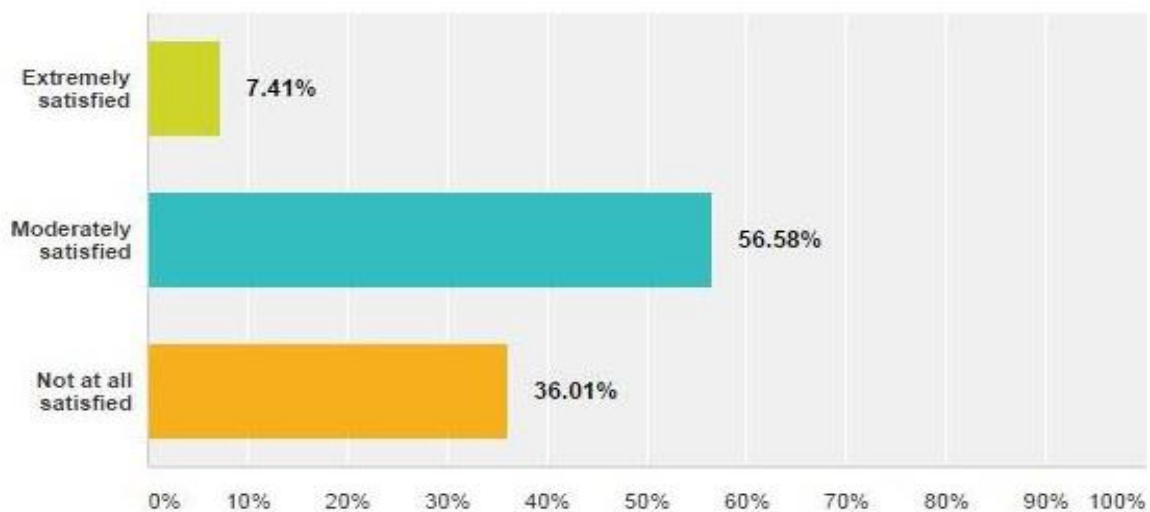
In order to combat the lack of access to shops and services within the town centre, on-street parking is essential.

Any proposed expansion must include a 30 minute free period of parking, with no option to extend.

If accepted, shoppers wishing to spend longer than 30 minutes in the town centre should be encouraged to use the free hour allowance in other areas of Hamilton.

What is your opinion of the one way system currently operating in Hamilton?

Answered: 1,741 Skipped: 75



Affordability

Business rates

Businesses in Hamilton are struggling financially. Where in some instances, the customer base exists, the overheads are too costly to remain sustainable.

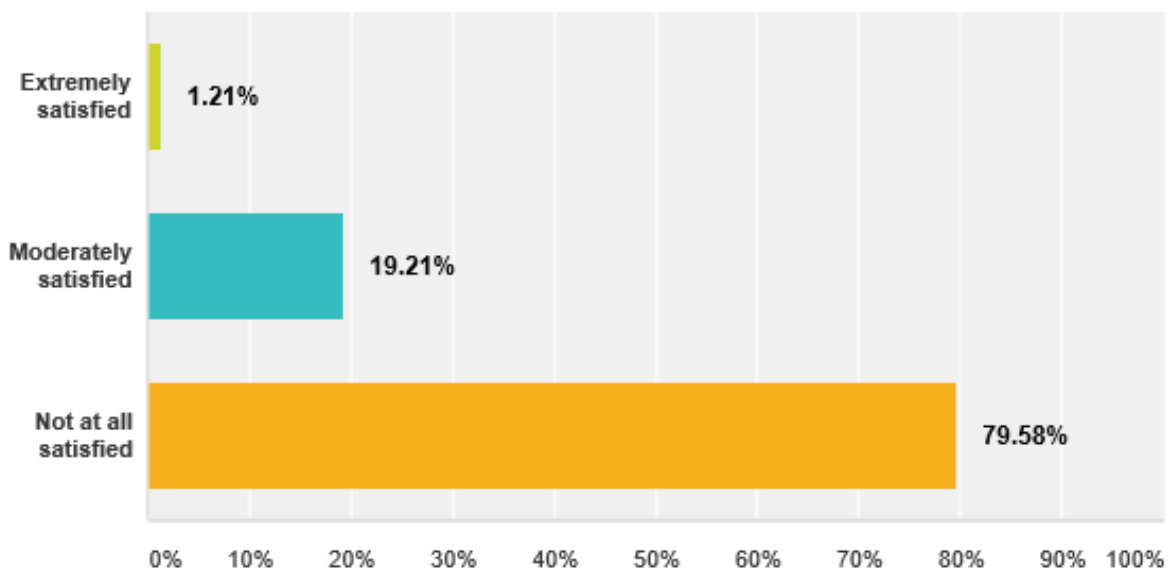
A number of initiatives have helped small businesses survive in Hamilton. The Scottish Government introduced the Small Business Bonus, which removes all business rates for any property with a rateable value of under £10,000.

However, in Hamilton’s case, it is mostly large properties that are vacant, and therefore are not eligible for the rates relief scheme.

The question “how satisfied are you with the business rates in Hamilton Town Centre” was answered by 1,322 people and found that 79.58% of respondents were extremely dissatisfied with business rates in Hamilton. There is a clear appetite for change, and our recommendations seek to address the respondents’ concerns.

What is your opinion of business rates in Hamilton town centre?

Answered: 1,322 Skipped: 494



Answer Choices	Responses
Extremely satisfied	1.21% 16
Moderately satisfied	19.21% 254
Not at all satisfied	79.58% 1,052
Total	1,322

The Scottish Government also provide support through the new start scheme. The initiative entitles those who own or have built a new business property after April 2013 to up to 100% rates relief.

A 50% rate relief is also applied to those that move into a property that has been long term vacant. The 'Fresh Start' scheme applies to those that started occupying the property on or after 1 April 2014 when that had previously been empty for at least 12 months and had a rateable value under £65,000.

In Hamilton Town Centre, of the current empty properties, most have a rateable value of over £10,000. This means they are liable to pay some or all of their business rates. Their rates have not been revaluated since 2007, prior to the financial crash, making them completely unrepresentative of the current economic climate.

The Scottish Parliament passed the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 on 17 June and it received Royal Assent on 24 July 2015. It contains provisions which, according to the Explanatory Notes, "will allow any rating authority to create, if it wishes, local relief schemes for any non-domestic rates leviable by it".

These schemes "may be defined by categories of property, areas, activities or any other matter". The date on which this power will be available to local authorities was determined by a Commencement Order laid before the Scottish Parliament on 25 September 2015: and was made available from 31 October 2015.

In Scotland, the multiplier of business rates, or "poundage" as it is known, is set by the Scottish Government. As in England, it can increase by up to the Retail Price Index rate of inflation annually, and the Scottish Government has committed that the poundage in Scotland will not rise above the equivalent English rate for the lifetime of this Parliament.

Recommendations:

South Lanarkshire Council create the 'Hamilton Business Bonus Scheme'.

This scheme would see South Lanarkshire Council use the powers in both the Community Empowerment Act and the devolution of business rates to provide a 50% flat rate reduction on business rates for properties with a rateable value of over £12,000 in Hamilton town centre.

We recommend that the pilot scheme operates within the town centre area as defined by the Business Improvement District boundary.

If the Council cut business rates in by 50% in Hamilton, we estimate that this will attract more businesses to the town centre, and therefore generate more income for the local authority.

We estimate that the extra revenue generated by the new businesses will mitigate the cost of the reduction in tax.

Projects

There has been a huge amount of positive feedback as a result of this consultation, and some of the ideas raised will now be outlined in more detail. This section is based on the more creative ideas to rejuvenate the town centre.

Open spaces

There were several suggestions relating to the development of attractive open spaces within Hamilton Town Centre. In addition to investment in the general upkeep and appearance of the town centre, this project relates to the creation of more structured spaces that will be attractive and useful to residents and town centre customers.

Recommendations:

We recommend that a small green area is installed in the derelict area of Quarry Street that corners Campbell Lane.

This would present an opportunity to involve community groups in taking ownership of the area. A new initiative in Glasgow's Sauchiehall Street was created at the end of last year, pictured below – the city's first 'Parklet'. The Parklet is described as a pocket roadside installation designed to encourage passers-by to linger in the area. We believe a similar initiative would work well in this space.



Another site identified within the survey for redevelopment is Townhead Street. The stretch of

Townhead Street that begins at the corner of Cadzow Street/Keith Street is vacant, without use.

We recommend that a green space is installed to attract people to Hamilton and allow customers to spend more time in the town.

Many respondents indicated that **action needs to be taken relating to the derelict Townhead Hotel**, with suggestions including renovation into social housing, and demolishing for extra parking space.

Suggestions on the stretch of road included pedestrianisation incorporating a green space, perhaps with a children's play park, flower beds, seating areas.

A number of responses indicated that more use should be made of the open space already in existence at Castle Street. It has been suggested that this area could be aesthetically enhanced with the addition of some greenery and flora to break up the urban 'concrete' feel, and that the area could be used to host markets or events.

Events

Throughout the consultation, a number of respondents gave a number of recommendations relating to events that could be potentially be held in Hamilton. In this section of the report, the events we outline are with the intention of encouraging more people to visit Hamilton, enjoy the event and return in the future.

Recommendations:

We recommend that the Council build on the success of the fairly new Games Cafe, Settlers, and the new neighbouring Games Shop Akkrin, and promote this area of Hamilton as a Comic/Games haven, with the introduction of an annual Comic-Con Event.

Early this year East Kilbride hosted their first Comic-Con, which was organised by The Big Glasgow Comic, and promoted as South

Lanarkshire Comic-Con. We propose that Hamilton should host the same type of event. Such an event should include vendors selling Comics, Graphic Novels, Crafts, Art, Old and New Figures and Film/TV memorabilia and a Cosplay competition.

We also recommend that other events, including family days, festival of food and drink, music festivals, arts, cultural or historical festivals, and street parties with stalls, music, children's attractions such as face painting with food and drink stalls supplied by local pubs, cafes or restaurants are considered.

A Hamilton Youth Music Festival – Chatelherault have a thriving youth band set up, last year Hamilton was not represented at the Chatelherault Youth Music Festival – *Tom, resident*

We believe that these should work in conjunction with events at Chatelherault Country Park whereby cross-promotion could take place. An example of this is Chatelherault's Art in the Park event, where some of the stall holders at the arts and crafts fair could set up an additional stall in the town centre, and various choirs, music groups or dance schools could perform.

There are various food and drink festival ideas that should be considered. Glasgow hosts an annual festival called 'Let's Eat Glasgow!' in which top chefs from across the city taking customers on a journey from field to fork. Run by the Real Food, Real Folk not for profit co-operative of top Glasgow chefs, the 16 restaurants take visitors on a gastronomic world tour with 46 dishes reflecting delicious cuisine from Scotland, Europe, Asia and the Orient.

The festival includes cooking demonstrations, a small farmyard, live music and a pop-up market featuring 50 of the West of Scotland's most innovative food and drink producers and community organisations helping improve access

to good food in the city. Let's Eat Glasgow! Was conceived as the UK's first major food festival with a social conscience. All the restaurants, guest chefs and celebrities are donating their time to the event, and any profits from Let's Eat Glasgow! go towards Real Food, Real Folk's work to help address food inequality in the city. This is an initiative which could easily be replicated in Hamilton, and based on the survey responses, would be very welcome by residents and serve to increase footfall.

A regular farmer's market on a Saturday with affordable fresh produce. Take a leaf out of Hendersons the butchers – independently run butchers and deli – *anon resident*

Another Glasgow food festival that ran earlier this year is called Good Food Glasgow, where street food from around the world brought to the city streets. Colourful street food vehicles from operators in central Scotland offered a range of cuisines, from burgers, curries, American baking and gourmet sausage rolls to shellfish, fried chicken and vegan baking to bring a taste of the exotic to the streets of Glasgow. Again, this could be replicated in Hamilton.

Markets work well when they come to town, so why not every week? Return to a destination town – *Lesley, resident*

With regards to Street Parties and Music Festivals, we recommend that consideration be given to Hamilton hosting a Mini-Mela. Event such as one organised by Byres Road & Lanes BID. This could be organised to celebrate an afternoon of multicultural music and dance. The Byres Road event included Bhangra and Bollywood dance, international cookery, and arts activities and storytelling from around the world.

We also recommend that consideration be given to holding more markets in the town centre. From expanding the current Farmer's market to introducing additional food and drink stalls. We believe that this could be linked in with Chatelherault's Summer Tasting Day event.

Arts and Crafts Markets, Vintage Markets and Christmas Markets were all mentioned as possible options to encourage more footfall into the town centre. It was also suggested by a few people that some of the larger empty premises could be used as permanent market stall venues.

Premises and social enterprise

There were many suggestions submitted for how to make more use of empty premises in our town centre.

Some of the highlights were to attract some activity based organisations into the area, such as soft play for younger children, Laser Quest, crazy golf and puzzle rooms.

Another key theme was to attract more nightlife into the current Quarry Street precinct. There are restaurants and bars at Gateside Street and at the bottom of the town, at Cadzow Street, Townhead Street and Castle Street, but very little in-between. There were many suggestions to attract some recognisable restaurant or bar chains such as Wetherspoons, Pizza Express, Wagamama and this could perhaps be supplemented by a music venue, for example the O2 Hamilton.

A successful initiative recently introduced in Airdrie was TheShop@StartingPoint. Funded by the European Regional Development Fund and North Lanarkshire Council. The aim of this project was to give local people a helping hand to start-up and grow their business idea. Working towards a more attractive, vibrant and sustainable town centre, businesses were given the opportunity to take up residence in a shop unit in Airdrie. During their time in the unit new business owners were given support to learn everything they need to know about starting-up and running their business.

Although there were many comments submitted about the excess of charity shops present in the town centre, there is a fantastic initiative running in South Lanarkshire already called R:evolve Recycle, which is an intergenerational project aiming to cut CO2 emissions and waste by offering a range of services and activities which prolong the life of clothes and textiles. They offer creative and exciting volunteering opportunities by sharing the "make do and mend" and textile skills of older people with families and children in the local community. In addition to textile up-cycling workshops, R:evolve Recycle have also introduced R:evolve Furniture, which offers free furniture up-cycling and home wear workshops to enable local people to learn new skills which will make houses into homes by revamping old items. R:evolve now have a premises in Cadzow Street.

Hamilton used to be a vibrant town centre, with a good selection of shops, both well known names and interesting and varied independents. I would love to see the town back to its former glory. It needs an overhaul to attract both businesses and customers back. I have always thought a "pop-up shop" culture would work well in the town as there are many local businesses that don't have and probably couldn't afford a shop front. These businesses usually have a large online presence, but could benefit from a space that customers can come along to and browse their goods –
Amelia, resident

While for many "charity shop" may have some negative connotations in terms of the town centre, does "vintage shop" leave the same impression? Perhaps a retail training day event could be set up for charity shop volunteers to give them pointers on shop layout, branding, window displays and retail innovation. There is a Lanarkshire Retail Academy based in East Kilbride

that could be a useful contact in taking this idea forward.

More cafes and bars, toy shops for kids, fashion and sports shops, less charity and e-cig shops. More attractions at the weekend to encourage families. Outside of Regents Way having fish, fruit and food shops, like on Larkhall Main Street –
Caroline, resident

It could be examined whether there would be any scope for a town centre Charity Shop Steering Group, where representatives from each charity shop get together occasionally to exchange ideas.

Although all individual shops rely on the quality of their donations, one possibility might be that donations could be exchanged to fit in with the theme of a particular shop. For example, one shop may decide to aim for a more vintage feel, one may be dedicated to menswear, and another to household items. Simple strategies such as asking customers what they want from their charity shop could help influence direction, but in line with all the retailers in the town centre, it has been suggested that the shopfronts should be well maintained and attractive. Hamilton BID offer a Business Improvement Grant, which can help existing businesses plan a series of improvements to their premises. These grants can have a positive visual impact on the appearance of the town and improves the quality of units available in the town centre.

Encourage specialist or quirky shops to try to get people outside Hamilton to visit. More activities needed, like the Classic Car Show to encourage visitors – *Richard, resident*

Another idea that came through from the survey analysis was to attract a more diverse range of independent shops – making Hamilton known as the place to go for unique boutique shopping.

Similar to the idea proposed for a larger empty unit to be used as a permanent venue for market stalls, another option could be to use one of the large, vacant properties to house a number of independent business who are looking to move from being a home-based business to the town centre.

The monthly farmers' market could be made weekly and housed in the ground floor at Bairds or BHS with the first floor set aside for arts and crafts studios. Within the same premises there could be learning/training opportunities say for the hospitality sector – as Hamilton has superb and varied restaurants/hotels that require trained staff. Within the one building you would have participation and involvement of local people and businesses with the retail opportunities that it would bring –
Tom, resident

Another suggestion was to use an empty venue to showcase the talents of our young and student population – creative individuals who may have products or a business start-up idea. There are various initiatives to be found where this type of enterprise has been a success, including a project called From Homeworking to Co-working that is being organised through Can Do Places. Can Do Places is a programme that seeks nurture entrepreneurship to help bring about regeneration. It helps people who are passionate about their communities to bring currently unloved and disused spaces back to life, and in the process encourage greater vibrancy in their town centres.

Aspirations for the Future

The Hamilton Town Centre Action Plan was set up to seek the views of the residents on the future of the town centre. After hearing from almost 2,000 people, we believe we have accomplished that goal.

We also sought to provide a detailed report outlining your views, and make sound recommendations for change. We believe that we have accomplished that with this report.

Our next phase in the action plan is to work with the Scottish Town Partnership to take forward our plan, look at the innovative ideas from the report and make them a reality.

The Scottish Government have confirmed that they are willing to match up to £20,000 to bring about real change to our community, to give us a start in innovating our civic space and re-establishing our town centre as one of the best in the country.

Scotland's Towns Partnership is Scotland's largest towns collective; representing and promoting the diversity of our towns and places, and supporting those organisations and groups that have an interest in or ownership of them.

Their role is to act as a hub for relevant news, resources, knowledge and good practice; to support learning and Community through events; to influence and share policies that impact towns; and to raise the profile of Scottish towns.

They are also able to conduct a charrette process. A charrette is essentially a collaborative way of preparing proposals for future change in a particular place. The local community and professionals work together to identify issues and aspirations, and then design proposals in response to those issues and aspirations.

It involves an intensive planning session where citizens, designers and others collaborate on a vision for development.

It provides a forum for ideas and offers the unique advantage of giving immediate feedback to the designers. More importantly, it allows everyone who participates to be a mutual author of the plan.

The Scottish Government for the fourth year of the charrette mainstreaming programme, will provide grant funding. The charrette projects will be managed by the project sponsors.

There are two separate charrette programmes: charrettes sponsored by planning authorities in support of Local Development Plans; and charrettes sponsored by local organisations.

Hamilton has proven itself to be eager for change, to be willing to get involved in the decision making process and to have the ideas, that if materialised, could make a real difference.

The purpose of a charrette in Hamilton would be to respond to information in this report and extend the engagement exercise.

Similar charrettes have been undertaken in other town centres and have produced a number of key principles:

- Support collaborative working between councils and community groups.
- Create more people-friendly streets and spaces.
- Improve access to the town centres, transport networks and parking
- Improve the physical fabric of town centres.
- Connect with other initiatives to coordinate marketing and business support.

Hamilton Business Improvement District (BID)

By Hamilton BID Manager, Gareth Walker

In common with many towns across Scotland, Hamilton is facing the challenge of declining footfall as a result of the growth of e-commerce and the increased use of regional shopping centres.

Rather than simply sit back, Hamilton businesses created Lanarkshire's first Business Improvement District (BID) in 2012 as a means of investing in new events and services. Hamilton BID was set up so businesses could work together to make a positive influence on the trading climate in the town.

Activities have included events such as the enhanced Christmas Light Switch On, Reindeer Parade, HaHa Hamilton Comedy Festival, Classic Car Show and the Ready Steady Gallop sculpture trail. Building on this success and working in partnership with Glasgow Children's Hospital Charity (formally Yorkhill) the BID will bring a new sculpture trail, The BIG Stampede to the town in 2017. This family friendly trail will involve 100 sculptures and incorporate work from up to 70 local schools.

The BID has also promoted the town's national and local independent businesses with extensive multi media advertising campaigns. It has produced and distributed a quarterly discount voucher booklet and supported many businesses invest in the look of their businesses. Almost

£15,000 has been issued in grants to generate an investment of over £62,000 in the provision of new signage or painted business frontages. The BID has also subsidised digital solutions like the Swipii loyalty card trial for over 25 businesses in the town.

The BID is currently working with the towns licensees to launch the Best Bar None scheme. Working in partnership with SLC and the police, the award scheme will promote the great work being done by businesses in the town.

The BID has attracted additional governmental and private sector investment of over £150,000 in the town through sculpture sponsorships, working with Zero Waste Scotland on business waste procurement or Scottish Government funding for the imminent introduction of free town centre WiFi.

The BID is led by volunteer directors who all own or manage businesses in the town. Whilst acknowledging that the BID has detractors, none of its activities would continue without the input of the BID. The BID on its own cannot solve the problems of the town. However, it is part of the solution.

Hamilton BID is pleased to support the consultation process and welcomes the commitment from all our elected representatives.

Hamilton: The University Town

The University of the West of Scotland (UWS) Hamilton campus has the potential to make Hamilton one of the most thriving and contemporary university towns in Scotland.

The most recent Times Higher Education Institute World University Rankings named UWS in the top 5 per cent of universities worldwide. UWS is an attractive, welcoming and thriving institute of higher learning, situated in the heart of Hamilton.

According to Professor Craig Mahoney, Principal and Vice-Chancellor of UWS, the Hamilton campus already makes a significant and positive impact on the local area, contributing £69.3million to the economy, including graduate premium, and supporting 711 jobs in South Lanarkshire.

Following extensive consultation with stakeholders regarding the future of UWS Hamilton campus, the university finalised the decision to move their Hamilton campus into the Hamilton International Technology Park (HITP).

The new EcoCampus in Hamilton will offer state-of-the-art teaching and learning facilities, student accommodation, a new students' union, and specialist laboratory space.

It is intended that the new EcoCampus will become a world leader in science and technology. As well as attracting a high intake of nursing and midwifery students, UWS brings a large number of international students from across the globe into Hamilton.

The redevelopment of the UWS Hamilton campus integrating into the HITP has the potential to help reshape the town centre. It allows for the town centre to become a hub of social, educational and technological activity.

It is proposed that retailers, shops and businesses seek to establish closer ties with the University, through the **University of the West of Scotland Discount Scheme**. The scheme, exclusive to UWS students and delivered on presentation of a matriculation card, can offer a range of benefits. This may include discounted products, exclusive offers, membership bonuses, and loyalty rewards. The scheme will encourage a greater footfall from the university campus to Hamilton town centre.

The redevelopment of UWS Hamilton campus to the HITP creates an opportunity for tailored retail expansion within the town centre. As the number of students increases with the expansion of the university at the new campus, there is greater opportunity for libraries or bookshops; electronical repair or laptop specialist shops; specialist stationary shop or study places; and an increase in prospects for established businesses to cater to the student population.

The retail opportunities offered by the UWS campus redevelopment gives greater impetus for implementing the recommendations in this report's consultation survey: the people of Hamilton want a wider range of retail and shopping options, and the increasing university population will supply a larger number of potential customers.

Through the proposed **University of the West of Scotland Discount Scheme** and the potential retail opportunities that campus expansion entails, we believe that these initiatives will help give our town centre a boost and should be given careful consideration for the future.

Conclusion

Hamilton Town Centre has a bright future, of that we are sure. Our confidence comes from the strength of feeling residents have towards their town, the time they have dedicated to responding to this consultation and the thoughtful answers we received.

At the start of this process, we hoped to achieve 1,000 responses. The target was set to give us a solid base of statistics that would make the case for the change outlined in this report strong.

However, by the time we closed the engagement exercise, we had received almost double our original target, making the path to change and regeneration unavoidable.

Making use of the powers that are available to the local authority, such as the devolution of business rates and the community empowerment bill will be key to ensuring Hamilton's success.

The creation of the "Hamilton Business Bonus Scheme" will attract businesses that may have considered starting or moving their business out-with the town centre back in.

But as well as that, it will give businesses that are struggling to make ends meet within the town centre area a better opportunity to survive and succeed.

Throughout the process, the biggest and most emotive issue that was raised was the parking provision in Hamilton Town Centre. Almost everyone that responded held a negative view of parking charges.

Our recommendation to allow a one hour free period in council-run facilities before a charge is incurred, and to change the system to pay-on-exit, will give shoppers the freedom to enjoy our town centre, without having their experience cut short or risking a considerable fine.

Our report also seeks to change the way South Lanarkshire Council think about parking. To use charges as a way to pay for maintenance, but also

to encourage the right people and shoppers into our town centre.

Hamilton Town Centre has the obstacle of competing with a large retail park. The retail park is home to the some of the most successful branches of brand-name shops in the country, yet only a few hundred yards away, the old Bairds shop lies empty and the BHS site vacant.

If we are to make a success of our town, we have to redress the balance. It is unsustainable to have an area struggling for business constrained by restrictive parking charges, whilst the area that is prospering benefits from free parking.

If South Lanarkshire Council take on our recommendations, particularly around parking, we are confident that people will return to the top of the town.

We undoubtedly have challenges ahead, but with the efforts of our community, we can make our town centre something to be proud of.

Throughout this process we have worked in partnership with a number of people and organisations.

We would like to thank the Hamilton Business Improvement District (BID) team, and in particular BID Manager Gareth Walker, for their and his support throughout this process and for their continued efforts to try and make Hamilton Town Centre a more attractive place to visit.

We would also like to thank the business owners that attended stakeholder meetings, gave us their experiences, problems and offered their solutions.

However, the real architects of this project have been the people of Hamilton themselves – without your time and energy the strength of our argument would not be as strong.

Thank you to each and everyone one of you that contributed. Now let's get out and campaign for the change we need.