SCOTO®

PRESS PAUSE



COMMUNITY LED DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT, MANAGEMENT AND PROMOTION

MARKINCH, FIFE

20 November 2025

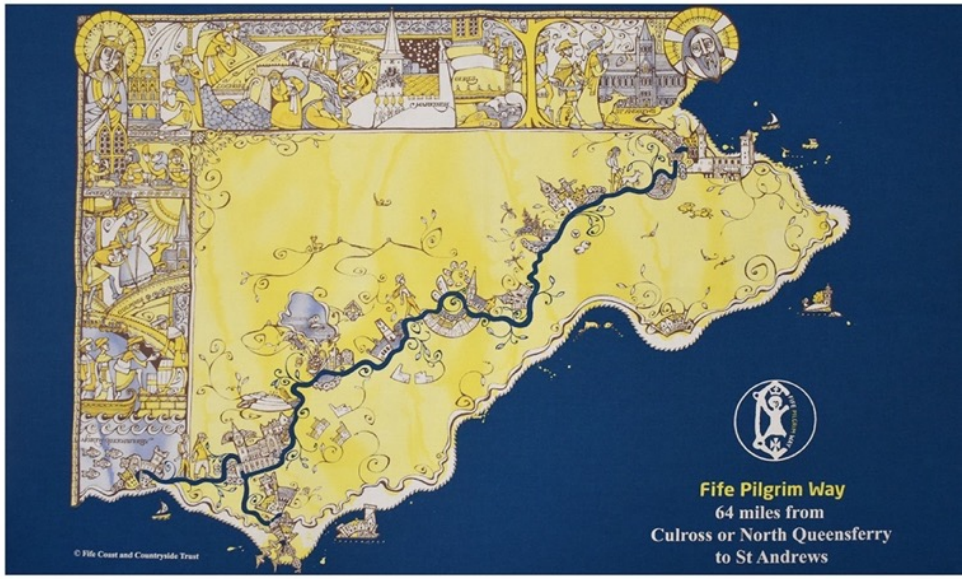
Fife Pilgrim Way

The Fife Pilgrim Way is a 102 km long distance walk from Culross to St Andrews. It is a key strategic tourism asset in Fife attracting domestic and international visitors to explore the history and culture of the people and the places along the route with locals and fellow walkers and spreading the social as well as economic impact of visitor activity across the region.

Environmental and economic factors are driving a need for change across communities. The Fife Coastal Path is suffering erosion, and many churches are at risk of closure and so needing to look at re-purposing buildings to create sustainability.

Fife Pilgrim Way Partnership Programme

The purpose of the Fife Pilgrim Way Partnership Programme is to support each of the churches and communities on the route to build a cohesive, sustainable, and immersive visitor experience through a community led approach to tourism and the visitor economy.



Partners

Organisations: FCCT, Fife Council, VS, SPRF
Communities: Culross, Dunfermline, Markinch, Ceres and St Andrews

PILLARS OF A SUCCESSFUL PILGRIM ROUTE

PILLAR	FPW Status				
Pilgrim information and signage	■	■	■	■	■
Pilgrim passport and stamping	■	■	■	■	
Accommodation Support	■				
Spiritual and cultural support	■	■	■	■	■
Event and community engagement	■	■			
Certification	■	■	■	■	
Transportation links	■	■	■	■	

TOP 5 REASONS FOR VISITING SCOTLAND

RANKING	REASON	%
1	Scenery and landscape	72
2	History and culture	48
3	Outdoor activities available	33
4	Visiting friends and family	29
5	Scotland's people	24
Source: VisitScotland		



Source: GoGlenrothes Facebook

PRESS PAUSE®

MARKINCH, FIFE

This Press Pause ® initiative has been funded through Climate Action Fife with funding from
the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Fife Council, plus a lottery funded grant from the National Churches Trust.
SCOTO was commissioned by Fife Council to undertake five Press Pause® workshops for the Fife Pilgrim Way Partnership Programme
in Dunfermline, Markinch, Ceres and St Andrews, and also in Kirkcaldy.
This work was initiated by the Fife Pilgrim Way Partnership in Summer 2025.

COMMUNITY FUND

Fife Council

NATIONAL CHURCHES TRUST

A' Mhaoin-Dualchais Heritage Fund

CLIMATE ACTION FIFE

Funded by UK Government

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PRESS PAUSE

PRESS PAUSE® IN MARKINCH, FIFE

The Markinch Workshop took place on 20 November 2025 in the 252 Hall. SCOTO met with various local business and community interests. Time was taken to experience the area and explore local sites and features of interest prior to and following the workshop.

This report provides context on community led tourism and the community of Markinch and then sets out the key workshop findings. It then offers several ideas and recommendations for the short and longer term to more directly involve the community in tourism and for tourism to provide meaningful benefits to the people of Markinch in general and linked to its relationship with the Fife Pilgrim Way.

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A: MARKINCH PRESS PAUSE® AT A GLANCE

1. The Opportunity

Markinch – the *Ancient Capital of Fife* – sits at the midpoint of the Fife Pilgrim Way between Culross and St Andrews. While long seen as an industrial and commuter town beside Glenrothes, the Pilgrim Way (launched 2019) is repositioning Markinch as:

- A heritage-rich staging post
- A potential pilgrim hub
- Glenrothes' heritage village/quarter
- A base for slow tourism and walking experiences

The town has strong connectivity (mainline rail station), significant heritage assets, woodland parks and an established Highland Games – but currently lacks coordination, branding and visitor infrastructure.

2. What's Working

- Pilgrim walkers already stopping (passport scheme encourages this)
- St Drostan's Church open, offering tours & facilities
- Balbirnie Park – woodland walks & rhododendron collection
- Caravan & camping site (longstanding visitor base)
- Markinch Highland Games – one of Scotland's oldest
- Strong local heritage knowledge (active Heritage Group)
  Excellent rail access (East Coast Mainline)
- Local sentiment toward tourism: positive or neutral – no hostility.

3. Key Gaps & Challenges

- No community council or development trust in place
- No unified place brand or visitor-facing website
- No brown tourist signage
- No public toilets (church provides when open)
- Limited accommodation – especially budget/hostel
- Poor promotion & fragmented digital presence
- Climate action & accessibility rated "red"
- Markinch is not yet perceived as a destination in its own right.

4. Strategic Positioning

A. Markinch – *Ancient Capital of Fife*

Compelling heritage claims:

- Medieval capital of Fife
- 12th-century tower still in use
- Strong Covenanter, whisky, papermaking & pilgrimage history
- One of Scotland's oldest Highland Games

Opportunity: Develop immersive heritage storytelling, walking experiences and annual heritage programming.

B. Markinch – Pilgrim & Walking Hub

Midpoint on the route + railway access

Potential:

- 1–2 night stays for walkers
- Circular heritage trails
- Heritage Walking Festival
- Slow tourism positioning

Budget shared accommodation (bunkhouse/hostel in church buildings) is a **priority enabler**.

5. Immediate Quick Wins (0–12 Months)

A. Visitor Map Upgrade

- Expand existing town map to include:
- Make downloadable PDF version.

B. Simple Online "Where to Eat" Guide

- Live links to businesses
- Updated seasonally.

C. Church-Based Visitor Hub

- Information display
- Leaflets & tear-off maps
- Toilets with tap-and-go donation.

D. Informal Tourism Group

- Start with workshop attendees (WhatsApp group)
- Feed into Heartlands of Fife LTA.

E. Develop Place Brand Messaging

Working concept:

Markinch – Ancient Capital of Fife | Glenrothes' Heritage Village | A Pilgrim Hub on the Fife Pilgrim Way

6. Medium-Term Priorities (1–3 Years)

- Walkers Welcome Plan
- Feasibility study for bunkhouse/hostel
- Heritage Walking Festival (start small)
- Craft & makers' space (pop-up trials)
- Cruise & travel trade packaging (via Welcome to Fife)
- Climate action audit & visitor-facing plan
- Accessibility statements for key venues
- Explore Community Action Plan / Local Place Plan mechanism

7. Why This Matters
Tourism in Fife (2024):
- 4.41m visitors
- £816.7m economic impact

Markinch currently captures only a small fraction of this value.

Community-led tourism could:
- Support church sustainability
- Create fair work & volunteering pathways
- Increase footfall for local businesses
- Strengthen civic pride
- Attract younger volunteers
- Embed climate-conscious travel

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8. Overall Assessment
Markinch is not starting from zero.
It has:
- Authentic heritage
- Strong local advocates
- A growing pilgrim market
- Natural assets
- Rail connectivity
- Positive local sentiment

What is missing is:
Coordination, visibility, accommodation and a confident shared identity.

With focused early actions and development of a clear place brand, Markinch can realistically position itself as:

“The Ancient Capital of Fife – and the Heart of the Fife Pilgrim Way.”

B: BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

INTRODUCING COMMUNITY LED TOURISM

Community Led Tourism isn't new. For decades many communities across Scotland and elsewhere have set up charities and social enterprises that have a visitor facing element to what they do. Examples are Heritage Centres, Highland Gatherings and local festivals. The visitor aspect is not necessarily 100% of what is on offer and equally may not be the primary driver, but the presence of visitors helps generate revenue and to support the charity or social enterprises' core purpose. Community led tourism therefore is not new but is rapidly growing in Scotland with our community empowerment legislation enabling communities to own and manage assets and have a stronger voice. Community led tourism is now being recognised as a more sustainable and responsible way of providing much needed visitor services and experiences.

What is new is the idea of communities – geographic places – reviewing how tourism is playing out in their community and seeking to be more involved to ensure the visitor economy delivers meaningful benefits that help the community tackle known issues and priorities and be an even better place to live work and visit.

Of note, SCOTO CIC undertook a 27-venue roadshow across Scotland in 2023. A key sentiment shared at every workshop was that most communities feel that tourism happens to them - rather than with them. Tourism feels like it is being imposed and although not necessarily a bad thing in itself, communities would welcome being more involved in what happens.

And as more communities across Scotland form local development trusts, take ownership of assets, and are providing visitor facing services and experiences, there is a growing sense that tourism should have the community's interests to the fore.

If managed proactively tourism can deliver many positive and lasting benefits which can help address priority issues within a community providing fair work, tackling social isolation, retaining young people, promoting local supply chains, showcasing local producers and crafters and conserving local traditions, artefacts and assets.

Community led tourism can significantly improve community cohesion by bringing community and business interests together to develop collaborative products that celebrate their individual sense of place, give visitors a meaningful experience and enhance the sense of welcome.

DEFINITIONS

What do we mean by 'community'?

Place based communities. Where people live, work and visit.

What is community tourism?

Tourism that prioritises community involvement and meaningful local benefit. Tourism that focuses on people, places and purpose.

Why is community tourism important?

A happy place to visit must first be a happy place to live and work.

What types of community tourism are there in Scotland?

- **Community led destination development, management and promotion** - geographic communities lead the management and promotion of their home as a host community
- **Community led tourism enterprises** - community groups, charities and social enterprises provide visitor-facing services and experiences
- **Community centred tourism businesses** – purpose driven businesses embed community wealth building in their operations and support locally defined social, environmental and economic priorities
- **Community centred tourism policy and planning** – community voice and aspirations are involved in local and regional tourism leadership, decision making and promotion

WHAT IS SCOTO PRESS PAUSE®?

SCOTO's Press Pause® Initiative has been developed to support geographic communities in considering their community as a destination and how tourism is developed, managed and promoted. A workshop takes place which is designed to help business and community interests come together and take time to review their current situation in relation to tourism – to reflect on what is and isn't working and what could be done differently or better.

SCOTO first piloted Press Pause® with the North Highland Initiative in summer 2023 working with two communities on the North Coast 500 - Thurso and Lochcarron.

Press Pause® takes place in destination and facilitates several reflective conversations with key business and community representatives at the table.

Each workshop generates key findings which SCOTO collate and then provide recommendations on what the community can do to address identified problems and opportunities for community led tourism enterprises and initiatives that can build community cohesion. The report is then the basis for developing an activity plan and agreeing specific asks of agency and private sector partners.

An important consideration is that tourism has entered a new era. Tourism and travel choices were already changing – and this rapidly accelerated during and following the pandemic in 2020

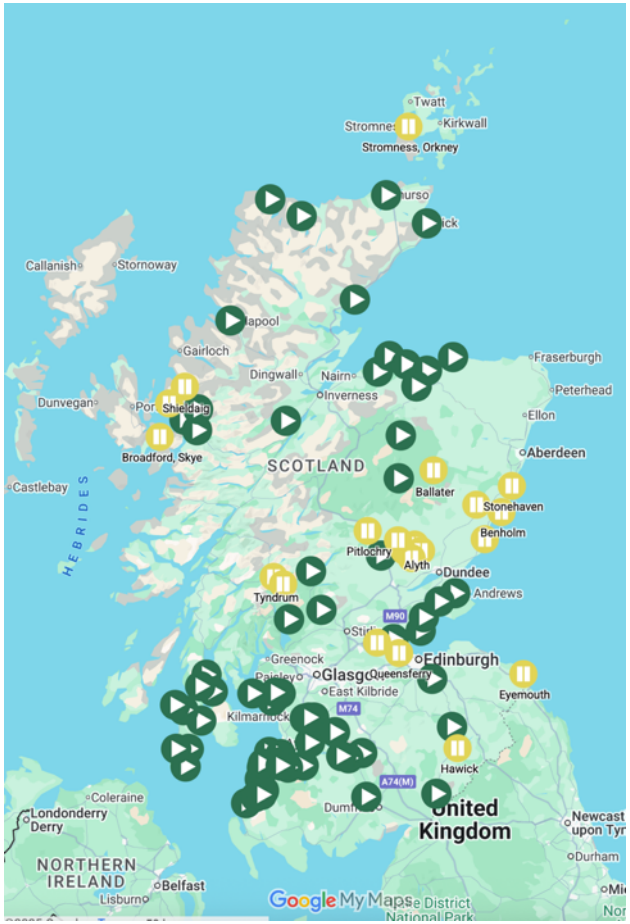
- Technology is revolutionising travel, tourism and everyday lives
- Digital content is an increasingly important source of travel inspiration
- Visitors are now seeking to slow down, meet local people, have authentic experiences
- Everyone is much more conscious of their wellbeing
- We are increasingly aware of the climate emergency and the need for individual action

Meanwhile …

- Scotland is seeking a 'wellbeing' economy and to support community wealth building
- Scottish Communities are being empowered to do more for themselves - to own assets and strengthen their voice
- Scotland is seeking 'responsible tourism for a sustainable future'

Communities are increasingly coming to the forefront of strategy and policy and are vitally important to the visitor economy. Communities are primarily where the visitor experience takes place and their role as host destinations needs nurtured. SCOTO Press Pause® seeks to help individual communities be outstanding hosts and consider what matters most to them and explore how tourism can support their wellbeing.

SCOTO PRESS PAUSE® COMMUNITIES



Map of Press Pause® Communities as of November 2025 – source www.scoto.co.uk

WHY SCOTO PRESS PAUSE®?

GLOBAL CONTEXT

In 2015 all United Nations Member States adopted the **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.** This provided a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and planet, now and into the future. At its heart are the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which are an urgent call for action by all countries – developed and developing – in a global partnership. They recognise that ending poverty and other deprivations must go hand in hand with strategies that improve health and education, reduce inequality and spur economic growth – all while tackling climate change and working to preserve our oceans and forests.

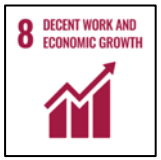
#SDG8 & #SDG11 are the most relevant to Community Led Tourism:

- **#SDG8 and Target 8.9** is very specific to community led tourism

Target 8.9: Promote Beneficial and Sustainable Tourism - By 2030, devise and implement policies to promote sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products.

- **#SDG11** focuses on making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable







NATIONAL CONTEXT

The National Strategy for Economic Transformation (NSET) has a vision:
*"**To create a wellbeing economy: a society that is thriving across economic, social and environmental dimensions, and that delivers prosperity for all Scotland's people and places. We aim to achieve this while respecting environmental limits, embodied by our climate and nature targets**."*

Scotland Outlook 2030 – the national tourism strategy – is seeking ***"responsible tourism for a sustainable future"***.

Responsible tourism considers four themes – reducing carbon, inclusion, biodiversity and communities.

The national strategy focuses on four priorities:

- Our passionate people
- Our thriving places
- Our diverse businesses
- Our memorable experiences

Scotland has provided the strategic context for a new way of doing tourism with communities to the fore. Press Pause ® seeks to support individual communities in considering how tourism can be a meaningful force for good locally.

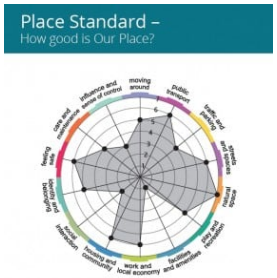


LOCAL CONTEXT

In Scotland communities have been undertaking **Community Action Planning** for many years. Community Action Planning seeks to identify the priorities that the community feel is important to them and set out how they wish to pursue their goals and aspirations. This process is ensuring that local people have a real voice and can influence the decisions which impact on their communities.

More recently **Local Place Planning** has been introduced by the **Planning (Scotland) Act 2019**, which contains a new right for communities to produce their own plans as part of the new Scottish planning system. Local Place Plans contain the community's proposals for the development and use of land and provide a new opportunity for communities to feed into the planning system with ideas and proposals.

Many communities across Scotland identify tourism and visitor management as key themes and priorities within their local community action plans and place plans. Even where tourism is not singled out as a theme or priority, tourism can often be the key to addressing some of the issues and opportunities that have been identified – tourism as a means to an end.



PRESS PAUSE®
MARKINCH, FIFE













C: SETTING THE SCENE: MARKINCH

MARKINCH

- Markinch is a historic town on the edge of Glenrothes in Fife
- Markinch's origins trace back to Pictish times
- Markinch church was first recorded in the 11th century
- Markinch has a population of approximately 2,400
- Markinch is 20 miles northeast of Dunfermline and 20 miles southwest of St Andrews
- Markinch is a staging point on the Fife Pilgrim Way and is at the midpoint
- Markinch has a train station which is on the East Coast Mainline route



THE FIFE PILGRIM WAY

The Fife Pilgrim Way was opened to the public in 2019 as a modern long-distance trail following historic pilgrimage routes to St Andrews. It re-establishes a medieval route and links religious and historical sites across Fife. It starts in Culross and North Queensferry before converging in Dunfermline and heading north to St Andrews via Markinch.

Since its launch several churches along its length have either been placed at risk of closure and sale due to diminishing congregations and a lack of ministers or are struggling to source sufficient funds to undertake essential maintenance works.

The National Lottery and other partners have recognised the scale of issues that are emerging and have launched funds to support churches – but are seeking a strategic impact from this investment – which the Fife Pilgrim Way provides.

"We want to help places of worship across the UK tackle heritage challenges systemically, become more sustainable and welcome people from all backgrounds, including those who rarely visit. We will invest a minimum of £15million in projects that have a strategic impact at a regional or national level for places of worship over the next three years."

The National Lottery Heritage Fund

Early in 2025, the Fife Pilgrim Way Partnership reached out to SCOTO to learn more about Community Led Tourism and its potential in helping communities along the route explore how tourism could better support their ambitions as a community and the future role and purpose of the churches at risk.

SCOTO provided insight into their pioneering Press Pause® initiative which helps individual communities consider how to embrace tourism as a force for good. Funding was successfully secured to progress Press Pause® initiatives in Dunfermline, Markinch, Ceres, St Andrews and, latterly, for Culross and Inverkeithing.

This Press Pause Report sets out the key findings and lists several quick win and longer-term recommendations for Markinch to consider as part of their journey in community led tourism and linked to plans that are already being hatched for St Drostan's Church by their new SCIO.

A template is provided for the individual communities on the Fife Pilgrim Way to develop a community-led, place-based Pilgrim / Walker Friendly Plan.

The individual community-by-community findings will also be aggregated into a Fife Pilgrim Way strategic review of community led tourism along the route.



SCOTLAND'S TOWNS PARTNERSHIP & UNDERSTANDING SCOTTISH PLACES - MARKINCH

Markinch is listed as one of 509 towns in Scotland with the full listing here . This

provides very useful socio-economic data about the city, trends and the ability to compare with other Scottish towns.

"Markinch is in Fife. The settlement dates from Pictish times. It was a medieval burgh then called Dalgynch. In the industrial revolution mills were built and spinning and weaving were developed. Paper making was also started, an industry which continued until the closure of Tullis Russell in 2015. Haigs whisky distillers had a plant here before the company was taken over by Diageo who operate at Cameronbridge. Today it is a suburb of Glenrothes."

"Markinch is described as an 'interdependent town' meaning it has a medium number of assets in relation to its population; average diversity of jobs; and residents travel a mix of short and long distances to travel to work and study."



The Markinch Inter-relationship diagram on the USP website.

MARKINCH: COMMUNITY STRUCTURES

The Markinch Community Council ceased to operate in 2023.

Markinch Community Trust was set up in 2013 as a SCIO – to advance citizenship by encouraging and promoting community participation and a sense of community spirit within Markinch. It folded in 2018.

At the time of writing there is neither a Community Action Plan nor a Local Place Plan for Markinch. There are several active community groups and organisations in the village.



Markinch Heritage Group was founded in 2003. It aims to raise awareness of the ancient town's history and heritage. The group focuses on heritage as a means to make Markinch a better place for future generations. They are specifically seeking to attract visitors to the town and help boost the local economy through raising awareness of the local history. They recently installed a town map and timeline panel plus town trail leaflet in the town centre on and the Fife Pilgrim Way. Over the years the group have organised a series of public events and activities on different aspects of the town's history. They hold regular talks and have produced several publications including walk leaflets which also serve to promote health and well-being.

The Markinch Forum brings together local residents, businesses and community groups in the absence of the community council and has a Facebook page to share what is happening locally.

Of note a new SCIO has recently been established - **St Drostan's & Markinch Community Group -** which is linked to the Church and to the Fife Pilgrim Way. The SCIO already has plans and permissions for a heritage aisle in the church and for performances and concerts. The SCIO has proposals to turn the Session House into an archival centre for the locality (as well as people having the use of the internet, plus a kitchen for (especially) walkers on the Fife Pilgrim Way to make themselves refreshments. The hall is also earmarked for budget accommodation. The SCIO is at the early stage of sourcing funding for these projects and is doing so in anticipation that the church may at some point be at risk and this would pave the way for a transition into community ownership.



MARKINCH:
TOURISM STRUCTURES

Welcome to Fife is the Destination Marketing Organisation (DMO) and digital presence for the Fife area. Welcome to Fife is run by the Tourism Team within Fife Council and works with the tourism sector in Fife. It is responsible for:

- *Setting the tourism priorities for Fife*
- *Promoting and marketing Fife as a tourism destination*
- *Destination development*
- *Overseeing the delivery, monitoring and evaluation of the Fife Tourism Strategy*
- *Engaging and lobbying on behalf of the tourism sector in Fife within the national tourism context*
- *Driving the tourism economy through developing a quality product in Fife*
- *Supporting the Local Tourism Associations to help them develop new products*
- *Encouraging people working in the industry to develop their skills and to promote tourism as a positive career choice*

A new strategy for Welcome to Fife was launched in 2023 for the period up to 2030 aligning with the national strategy 'Scotland Outlook 2030'.

***OUR VISION**: By 2030 the Kingdom of Fife will be a world class visitor destination known for being a leader in sustainable tourism, and renowned for the warm welcome visitors receive. Fife will be a venue for major events, and a first-choice destination renowned for its variety of offering including stunning scenery, relaxing escapes, cultural attractions & experiences, outdoor activities, and excellent local food & drink.*



There is also a Fife Tourism Climate Action Plan, which is guided by the Glasgow Declaration which is explained later in this report.

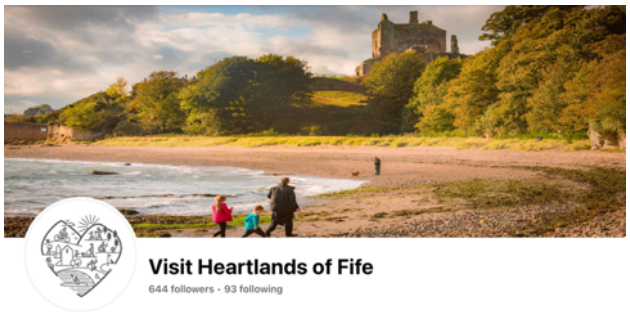
At a more local level there is the Heartlands of Fife Local Tourism Association (LTA).

The group's objective is to increase visitor numbers within the area, work in collaboration to develop local tourism projects and to highlight opportunities to businesses. They are one of six groups that feeds in to Welcome to Fife.

Their Membership is open to all hospitality, leisure, and tourism businesses in the Heartlands of Fife which includes the area surrounding the Lomond Hills, the coastline from Aberdour to Wemyss and Glenrothes.

The group operate a Visit the Heartlands of Fife Facebook page.

Heartlands of Fife



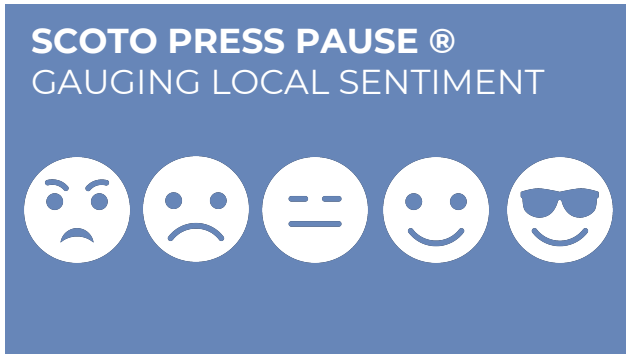
SCOTO PRESS PAUSE®

D: MARKINCH PRESS PAUSE® FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS

16 individuals attended the SCOTO Press Pause® workshop representing a mix of business and community interests and sectoral interests. The workshop took place in the 252 Hall in the centre of town.

TOPICS EXPLORED AT THE WORKSHOP

1. Local Sentiment
2. Defining the Markinch Destination from a Visitor and a Local Perspective
3. Current Thoughts on Tourism
4. Markinch's Competitors and Comparators
5. Fife and Markinch's Visitor Profile – Past, Present and Future
6. Markinch's Destination Competency Appraisal
7. Markinch's Place Branding – USPS, POPS AND PODS
8. Measuring Tourism Impact in Markinch



1. LOCAL SENTIMENT

When asked to share their current sentiment towards tourism in the local area using emojis, there was no negativity with everyone either happy or neutral. The workshop conveyed an overall sense that the Fife Pilgrim Way has brought people to the town and demonstrated that more could be achieved through tourism.



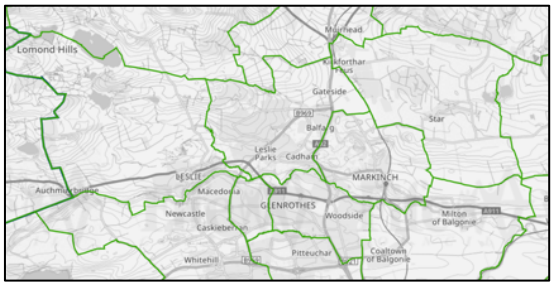


2. DEFINING THE DESTINATION

When considering the geographic area to define as the 'destination' it is important to consider what makes sense as a cohesive unit to visitors, but also and arguably more importantly, what makes sense to locals.

Community Council boundaries are a good starting point as these typically reflect old parish boundaries which responded to the local geography so made sense on the ground and reflected historic considerations.

All agreed this makes sense in Markinch where the community council boundary embraces the old town, Balbirnie Park and its rural hinterland, and differentiates it from the wider Glenrothes new town.



3. CURRENT THOUGHTS ON TOURISM

WHATS WORKING IN MARKINCH?

Initial thoughts shared at the workshop:

- The FPW is bringing visitors to the town, and they are exploring the church and surroundings
- The caravan park is doing well and is a good local resource
- The hotels (mixed)
- Rail station on East Coast mainline route
- The Markinch Games – one of the oldest games in Scotland – has unique features including grass string-lined running track - very well attended annual event
- Balbirnie Park and the Rhododendron collection
- St Drostan's church and the guided tours
- Guided walks
- Golf course
- View at the top of the hill
- Markinch Ibrox Memorial 1971
- American Scouts come each year – camp in the 252 Hall
- Known as the ancient capital of Fife – welcome signs on the main roads
- Town map and town trail leaflet

WHATS NOT WORKING IN MARKINCH?

Initial thoughts shared at the workshop:

- Markinch is not well known for its history
- Lack of promotion in general
- Poor parking especially in the centre
- Commuter town so hard to get volunteers
- In the shadow of … Falkland, St Andrews for heritage and Glenrothes and Kirkcaldy for activities
- Expense for accommodation (Air BNB)
- Balbirnie Craft Centre had studio spaces but are now residential units
- Hard to find information about Markinch
- Limited offer for families and young people in the village and at Balbirnie
- Hard to know how to get information on to the local noticeboards
- The connection from Commercial Street to the church is poor and not signposted
- The signage from surrounding trunk roads to Markinch is poor
- No brown sign for the village or the church
- Balbirnie is not well connected to the village
- The High Street is long and lacks a 'stop here' feel
- Following covid there was a plan for a town booklet but very limited response from businesses

WHAT COULD BE DONE DIFFERENTLY OR BETTER IN MARKINCH?

Initial thoughts shared at the workshop:

- Trails in the Balbirnie woods to appeal to families – eg Gruffallo and fairy trails
- Better promotion of Balbirnie Park with its Rhododendron collection and with guided walks
- American Scouts – use of the 252 Hall – possible installation of additional shower and promoting it to other groups including pilgrim groups
- Bunk house/hostel budget level accommodation for walkers
- Craft space for local artists to display artwork – possible studio space to let upstairs
- Old Station ticket office – not used
- Butcher shop and garage next door are now both empty and good location linked to the pilgrim way – possible community project?
- Bus trips from the cruise ships - could they be attracted to Markinch?

4. MARKINCH COMPETITORS AND COMPARATORS

A useful exercise is to consider communities/ areas that are either direct competitors and can be attracting the visitors you would like to see in your community, or comparators from elsewhere which have achieved success that you would like to see in your community.

By identifying these, time can be taken to understand what it is that is appealing to visitors that could be emulated locally. Learning exchanges to comparator communities can be very fruitful.

MARKINCH COMPETITORS

FALKLAND – strong draw for heritage, palace and Outlander. Accommodation available on the estate.

MARKINCH COMPARATORS:

BURNTISLAND – regeneration of their High Street
NEW LANARK – use of history and heritage plus local walks
ARDKINGLAS – Gruffalo Trail for young families
LUSS – Faerie Trail for young families and church
WEST KILBRIDE – Creative Town

5. FIFE & MARKINCH VISITOR PROFILE

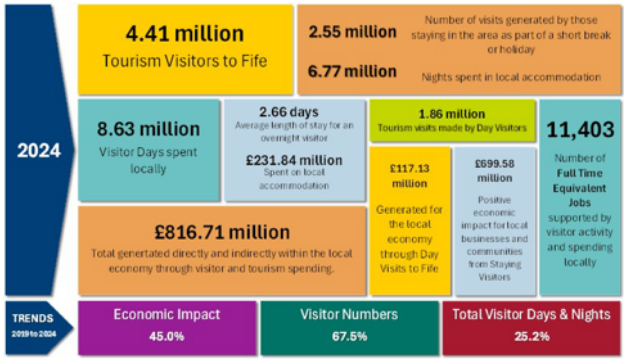
STEAM DATA

Fife Council collects STEAM data for tourism on an annual basis and at a regional level.

STEAM is a tourism economic impact modelling process which approaches the measurement of tourism from the bottom up, through its use of local supply side data and tourism performance and visitor survey data collection.

The data for 2024 states Fife

- enjoyed 4.41 million visitors in 2024 and 8.63m visitor days
- STEAM data suggests 58% of all tourism visits were overnight.
- In 2024 tourism generated a total of £816.7million in the local economy which is believed to be up 45% on 2019 when economic impact was £563.3million indicating tourism in Fife has more than recovered from pre-pandemic figures.



Summary of STEAM data for Fife in 2024

VISITSCOTLAND DATA

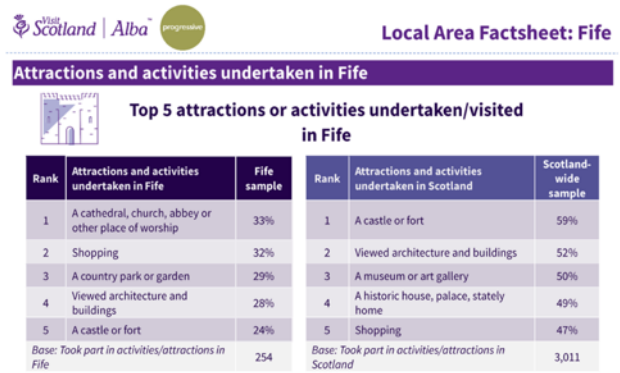
Using data from the International Passenger Survey 2024 and Great Britain Tourism Survey 2024, VisitScotland state that Fife experienced:

- 620k overnight visits
- 2.44m overnight stays
- £254m total spend
- £412 average overnight visitor spend

The VisitScotland Visitor Survey for 2023 provides data for Fife. It is not disaggregated within Fife.

2023 figures state:

- 65% of visitors are domestic (of which 19% are from Scotland) and 35% are from overseas (22% long-haul).
- 81% are repeat visits
- 84% are older independent or retirement age
- 1/3 use serviced accommodation and 2/3 are in self-catering


Visit Scotland | Alba

Local Area Factsheet: Fife

Attractions and activities undertaken in Fife

Top 5 attractions or activities undertaken/visited in Fife

Rank	Attractions and activities undertaken in Fife	Fife sample
1	A cathedral, church, abbey or other place of worship	33%
2	Shopping	32%
3	A country park or garden	29%
4	Viewed architecture and buildings	28%
5	A castle or fort	24%
Base: Took part in activities/attractions in Fife		254

Rank	Attractions and activities undertaken in Scotland	Scotland-wide sample
1	A castle or fort	59%
2	Viewed architecture and buildings	52%
3	A museum or art gallery	50%
4	A historic house, palace, stately home	49%
5	Shopping	47%
Base: Took part in activities/attractions in Scotland		3,011

Extract from VisitScotland Visitor Survey 2023 Local Area Fact Sheet for Fife.

MARKINCH VISITOR PROFILE – PAST, PRESENT & FUTURE

The tourism data provided by STEAM and VisitScotland is not broken down to a local level. An appraisal of what participants are seeing and would like to see in Markinch revealed:

PAST

- Popular for day trips and picnics at the hill
- Caravan Park has been popular since the 60s/70s for holidays and used as a base to explore Fife
- Visiting friends and family (jobs linked to Haigs and Papermill)

PRESENT

- Pilgrim Way Walkers
- Weddings and extended stays
- Ancestral visits – retracing family connections

FUTURE – WHAT IS DESIRED

- History and heritage to be the means to drive footfall and revenue
- More pilgrim walkers
- Pilgrim walkers spending 1-2 nights plus in Markinch



6. WHAT MATTERS LOCALLY

Markinch does not currently have a Community Action Plan or a Local Place Plan.

These are typically progressed by Community Councils and/or Community Development Trusts following extensive local engagement to understand what matters to local people. Markinch has lost both its Community Council and Community Trust so currently does not have an obvious mechanism to progress this. This is worth exploring as these plans are important when seeking to influence the local development plan and to support funding bids for specific projects

It is understood a community survey has recently been conducted which had over 230 responses. This provides some useful insights on what matters to local people and specific thoughts on John Dixon and Balbirnie Parks. Key comments made within that survey were that most people feel Markinch is a great place to live and it is safe which are strong attributes to share with visitors. Any future surveys can help the community better understand what does matter to local people and how community led tourism initiatives could support these priorities.



7. DESTINATION COMPETENCE

Being a successful destination is a function of many factors and how they interplay. SCOTO has devised a competency appraisal for geographic communities to undertake as part of the Press Pause® conversations.

Through conversation and discussion at the workshop the participants described their current offer under each of 20 criteria and then jointly rate each in terms of

- **Red – things do not work/exist.**
- **Amber – things do need improved.**
- **Green – things are functioning well.**

This rating is debated and agreed by all present and helps facilitate collective thinking and trigger ideas for improvement. It helps contextualise project ideas by stepping back and thinking first about how well the community functions as a destination and how any weaknesses can be addressed either directly or indirectly. This can trigger new projects or refine project ideas already under consideration. The results are presented and although comparisons can be made with other communities these are not league tables. They reflect local lived experience and sense of capacity and capability.

No.	DESTINATION COMPETENCY CRITERIA	CURRENT OFFER	JOINTLY AGREED RATING	IDEAS & RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE COMMUNITY TO CONSIDER
1	**Tourism Tradition**	Markinch has primarily been seen as an industrial town with large factories – eg Haigs and papermaking The caravan park has attracted touring visitors for several decades		Develop a compelling place brand that celebrates the town's heritage and importance in times gone by. Develop the existing walks guide and town map/trail as a place branded heritage resource and consider an annual place branded Heritage Walking Festival
2	**Sense of Place outwith the area**	Very few will know of Markinch outwith Fife Balbirnie is better known – largely as a wedding venue		Develop a compelling place brand that celebrates the town's heritage and importance in times gone by and clearly differentiates it from Glenrothes new town.
3	**Features & Attractions**	Balbirnie House – private venue Balbirnie and John Dixon Parks St Drostan's Church and kirk yard Balgonie Castle - private		Develop the existing Welcome to Markinch map with a second map of the wider area supplementing the key attractions and features of interest with facilities and services plus local walks and trails around the town
4	**Culture & Heritage**	Strong heritage connections but not well known or publicised St Drostan's tower is 12th century Active heritage group Monthly heritage talks (open to visitors)		Consider new small-scale events and bookable experiences to offer which celebrate the town's heritage. Consider packaging the church tours and history walks plus new experiences as a travel trade product and for the cruise market (work with the Welcome to Fife team)
5	**Wildlife & Nature**	Woodland walks Circular riverside and woodland walk Rhododendron collection at Balbirnie River regeneration programme Tree planting in Balbirnie Park		Review and add to the existing map of local walks and trails from the car park near the station – supplement with walks that locals enjoy and produce a downloadable version with suggested parking/start points, refreshments and seasonal features. Possibly combine with the town map. Better promote these walks to pilgrim walkers.
6	**Activities & Experiences**	The Fife Pilgrim Way – Markinch is a staging point, and the passport encourages people to stop Pilgrim Pastor does guided walks (FPW) Golf – can pay to play – not promoted Asthma International running trail (in its infancy) Local guided walks Markinch Heritage Group – trained walk leaders No bike hire Occasional guided walks at Balgonie		Consider setting up a Markinch Park Run (liaise with Glenrothes and Kirkcaldy to see if viable) Provide a walk leader's training programme for local volunteers to supplement the Markinch Heritage Group walk leaders. Consider packaging guided walks and tours for the travel trade and cruise market Develop an initial programme of Markinch Heritage Walks with a programme of local events over a set period which can steadily be developed as a branded heritage walking festival
7	**Visitor Accommodation**	A range of AirBnB units Touring caravan and camping site (seasonal) Laurelbank Guest House (4 in a Bed Winner) No 1 High Street Travel Lodge nearby in Glenrothes No hostel or bunkhouse		Develop the plans for a bunkhouse/hostel in one of the church buildings – seek funding for a feasibility study and business plan. Establish an informal business/tourism group Undertake a simple accommodation audit of what is available, seasonality and minimum night stay etc

8	**Food, Drink & Refreshments**	Has reduced in recent years – quality and quantity No longer a bistro at the park Cafes in the town Golf Club do meals		Produce a simple where to eat guide available online and as a PDF at the church with links to businesses to check opening times, make booking etc – keep under review
9	**Events & Festivals**	Markinch Games – major local event – one of the oldest games in Scotland Open Studios in September – Fife-wide 1-off events at the church – eg re-enactments New AV system at the church buildings for conferences and events		Consider additional activity (eg stands and activities) at the Games to showcase the town's heritage experiences, crafts etc Develop a simple what's on calendar for Markinch available online – use as a clash diary when considering new events (Ref Markinch Forum plans for this) Develop a Markinch heritage walking event/festival
10	**Makers and Producers**	Notable number of local artists but not visible or accessible to visitors		Develop the ideas to create a crafters unit in the old butchers (or similar) – pilot some pop up options at the church
11	**Travel & Connectivity**	Train station – on the East Coast mainline route Day-time regular buses into/from Glenrothes Good cycle links		Develop a Markinch Hub guide for walkers doing the FPW which highlights the bus connections for doing stages of the route and local walks and trails to encourage extended stays
12	**Retail**	2 supermarkets Gift shop		Include convenience stores and visitor facing shops on the new map. Consider retail opportunities at the church.
13	**Amenities & Infrastructure**	Generally good and everything is available nearby in Glenrothes NB no public toilets – church provides toilets when open		Consider better signage for the toilets available at the church with a tap and go donation system Include local amenities on the map and a simple guide to the nearest option for services in Glenrothes
14	**Visitor Information & Signage**	No brown signs for the 12th century church (there are green and white pedestrian signs in the town) No visitor information point Heritage display near the memorial		Consider a simple visitor information display in the church foyer using the existing town map and timeline display and with tear off town maps, trail and other leaflets, plus suggestions on where to eat, events and other information.
15	**Digital Presence & Marketing**	No digital presence for the town Individual businesses do good content – eg success with TikTok No coordination		Consider a web presence for the town which holds visitor facing information and downloadable versions of the map and where to eat guide. Potential to develop a page on the Markinch Heritage site dedicated to visitors and linked to FPW
16	**Climate Action**	No specific activity or projects at present		Consider developing a simple climate action plan for the church buildings as a precursor to a Markinch plan
17	**Inclusion & Accessibility**	Limited activity or projects at present – the new SCIO has been pursuing this for a few years		Consider developing a simple accessibility statement for the church buildings using advice on the VS Business Hub
18	**Community Assets**	Common Good Fund holds John Dixon Park and Markinch Hill – byelaw restrictions on any proposals for charging for use Graveyard at the church is Fife Council		Consider revenue generating CLT uses in the church buildings – eg toilets, visitor information, bunk house, self-serve snacks Further explore the idea of creating a craft hub and visitor hub in the town and trial pop-up possibilities/opportunities
19	**People & Players**	Community Council and Community Trust both folded - very active community with many interest groups and organisations – eg Markinch Heritage Group and Markinch Community Choir		Consider the best organisation to lead with community action plan/local place plan activity in the absence of a community council or trust. Consider a Volunteer Fayre in the town for different organisations to have stands and inviting locals to get

		Concern that as a commuter town there are many who don't yet engage as volunteers and longer-term projects will need younger volunteers		involved in different ways. Possibly tie in with the Games or another well attended event.
20	**Destination Collaboration**	No collaboration at present with VS and Welcome to Fife, and limited engagement with the LTA. At the start of a tourism journey with activity at the church and several projects being developed		Consider establishing an informal tourism and business group to develop and share ideas and offer a representative to sit on the LTA. Begin with a Whats App group with the workshop attendees

SUMMARY OBSERVATIONS

There are several issues emerging from the Markinch Destination Competency Appraisal, primarily linked to Markinch not having been seen as a tourism destination and therefore having limited facilities for visitors and a very low profile.

However, the Fife Pilgrim Way, since its launch in 2019, has been attracting walkers to the village and with a specific interest in the church which is a notable heritage feature. The church is open to visitors and does provide guided tours. Balbirnie Park has also attracted people for years for the caravan and campsite and the woodlands and walks. Balbirnie House is a well-known private wedding venue. The town has excellent connectivity having a railway station and being on the East Coast mainline route. Also, with Markinch forming part of the bigger town of Glenrothes there are several facilities and services nearby. It therefore has scope to become a hub for the FPW, especially with it being at the midpoint between St Andrews and Dunfermline. Walkers could base themselves at Markinch and use public transport to facilitate walking different stretches of the route.

The lack of budget accommodation in general along the Fife Pilgrim Way is a concern as most walkers typically look for one-night stay budget accommodation which they can share with fellow walkers and have communal spaces to eat and chat. This appraisal has confirmed this type of accommodation isn't available in the Markinch area but also reinforces the plans being hatched by the new SCIO – St Drostans and Markinch Community Group – to repurpose one of the buildings associated with the church. Their other plans for the co-working space would complement this and appeal to digital nomads/walkers. Developing the existing town map with information on other local walks, services and facilities is recommended. These are key developments needed to support the aspiration for the route to be elevated and to meet the Scottish Pilgrim Route Forum's gold accreditation standard.

INSPIRATION FROM ELSEWHERE

There are several opportunities for community led tourism enterprises in and around Markinch. Case studies are available on www.scoto.co.uk and can be useful learning exchanges:

Findhorn Campervan Aire
https://www.scoto.co.uk/media/fsqnta50/scoto_findhorn-case-study.pdf

Callander Youth Project/Callander Hostel
https://www.scoto.co.uk/media/f3oerevm/scoto_callander-hostel-case-study.pdf

Loch Ness Hub, Drumnadrochit
https://www.scoto.co.uk/media/ylepaaos/scoto_loch-ness-hub_case-study.pdf

Wild Skies Shetland
https://www.scoto.co.uk/media/xgzchqln/scoto_wild-skies-case-study.pdf

Callander Visitor Information Centre
https://www.scoto.co.uk/media/ogmnlyxl/scoto_cvic-case-study.pdf

Tweedsmuir The Crook Inn Plus
https://www.scoto.co.uk/media/bznbggxg/scoto_tweedsmuir-case-study.pdf

Isle of Eigg Camping Pods
https://www.scoto.co.uk/media/zy4lzqkt/scoto_eigg-camping-pods_case-study.pdf

Lewis Point & Sandwick Trail
https://www.scoto.co.uk/media/31khsd2p/scoto_point-sandwick-case-study.pdf

Strontian Oakwood Tourism & Crafts
https://www.scoto.co.uk/media/yppgkurp/scoto_oakwood-case-study.pdf

Moray Walking and Outdoor Festival
https://www.scoto.co.uk/media/341kukao/scoto_moray-walking-festival-case-study.pdf

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE:
Climate Action & Nature in Markinch

Looking to the future, a discrete area within community led tourism relates to climate action and nature, and how visitors can help and support local endeavours, as well as consider how they can reduce their own carbon footprint when visiting this community.

Climate action and tourism are inextricably linked and there are many ways to motivate and encourage visitors to support climate action when in your community. This relates to both the domestic and overseas markets. Overseas travellers could have a significant carbon footprint from air travel in particular. Helping them see how they can reduce their local carbon footprint when 'in destination' both helps their decision making but also demonstrates that Markinch as a host destination is taking climate action seriously and is inviting guests to do the same.

The domestic market can also have notable carbon footprints so encouraging travel by public transport is an obvious action, and Markinch is well placed with the mainline railway station. And an even more impactful action will be to focus effort on encouraging locals in and around Fife to explore their own back door and not necessarily travel too far for day trips and for short and longer breaks. There is a lot on offer locally and across Fife and often this can be overlooked by locals in favour of travelling further afield. Clever local marketing and promotion can have impact as can a Fife-wide campaign approach.

In terms of visitor facing providers, businesses and community groups with premises can reduce running costs, minimise food miles and differentiate themselves by adopting climate friendly practices. An increasing percentage of visitors are keen to ensure their visit has minimal climate impact and are actively seeking out operators who are clearly making an effort and experiences where they can support local endeavours.

Climate action was rated as red at the workshop and participants flagged that although there are individual actions being undertaken by community groups and businesses there isn't an overall understanding of this from a tourism perspective and very limited awareness of what more could be done.

Travel and connectivity scored amber recognising that Markinch has a mainline train station but also recognising things could be better connected out into the community and surroundings, especially for visitors. Markinch, with the mainline train station could be promoted as a base for walking the middle section of the Pilgrim Way. Markinch could readily be promoted as a pilgrim hub with options for exploring north and south and then further into the heart of Fife.

Of note, the rating for wildlife and nature was green. This is an important asset to package and promote for visitors and locals.

A visitor facing climate action audit and plan is recommended for Markinch, which will both consider what is already happening and spell out how businesses and organisations can reduce their own impact and support visitors in making positive choices.

Community Climate Action in Fife is led by the Climate Action Fife (CAF) partnership. CAF is a cross-sector partnership of 12 organisations that covers the width and breadth of Fife and partners include community groups, third sector, Fife Council and Fife College.

Greener Kirkcaldy is the lead partner. Based in the heart of Kirkcaldy – with a community building, training kitchen, bike shop and garden – Greener Kirkcaldy carry out activities across Kirkcaldy and work with partners to deliver projects across Fife. Climate Action Fife has already been looking at some visitor facing climate action initiatives including a project that will encourage locals to stay much closer to home. This is a welcome play on the concept of staycations which gained prominence following lockdown where many people discovered things to see and do on their own doorsteps.

Welcome to Fife and other partners provide advice and training on climate action and accreditation schemes for individual businesses and enterprises.

A key consideration that needs borne in mind is that the tourism and hospitality industry is characterised by a high percentage of small enterprises, and the current cost of living crisis is hitting this sector hard with increasing regulation and additional costs for national insurance, energy and supplies. This means climate action can slip down their priorities so profiling any support schemes and grants will help them engage, as will highlighting initiatives that reduce overall running costs.

Community cohesion and resilience is key to all of this and opportunities for visitors to engage and support the community should feature in a local climate action plan.

A further consideration is that climate change could be, if it isn't already, a threat to visitor attractions, paths and assets through flooding,

storm damage and other impacts. Being aware of risks and contingency plans in the event of an incident will ensure visitors feel informed and have alternatives to consider.

As well as a destination level audit and action plan, a strong recommendation is for individual businesses and organisations that are visitor facing to develop simple climate action and accessibility statements and to display these on their website and in their premises to help existing and potential guests and customers see what action is being taken and what this means for the business, the community and them as a visitor.

Appendix 1 sets out a template for producing a community led tourism community action plan for Markinch.



THE FIFE PILGRIM WAY – Welcoming Pilgrim Walkers to Markinch

Walkers in general have specific needs which communities can cater for to ensure they feel welcome. These are simple things like public toilets, a water refill station, cafes that allow people to come in with muddy boots and provide areas for drying wet clothing.

With the Fife Pilgrim Way being a recognised long-distance trail there are additional needs as many FPW walkers will be doing the full route over a few days. The route may also be used by day walkers, but the needs of longer distance walkers need specific consideration.

A Walkers Welcome plan and a community pledge is recommended that forms the basis to how the community goes about welcoming walkers:

"We welcome walkers and pilgrims. We will provide clear information, essential facilities, and a warm local welcome while ensuring tourism benefits our community."



Where a community is a staging point on the route, which Markinch is, there are additional needs relating to accommodation. Walkers typically but not exclusively are not looking for luxury accommodation and are more interested in budget options which allow simple one-night stays, have communal space to meet other walkers, space to dry kit, and is located close to shops and cafes for supplies and an evening meal plus breakfast.

Many accommodation providers have moved to 2-night minimum stays due to increased costs and changeovers being one of the main cost headings.
Markinch does not have a lot of accommodation for visitors in general and currently does not have budget one-night accommodation. Consideration is currently being given to the potential for a bunkhouse or hostel to be provided in one of the church buildings. This is strongly recommended and a feasibility study would allow the size and operation of this to be fully scoped out to ensure any facility is viable and sustainable.

Key considerations for any bunkhouse or hostel are that the previous model of dormitories with beds to rent has lost traction since Covid and lock down. Many hostels opted to convert to rooms with ensuite facilities and to let the room rather than individual beds.

An example is Callander Hostel which is operated by the Callander Youth Project Trust. The rooms were all reconfigured in light of social distancing requirements, and rooms that previously had 6 or 8 beds where individuals could book a single bed, were converted to be self-contained ensuite rooms that can only be booked as a room.

One distinct advantage of this approach has been the ability to use key locks and allow self-entry at any time, which was not possible when

individuals were sharing a dorm and arriving at different times. The Callander Hostel have opted to continue this room only booking and have found it has great appeal for families and groups.



A more recent example of a bunkhouse where people do pay per person is the New Town Hall Bunkhouse in Whithorn. This has been purpose built and has a choice of 2, 4 and 6 bed ensuite rooms and payment is per person. They have staff on site at the adjacent Town Hall to welcome visitors, and they provide a communal kitchen area.

There are several other considerations for a community to ensure walkers and Pilgrim Walkers in particular feel welcome and can easily find key information on local facilities, accurate opening times and events they might enjoy, as well as places that can stamp the FPW Pilgrim Passport

Online information is important both for planning but also while walking.

Appendix 2 sets out a template for Markinch to develop a community led place-based pilgrim walkers' welcome plan. It also highlights other considerations, not least explaining how local businesses can be walker friendly.

MANAGING VISITOR EXPECTATIONS

An important consideration, having undertaken this appraisal is managing visitor expectations.

Visitors don't always do their research or may struggle to find current information and can arrive with preconceived ideas of what to expect whether staying overnight or passing through.

This can be anything from getting access to WIFI or 4G/5G to finding toilets, being able to use credit cards and not need cash, get an Uber, find a room that night, order a takeaway for delivery or not needing to book a sit-down meal in the evening. These are much less significant in urban areas but do need consideration.

To avoid disappointment and frustration communities can do a lot to manage expectations in general but also if there is a specific and short-term issue affecting a service – eg restricted opening hours due to staffing issues.

Useful ideas to consider are

- Create a new Markinch map to highlight the key attractions with local services and facilities plus parking and cycling/walking trails. Highlight what services aren't available and where the nearest option is.
- Make the map available online and share with all local businesses and organisations to display and host on their sites.
- Develop a new or repurpose an existing open Facebook page for local businesses and enterprises to post updates and offer for locals and visitors – and for visitors to ask questions.



8. PLACE BRANDING

Place branding is the idea that a place, a town, a city, or a region can be branded – given an identity with a value proposition for a target market and have branding techniques and marketing strategies applied to drive marketing campaigns, stimulate product development and build brand loyalty. Much in the same way a product, service or business can.

In essence, place branding is "a strategy for projecting images and managing perceptions – and expectations – about a place".

Place Branding seeks to strategically create a unique image and identity for a town, an island, a city, a region, or a country to attract visitors, investment, talent, and residents, essentially marketing a location like a product by highlighting its unique features, culture, and aspirations to build pride and economic growth. It goes beyond simple advertising, involving cohesive strategies in hardware (infrastructure), software (events), and storytelling to shape perceptions, boost local economies, and foster community identity. Authenticity is crucial and place branding should convey what has made the place what it is today

THE PLACE BRAND HIERARCHY

Place brands ideally nestle within each other from a country down to an individual business level and at each level have clear ownership of that place brand.

Within an individual community this may be the local business association or development trust and ideally has a singular web presence and social media channels to convey the place brand and develop content that reinforces it.

A common issue in communities is multiple websites and no clear ownership or differentiation as to which is the 'official' site for that community. The 'official' place brand is a key element of this. In addition, sites may have a mix of local and visitor facing content and it is important to be clear what is visitor facing to aid easy navigation and finding information easily.

Once a place brand has been established Individual businesses and organisations should then use this place brand in their own content and celebrate being part of the place through their own marketing and product development.

- **A** · **COUNTRY – SCOTLAND – VISIT SCOTLAND**
- **B** · **REGION – FIFE – WELCOME TO FIFE**
- **C** · **AREA - CENTRAL FIFE - HEARTLANDS OF FIFE**
- **D** · **TOWN/VILLAGE - MARKINCH - ???**
- **E** · ***individual businesses, organisations and enterprises***

VISITOR TOUCH POINTS AND THE CUSTOMER JOURNEY

Traditionally visitors were significantly inspired by national and area tourist boards and made decisions using advice in travel books.

Today visitors are influenced by so many different 'touch points' – both print and often online.

Social media is a significant source of inspiration both through blogger and influencer content and TikTok videos from individuals and businesses.

TV and film have hugely influenced travel with Outlander being a classic example.

Recent research by VisitScotland identifies the key sources of inspiration for different visitors.

3.4 Sources of Inspiration when deciding on Scotland: breakdown (Deep Dive)

Digital sources	All Visitors	UK	Europe	Long haul
Online travel feature providers	6%	4%	6%	12%
Online travel guides	7%	4%	8%	15%
Peer review websites	12%	11%	16%	14%
Information from travel bloggers and influencers	13%	9%	24%	23%
Online travel agent	6%	5%	6%	6%
Online information from tour operators	3%	2%	4%	11%
Travel or price comparison providers	2%	2%	3%	4%
Online information, imagery or itineraries from VisitScotland	18%	16%	20%	23%
Online information from transport providers	6%	5%	6%	10%
Online information from tourism businesses	7%	7%	7%	9%
Bargain deals on airfares, accommodation or tours	4%	4%	3%	4%

Interpretation note: Long haul refers to USA, Canada and Australasia

A significant point to note following the Press Pause Workshop is that early in 2026 VisitScotland have amended how their website operates. They no longer have their own VisitScotland business listings, and their new map is based on Google Maps. Their site now pulls profiles and content from Google. Google profiles and map entries for businesses and attractions are now key to being found on the VS website and more generally.





MARKINCH – "TO SEE OURSELVES AS OTHERS SEE US"

A key consideration when exploring local place branding is to understand how the place is being portrayed at present by others and consider if this is how the community wants to be seen by the outside world.

- Places across Scotland are promoted by many players – notably VisitScotland and DMOs (Destination Marketing Organisations) as well by the media, bloggers and influencers, the travel trade, film and TV, plus online review sites
- These players often have very good reach online and are targeted in how they share their content to interested audiences
- Community groups and individual businesses have limited reach
- There is therefore significant value in firstly seeing how others portray the community to their audiences - and how it fits with reality – and then seek to influence their content

This is a very good prompt for communities to develop and take ownership of their own place brand and to then develop new content that reinforces how the community sees itself and wants to be portrayed to the outside world.

VISITSCOTLAND

The listing on VisitScotland for Markinch (at the time of the workshop) states:

[Glenrothes And] Markinch
Towns & Villages

Glenrothes is one of Scotland's post-Second World War new towns....

Markinch lies a few miles east of Glenrothes and combines a historical setting with excellent access to modern amenities and a strong sense of community. St Drostan's Church is the focal point of town and the surrounding conservation area.

Although a relatively small town, Markinch has two major parks within its boundaries: John Dixon Park provides children's all-weather play facilities and football pitches while Balbirnie Park is a unique facility containing bridle paths, picnic areas, woodland walks, wildlife areas, a caravan site and golf course.

Every summer, the Markinch Highland Games are held in John Dixon Park.



WELCOME TO FIFE

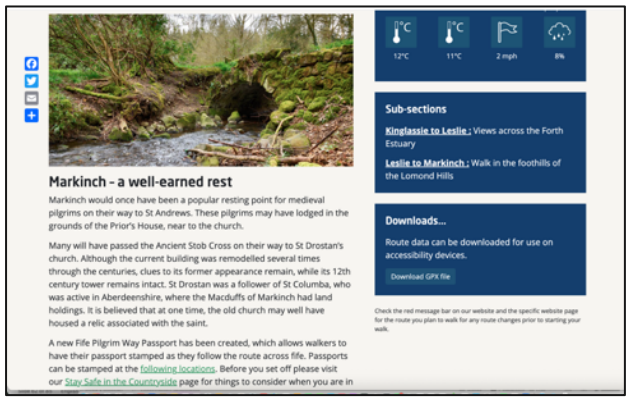
The current listing on Welcome to Fife for Markinch states:

HEARTLAND OF FIFE

The Heartlands of Fife is an area of stunning contrasts. From the highest point in the Kingdom of Fife – The Lomond Hills – to the award-winning beaches and quaint harbours on the coast. From historic mining villages to one of Scotland's newest towns.

MARKINCH

Situated on Fife Pilgrim Way, Markinch's St Drostan's Church was once a stopping point for medieval pilgrims as they made their way to St Andrew's Cathedral. Today, Markinch provides an equally welcome refreshment break to walkers trekking the 65-mile route of Fife Pilgrim's Way – and is also an interesting place to explore**.**



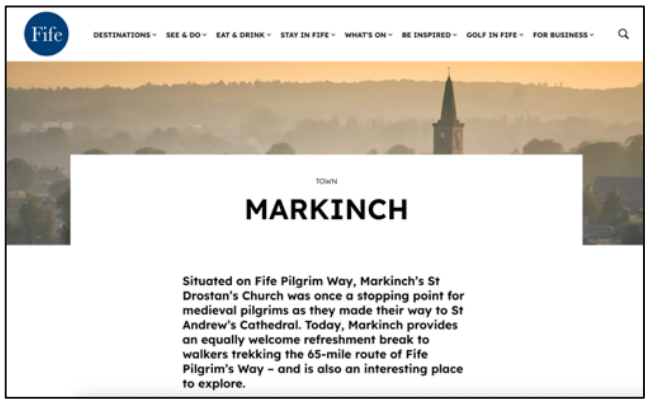
FIFE PILGRIM WAY

The current listing on the Fife Coast and Countryside Trust website for the Fife Pilgrim Way and for Markinch states:

Markinch – a well-earned rest

Markinch would once have been a popular resting point for medieval pilgrims on their way to St Andrews. These pilgrims may have lodged in the grounds of the Prior's House, near to the church.

Many will have passed the Ancient Stob Cross on their way to St Drostan's church. Although the current building was remodelled several times through the centuries, clues to its former appearance remain, while its 12th century tower remains intact. St Drostan was a follower of St Columba, who was active in Aberdeenshire, where the Macduffs of Markinch had land holdings. It is believed that at one time, the old church may well have housed a relic associated with the saint.

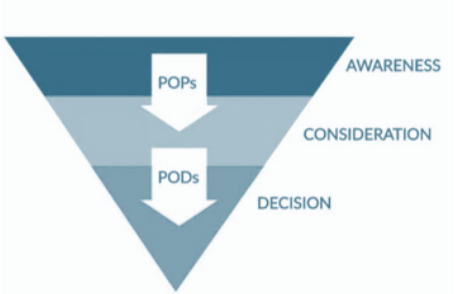


DEVELOPING THE MARKINCH PLACE BRAND - USPs, POPs and PODs

Using marketing jargon, a valuable exercise in place branding is to first consider the community's unique selling points – USPs. These are the claims that the community can make which others can't.

The next consideration is Points of Parity – POPs – which are shared features the community may have with other communities and which confirm it is acceptable in calling itself a visitor destination and will meet the baseline needs of visitors.

PODs – Points of Differentiation then consider what attributes the community has which set it apart from others creating a unique advantage or benefit and in the case of a community, a compelling reason to visit. These relate to attractions and activities and help visitors decide where to



MARKINCH POPs

The destination Competence Appraisal demonstrated that the town has several attributes that confirm it is acceptable in calling itself a visitor destination with important heritage features, wildlife and nature, walks, trails, events and activities taking place.

MARKINCH'S USPs & PODs

Several points of differentiation and claims to fame were shared at the workshop and researched afterwards:

- Markinch was the ancient capital of Fife
- The Markinch Games are one of the oldest games in Scotland
- The Markinch Games features the oldest Pipe Band contest in Scotland
- The Markinch Games were the first games in Scotland to take place on a Sunday
- The Fife Medieval Court took place at Markinch
- Balbirnie has one of the largest collections of Rhododendron in Scotland which rivals the national collection
- St Drostans church is arguably one of the oldest church buildings in Scotland in continuous use
- The church was sold for 5 cheeses and a pig
- Markinch was the home of Haig Whisky
- Markinch was a major site for water powered papermaking on the Leven from the early 1800s
- One of the first industrial papermaking machines in the UK was installed at the Rothes Mill in Markinch
- The Archibald family in Markinch pioneered the seed potato
- The inventor of Salbutamol (inhaler) was born in Markinch
- The parents of Cardinal Beaton who was murdered at St Andrews Castle – persecuted and burned by protestants – are buried at Markinch
- John Wallace the internationally acclaimed trumpet soloist was born in Markinch
- General Sir Alexander Leslie who led the covenanting army lived at Balgonie and was buried at Markinch Church

- ‘The crooked man who walked a crooked mile’ is said to be General Sir Alexander Leslie of Balgonie Castle
- Lady Macbeth owned land here and conveyed it to monks on Loch Leven
- A Rob Roy skirmish took place at Markinch in 1715 when they met a militia group
- The approach to Markinch from the east still resembles that portrayed in late 18th century painting
- Lady Ruth Balfour CBE, mother of the Lord Lieutenant of Fife, was chair of the WRVS in Scotland during WWII and was founder of the organisation, alongside Lady Stella Reading.
- The Balfour family of Balbirnie are very active in climate action, notably regenerative farming
- The concentration of mason’s marks at the church is exceptional
- The mural in the church that depicts the original archway has been featured in a global archaeology magazine



PLACE BRANDING - INITIAL OBSERVATIONS

This extensive list of USPs and PODs demonstrate that Markinch has several points of interest which could spark reasons for visitors to be interested in the town. It also has several themes to consider for product development and experiences.

However, Markinch is not a well-known place name and has in many ways been consumed by the development of Glenrothes New Town meaning its identity as a discrete town has been eroded.

Yet it has kept its town character and buildings like the church on the hill provide an iconic view, and the original clocktower does date back to the period when it was the Ancient Capital of Fife. The town’s heritage isn’t hidden and therefore the scope for storytelling and offering heritage experiences is there.

The welcome signage already refers to the Ancient Capital of Fife which is a distinct advantage. Bringing this to life in the town is key.



PLACE BRANDING – IDEAS

Markinch – Ancient Capital of Fife and Glenrothes’ Heritage Quarter/Village

Markinch has played a significant role in the history of Fife dating back to at least the 12th century. It provides a stark contrast to its neighbour Glenrothes which was developed as a post war new town in the 1950s and 60s.

In many ways Markinch has been absorbed into Glenrothes which has eroded awareness of it as a town. Its heritage is the ideal basis to develop its place brand and re-establish it as a discrete place as the new town’s heritage village/quarter with trails and experiences for locals and visitors.

The current welcome signs refer to the Ancient Capital of Fife but there are limited ways in which this is readily brought to life within the town for a casual visitor.

The Markinch Heritage Group’s website is a great resource with well researched and clearly presented information about the history of the town and imagery that brings this to life. It also explains different periods in the history of the town from prehistoric times, through the medieval periods, and religious transformation, then the industrial revolution, the war years and the advent of Glenrothes new town on Markinch’s doorstep. This is a significant timeline with notable events and developments which could be brought to life through displays, guided walks and talks and more innovative heritage interpretation.

Stobcross with its ancient, possibly Pictish cross, and Markinch Hill with its long terraces

are two historic sites with features that are not fully understood and provide a great sense of historic mystery for visitors and already have interpretation on site.

The church and Markinch Heritage Group already do occasional re-enactment and other free events and plans are being hatched for the new SCIO to implement more - and these should be strongly encouraged and supported. Ensuring activity is visible and bookable online is key, and careful consideration should be given to pricing and the revenue generation potential of this. These immersive heritage experiences will appeal to many, and especially for overseas visitors and groups from cruise ships and the travel trade. Welcome to Fife have been developing travel trade connections and could readily support this and advise on partnerships with neighbouring towns and attractions.

The Markinch Highland Games are a significant date in the town's calendar, and in the national programme of Highland Games. The Games embody much of what the community stand for in celebrating their heritage. Consideration should be given to how the Games can be a key element in establishing and bringing to life a heritage-based place brand for Markinch.



Markinch – a walker's hub on the Fife Pilgrim Way

Markinch is at the midway point between Dunfermline and St Andrews on the Fife Pilgrim Way and of note has a railway station on the East Coast mainline route.

This makes it an easy place for everyone to get to and a great place to base yourself as a walker either when doing the route with opportunities to use local transport to join up lengths of the walk to the south and north, or to enjoy the many circular walks available locally that explore the town's heritage.

The Markinch Heritage Group website has a page dedicated to local walks and lists over 10 circular routes around the town and in Balbirnie Park. The site has links to maps and advice for walkers. The Braes Loan Trail is their flagship walk with a detailed leaflet and map highlighting the historic sites around the town which date from medieval times to the 20th century.

The extent of heritage walks suggests the town could consider a Heritage Walking Festival which can start small and grow over time. The Moray Outdoor & Walking Festival is a great example where many local organisations each provide walks exploring different aspects of Morays natural and cultural heritage and take payment for their activity with a proportion given to a central pot for programming and marketing. It started small and has grown over time and enjoys many repeat visitors, plus walkers travelling considerable distances to join the festival.

The Fife Pilgrim Way - How slow can you go?

The workshop highlighted that one way to get the route (and Markinch) better known would be to host an endurance event (with an 'Ultra' event along the route planned for May 2026).



However, the Fife Pilgrim Ways lends itself to a much slower pace and embodies the principles of 'slow tourism', encouraging people to slow down, take time to meet local people and learn about local culture and heritage.

Could there be a quirkier 'slow' paced challenge event which would raise its profile in the media and embody what the Fife Pilgrim Way is all about? This could be linked to the recently launched FPW passport, with more businesses encouraged to take part, and the challenge being focused on collecting as many stamps as possible over seven-day event.

For businesses in Markinch, the recently introduced FPW passport is a great way to get people to ensure they do visit to get their passport stamped and it in turn offers great opportunities for these businesses to 'upsell' and offer added value once the walker is there.



Encouraging different businesses in Markinch to be involved in the FPW walker experience is recommended and for each to consider a themed product(s) they can offer to increase dwell time and encourage local spend is also recommended. This could be as simple as a Pilgrim's Soup and Sandwich special or other menu item, and Pilgrim packed lunches featuring some local produce.



MEASURING LOCAL IMPACT

"*What we measure affects what we do. If we measure the wrong thing, we will do the wrong thing. If we don't measure something, it becomes neglected, as if the problem didn't exist*". Carnegie UK

Tourism is typically measured by footfall, bed nights and spend at a regional level. Recalibrating how tourism is measured locally will demonstrate how tourism is delivering local benefits and helping the community be a better place to live, work and visit.

In the absence of a community action plan or local place plan, a key recommendation is to use the recent survey to agree a basic list of measures that can demonstrate benefits from visitor activity – eg number of volunteer hours provided, number of local artists and makers supported, number of cultural assets retained, number of new products developed, number of cultural events provided, etc. By agreeing the measures, everyone can focus on what they can do to help deliver positive impacts.

An infographic template can be developed for the business interests in the area to record and demonstrate the community benefits they provide. This will hopefully encourage them each to do even more.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Initial recommendations relate to considering the appetite for and capacity to undertake community action planning and/or local place planning in Markinch. These processes are valuable when considering community led tourism as they establish what is important to the community and set out priority themes for action. These can then stimulate ideas to develop within community led tourism initiatives that will address these themes. For example, if retaining young people is important, establishing a hostel for the Fife Pilgrim Way where young people can train and get qualifications has merit.

The Destination Competency table sets out several ideas and recommendations for the community to consider. The key ones relate to

- **Place Branding** – Markinch is not well known despite its heritage significance. A place brand that clearly positions its heritage offer is recommended with associated product development and propositions
- **Map** – Markinch has several features of interest relating to different periods in its history and several local walks. A map that profiles local features and attractions,

visitor facilities and walks and trails is recommended which is available online and in print at the church, rail station and other key locations. Artist drawn and illustrated maps have strong appeal. Dunkeld has a great example of this.

- **Hostel** – the lack of budget one-night accommodation is a known issue along the length of the Fife Pilgrim Way and given the strategic location of Markinch as a staging point and at the midpoint suggests this would be welcome. The new SCIO are considering this and sourcing a budget for a feasibility study and business planning is recommended in early course
- **Visitor Services and Facilities** – there are no public toilets or visitor information in Markinch. The church does provide facilities when open and it is recommended these are clearly referred to in the FPW guide to ensure walkers are aware and information about local walks, where to eat and. other services are provided
- **Heritage Walking Festival** – The routes which are already provided on the Heritage Groups website would form a great basis for a small walking festival. Walk leadership training can be provided and advice sought from other communities on setting a festival up. This can then grow over time.
- **A Crafters Hub** – there are several creative people in and around the town seeking space to display their artwork. Feasibility work is recommended looking at possible premises and operational models. Encouraging the crafters to establish a local network and do pop up events is recommended with stands at the church and during the Games as initial ideas.

PILGRIM FRIENDLY MARKINCH

As the Fife Pilgrim Way is bringing walkers to the town, a key recommendation is to develop a Pilgrim and Walker Friendly plan for Markinch.

A framework for this is provided in the Appendix and at its core it is about taking time to understand the walking and pilgrim market in general and as currently experienced locally, what currently is on offer in the town and measures that will ensure this market feels welcome and is encouraged to spend more time and money in the local area. It has two dimensions with pilgrims on the one hand and more general walkers on the other.

Key to this is a local action plan but also taking time to engage with the other staging communities on the route to ensure consistency as well as peer to peer learning.

CLIMATE ACTION

As climate action is inextricably linked to tourism a key recommendation is developing a simple climate action and tourism action plan for Ceres, with the guidance provided in the Appendix.

GOOGLE PROFILES

Early in 2026 VisitScotland changed their visitor facing website to no longer provide their own business listings and now draws on Google profiles.

At the core of this is the concept of having an online Google Profile that is kept up to date to improve visibility, and this content then being pulled on to various platforms, such as VisitScotland (and being used by AI). Previously any updates would need to be flagged separately to VisitScotland and added to your Google Profile, and this approach streamlines things.

In terms of marketing and promotion a key action for businesses and community groups and organisations in the city is to review current google profiles for any features, attractions and services they provide. Is there a profile? Is it in the right category? How up to date is it? What extra information and imagery could be added? Are there reviews and are there responses?

It may be there isn't yet a Google Profile for some of the attractions and services provided so claiming this and adding content is increasingly important. Also, if anyone has two or more quite different tourism offers, it is worth considering having two or more Google profiles to ensure these are each readily found.

Having a Google profile improves online visibility for SEO and ensures the business, service or attraction can be readily found on Google maps. This will highlight what is on offer and ensure reviews are managed and visitors can make online bookings if offered. It is important to consider individual profiles on Google Maps for attractions such as monuments, trails or parks which aren't necessarily a business but will attract visitors.

VisitScotland provide guidance on their business hub with a good introduction here: VS Business Essentials Bitesize Webinars | The power of Google: claim and enhance your profile.

The new map function is currently in BETA/test format and as this is developing, increased guidance and support will be added to their business hub.

A key recommendation at this stage is to check what Google profile exists if any. This is readily done by searching the business or attraction name online – eg on Google Chrome. If there is a profile it comes up on the righthand side on a desk top screen. If this area is blank there isn't currently a profile and this should be claimed using guidance available from Google.

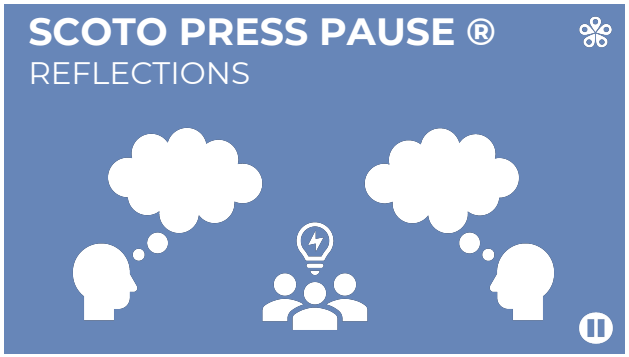
In addition, checking on Google Maps what is already listed in the local area will highlight what else can be added. Clicking a spot on the map where something is missing and then right clicking allows a missing place or business to be added, and to give it a category. This is a valuable way of highlighting features of interest that aren't necessarily a business.
Once the profiles and map entries are in place it is important to regularly check and respond to any reviews and update opening hours every time they change.

SUGGESTED FIRST STEPS

- Review the report with the SCOTO facilitator to prioritise what the community would like to progress and develop an activity plan
- Set up a What's App group for all those interested in this initiative – starting with the workshop attendees
- Arrange an open day event in the town to share the Press Pause findings and recommendations plus early actions to gather interest and involvement - potentially linked to a volunteer fayre staged with several local groups and charities
- Establish (or repurpose an existing) BeLocal Markinch Facebook page and encourage business engagement on the page with posts on features and offers, plus quick responses to any visitor queries
- Arrange a learning exchange to other communities who have developed their heritage offer for visitors
- Agree a quick win project for the next tourist season to galvanise everyone (eg the map)

An overview report will be generated collating the findings across the Fife Pilgrim Way Press Pause communities and setting out an activity plan that will help to build a cohesive, sustainable, and immersive visitor experience through a community led approach to tourism and the visitor economy.





11. REFLECTIONS

The Markinch Press Pause workshop revealed a community that is passionate and proud of its history and heritage, and very aware of its significance over the centuries. However, this is currently largely flying under the tourism radar. Visitor facing content that is available online is limited, and the casual visitor would struggle to orientate themselves and appreciate just how significant the town has been over the years.

The stunning setting of St Drostan's church and kirkyard on the hill overlooking the town is significant and provides a distinctive skyline that hasn't changed for many years. In fact, the clocktower is one of the oldest structures in the town and has a distinctive profile.

Markinch largely has been absorbed as part of Glenrothes new town but as demonstrated by its inclusion in the Scottish Towns Partnership database, it is a discrete town and developing the place branding ideas that reinforce its heritage significance will have clear merit.

Its heritage significance is a strong contrast to Glenrothes new town and offers the potential to position the town as the Glenrothes' Heritage Village or Quarter, and St Drostan's church as the historic centre.

The Fife Pilgrim Way has helped draw more visitors to the town and specifically to the church. The community have embraced this as an opportunity to share their story through guided tours and provision of visitor facilities at the church, and the workshop flagged further opportunities to engage them across the town.

The local Heritage Group have important resources that can be used to develop new products and experiences. Their website provides very useful information about local walks in the area that showcase heritage features. The value in exploring an annual heritage walking festival is significant. It could attract more local people to get involved, and link heritage to health and wellbeing for more people and enhance community cohesion.

There are several artists based in the town and a hub that provides studio space and enables them to display their artwork was explored at the workshop. An artist drawn and illustrated map of the town would be appealing for visitors and help orientate pilgrim walkers to other historic features and facilities they can experience and hopefully opt to spend longer in the town.

The Press Pause® initiative seeks to help individual geographic communities take time out to consider tourism and how it could be much more of a force for good within their community. This involves business and community interests having constructive conversations – and being willing to take ideas forward.

Post pandemic there has been a focus on recovery and 2019 was treated as a benchmark. However, we are in a new era in tourism – post Covid, post Brexit, in the midst of a technological revolution and a climate and biodiversity emergency.

SCOTO believes this requires a new approach which has responsible tourism at its core. It also presents many exciting opportunities at a local level for individual communities to focus on what more visitors are seeking – to meet local people, have meaningful authentic experiences, discover new places, learn new skills and spend locally.

This report seeks to set out what was discussed together, highlight what could be done differently to help the community move embrace tourism as a force for good. It provides a range of ideas for consideration and sets out inspiration from elsewhere. The community is the driver and can establish which ideas to pursue or explore further.
Whatever action is taken the primary aim is community cohesion and for tourism to deliver meaningful benefits that address local issues at an individual community level. The presence of visitors should be making a positive difference and helping make the community an even better place to live, work and visit.



The Welcome to Markinch map and timeline panel on display in the town and on the Fife Pilgrim Way.



The Current Welcome to Fife Z-Map for the Heartlands of Fife, developed in partnership with the LTA

ADVENTURE AT THE HEART OF FIFE

welcometofife.com/region/heartlands



FIFE PILGRIM WAY

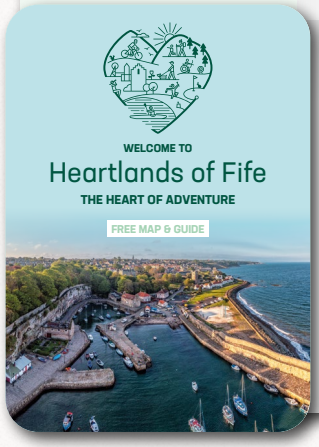
The 64-mile Fife Pilgrim Way starts at **Culross** and **North Queensferry**, and meets in **Dunfermline** before winding through the less well-known areas of the Fife Heartlands. It passes medieval landmarks, industrial landscapes, and picturesque villages en route to **St Andrews**. The route has manageable sections which offer a few hours' walking or a long-distance challenge.



IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF KINGS

Follow Jess the Jester's augmented reality adventure at 10 Fife locations, including **Aberdour Castle**, **Lochore Castle**, **Burntisland waterfront**, **Ravenscraig Castle**, **McDuff's Castle** and **Markinch Church**.

Download on the App Store | Google Play



THE HEARTLANDS OF FIFE IS AN AREA OF STUNNING CONTRASTS. FROM THE HIGHEST POINT IN THE KINGDOM OF FIFE - THE LOMOND HILLS - TO THE AWARD-WINNING BEACHES AND QUAINT HARBOURS ON THE COAST. FROM HISTORIC MINING VILLAGES TO ONE OF SCOTLAND'S NEWEST TOWNS.



CULTURE & LIFESTYLE

Immerse yourself in authentic charm with a variety of **events**, **museums**, **galleries**, **theatres** and local **independent shops**. Check out the **art trail** around **Glenrothes** featuring 170 different pieces of town art including hippos by Stanley Bonner and Giant Irises by Michael Westwater. **Cowdenbeath** also features **murals** by Kerry Wilson.



ACCOMMODATION

Heartlands of Fife offers a range of serviced accommodation, including award-winning hotels, family-run BBBs, and self-catering properties. Camping and caravanning enthusiasts can also enjoy well-equipped sites across the region.



A NATURAL PLAYGROUND

Experience the Heartlands of Fife's outdoor wonders: woodland and coastal walks, scenic parks, wildlife, and captivating views. Don't miss **Lochore Meadows**, a 1200-acre country park near **Lochgelly**, offering a **trout fishery**, **golf course**, **picnic spots**, **beach**, **play area**, and **riding stables**. Embrace **watersports**, **e-foil**, **paddle boarding**, **hillwalking**, and **mountain biking** across the Heartlands.

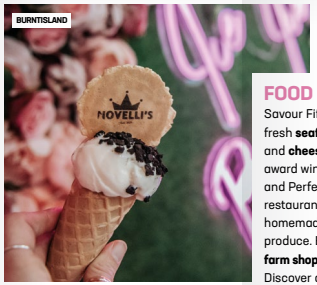




AT THE HEART OF THE HOME OF GOLF

Unleash your golfing passion in the Heartlands of Fife, where history, beauty and diverse golfing experiences await. Discover Fife's golfing gems offering stunning views and challenging courses for all golfers. From the 10th oldest golf club in the world at **Burntisland** to **Aberdour**'s picturesque parkland, enjoy a round with a view. Explore the courses at **Balbirnie Park**, **Kirkcaldy**, **Dunnikier Park**, and more. Experience 9-hole courses, driving ranges, and unique golf variations including disc and foot golf at **Cluny Activities**. For comprehensive information on courses, passes and packages scan the **Fife Golf QR code** or visit their website.

SCAN ME



FOOD & DRINK

Savour Fife's culinary delights; daily fresh **seafood**, top-quality **meats,** and **cheese** from the Buffalo farm, award winning **ice cream** from Novelli's and Perfect Scoop. Indulge in acclaimed restaurants, pubs and cafés offering homemade dishes made with local produce. Explore **artisan markets**, and **farm shops** for the best seasonal produce. Discover award winning **beers, spirits** and perfectly brewed **tea** and **coffee**.



HISTORY & HERITAGE

The Heartlands offers a wealth of historic treasures like **Aberdour Castle**, **Macduff's Castle**, and **Ravenscraig Castle**. Explore family history at the charming **Wemyss School of Needlework**. Nearby, take a guided tour of the **Wemyss Caves**, home to the largest collection of ancient Pictish carvings, preserved for over 1,500 years.



EXCLUSIVE TO HEARTLANDS FIFE

KIRKCALDY ICE RINK:
Skating, Curling, Ice Hockey, Famous Fife Flyers Ice Hockey Team

CLUNY ACTIVITIES:
Segway Riding, Clay Target Shooting, Disc Golf

RACEWAYS:
Cowdenbeath Racewall – Stock Cars, Drifting, Lochgelly Raceway

FIFE AIRPORT GLENROTHES:
Flight Training, Aircraft Hangarage & Hire

GREYHOUND RACING:
Thornton Stadium



FIFE COASTAL PATH

Explore the Fife Coastal Path, 117 miles of quaint fishing harbours, atmospheric castles, historic villages and industrial heritage. The **Aberdour** to **East Wemyss** section captures the essence of the Heartlands of Fife. Encounter diverse beauty, from rich seabird habitats to playful seals and occasional dolphins. Discover **Kirkcaldy's Waterfront**, immersed in maritime heritage.

APPENDIX 1:
Key Considerations for a Community-Led Tourism Climate Action Plan

Guiding Principles:

- *Tourism should strengthen the community's climate resilience while reducing its environmental footprint and improving local quality of life.*
- *Visitors should readily understand that climate action matters to the community and feel able to help and contribute.*
- *Businesses and organisations should proudly profile what climate action they are taking and what this means for their business, their community and their customers*

Recommended Format and Content:

1. Vision & Community Values

Define what climate-responsible tourism is and what it means for this community

- A shared vision for low-carbon, resilient tourism
- Explain the community priorities (eg. livelihoods, culture, ecosystems, equity)
- State the community's commitment to local leadership in climate action and inclusion (residents, community groups, small and micro businesses, young people)

2. Climate Risks & Tourism Impacts

Set out a clear understanding of what climate change threatens in relation to tourism and the visitor experience within this community

- Highlight the key climate hazards that have been experienced (floods, storms)
- Highlight vulnerable tourism assets (infrastructure, heritage assets, paths and trails, natural resources and habitats)
- Highlight outdoor events and activities that could be impacted by extreme weather
- Consider social vulnerability as a consequence (eg jobs at risk, informal and seasonal workers income, volunteering impacts)

3. Tourism Emissions Snapshot

Identify the major carbon sources relating to tourism in this community

- Visitor transport (how they arrive and local travel once in destination)
- Accommodation options and their energy use and waste management
- Food systems and supply chains at cafes and restaurants; use of local seasonal produce
- Waste management and accessibility for visitors
- Highlight the main sources and desire to tackle these

4. Climate Action Audit

Undertake a simple audit of what already exists and/or is available

- Collate which businesses and organisations already have green accreditations (eg Green Tourism gold, silver or bronze accreditation)
- Review who has participated in local climate action training programmes and advisory workshops
- Review current visitor facing information and guidance available online to promote for example public transport and active travel to visit the destination
- Develop simple case studies of good practice

5. Climate Mitigation Actions

Outline the actions that will help reduce tourism-related emissions and promote these to visitors

- Low-carbon mobility (public transport, EVs, active travel)
- Highlight energy efficiency and renewables in tourism attractions and facilities
- Showcase local, seasonal food and waste reduction
- Showcase local circular economy initiatives including plastic reduction

6. Adaptation & Resilience Actions

Explain what is being done locally to protect people, livelihoods, and ecosystems

- Climate-resilient infrastructure investments and land use decisions
- Nature-based solutions (forests and woodland planting projects, care and enhancement of meadows, rivers, wetlands and other habitats)
- Event planning and contingency measures for extreme weather incidents
- Disaster preparedness and early warning systems that have been developed by the community

7. Community Benefits & Equity

Provide details on what is being progressed locally to ensure tourism supports local well-being

- Local ownership of assets

- Green jobs
- Skills training and capacity building
- Cultural and built heritage protection
- Campaigns and incentives to extend the season and disperse visitors across the community

8. Education & Behaviour Change

Align visitors and locals

- Visitor awareness of climate impacts and what they can do reduce their personal impact in this community
- Voluntourism opportunities for visitors to support local endeavours – tree planting, litter picks
- Low-impact travel guidance for visitors provided at accommodation and at time of booking
- Training for tourism and hospitality workers and operators
- Annual award for climate action heroes – local individuals and enterprises plus visitors who have engaged in activity
- Transparent communication (avoid greenwashing)

9. Governance & Partnerships

Explain how the community is ensuring shared responsibility and accountability

- Clear roles for community, public agencies and private sector
- Participatory decision-making
- Integration of local knowledge
- Partnerships with charitable groups, universities and colleges, and climate experts

10. Financing & Incentives

Set out what support is available to support climate action in this community

- Grants
- Potential tourism levy (if approved and introduced by the Council)
- Incentives for small and local businesses
- Community benefit or reinvestment funds

11. Targets, Monitoring & Review

Track progress using available indicators or proxies and demonstrate adaptions being made in response

- Emissions reduction and resilience targets
- Simple indicators (energy use at premises, waste management and litter pick stats, jobs, biodiversity measures)
- Annual public reporting
- Regular plan updates

APPENDIX 2:
Key Considerations for a Place-based Community-Led Pilgrim / Walker Friendly Plan

City/Town/Village:
Date:
Lead Organisation / Steering Group:

SUGGESTED FIFE PILGRIM WAY COMMUNITY PLEDGE:
"We welcome walkers and pilgrims. We will provide clear information, essential facilities, and a warm local welcome while ensuring tourism benefits our community."

SECTION A – UNDERSTANDING YOUR WALKER MARKET
2. Walker Profile Assessment
What is lived experience telling us?
Percentage split and key characteristics.

Category	Current Situation	Desired Future
Day walkers		
Long-distance pilgrims		
Group walkers		
International visitors		
Families		

Key Questions:
- Where are walkers coming from?
- When do they visit (seasonality)?
- How long do they stay?
- What do they struggle with?

SECTION B – ESSENTIAL WALKER FRIENDLY INFRASTRUCTURE

3. Core Facilities Checklist
A. Toilets
☐ Public toilets available
☐ Opening hours displayed
☐ Donation/contactless option
☐ Accessible toilet

Action Plan:
- Improvements required:
- Responsible party:
- Timeline:

B. Water & Refreshment
☐ Drinking water refill point
☐ Café / takeaway option
☐ Early breakfast option
☐ Packed lunch provision

Improvements Required:

C. Accommodation (Critical for Pilgrim Routes)

Type	Available?	Gaps
B&B / Guesthouse		
Self-catering		
Budget bunkhouse / hostel		
Campsite		
Group accommodation		

Key Consideration:
Pilgrims often seek:
- 1-night stays
- Budget pricing
- Drying space
- Communal areas

Feasibility actions required:

D. Wayfinding & Signage
☐ Clear route signage through town/village
☐ Directional signs to facilities
☐ Brown tourist signage (if applicable)
☐ Route maps displayed centrally

Gaps:

SECTION C – WALKER EXPERIENCE
4. Arrival & First Impressions
- Is the welcome/entry point at both ends of the town/village obvious?
- Is there a "Welcome FPW Walkers" sign?
- Is there seating near key points?
- Are businesses visibly walker-friendly?

Enhancement Ideas:

5. Walker-Friendly Business Standards Suggested Local Charter
Businesses agree to:
☐ Allow water bottle refills
☐ Provide drying space (where possible)
☐ Accept card payments
☐ Offer early breakfast or takeaway options
☐ Display route map

Consider creating:
"Certified FPW Walker Friendly Business" window stickers

6. Digital Presence
☐ Dedicated "Walkers" page on website
☐ Downloadable town map
☐ Accommodation list
☐ Live opening hours information
☐ Transport links
☐ Emergency contact info

Recommended:
- Single official visitor-facing page
- WhatsApp / Facebook group for updates

SECTION D – EXTENDING STAY & SPEND
7. Encouraging Overnight Stays
Opportunities:
- Heritage evening walks
- Pilgrim meals
- Cultural storytelling evenings
- Group packages

What could encourage a walker to stay 2 nights instead of 1?

8. Added-Value Experiences
☐ Pilgrim passport stamping points
☐ Guided heritage walks
☐ Heritage themed talks/lectures
☐ Local food tasting
☐ Craft workshops
☐ Nature walks
Consider partnerships with:
- Churches
- Heritage groups
- Local producers
- Walking clubs
- Artists and crafters

SECTION E – TRANSPORT & CONNECTIVITY
9. Getting To & From the Route
☐ Bus links
☐ Rail links
☐ Taxi availability
☐ Luggage transfer services
☐ Bike hire
Is your town a:
- Through-stop?
- Staging point?
- Midpoint hub?
- Base for circular walks?

SECTION F – SAFETY, INCLUSION & ACCESSIBILITY
10. Accessibility
☐ Accessibility statement available
☐ Step-free access where possible
☐ Clear terrain grading on walks
☐ Seating at regular intervals
Recommendations:

11. Managing Expectations
Clearly communicate:
- Limited services?
- Seasonal closures?
- Rural connectivity issues?
- Cash vs card availability?

Transparency prevents negative reviews.
Recommendations:

SECTION G – CLIMATE & RESPONSIBLE WALKING
12. Climate Action
☐ Promote public transport
☐ Water refill promotion
☐ Waste reduction messaging
☐ Local sourcing in cafés
☐ Repair / reuse culture
Optional:
"Walk Lightly Here" campaign messaging

SECTION H – COMMUNITY BENEFIT
13. Measuring Local Impact
Agree 5–10 simple metrics:
- Number of walker overnight stays
- Volunteer hours delivered
- Revenue generated for community assets
- Number of local businesses engaged
- Events delivered

SECTION I – ACTION PLAN
14. Priority Actions (12–24 Month Plan)

Priority	Action	Lead	Funding Required	Timescale
1				
2				

SECTION J – GOVERNANCE & DELIVERY
15. Who Owns This Plan?
- Community group?
- Church?
- Business association?
- Informal tourism network?

Establish:
- Named coordinator
- Quarterly review meeting
- Annual public update

SCOTO PRESS PAUSE® WALKER FRIENDLY ANNUAL SELF-ASSESSMENT SCORECARD
Rate each 1–5 as 'Fife Pilgrim Way Walker Friendly' where 1 is poor and 5 is excellent
- Public Toilets
- Accommodation
- Signage
- Digital info
- Food & Water
- Communal Spaces
- Business engagement
- Events
- Transport
- Climate action

Total Score:
Target Score (Year 2):