SCOTO®

PRESS PAUSE



COMMUNITY LED DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT, MANAGEMENT AND PROMOTION

CULROSS, FIFE

11 May 2026

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		



PRESS PAUSE®
CULROSS, FIFE

This Press Pause ® initiative has been funded through Fife Council's South and West Fife Area Committee.
SCOTO was previously 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 and funding sourced to also include Culross in 2026.

SCOTO®
PRESS PAUSE

PRESS PAUSE® IN CULROSS, FIFE

The Culross Workshop took place on 11 May The Stables. SCOTO met with Culross Community Council and 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 Culross 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 Culross in general and linked to its relationship with the Fife Pilgrim Way.

CONTENTS

A: Culross Press Pause - At a Glance
B: Background & Context
- Introducing Community Led Tourism
- Introducing Press Pause®
- The Global, National & Local Context

C: Setting the Scene - Ceres
- The Fife Pilgrim Way
- Culross Community Structures
- Culross Tourism Structures

D: Press Pause Findings and Recommendations
1. Local Sentiment
2. Defining the Destination
3. Current Thoughts on Tourism
4. Competitors and Comparators
5. Visitor Profile – Past, Present & Future
6. What Matters Locally
7. Destination Competence
8. Place Branding
9. Measuring Local Impact
10. Recommendations
11. Reflections

APPENDICES

A: CULROSS PRESS PAUSE® AT A GLANCE

Culross is a highly desirable visitor destination in central Scotland but is not currently structured to optimise benefits for the local community.

Tourism is largely happening to Culross rather than with Culross, creating pressures on infrastructure and the historic environment while many economic and social opportunities remain untapped.

The overarching recommendation is to refocus how tourism plays out in Culross by moving away from a high-volume tourism model to a community-led, value-based visitor economy which focuses on how visitors experience the village and what benefit their visit provides to the local community.

KEY FINDINGS

1. Tourism is both an opportunity and a pressure

Residents recognise tourism is essential for supporting local businesses and protecting Culross' heritage. However, there is growing concern about:

- parking congestion
- traffic management
- coach tours with short stays and limited local spend
- Outlander-related visitor numbers seeing the village as a film set
- increasing pressure on village infrastructure.

The workshop found mixed community sentiment, with most participants believing Culross could offer much more if tourism were better managed.

2. Culross has exceptional heritage assets

The report identifies Culross as one of Scotland's strongest heritage destinations, with assets including:

- Scotland's best-preserved 17th-century village
- National Trust for Scotland's Culross Palace and other NTS properties
- Culross Abbey
- St Mungo's birthplace and St Mungo's Chapel (a ruin)
- Fife Pilgrim Way start point
- Fife Coastal Path
- Strong film and television connections.

These provide an excellent platform for developing higher-value visitor experiences.

3. Visitor numbers are increasing but spending opportunities are limited

Visitor numbers have notably increased since Covid and especially Outlander filming and production. Although visitor numbers continue to grow, there are relatively few opportunities for visitors to spend money.

- no village shop
- limited retail outlets, galleries and cafes
- only one main evening restaurant
- very limited visitor information
- few organised experiences and events

Many coach visitors spend less than an hour in the village.

4. Parking and traffic are the dominant local issue

This emerged repeatedly throughout the workshop.

Issues include:

- resident parking pressures
- insufficient parking spaces
- inconsiderate parking
- poor traffic flow
- sat-nav routing through narrow streets
- coach management – drop off and parking
- inadequate signage.

The report notes successful solutions operating in places such as Luss, New Lanark and Plockton that could provide models for Culross.

5. Community organisations are a major strength

Despite its small size, Culross has:

- an active Community Council
- The Stables Community Hub
- The Red Lion Community Pub and Brewery
- Regular community markets
- Grow West Fife
- Woodland groups
- active volunteers.

The report sees these organisations as the foundation for community-led tourism and future visitor services.

6. Coordination between organisations could be improved

Although many groups are active, participants felt there is:

- limited collaboration
- silo working

- no place plan or community action plan setting out a shared vision and priority themes
- no overall visitor management approach
- weak links with wider tourism organisations, council and other agencies.

Better coordination is viewed as essential for future success, but to be effective there needs to be a shared vision, a masterplan and strong community leadership.



PRINCIPLE RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Focus on developing a shared vision for Culross

Develop a local place plan/community action plan for the Culross that has tourism as a key theme and which:

- Is built on robust engagement
- reflects community priorities
- protects quality of life
- generates meaningful local benefit
- aligns tourism with community wellbeing.

A community generated local place plan then enables the community to work with council and other partners confident there is a shared vision and single voice for the community.

2. Develop a stronger Culross place brand

Move beyond being known primarily as an Outlander filming location.
Instead promote:

- authentic heritage
- local stories
- community life
- pilgrimage
- walking
- nature
- cultural experiences.

The report encourages telling the story of the "real Culross" and 'this place that we call home'.

3. Improve traffic and visitor management

Priority action is to develop a masterplan for Culross which includes:

- permanent traffic management measures
- resident parking solutions
- improved directional signage
- better coach management
- visitor services and facilities (toilets, information and orientation)
- paid visitor parking where income benefits the community.

A masterplan is recommended that seeks to collectively understand and address the many different pressures, support effective visitor and traffic management and be implemented in phases.

4. Increase visitor spend

Rather than seeking more visitors, encourage existing visitors to stay longer by introducing:

- guided heritage walks
- walking itineraries
- community events
- local food offers
- pop-up retail and artisan maker opportunities
- evening food provision

Working with existing tour operators is recommended to encourage them to stop longer and encourage their guests to support local businesses and the wider community.

Improve visitor information

Develop:

- a high-quality village map
- walking guides
- suggested itineraries for different lengths of time in the village/area
- interpretation panels
- better online information
- stronger wayfinding throughout the village.

Establishing a visitor information hub at an easily accessible location is recommended.

5. Better support Fife Pilgrim Way visitors

As the start of the route, Culross should strengthen its offer through:

- clearer gateway signage
- local pilgrim information
- increased passport stamping locations
- budget and one-night accommodation options
- walker-friendly businesses and spaces

A template is provided to help scope out a formal Pilgrim/Walkers Welcome Plan.

6. Create new community-led tourism enterprises

Potential opportunities include:

- motorhome aire
- visitor information hub
- reuse of vacant buildings
- artisan retail units
- community-run facilities

- heritage experiences
- volunteer ambassador programme.

The aim is to generate sustainable income that supports the wider community.

7. Strengthen collaboration

Recommendations include:

- establish a local tourism group
- regular networking between community groups and businesses
- stronger engagement with Welcome to Fife and the Local Tourism Association
- stronger engagement with the council and NTS
- shared marketing
- volunteer recruitment
- improved communication between organisations.

A local place plan/community action plan will enable the community to present a shared vision and prioritised themes as the basis for any collaborative work.

STRATEGIC OPPORTUNITIES

The report identifies several significant opportunities over the next decade:

- Pride in Place funding for West Fife Villages
- rising interest in walking holidays
- growth of the Fife Pilgrim Way
- continued interest in heritage tourism
- opportunities arising from film tourism ("set-jetting")
- increasing demand for authentic community experiences
- community ownership and regeneration initiatives.

CONCLUSION

Culross does not need more visitors; it needs to derive greater value from the visitors it already attracts.

Culross also needs to be supported in understanding its capacity and then introducing measures to reinforce this.

The recommendations focus on shifting from a model of high visitor volume and relatively low local benefit to one where tourism is community-led, well managed, financially sustainable, and directly supports the long-term wellbeing of Culross and its residents.

The recommendations focus on tourism no longer happening to Culross and shifting to happening with Culross.



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 meet and explore common interests, 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.

WHY SCOTO PRESS PAUSE®?

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

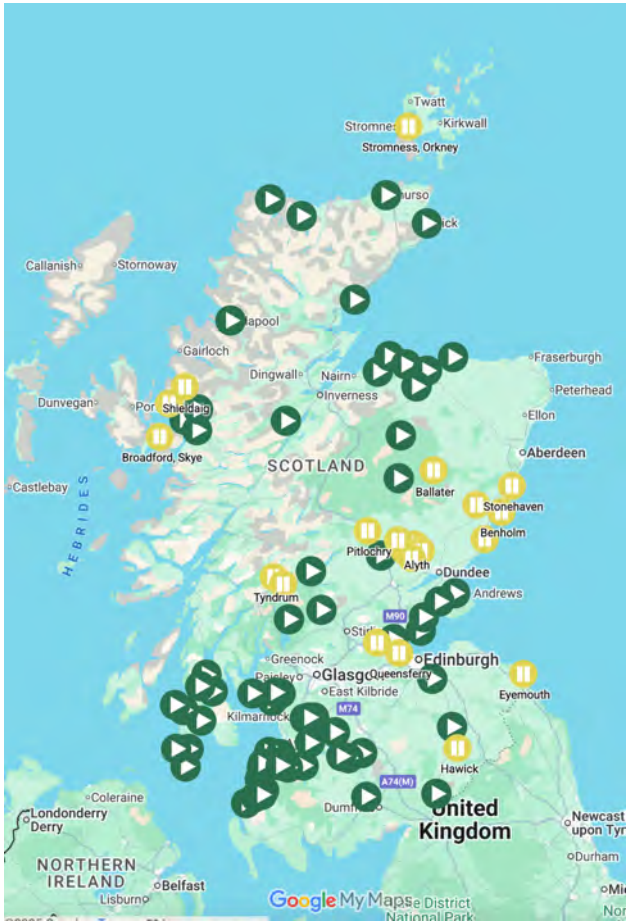
- Technology is revolutionising travel, tourism and everyday lives
- Digital content is an increasingly important source of travel inspiration
- Visitors are now seeking to slow down, meet local people, have authentic experiences
- Everyone is much more conscious of their wellbeing
- We are increasingly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

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®
CULROSS, FIFE














C: SETTING THE SCENE: CULROSS

- Culross is located on north shore of the Firth of Forth in Fife
- Culross is a former Royal Burgh and dates back to the 6th century
- Culross is an outstanding conservation village and is considered Scotland's most complete example of a 17th century burgh
- Culross village has a population of approximately 450
- Culross is 8 miles southwest of Dunfermline
- Culross is the start point on the Fife Pilgrim Way and is on the Fife Coastal Path which starts at nearby Kincardine
- NTS owns several properties within Culross including the Palace and 'Little Houses'



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.

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 and St Andrews and latterly for Culross.

This Press Pause Report sets out the key findings and lists several quick win and longer-term recommendations for Culross to consider as part of their journey in community led tourism.

A template is provided for the individual communities on the Fife Pilgrim Way to develop a community-led, place-based Pilgrim/Walker Friendly Plan. See Appendix 2.

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 - CULROSS

Culross is regarded as a village. However, it is grouped with High and Low Valleyfield and listed as one of 509 towns in Scotland by Scotland's Towns Partnership.

Listing: High Valleyfield, Low Valleyfield and Culross

High Valleyfield in Fife was a 20th century coal mining town. The Valleyfield colliery operated from 1908 until 1978. Public housing was built for mine workers. Today new private housing has been built.

In this, and similar small towns, people experience more challenging circumstances with higher rates of unemployment, poorer health, lack of a car, lower levels of education and lower social grades than other groups. A higher proportion live in social rented housing. There is a higher proportion of single person households and lone parents.

High Valleyfield, Low Valleyfield and Culross is an interdependent to dependent town.



CULROSS: COMMUNITY STRUCTURES

There are a number of active community groups in and around Culross.

Culross Community Council – The community council is made up of elected members who represent the interests of the village and its residents. The council meets monthly where local issues and opportunities are discussed. Acting as the voice of the community, the council speaks on a wide range of topics from planning and development to local services and heritage. The Council also organises local events including the Hogmanay celebrations and Remembrance Day.



The Stables Community Hub – The Stables is the central hub for community activities in Culross including community meals, markets, seniors' coffee mornings and toddler sessions. The Hub hosts a range of wellbeing activities for all ages and does Bakery sales on a Friday. The Stables was formerly a youth club created when the building was gifted to the community by the Cunninghame family in the 1960s.

grow west fife
FOOD FOR LOCAL COMMUNITIES

Grow West Fife is located in the Blair Castle walled garden and provides volunteering, community meals and sustainable food education.

Culross Community Garden – located within the village, the garden is a shared space where locals cultivate flowers and herbs.

Red Lion Inn
Low Causeway, Culross, Fife

West Fife Community Trading Limited - is a Community Benefit Society that purchased the Red Lion Inn for the Community. The Inn is run by tenants as a business with WFCTL the owner of the building. WFCTL also own and run the Community Brewery. WFCTL will ultimately provide the West Fife Community Charitable Trust with funds.

West Fife Community Charitable Trust – The Trust's stated charitable objects are - to help maintain the fabric of the community by ensuring sensitivity in the planning process; to look after the heritage of the community by taking public assets into community ownership where necessary; and to help other voluntary groups maintain, develop and take responsibility for facilities within the community.

Culross Community Market – takes place every Sunday on the village green with handmade and local produce.



West Fife Woodlands Group – this group is dedicated to enhancing local woodlands and creating path networks to the Fife Coastal Path and Devilla Forest to the north of Culross.

West Fife Woodlands

CULROSS: 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'.

Fife

***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.

At a more local level there is the Dunfermline and West Fife Local Tourism Association (LTA).

The Dunfermline and West Fife Tourism Association (LTA) consists of hospitality, leisure and tourism businesses within Dunfermline and West Fife, including Culross, North Queensferry, Inverkeithing, Limekilns and Charlestown. Joining the LTA is completely free for all businesses and has many benefits for members. Members can network with other people and organisations in a relaxed and informal manner, discuss existing challenges and examine best practice.

Ongoing LTA initiatives can help attract visitors and lead to new opportunities for sales and increased business. Through greater commercial interaction and collaboration, LTA membership can help businesses grow, increase their exposure and will support the development of tourism in the area to increase footfall.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

1. To develop an active network of visitor businesses in Dunfermline and West Fife
2. To promote and encourage training for tourism businesses
3. To build effective linkages with other organisations and interest groups in Dunfermline and West Fife and whole Fife region
4. To establish effective linkages with Welcome to Fife, VisitScotland and other national agencies
5. To promote the work of the Dunfermline and West Fife Local Tourism Association locally, and nationally.



D: CULROSS PRESS PAUSE® FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS

22 individuals attended the SCOTO Press Pause® workshop representing a mix of business and community interests. The workshop took place in the Stables in the village.

TOPICS EXPLORED AT THE WORKSHOP

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



1. LOCAL SENTIMENT

When asked to share their current sentiment towards tourism in the local area using emojis, ten participants were happy with a couple of people very happy, balanced by four who were neutral and four who were unhappy.



Initial thoughts expressed were that the lack of parking and traffic management are key issues and locals had resorted to putting up their own 'no parking' signs in their windows and on the street plus pots of plants to block off space outside their homes. There was clear recognition that visitors are needed to keep the existing businesses going but there is a lack of premises for anyone interested in setting up a new business.

Many expressed concern that Outlander impacts are out of control and cited excessive numbers of tour groups that provide little or no benefit to the community and contribute to the parking and traffic management challenges.

Everyone was then asked to consider 5 statements and state which best reflected where they felt Culross stands at the moment in relation to tourism.

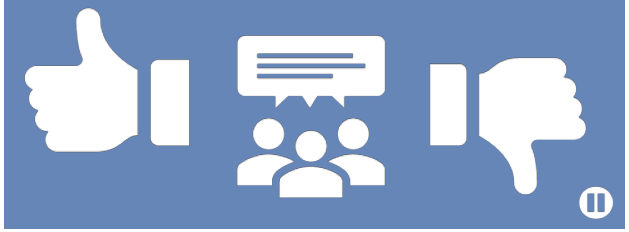
1 *"We are completely overwhelmed – it's too much"*
2 *"We're doing okay in summer but would like to extend the season"*
3 *"There are a couple of things for visitors to do but we could offer so much more"*
4*"We used to do really well with visitors but have lost our way"*
5*"We are at the start of our tourism journey "*

A few people highlighted statement 1 flagging that the traffic issues were the main problem.

Most, however, opted for statement 3 – with a focus on the lack of shops for people to spend money, and the pub often being at capacity and evening meals fully booked with no local alternative.

Concern again was expressed that many of the tours only stop for a short period with very limited time for the visitors to do anything other than take some photos.

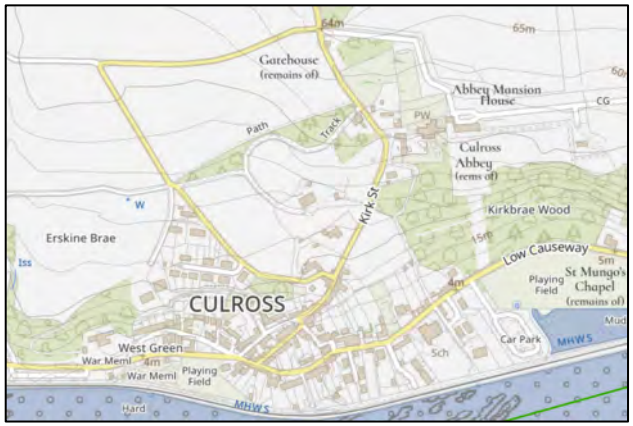
SCOTO PRESS PAUSE ®
WHAT'S OUR STARTING POINT?



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.



Although the old village is seen as the core for visitor interest it was recognised that the wider rural area also has appeal with the several woodlands and a good network of paths, including the Fife Coastal Path and the Fife Pilgrim Way (which officially starts at Culross). There are also a number of accommodation providers and venues for weddings and other Events outwith the village itself.



Map: Culross Community Council Boundary

The community council boundary itself is quite arbitrary from a destination cohesion perspective and the ideal focus would be to have a core area taking in the southern area of the community council from the A985 south to the coastline, and a wider perspective taking in the surrounding forests and woodlands including Valleyfield Woodlands, Devilla Forest and Balgownie Woods which are managed by West Fife Woodlands Group.

This outer area is a great basis to review existing and develop new walking guides for the area with Culross at the core.



3. CURRENT THOUGHTS ON TOURISM

WHAT'S WORKING IN CULROSS?

Initial thoughts shared at the workshop:

- Culross is being promoted and by many different players
- Culross is a stop on a lot of tours coming out of Edinburgh
- The coastal path attracts a lot of walkers
- The Fife Pilgrim Way is drawing more people to the village
- The Sunday market attracts people
- The village is vibrant
- Tourists in the evening have helped reduced vandalism
- Temporary signage at Kirk Street has worked for HGVs
- The Stables bakery on a Friday attracts people from outside the village
- Visitors are coming all year
- Campervans in the main car park at night have deterred anti-social behaviour
- NTS have investment in the palace and grounds
- Old buildings are being invested in and maintained
- Lighting in the west car park

WHATS NOT WORKING IN CULROSS?

Initial thoughts shared at the workshop:

- Sat Nav brings vehicles down the narrow road past the Abbey (the 'fastest' route)
- Parking and traffic management is a major issue
- Locals have resorted to putting up their own no parking signs
- The temporary signs and cones for traffic management at King Street do get moved out the way – needs a permanent solution
- No visitor information resource
- Information in the car park is dated
- Very few opportunities for visitors to spend
- Lack of suitable premises for small businesses
- Toilets – only one block and major issue when not open (closed for 3 months last year)
- Toilets inadequate for the level of use
- Toilets aren't open in the evening when visitors are still arriving and spending time
- Campervans park overnight and don't pay (no opportunity to do so)
- Inconsiderate parking within the village
- Several self-catering units in the old village – users want to
- Culross as the start of the Fife Pilgrim Way is not clearly highlighted
- The old, cobbled streets are being neglected
- Poor signage – vehicles and pedestrians
- Cyclists not using bells on paths

WHAT COULD BE DONE DIFFERENTLY OR BETTER IN CULROSS?

Initial thoughts shared at the workshop:

- Campervans and motorhomes – get an income from them staying overnight (and also recognise this is helping manage ASBO issues) – Ref Findhorn Motorhome stop over)
- Review the opening hours for the toilets into the evening
- Ensure when charging is introduced for parking and/or campervans that the community benefits not just the council
- Common Good land handed over from the Royal Burgh in 1975 – how can this be a potentially repurposed as a resource that helps with visitor management and benefits the community
- Permit holders only and dedicated parking areas within the village
- Security cameras in the car parks
- Make the temporary restrictions permanent – they have worked
- Traffic management that encourages traffic to go in one direction and not try to turn
- Better signage – finger posts clearly directing visitors to different features
- Park and ride
- Reinstate a village shop
- Sandhaven house – sitting empty but could be in use
- Bike racks for cyclists

4. CULROSS 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.

CULROSS COMPETITORS

As Culross is considered one of, if not the, best preserved 17th century village in Scotland there is a sense that it does not have any competitors. It is unique.

However, Falkland also has a conservation village and has a NTS owned/managed palace. Falkland dates from the 16th century and served as a residence for the Scottish Royal Stuart family whereas Culross Palace dates from the 17th century and was a merchant house. From a tourism perspective Culross is one of a number of filming locations associated with Outlander and is included in most self-guided and formal tours. Other locations include Midhope Castle, Blackness Castle, Doune Castle and Falkland, as examples. To date these communities have not necessarily collaborated on what Outlander means to them and how the Outlander experience could be better packaged and promoted to benefit the host communities. Food for thought?

CULROSS COMPARATORS:

Examples of conservation villages that have parking and traffic management schemes:

LUSS – an outstanding conservation village on the banks of Loch Lomond which operates with a large car park on the periphery and permit schemes in the village for local access

NEW LANARK – an outstanding conservation area where a large car park has been provided at the top of the hill with an access path into the village, and a permit holder only scheme for resident parking in the village, and with dedicated parking for the hotel in the old Mill.

PLOCKTON – a conservation village in the west highlands suffering from lack of parking and various traffic management issues. The community can access funds from the council's voluntary parking scheme which has been used for planters, replacement benches and local events. The community have recently commissioned a study to explore a community asset transfer of land owned by the council on the edge of the village (part of an old airfield) for parking and other potential revenue generating uses, and new traffic management measures in the village.

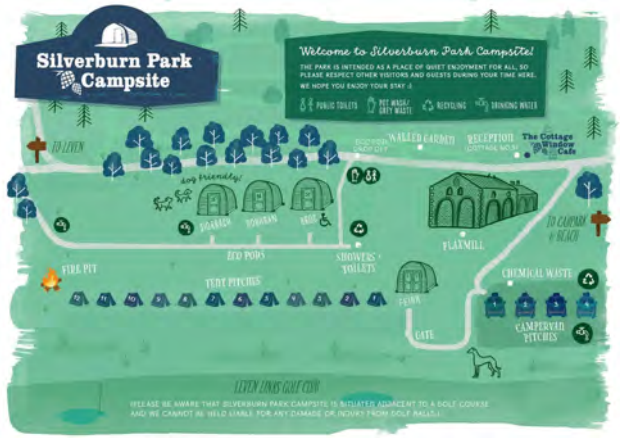
Examples of communities that have sought to provide visitor facing facilities and generate revenue and employment which could be appropriate in and around Culross are:

FINDHORN MOTORHOME STOP OVER – This community run facility was developed in response to excessive use of the area for motorhomes following the pandemic. The land is owned by a community charity and was developed to accommodate overnight stops and with a number plate recognition barrier to control payment and access. Overnight only stop overs are permitted and the site generates £35-30k per annum for the charity which is spent on footpath and fencing improvements and supporting other community led initiatives.

LIMEKILNS AIRE – 3 stop over points provided by the community overlooking the Forth Bridges and charging £5/night

SILVERBURN PARK, FIFE – a community led development with camping and pods, a café and grounds open to the public. The site was gifted to the former town council in the 1970s by the Russell Family and for many years ran as an animal farm, a craft centre and hosted campers and a range of events. The activities and buildings closed during the 1990s. In 2019 FEAT Trading CIC signed a lease agreement with an aim to regenerate the park for a sustainable future. The camping, pods and café are operational, and the historic Flax Mill is currently being redeveloped for community wellbeing, enterprise and employment.





5. FIFE & CULROSS 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

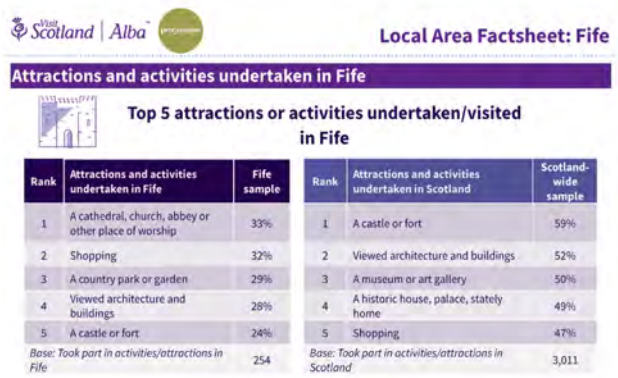
Using data from the International Passenger Survey 2024 and Great Britain Tourism Survey 2024, VisitScotland state that Fife experienced:

- 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.

VISITOR PROFILE – PAST, PRESENT & FUTURE

The tourism data provided by STEAM and VisitScotland is not broken down to a local level, and whilst it can give an overview and sense of what is happening regionally, local lived experience helps better understand the local realities. An appraisal of what participants are seeing and would like to see in Culross revealed:

PAST

- Day trippers from the central belt
- Historic/architectural interests
- NTS members and Palace visitors

PRESENT

- Day trippers/tourers:
  - Covid and Outlander led to much more people discovering Culross and a notable change in the type of people who visit and why
  - Coach tours - which don't stay long
  - Walkers on Fife Coastal Path and Fife Pilgrim Way
  - More dog walkers since lockdown
- Overnighters – use Culross as a base for walking and exploring Fife and as a stop off before flights (close to airport)

FUTURE – WHAT IS DESIRED

- More people to spend more time and money exploring and benefitting the area
- New ferry service from France to Rosyth – how can Culross benefit?

A specific recommendation for the Culross community is to segment the different visitor interests that come to Culross. Their motivations are very different and each offer different opportunities for the community to see more benefits from visitor activity and also have different visitor management requirements.

SCOTO PRESS PAUSE ®
APPRAISING WHAT MATTERS IN THIS COMMUNITY

6. WHAT MATTERS LOCALLY

Culross does not currently have a Community Action Plan or a Local Place Plan developed by the community and for the community



The South and West Fife Local Community Plan 2020-2025 produced by the council covers the broader area and identified five themes:

1. Poverty & cost of living crisis
2. Economic Growth
3. Climate Change
4. Affordable Housing
5. Wellbeing, Quality of life and Safety

Of note, Culross forms part of the 'West Fife Villages' which have recently been selected to receive £20m of Pride in Place funding to support community led regeneration over the next 10 years.

PRIDE IN PLACE
LED BY YOU – BACKED BY UK GOVERNMENT

West Fife Villages

This funding is intended to support communities to improve their place and address local priorities, by making lasting and positive changes. While success will look different in every place, the strategic objectives of the Pride in Place programme are to:

- build stronger communities
- create thriving places
- empower people to take back control

West Fife Villages, including Culross, were selected for Pride in Place funding because they meet the program's criteria, including showing needs, measured through the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) and the Community Needs Index (CNI).

A Pride in Place Neighbourhood Board is currently being recruited and one of its duties will be to oversee the production of a Pride in Place Neighbourhood Plan.

The Pride in Place fund is an invaluable opportunity for Culross and the West Fife Villages and could be a realistic mechanism to fund some of the ideas generated by this workshop where there is clear agreement demonstrated on the need and benefit, which can be fed into the neighbourhood plan deliberations, and ultimately the process for allocating the funds.

The workshop participants highlighted that two of the most significant issues facing the community in and around Culross are the very limited opportunities for young people and housing.

Rosyth is considered the only major employer in the immediate area. Tourism is a significant pressure on the community, but the employment and business development opportunities are very limited, largely due to the lack of premises and restrictions imposed by the Outstanding Conservation Area/listed building status. How could this be addressed?

Affordable housing is a concern especially for young people keen to stay in the area. Housing rarely comes on the market, and most older properties are not suited to affordable housing with the restrictions imposed by the 'Outstanding Conservation Area' status and/or by being listed buildings. This often limits energy efficiency and can impose higher running costs and extra requirements when decorating or refurbishing a property.

It is important to highlight the NTS Little Houses Improvement Scheme and the impact it had in not just buying and then restoring many of the 'burgh houses' but doing so to create decent homes for local people and not to create a museum. This effort focused on safeguarding community and was not purely for architectural preservation.

Culross was considered to be the flagship of this NTS Little Houses programme, and this has meant many homes remain as family homes and have not become second homes or self-catering properties which has been more of an issue in other villages. What more can be done to allow young people to stay/return?



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 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 in overall terms and how any weaknesses can be addressed either directly or indirectly.

This can trigger new projects or refine ideas already under consideration. The results are presented and although comparisons can be made with other communities these are not league tables.

This appraisal reflects 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**	Culross has welcomed visitors for decades especially since NTS began restoration works from the 1930 onwards This has drastically increased in the last 5 years linked to Outlander and more local people exploring post Covid No longer seasonal		Review and develop a community led Culross place brand ensuring its heritage origins are to the fore and which challenges the film set perception
2	**Sense of Place outwith the area**	Culross is well known as being in Fife and often linked to being a TV/film location, especially Outlander rather than the place it is in its own right Post lock down many local Fifers discovered Culross for the first time		Develop a compelling community led place brand that celebrates and highlights Culross's outstanding heritage and multiple stories Consider new experiences community groups and organisations can offer that celebrate the notable heritage connections and focus attention on the 'real' Culross
3	**Features & Attractions**	Culross West Kirk and Abbey The Mercat Cross Culross palace (NTS) and period gardens The historic village Culross Town House Hanging Gardens Viewpoint		Develop a new Welcome to Culross visitor map highlighting the different attractions, services and facilities and local walks, and which is accompanied by suggested itineraries for different interests and different lengths of stay. Seek to disperse visitors and raise awareness of the village's history
4	**Culture & Heritage**	Culross village – best preserved 17th century village in the UK Outstanding conservation area status Several listed buildings Loss of the church is a concern		Consider new small-scale events and bookable experiences that the community groups can offer which celebrate the village's heritage and help raise revenue. Encourage walkers to spend time in Culross exploring the Abbey and village before embarking on the Fife Pilgrim Way
5	**Wildlife & Nature**	Woodlands and forests – Valleyfield, Balgownie and Devilla Torry Bay Local Nature Reserve Preston island The shoreline		Review any existing maps of local walks and trails and supplement with other walks that locals enjoy and are happy to promote Produce a new up to date walking map and guide plus a downloadable version with suggested parking/start points, refreshment locations and seasonal features. Better promote these local walks in local accommodation and to pilgrim and coastal path walkers who are staying in local accommodation to encourage longer stop overs
6	**Activities & Experiences**	Occasional guided tours NTS village walking tours No bike hire		Install bike racks at additional strategic points to enable cyclists to explore the village – consider luggage storage options.

		Double height continental style bike racks in the Red Lion car park		Liaise with and scope out local walking tours with the FPW Pilgrim Pastor in Culross Develop an online 'passing through' guide for cyclists and walkers that show cases things to do and the pub/cafes Provide a walk leader's training programme for local volunteers to offer Culross Heritage Walks Develop an initial programme of local events over a set period which can eventually be developed as a branded Culross heritage walking festival
7	**Visitor Accommodation**	Several Air BnB and self-catering cottages 1 B&B 1 Guesthouse Bunkhouse at Balgownie Accommodation is available all year but busier during the season		Consider options for budget accommodation for walkers in Culross Develop stop off itineraries for coastal path walkers to explore more of the village Promote Culross as a 'take it easy' first night stop over on the Fife Coastal Path Explore options for allowing motorhome aire stop overs in the car park(s) and scope for the community to manage this as a revenue stream and also as a potential deterrent for anti-social behaviour (which has been noticed when motorhomes are there in the evening)
8	**Food, Drink & Refreshments**	The Red Lion The Mercat The Biscuit Café Tealeaf Bessie's Café Community bakery, lunch club and market Good day time offer with cafes and coffee shops Not all are open 7 days Red Lion evening meals – limited capacity and no alternative in Culross		Liaise with all current providers to determine local capacity and where the real gaps in provision are where demand is not being met. Consider potential pop-up options for take away food at weekends and busy times – eg woodfired pizza vans, Liaise with local providers to highlight the opportunity
9	**Events & Festivals**	Very limited number of visitor facing events and festivals (used to be more and had a Festival Committee) Sunday community market selling local handmade crafts and local produce Events for locals at the Stables		Develop a What's On in Culross events calendar and make available online and also as a printed programme Consider a simple annual walking and heritage event in Spring or Autumn to show case Culross and its surroundings on foot (eg nature walks to the local nature reserve, forest and woodland walks, heritage walks in and around the village)
10	**Makers and Producers**	Gallery Pottery Community bakery - Fridays Community Market – Sunday afternoons		Continue with the excellent community market and consider additional days the market could take place linked to other events in the area Invite artists to do 'meet the artist' events in the village Consider simple artisan huts in an agreed location for local artisan makers and producers

				Work with local artists and the galleries to explore Culross joining the Central Fife Artists Collective and open studios in September
11	**Travel & Connectivity**	No train service – nearest is Dunfermline Limited bus service – Alloa/Culross/Dunfermline with hourly service – ongoing reliability issues Bus service from Kincardine to Glasgow		Develop online content for the Visit Culross website on how to get to and from the village by public transport/active travel
12	**Retail**	The Town House Gallery No village shop Some provisions and deli in The Mercat Friday bakery Self-caterers need to buy elsewhere Coop at Valleyfield		Continue to explore options for selling basic provisions in the village from existing premises. Consider seasonal pop-up options for retail at the car park and other locations. Ensure the community market is promoted as featuring local makers and producers
13	**Amenities & Infrastructure**	Major parking and traffic management issues Seasonal urban clearway in the main season and large vehicles and coaches are prohibited from driving through the village Toilets are limited in size and only one toilet block No changing places provision No village shop No medical facilities No fuel A lack of bike stands		Continue to proactively engage with the council on the current parking discussions and temporary traffic measures and seek permanent solutions Encourage the council to charge for parking in the Culross car parks and enter a funding arrangement with the community (ref Plockton and Highland Council) Encourage the council to (re)consider a permit holders scheme for the village and dedicated parking area for residents. Find out more about other communities with similar traffic management parking issues and arrange a learning exchange for a group of locals and council officials/councillors – eg Luss and New Lanark
14	**Visitor Information & Signage**	No visitor information point Poor signage highlighting features or walks NTS had a visitor centre which kept flooding and was closed at Covid		NTS visitor centre panels still exist and could be displayed in an alternative location – temporarily or as part of a more permanent visitor information point Develop the recommended map as a poster to be displayed in the car parks, at the toilets and available in accommodation Work with the council to create a fingerpost signage plan and seek funding to implement it
15	**Digital Presence & Marketing**	New Visit Culross website has been produced and is easily found in searches – appealing format and useful information Most local businesses have websites and social media channels NTS web presence for Culross is good		Further develop the VisitCulross.com website with additional entries for businesses and services (eg retail, public transport, walks, and suggested itineraries for different interests and length of visit) Integrate the community led place branding on the website and social media channels

				Create itineraries on the website for different lengths of visit and interests Encourage all businesses and organisations to have a google profile and keep it up to date, respond to reviews and add any bookable products
16	**Climate Action**	Flooding concerns – overflow issues with effluent and sewage debris on the beach No recycling bins on the streets (conservation area) Accommodation providers do recycle and use refillable toiletries		Consider developing a simple climate action plan for the village that showcases what businesses and the community are doing and helps visitors see how they can support climate action in Culross – suggested format included as an appendix. Encourage all businesses and organisations with premises to consider their flood resilience, if not already prioritised, and identify potential issues for visitors in the event of a flood
17	**Inclusion & Accessibility**	No changing places toilets Basic disabled toilet at public toilets and Red Lion Basic disabled toilet at NTS café – but cobbled access NTS provide a video tour for those not able to access the palace Cobbled streets do limit access for wheelchairs and buggies		Review who has already produced an accessibility statement for their premises and encourage others to produce one. Collate these on the Visit Culross website and provide information on what is accessible with itinerary suggestions for different levels of ability
18	**Community Assets**	The Stables The Red Lion Community Garden Grow West Fife Community Good Fund with land gifted in 1975 – includes Bon Accord land at east end of the village The boathouse is derelict and could have potential?		Explore the appetite for community led tourism enterprise opportunities in the different community owned assets both as revenue streams and also to help manage the visitor pressures - eg toilets, visitor information, pop up retail and eatery opportunities, self-serve snacks, motorhome aire provision Explore opportunities for CLT enterprises on council assets – eg motorhome aire at the car park, temporary retail and pop-up food options at the car park(s) Scope out potential ideas for the boat house – including checking ownership and potential conversion opportunities.
19	**People & Players**	For a small village it is active with several people involved in a number of different groups Coordination between groups is a major concern – a lot of silo working		Consider an open day event to share ideas from this report (and other opportunities) and combine this with a Volunteer Fayre for the different organisations to have stands and inviting locals to get involved in different ways.
20	**Destination Collaboration**	Welcome to Fife are supportive Limited awareness and involvement in the Dunfermline and West Villages LTA Used to have good connections with VisitScotland but not now NTS do work with VS and could potentially be more of a conduit		Explore better representation from the village on the LTA Set up a Whats App group with interested workshop attendees to encourage networking and idea sharing

SUMMARY OBSERVATIONS

There are several issues emerging from the Culross Destination Competency Appraisal largely relating to the relatively low level of services and facilities available in Culross given the high level of tourism interest and footfall. Culross is currently suffering from a volume approach to tourism being imposed on the village and should seek to transition this to being a value-based proposition.

Parking and traffic management were recurring themes.

Culross has a long tradition of visitors coming to explore the cobbled streets, the palace and the Abbey and it is a key stop on the popular Fife Coastal Path. However, locals reported there has been a notable increase in volume of visitors since 2020 which is attributed to locals exploring their local area post Covid and also Outlander which has been filmed in the village. Culross has become a very popular 'set jetting' destination and is promoted as such by others. VisitScotland have recently highlighted set-jetting—traveling to locations featured in films and TV—as a major tourism trend in Scotland, with one in five visitors inspired by on-screen appearances. As this is considered a growing trend it is not likely to tail off soon.

This is a classic example of tourism happening to a community and a key recommendation is for the community to focus on how to ensure tourism happens with them, and meaningful benefits are experienced.

This appraisal highlights that the village is not as well geared up to benefit from the levels of visitor interest it experiences as it could and arguably should be. A key issue is that many of these visitors are on tours and do not stop for any length of time so how can the community benefit from their interest? Coach parking is limited to 3 spaces at the east car park. Many coaches drop off passengers in the centre of the village, and an 'Urban Clearway' seeks to stop them waiting at the kerb. There are limited places for them to park and wait for the pickup.

There are quite limited opportunities for visitors to spend in shops and also cafes and eateries. What does exist is high quality. The Red Lion is the only option for evening meals and is often booked out. There is no village shop which is an issue for locals and also visitors especially those walking the coastal path or Pilgrim Way and likely seeking refreshments. Also, anyone using local self-catering have no choice but to buy provisions elsewhere. Car and coach parking is currently free yet with the volume of visitors this could be a significant revenue stream.

Insufficient parking and a lack of traffic management This repeatedly came up. Additional parking options are being considered by the council, and temporary traffic management measures are being trialled to manage HGVs - which have been welcomed. To date it is understood there hasn't been any permit holder only or restricted parking introduced in the village. Such measures have been successfully implemented in other villages in Scotland.

Luss and New Lanark are both examples which are also Outstanding Conservation Areas. Local residents and business owners are eligible for permits and the schemes are based on access being restricted to permit holders only which has negated the need for double yellow lines in Luss for example. Measures are in place for delivery vehicles.

Plockton is also a good example where some lessons could be learned. The council recently introduced a voluntary payment scheme in the main car park (which is being used) and have an agreement in place whereby the community groups can then apply for pots of funding from the proceeds for local initiatives. The local development trust have recently secured funding and are undertaking a feasibility study exploring the merit in them acquiring some of the redundant airfield at the top of the village from the council. This could be for parking and also potential motorhome and camping facilities to help reduce pressure on the main village, and also to create jobs and provide revenue for the community.

An important consideration is 'when is enough, enough'. More parking can be provided but this needs to be balanced with the capacity of the village and local businesses. It is hard to define this but quality of life for locals and also quality of experience for visitors are good indicators. And having identified a threshold it is critical to then ensure there are robust visitor and traffic management measures in place.

Limited Visitor Experiences, Activities and Events - The key challenges in Culross that were highlighted in the appraisal relate to the limited number of visitor facing events and bookable activities and experiences.

NTS do offer walking tours and there could be merit in offering more of these and also new tours could be developed with local guides who can talk about community life as well as heritage. Overseas visitors in particular are

willing to pay for tours and to meet local people.

The discussions flagged that there have been more events in the past and that there had been a festival committee. The Raft Race is being reintroduced this year after a lengthy hiatus. In other communities, events and festivals are used as a means to attract visitors in shoulder months to extend the season. Culross is now busy all year.

However as noted later as part of the place branding recommendations, small scale events in the shoulder months around walking and heritage could be an effective means to make more people aware of the 'real' Culross. In addition, and of note, with Culross being a very popular filming location for both TV and film, a film festival could be an excellent means to celebrate this but also showcase what it means for a community to be a film location and how to ensure this enhances and doesn't detract from everyday life. There could be events tied in for other film location communities to come together and explore best practice in managing set jetting and also invite directors and producers to join discussion forums on various host community topics.

Tying this activity in with inspiration for local young people is a significant opportunity and could be developed with Fife College and also be the basis for showcasing local young talent.

Travel and connectivity, amenities and infrastructure were both flagged as lacking with there being no train station and the bus service considered to be limited.

Given the parking challenges an immediate response is to encourage visitors to travel by public transport. But for Culross this is convoluted so lacks appeal. For example, this would involve getting to Dunfermline by train and then getting a bus which only runs hourly and isn't direct.

The one audience this may appeal to is the walking market, especially the Pilgrim Way Walkers who could be encouraged to use public transport to get to the start point.

In addition, so many of Culross visitors are currently on tours with this being a stop off on a longer tour. So, another mode of transport isn't applicable.

Park and Ride was flagged as working elsewhere and is worthy of consideration, although a key issue will be identifying suitable land and an agreeable landowner, and also operational considerations for the 'ride' element. It could be a revenue generator and if then accompanied with stringent traffic management measures in the village this could be a game changer.

Lack of Amenities, Shops and Eateries - Amenities are lacking with no village shop and limited services and facilities. The eating options are also limited at busy times. What exists is high quality, but the Red Lion was cited as often being fully booked at weekends.

Some innovative options could be to consider pop up or temporary structures in or near the car parks for local starts ups and also for local businesses in Culross and from surrounding communities to have a satellite operation.

This could be trialled with licenses made available for nutritious kiosk type businesses – eg pizza and burger van options focused on using local produce.

Stickman Tacos at The Stables is an excellent example of this with them using the kitchens to provide street food at the weekends. The Stables sees itself as a community resource and is not targeting visitors so could something similar be provided that is for visitors elsewhere?

There are excellent examples across the country of high-quality street food operations by local providers using vans, horse boxes and other converted vehicles and their offer featuring local produce.



Examples include Stielow Wood Fired Pizzas that operate in and around Dunkeld and Birnam at different locations on different days

and with broad appeal for locals as well as visitors.



Polly's Coffee Stop is in a converted trailer which is towed on site each day at the Crinan Canal in Argyll over the main season and serves very popular home baking, teas, coffees and soft drinks. The location is chosen to target locals and visitors walking and cycling on the canal towpath, boat users in the canal plus people travelling along the adjacent road.

Licenses for kiosks are needed from the council plus landowners' agreements.

Lack of Visitor Information - Lack of visitor Information is recognised as a major issue with previous provision by NTS no longer available. There is significant merit in considering where this could be provided to help visitors better orientate themselves and appreciate all they can do in the village.

Reference was made to the information panels that NTS had on display in a location that flooded several times, and which do still exist. There was willingness to consider how and where these could be repurposed.

The Boathouse was mentioned as a building that is currently vacant which could have potential (located within the main car park). This looks like it will require substantial work so isn't an immediate answer but could offer potential for a few community led tourism services and facilities to collocate. It is in a good location. Has its development been considered before? Is it vacant for a reason? Are there restrictions on its use? (eg does this area flood?) Who currently owns it?

Sandhaven was also flagged as being currently vacant. Does it offer any temporary opportunities given its central location?

Girvan has created a community run visitor information point in a centrally located building which sells local crafts and hosts small music and other events. They also created a team of volunteer ambassadors who are out and about at busy times to meet and greet visitors, hand out maps and encourage them to explore the less obvious businesses and attractions.



Climate action and accessibility and inclusion - were both flagged as issues, albeit the old, cobbled streets and outstanding conservation area status do have a bearing on what can be achieved. Whilst there are basic disabled toilets in a few locations there is no changing places provision. Any future plans should consider this provision and existing businesses and organisations should consider producing climate action and accessibility statements to display onsite and online to help visitors appreciate what is being done/is available. An accessible itinerary would be welcomed and could be hosted on the visitculross.com site and promoted on individual business sites.

Destination collaboration - was flagged as a weakness. There isn't a business association or forum at present and closer working is recommended.

More engagement with the LTA is recommended and will enable closer working with the Welcome to Fife team.



INSPIRATION FROM ELSEWHERE

There are several opportunities for community led tourism enterprises in and around Culross. 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_civic-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

THE FIFE PILGRIM WAY: Welcoming Pilgrim Walkers to Culross

Walkers in general have specific needs which communities can cater for to ensure they feel particularly 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 and bags.

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."



The recently installed Fife Pilgrim Way Gateway sign in Culross is a local asset. This signage helps orientate visitors, give a sense of welcome and also provides essential information on what is available locally.

However, the start point could be more prominently marked, and both for Pilgrim Way Walkers keen to record the start of their journey but also for others arriving in Culross who may not be aware of the Fife Pilgrim Way.

A key site in Culross for the pilgrim way walkers is the Abbey. On the site there is the ruins of the monastic building plus the church which has been in use until recently. The future of the Abbey is uncertain as the church was marketed by the Church of Scotland last summer for £35k and is shown on their website as 'under offer'. The community did consider acquiring it but didn't pursue this. Its future is unknown and this could have a bearing on the Fife Pilgrim Way walker experience when in Culross.



It is important the community are aware of what is happening and are able to advise walkers of any changes in access to the building and the grounds. This site is an

incredibly important part of the Pilgrim story and Culross's heritage.

The Fife Pilgrim Way has introduced a passport and there are two places that a Pilgrim Way Passport can be stamped in Culross – at the Palace and at the Gallery in Sandhaven House. Both have stickers in the window to highlight this, and it could be other businesses and premises would also like to provide this as a means to get Pilgrim Walkers to visit their premises and also celebrate being on the trail. For example, this could appeal to The Stables as Pilgrim Walkers are typically very interested in the local community and meeting local people.

Where a community is a starting point on the route, which Culross is, there are additional needs relating to accommodation. Some may arrive and start walking straight away and others may be looking to stay over and spend some time in the village before the embark on the trail.

Walkers typically, but not exclusively, are not looking for luxury accommodation and are more interested in budget options which allow simple one-night stays, with communal space to meet other walkers, space to dry kit, and 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.

Where providers are willing to provide one-night stays for walkers it is helpful to ensure this is clearly displayed online and when providing information for listings on other websites.

Culross does have some accommodation for visitors mainly as self-catering and also a guest house and a B&B, both of which offer one-night stays. Culross currently does not have budget one-night accommodation.

This is something that Culross community may wish to consider as there are examples of community run bunkhouses and hostels in other parts of Scotland, some of which are linked to employment opportunities for young people.

Key considerations for any bunkhouse or hostel are that the previous model of large dormitories with beds to rent has lost traction since Covid and lock down. Many hostels opted to convert to smaller 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. Staff had to be available into the evening which is now no longer needed. The Callander Hostel have opted to continue this room only booking system, which has been cost effective and they have found it also has great appeal for families and groups.

A more recent example of a bunkhouse where people do pay per person rather than per room is the New Town Hall Bunkhouse in Whithorn.



This has been purpose built and rather than have large dorms, it has a choice of 2, 4 and 6 bed ensuite rooms and payment is per person and people can share rooms. They have staff on site at the adjacent Town Hall to welcome visitors, and they provide a communal kitchen area. They also have a fully accessible room with facilities on the ground floor.

Information is key to ensuring the walker has a good experience, both physically in destination and online to help with in advance queries and also while walking between towns and villages. Guidebooks provide the context but often need to be supplemented with up-to-date information.

There are several other considerations for a community to ensure walkers and Pilgrim Walkers in particular feel welcome and able to 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





Appendix 2 sets out a template for Culross to develop a community led place-based pilgrim walker's 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 at all times of day, 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 particular issues in smaller communities.

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 Culross map to highlight the key attractions with local services and facilities, parking and cycling/walking trails.
- Provide a QR code link on the map to the VisitCulross website where should be links to individual business and organisations for bookings etc
- Highlight what services aren't available and where the nearest option is.
- Make the map available online and share with all local businesses/organisations to display on their websites and premises.
- Develop a new or repurpose an existing open Facebook page for local businesses and enterprises to post updates and offers 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 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 - DUNFERMLINE & WEST VILLAGES - D&WVLTA**
- **D** · **TOWN/VILLAGE - CULROSS - VISIT.CULROSS.COM**
- **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 in general.

CULROSS – "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 to take time to consider if this is how the community wants to be seen by the outside world.

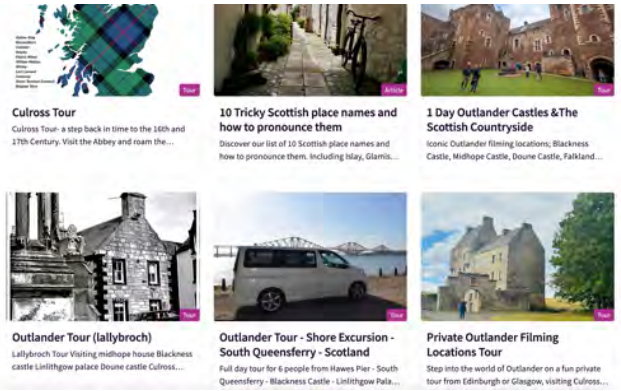
- Places across Scotland are promoted by many players – notably VisitScotland and DMOs (Destination Marketing Organisations) as well by the media, bloggers and influencers, the travel trade, film and TV, plus online review sites
- These players often have very good reach online and are targeted in how 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.

This can then be shared with others either directly or by tagging them on social media posts.

VISITSCOTLAND

VisitScotland has recently changed how its website is structured and no longer provides listings for individual communities. A search for 'Culross' on their site pulled up the following:



In February 2026 VisitScotland made significant changes to their website. The site now pulls content from Google business profiles and map entries and at this stage it no longer provides descriptive listings for individual places like Culross.

The content that is pulled when searching for a place is articles from VisitScotland plus, tours and events that mention Culross. These are based on Google profiles.

Google profiles and map entries are therefore key to being visible on the VisitScotland website (and more generally). Please refer to the recommendations later in this report.

WELCOME TO FIFE

The current listing on Welcome to Fife for Culross states:

CULROSS

Step back in time with a visit to Culross, where everything from grand properties to modest cottages has been restored to all its 16th and 17th century glory. Culross is renowned as one of Scotland's most picturesque villages and its steep, cobbled causeways with their white-walled, red-roofed, step-gabled buildings can regularly be spotted on film and TV.

A starting point of Fife Pilgrim Way, Culross has been a religious site since the 6th century. By the 13th century, there was a grand abbey at the top of the hill, with the village of Culross below. Today, Culross Abbey is in ruins but the town, which is cared for by the National Trust for Scotland, is a spectacular example of a 16th century burgh.

In the 1500s, Culross was a thriving port, bringing such great wealth to one local laird and merchant, he built a palace for his family to live in. Today, ochre-coloured Culross Palace, with its perfectly recreated 16th century gardens, is one of the many highlights of a visit to the village.

The nearby Town House, overlooking the Forth, was once Culross' court and jail, with criminals kept in the cell while witches were incarcerated in the attic.

Culross regularly appeared in Outlander as Cranesmuir, with the village's Mercat Cross and surrounding buildings instantly recognisable to fans of the hit TV series.

The Welcome to Fife website provides useful information about parking and the limitations:

Please note parking is limited and we encourage visitors to park responsibly in designated car parks and parking bays. Please do not park on the small streets of Culross or block any driveways. Where possible please use public transport or sustainable travel routes.



NATIONAL TRUST FOR SCOTLAND

The current listing on the National Trust for Scotland website for Culross states:

About this place

Step into the past along the cobbled streets of a picturesque village with its own ochre-coloured palace

- *The streets of Culross have appeared many times in the hit US TV series Outlander.*
- *Explore Culross Palace, with its tiny rooms, connecting passageways and painted ceilings.*
- *Buy freshly grown seasonal herbs, fruit and vegetables from the organic palace garden.*
- *Wander along charming, peaceful streets which were once full of the hustle and bustle of a thriving 17th-century port on the River Forth.*

Culross is Scotland's most complete example of a burgh of the 17th and 18th centuries.

White-harled houses with red-tiled roofs line the steep cobbled streets which run from the market cross to the hilltop abbey. In the centre is the ochre-coloured palace with its beautifully reconstructed period garden, complete with herbs, fruit and vegetables. Get a sense of what it would have been like to live in Culross Palace in its prime, with original painted woodwork and beautifully restored 17th- and 18th-century interiors.

It's little wonder that Culross is acknowledged as one of the most picturesque villages in Scotland – or that it's so often used as a film and television location.

FIFE PILGRIM WAY

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

CULROSS – LOCAL SHRINES FOR LOCAL PILGRIMS

'Item, offerit [by James IV] to Sanct Serfis fertur, 14 shillings.' (Historical account, dated 5 October 1511, of King James IV's visit to St Serf's shrine).

Culross was one of the starting points for pilgrims journeying across Fife to St Andrews. It was also a pilgrim destination itself, due to its links with two local deities, Saints Serf and Kentigern (later St Mungo of Glasgow).

According to legend, Saint Serf moved to Culross having slain a dragon that was terrorising the residents of Strathearn. Meanwhile, Saint Kentigern was born here after his pregnant mother was washed ashore at Culross having narrowly escaped being murdered by her father.

Culross Abbey and St Mungo's Chapel were popular stop off points for both lowly and lordly pilgrims. In fact, King James IV was recorded as leaving an offering at St Serf's remains in Culross in 1511. Both sites can be visited today.

Ochre-painted Culross Palace is in the heart of the village and steep cobbles lead to Culross Abbey where you can explore the ruins of a Cistercian monastery of the 1200s. If you don't fancy the steep walk, continue along the path which follows the Fife Coastal Path at this section.

VISITCULROSS.COM

The community run website states:

Culross is on of Scotland's best-preserved examples of a 17th and 18th century burgh, a true step back in time.

Wander the steep, cobbled streets lined with brightly coloured cottages and red-tiled roofs, stretching from the historic Mercat Cross to the ruins of the hilltop abbey. At the heart of the village lies the distinctive ochre coloured Culross palace, surrounded by a beautifully restored period garden bursting with herbs and fruit trees.

A visit to Culross is like walking through history, whether you're here for a day or staying longer, there's plenty to explore and experience.

The sites are each good at describing Culross as a historic village and encouraging potential visitors to explore the streets but possibly don't adequately convey the challenges relating to parking and could give more up-front advice on best times to visit (to avoid the crowds), and also the walking opportunities in the area.

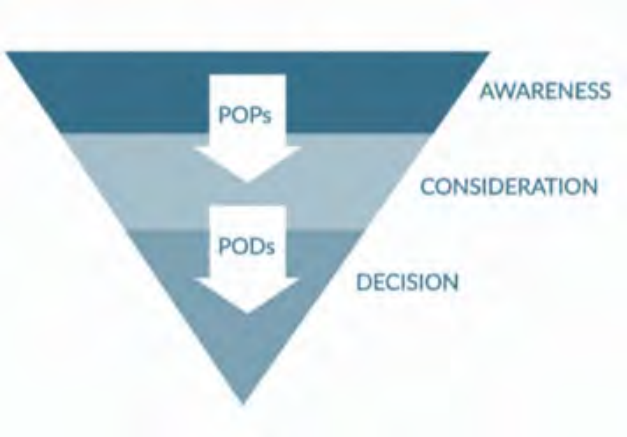
The advice on the Welcome to Fife site on parking is helping to manage expectations and also encourage responsible behaviours. What more could be conveyed that would help the community benefit more from the volume of visitors exploring Culross?

DEVELOPING THE CULROSS 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 and can relate to events that have happened, geographic features of interest or notable people associated with the place.

The next consideration is Points of Parity – **POPs** – which are the baseline features and attributes that mean the place has appeal to visitors and can readily call itself a visitor destination. These will often be features and attributes that other communities will also have.

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 go when faced with a choice.



CULROSS POPs

The Destination Competence Appraisal demonstrated that the village has several attributes that confirm it is more than acceptable in calling itself a visitor destination especially with it being considered one of the best-preserved 17th century villages in Scotland and with several individual heritage features of interest. It is also on two long distance walking routes and is a prime filming location.

These are significant in their own right and also are features that can form the basis for collaborations with other communities who share these attributes.



CULROSS USPs & PODs

Several points of differentiation and claims to fame were shared at the workshop and researched afterwards. There will be more:

- Culross is Scotland's best-preserved example of a 17th century village
- Culross is the earliest most important burgh restoration project by the NTS under the leadership of Ian Lindsay and is one of the best-known examples of their Little Houses Improvement Scheme
- Culross has been the filming location for several notable TV programmes and films, including
    - Outlander
    - 39 Steps
    - Captain America
    - The Little Vampire
    - Kidnapped
- The Courtroom is where more than 2000 witches were tried
- The painted ceilings at Culross Palace are among the most important surviving examples of early Scottish domestic decoration.
- The "Painted Chamber" features 16 allegorical panels created between 1597 and 1611, painted in tempera on wood
- The gardens at the Palace have been recreated as an early 17th-century, south-facing, steeply terraced kitchen garden, and has herbs and medicinal plants from that era
- Robert Leighton the Bishop of Dunblane, Archbishop of Glasgow and Principal of the University of Edinburgh resided in Culross in the 17th century
- Bishop Leighton's house and study can be visited
- Culross had a monopoly on 'girdles' used for baking Bannocks and oatcakes

- In 1599 the Culross Hammermen - girdle makers - secured a charter for the exclusive production of these wrought iron girdles– the charter was challenged and lost in the late 18th century



- The Girdle charter is the main reason Culross became a Royal Burgh – NB this is not listed on the village entry signs (unlike other Royal Burghs in Fife)
- The Fife Pilgrim Way starts in Culross
- St Serf a 6th century saint is credited with founding a Christian community and monastery in Culross
- Teneu daughter of the King of Lothian became pregnant before marriage and was cast out by her family and sailed across the Forth in an unmanned boat and landed at Culross where she was cared for by St Serf
- Tenue's son St Mungo was born in Culross
- St Serf fostered St Mungo (Kentigern) in Culross and was buried there after his death
- Culross was a pioneering Scottish coal mining centre in the 16th century
- Culross had the first underwater coalmine – the Moat Pit – which extended a mile under the Firth of Forth
- The Moat was a stone tower built offshore for ventilation and access
- The remains of the Moat Pit are still visible just below the high-water mark
- Coal wealth built Culross Palace
- The coal pits around Culross were one of the largest in Britain at that time
- The majority of the coal that was mined at Culross was used to evaporate seawater to make salt
- Culross was one of Scotland's top salt producers
- Salt panning in Culross was linked to the coal mining
- Culross, Fife, and Veere, Netherlands, share a historic, centuries-old trade relationship that established Veere as Scotland's primary gateway to Europe, particularly for wool.
- The original pier at Culross was dismantled to provide stone for construction at the Port of Leith and the former harbour was infilled to make way for the railway
- The pier has been made accessible again by the community and boats can get access (although stones on the seabed are an issue)
- The Red Lion is the oldest pub in Fife
- The Red Lion had its own brewery
- The Red Lion is a Gothenberg Pub (colloquially known as a "Goth") is a type of community-owned pub originating from the Swedish "Gothenburg System". Which are run as trusts where the majority of profits are reinvested directly into the local community rather than going to private shareholders.
- The Old School Yard Community Garden was created over 25 years ago on the site of the old Tin School and has featured on a TV programme
- Culross has strong connections to the Knights Templar
- Culross Abbey was founded as a Cistercian monastery
- The red pantiles on the Palace roof in Culross were transported from the Netherlands as ballast on ships returning to Culross
- Sir Thomas Cochrane from Culross was knighted but is better known as Admiral
- Admiral Thomas Cochrane was brought up on the family estate at Culross and there is a statue of him in front of the Town House
- Sir Thomas Cochrane was named 'Seawolf' by Lord Nelson for his encounters during the Napoleonic War
- Sir Thomas Cochrane was an instrumental influencer during the wars of independence in South America
- Culross has its own tartan created in 2019
- The Culross Raft Race – historically part of the Gala Day – is returning again in 2026



PLACE BRANDING - INITIAL OBSERVATIONS

For many Culross is currently best known as an exceptionally well-preserved 17th century village in Scotland if not the UK - and as the film location 'Cranesmuir' in Outlander. Both are features of Culross, but both also mask an absolutely fascinating history spanning several centuries from the times of medieval saints, through coalmining, salt panning and industrial innovations of national significance and a recent period of outstanding architectural conservation with a focus on community cohesion.

Many are attracted to the village for simple reasons and often for a quick look around. This curiosity for stopping for a quick visit can be an opportunity for the community to then share more in-depth stories with suggested itineraries for exploring more, to encourage longer dwell time on the day and also inspiring return visits.

This extensive list of USPs and PODs demonstrate that Culross has several points of interest which could appeal to visitors with more specific interests in, for example, 17th century architecture, medieval religion and industrial archaeology. Specialist itineraries could be packaged and promoted to these niche interests and clubs. The travel trade is also increasingly looking for bespoke and one-off experiences and will pay significant amounts for this type of offer.

This list also presents several themes to consider for positioning the village and managing visitor expectations.

PLACE BRANDING – IDEAS

Culross – the Place that we Call Home

Like many other outstanding conservation areas and film locations, locals can experience what can feel like disrespectful behaviours as people explore streets and peer in windows, come into gardens and take photographs of locals going about their daily lives. This is often not intentional and based on a misconception that the place they are visiting is not a community - a place that many call home.

Introducing this narrative in online content and through compelling graphics and storytelling can go a long way to helping visitors, especially from overseas, realise that being able to explore the village is a privilege rather than a right.

The is can be introduced in online narrative with requests made to partners like VisitScotland, NTS, FCCT and Welcome to Fife who are promoting the village to convey this in their content in appealing ways.

Content on visitculross.com can be supplemented with 'meet the locals' content with blogs, videos and podcasts from different locals going about their everyday lives. This can feature local business interests like bar staff and the chef in the pub, a café owner, a local artist, but also a teacher from the primary school, the postie, a local runner, a dog walker and anyone interested in being involved and happy to be interviewed or provide self-generated content. This is great content to then share with partners and also feature on social media.

Culross – More than Meets the Eye

Culross is a unique historic coastal village with significant visitor appeal given its outstanding well preserved built environment, its location close to Glasgow, Edinburgh and Stirling, and especially in recent times linked to it being a key location for filming Outlander. Scotland has witnessed an exceptional level of interest from the US in particular in visiting the key Outlander filming locations.

It is not immediately apparent to a casual visitor that Culross differs from many historic villages and outstanding conservation areas due in great part to the vision and practice of the National Trust for Scotland and its Little Houses Improvement Scheme which started in the 1930s. This Scheme raised funds to preserve houses in a number of Scottish villages and to then retain these houses as homes for local living. Dunkeld and Culross were the pioneers, and Culross is often referred to as being the flagship.

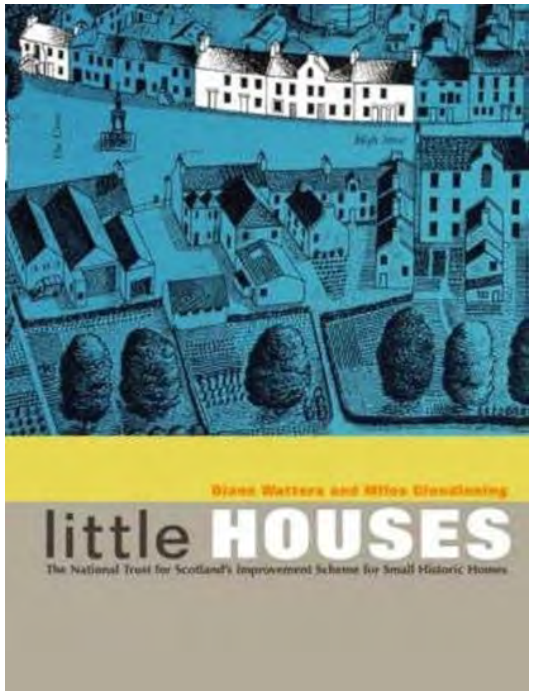
What difference has this made in Culross?

Many historic villages across Scotland and further afield have recently been suffering from issues relating to second home ownership and AirBnB properties which are stifling the sense of community.

Second homes are not necessarily an issue when these are limited in number, and the owners are regular visitors using the shops and cafes and engaging in local community life. Equally a small number of self-catering cottages and purpose-built self-catering premises are important local business opportunities and a great way of welcoming visitors and providing local work for cleaners and tradespeople.

However, following the launch of AirBnB a trend in many coastal communities has been for properties to be bought as pension pots by owners not living locally. The rental therefore is being 'extracted' out the community, albeit local people can be employed to service the units. At scale there is then substantial spend on renting accommodation which is not staying in the community and although the customers may spend locally on food, drink and activities they are transient and therefore make very limited contributions to the sense of community and community life. The concern is when this happens at scale and erodes the sense of community

Short term let regulations have been introduced and the current register shows 16 properties in Culross (compared to over 140 in Crail).



The reason for highlighting this is that this trend has arguably been constrained in Culross with the extent of NTS ownership and 'little houses' rented to locals as part of community life. So, second homes and AirBnBs are relatively low key and not generally at odds with the sense of community at present. This should however be monitored as it is understood NTS are selling some of the 'little houses' and this may become more of an issue in Culross.

A place brand that much better conveys that Culross is not just a stunning film set and is a thriving contemporary community is recommended. And the NTS vision and the individuals involved should be celebrated for the important contribution made in ensuring community life has been able to continue despite the pressures experienced in other very similar communities.

A Place brand that celebrates community life can then hopefully prompt a number of initiatives that will build community cohesion and wealth in Culross.

Lochcarron in Wester Ross was a pilot for Press Pause in 2023. This small community of 900 residents decided to celebrate their Tartan heritage with a global tartan brand bearing their place name and to host a Tartan Week in the community every Autumn. Two Tartan Weeks have since taken place, and these have been fundamentally about bringing the community together and less about visitors recognising the community had been operating in silos and with competing interests. The first event led to a 'Lochcarron United' initiative and the Lochcarron Community Development Company has since developed several regeneration projects including getting planning permission for 14 local affordable houses and new pathways, installing 4 visitor moorings, and renovating previous investments.
The Culross Raft Race is returning in 2026 at the end of June after a hiatus and could reinvigorate other community driven events.



On Location in Culross – A Film Festival with a Twist

Culross has been the filming location for several films and TV productions, and an immediate idea is to develop an annual Film Festival. A Film Festival can feature productions filmed in the village and can also be a platform for film related activities to inspire all generations and different interests.

Celebrating what has been filmed is one thing and worth pursuing if there is a local appetite. However, given that the actual filming can be disruptive for locals and visitors and more could be done to ensure the community interests in particular are both adequately respected and also a meaningful community benefit results from any filming, a Film Festival with a twist could be a clever innovation.

This approach would explore the idea that the actual filming and production stages have scope to be planned and managed with community interests to the fore. However, the impact of the production on subsequent 'set jetting' is much less predictable and responsibility for the impacts is much less clear – so let's explore what could be done better or differently through peer-to-peer exchanges in a festival format.

VisitScotland report that 1 in 5 visits are inspired by film and TV but to what extent are the host communities where the filming took place engaged in the planning of the tours and experiences visitors then seek?

The case in point is the number of tours that are now visiting Outlander locations across Scotland and placing significant pressure on local infrastructure. As noted, before these tours often only stop for short periods so the benefit returned to the host community through spend on parking and use of toilets and in local businesses is minimal even negligible.



So, what could good look like? A Film Festival with a Twist could readily combine film activity and welcome actors, directors and producers to feature in a programme of talks and previews which could be complemented by a programme of community led talks and exchanges showcasing responsible film production and set jetting to inspire and create benchmarks to then drive even more innovation.

This type of event could have popular appeal and also have a targeted audience. It could put Culross and the community on the map for being in the driving seat and ensuring meaningful benefits are brought to the fore.

How can Scotland's communities grow wealth through set jetting?

Culross – Start Point of the Fife Pilgrim Way

The significance of Culross as the start point on the Fife Pilgrim Way could and should be much better developed and profiled.

This is for two reasons. The first is that Culross' pilgrim heritage is significant in its own right and therefore could be the basis for new experiences in the village dedicated to those starting the route which encourage them to dwell longer before walking north. The second relates to the plans being explored to elevate the Fife Pilgrim Way to be Scotland's premiere Pilgrim Route and connecting this route with high profile routes from overseas.

Dunfermline is twinned with Trondheim which is at the heart of St Olav's Way – which is a network of routes which converge on the city at the Nidaros Cathedral where St Olav is buried. Discussions have been initiated which are seeking to develop the relationship and as part of this the Fife Pilgrim Way Partnership is keen to enhance the Fife Pilgrim Way experience with a focus on community led tourism and pilgrim walkers being able to meet and enjoy spending time in the communities along the route.



Culross originated as a 6th-century Christian settlement founded by Saint Serf on the Firth of Forth and became a major medieval

religious site in Scotland. Culross is also renowned as the birthplace of St Mungo (Kentigern) who later became the patron saint of Glasgow.

St Mungo's Abbey on Low Causeway in Culross, commemorates his birthplace but is now a ruin and it is understood there is minimal sense of place or interpretation at the site. The story of his birth and upbringing is fascinating and connects Culross across the Forth to East Lothian as well as North on the FPW to Dunfermline.

- Could more be made of this particular site as a pilgrim way walkers' meeting point and creating more of a sense of place at the start of the Fife Pilgrim Way.
- Could the connection across the water be developed as part of the plans for the pier?
- Could a circular walk be developed from Boness across the water to Culross, follow the FPW to Dunfermline and then to North Queensferry, over the Forth to South Queensferry and then along the Firth to Blackness Castle and finishing at Boness?

These are thoughts for the future and will need to be explored but hopefully convey how Culross could be positioned with it being the start of the FPW and a meeting point with the significance of St Mungo's Chapel and birthplace being better profiled.

The Abbey is another significant site with the older monastic ruins being a feature on the FPW. However, there is the question mark over the sale of it by the Church of Scotland and plans for its future use and accessibility to the Abbey and the grounds for pilgrim walkers and the general public. A key action is to seek to better understand its future and to work with partners like Fife Coast and Countryside Trust, the Fife Pilgrim Way Partnership and the Council to explore what the future might hold. The Abbey is a key site at the start of the pilgrim route and could be a venue for communal meeting and eating and also Champing (staying overnight in a church).



Once the details of the sale and its future possibilities are known more can be explored around this positioning of Culross as the Start Point on the Fife Pilgrim Way.

A fantastic opportunity exists to develop an experience in a Culross venue for walkers to meet on their first day and share a meal and other experiences, as well as potentially stay over. Is there a building that could provide this venue just now?

Of note, the concept of pilgrimage and pilgrim walks - the 'Camino' experience - has grown in profile in recent years with the Camino de Santiago in northern Spain being the best-known network. The 'Way of St James' has a 1000-year history and although associated with Christian and religious activity it and the many other Caminos have become much more of a spiritual experience undertaken for non-religious reasons and one that is often about camaraderie with fellow walkers and meeting locals and experiencing local food and drink along the way.



How can Culross set the tone for the rest of the route?

A further consideration is that there are currently two start points to the Fife Pilgrim Way at Culross and also at North Queensferry with both converging at Dunfermline. Establishing a local welcome and community experience in Culross would differentiate it and potentially raise its appeal as the preferred start point.

The Fife Pilgrim Way - How slow can you go?

The Press Pause workshops have been undertaken in Dunfermline, Markinch, Culross and St Andrews. A key consideration was that the FPW does follow traditional pilgrim routes from medieval times but the creation of the FPW as a current day long distance walking trail is relatively recent and its profile is relatively low.

The Markinch workshop highlighted that one way to get the route (and the communities) better known would be to host an endurance event. And an 'Ultra' event did take place in May 2026 starting in North Queensferry and running the route from there to Dunfermline and on to St Andrews. This did not include Culross which is a double-edged sword as its position on the route is not acknowledged but equally the start of an endurance event attracts a lot of cars and requires traffic management on the site, and also logistics to get the athletes back to their vehicles



It will be interesting to see if this event becomes an annual event. However, the Fife Pilgrim Way 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 a seven-day event. It could also be based on using public transport to get to the start point and to travel on after completing the route in St Andrews

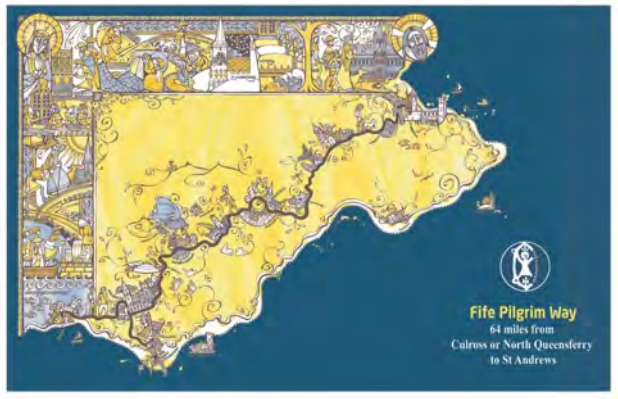


The recently introduced FPW passport is a great way to get people to ensure they do visit local businesses and organisations to get their passport stamped and it in turn offers great opportunities for these businesses and organisations to 'upsell' and offer added value once the walker is there.

At present there are only 2 places providing the stamp in Culross so others getting involved in the FPW walker experience is recommended.



The Red Lion and The Stables as community owned enterprises are ideal for this, as are the cafes and coffee shops. Everyone can then consider a themed product(s) they can offer to attract walkers, increase dwell time in Culross and encourage local spend. This could be as simple as a Pilgrim's Soup and Sandwich special or other menu item, themed merchandise and Pilgrim packed lunches featuring some local produce. Most walkers will want to buy something when asking for their passport to be stamped.





9. 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 agree a basic list of measures that can demonstrate benefits from visitor activity – eg number of living wage jobs in tourism, proportion of permanent to seasonal jobs, 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 and encourage them to achieve more.



10. RECOMMENDATIONS

Initial recommendations relate to considering the appetite for and capacity to undertake community action planning and/or local place planning in Culross. The village is included in the Pride in Places initiative and there is therefore a potential

DESTINATION COMPETENCY

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

- **Sense of Place and Place Branding** – Culross is well known but for some reasons that arguably lack authenticity and also are now attracting volume but not value to Culross. Yet authenticity is at the absolute core of Culross with its outstanding built environment and the preservation that has been undertaken. Outlander was set in Culross because of this outstanding environment so a place brand that better conveys the experience is not a film set is needed. A place brand that clearly positions Culross' heritage and current day offer as a thriving community is recommended with associated product development and propositions.
- **Map and Itineraries** – Culross is a very picturesque and compact village with several features of interest dotted around the streets and surroundings. 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 Palace, the pub, the cafes and other key locations. The map should have simple itineraries set out for different interests and length of time in Culross recognising a significant number have limited time in the village. Artist drawn and illustrated maps have strong appeal and can be developed as merchandise as well as being displayed as posters at key locations such as the toilets, car parks and bus stops. The existing NTS map included in the Appendix is appealing and could potentially be developed in partnership with the community to show other services and facilities with a map of the wider area on the reverse, and suggested itineraries set out.
- **Visitor Services and Facilities** – The current public toilets are dated, and there is no visitor information point in Culross. NTS previously provided boards which are understood to be in storage and could be repurposed if a suitable venue can be found as a temporary measure while a more permanent venue is scoped out. There are interim solutions to providing visitor services and facilities, but a longer-term masterplan approach is recommended as set out below.
- **Parking and Traffic Management** – this was a recurring theme, and solutions will require the support and agreement of the council. Work the community can progress is to consider what has happened in other communities and what has

worked, lesson learned etc. A key action would be to do a learning exchange to other outstanding conservation area communities outwith Fife where traffic management, parking and permit schemes have been introduced. Two immediate examples are Luss and New Lanark.



- **Coaches and Tours** – a very specific subset of the parking and traffic management issues are the volume of 'Outlander' and other tours in coaches and smaller mini coaches with short stopovers in the village and very limited spend. This can be seen as an imposition and therefore more of a contractual basis is recommended where the regular coaches and their passengers are welcomed in return for a 'stipend' type payment to the host community which supports the provision of maps for example and other possibilities. This needs to be scoped out and is something that SCOTO is championing on behalf of the wider network as these issues affects many of Scotland's communities.
- **Pilgrim Hub and 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 Culross as the start point suggests this could be welcomed if combined with a hub that provides a meeting point to bring coastal path and pilgrim way walkers together with facilities for charging phones, drying clothes, reorganising kit etc. This needs to be scoped out as many pilgrim walkers will look to start walking on their first day so combining a meet up experience and overnight will ensure Culross sees local spend.
- **Digital Presence** – The VisitCulross.com website is an asset and should be further developed with additional content on what there is to see and do (eg the 'Shop' section has not yet been developed). The recommended map and itineraries should be hosted here and available as downloads. Inspiring content to add would be to have features with local people either as blogs with images, videos and podcasts. These could feature the staff at the community owned pub and The Stables, the gallery, the cafes and with locals who work at Culross Palace in the café, the gardens and as guides. The video on the NTS website for Culross is a good starting point. This is great content to share on social media and tag in partners with greater reach. Effort should also be focused on encouraging all businesses and organisations to claim their google profiles and then keep them up to date. More guidance is set out below
- **Events and Festivals** – Based on the place branding recommendations a low-key Heritage and Walking Festival is suggested in the shoulder months aimed at groups, couples and individuals being able to undertake guided walks with locals exploring the outstanding heritage of the area. This can start as a day and grow over time. It can be used by accommodation providers to entice people to book for these dates and also be promoted as a day trip experience using public transport to begin with. Walk leadership training can be provided and advice sought from other communities on setting up a walking festival. This can then grow over time. A more ambitious Film Festival is also recommended building on the surprising number of films and TV shows that have been filmed locally to firstly celebrate and showcase this, but also as a vehicle to specifically explore important themes around filming, set jetting and managing positive and negative impacts on the host community. This could include curated conversations inviting other communities that have been impacted positively and negatively to share their experiences and promote peer to peer learning. This could attract communities that have lengthy experience – eg Glenfinnan and Harry Potter and others that have only recently become filming venues (eg Cullen and neighbouring communities where The Odyssey has been filmed).

- **Climate Action -** As climate action is inextricably linked to tourism a key recommendation is to also work on developing a simple community led climate and tourism action plan for Culross with guidance provided in the Appendix which has been developed for the other communities on the FPW which was supported by Climate Action Fife.
- **Collaboration** – There are a number of tourism/visitor related interests in and around the village which would benefit from closer working - local tourism businesses, NTS, The Stables, The Red Lion, Grow West Fife, West Fife Woodlands and possible representation from Fife Coast and Countryside Trust (FPW and the Fife Coastal Path). The group can also consider how they link in with the LTA and ensure Culross' interests are represented. A small and informal group that meets monthly to share ideas and also review activity is recommended and could start through a Whats App group set up for interested people from the Workshop



Some very specific recommendations for Culross are set out below

A CULROSS MASTERPLAN – SERVICES, FACILITIES AND TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT

A recurring theme throughout the workshop and this report is the imbalance between the sheer volume of visitor activity and the level of service provision, with the consequent impact on quality of life for locals. The Pride in Place funding provides an unprecedented opportunity to address some of this through capital spend and also to develop facilities that can be operated by the community for the community – as community led tourism enterprises.

Some work has been progressed with funding looking at parking at the east end of the village at Bon Accord Park which is held under a Common Good arrangement. Reference was made to needing to fully understand what can legally be done on this land given how it was originally gifted and then held under the Common Good arrangement. However, allowing that to run its course it does provide an opportunity to take a masterplan approach between this land, the two existing car parks and the toilets and considering traffic management at the same time.

This is a big piece of work which could be funded as preparatory work for the Pride in Place deliberations. And to be effective it will be really important for the community as a whole to be engaged – not consulted – in its development from the outset.

It is understood a few things haven't progressed in Culross as there wasn't a clear consensus from the community, so time needs to be spent on engagement at the outset, ideally through community action and local place planning or similar processes.

Individual views and ideas are important, and then building a consensus on what is best for the community is even more important.

Key tourism considerations for the community that will inform the master planning brief are:

a) Agreeing a tourism vision that is anchored in reality and sets out what Culross as a community wants to be as a host destination in 25 years' time
b) Exploring what is Culross' capacity as a destination and thresholds for different types of visitors (eg coaches) and how can this be effectively managed (eg restrictions on access and parking)
c) Consider what facilities are currently inadequate or missing and could be addressed in a masterplan – eg public toilets, visitor information, signage, traffic management, premises for a local shop, a walker's hub and new business interests
d) What are the opportunities for the community to own and operate community led tourism enterprises? And which assets could enable this?

VISITOR SEGMENTATON

Because of what Culross offers it has appeal to a broad range of people and segmenting these into groups can then be a strong basis for working out what the community would like to see done differently and how best to achieve this.

Initial suggestions for segmenting as the basis for understanding different needs are provided below – purely as a starting point.

The community in general and Individual businesses and organisations can then consider what extra things they may want to do/provide to either manage a pressure or cater specifically for that segment (if they aren't already) and to ensure the community is seeing meaningful benefits;

SEGMENT	CURRENT ISSUES	POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS / REVENUE STREAMS
Outlander and cruise/ coach tours	Short dwell time and often limited spend. Coaches waiting for passengers.	Restrict the number of coach parking bays and enforce the clear way. Meet and greet points for all tours with tour welcome ambassadors with packs for a pre-agreed fee. Provide itineraries for specific lengths of time in the village
Pilgrim Walkers	At the start point and immediately leave to walk north	Provide a pilgrim hub and meeting point location(s) with advertised communal lunch times and pre-arranged local tours of St Mungo's Chapel and the Abbey sites
Coastal Path walkers	Culross isn't promoted as an overnight staging point and no local shop, so walkers have a limited economic footprint	Signpost where refreshments are available. Offer and promote walker specials in cafes and the pub at quieter times.
Day trippers	Limited parking	Additional parking Car park charging with dedicated spaces for long and short stays Suggested itineraries for different lengths of visit
Casual dog walkers	Regular visitors but not necessarily spending in the community	Highlight dog friendly premises and provide added value offers for dog owners (eg free dog treat with every coffee)
Overnight stays (B&B and self-catering)	Parking Limited evening meal options	Permit holder scheme with temporary parking permits Encourage to prebook at the Red Lion. Explore and showcase pop up options. Offer local self-catering hampers.



WALKER FRIENDLY CULROSS

As the Fife Pilgrim Way and Fife Coastal Path are bringing walkers to and through the village, a key recommendation is to develop a Pilgrim and Walker Friendly plan for Culross.

A framework for this is provided in the Appendix with a specific focus on the Fife Pilgrim Way. At its core the plan 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 village and measures that will ensure this market feels more welcome and is encouraged to spend more time and money in the local area. It has two dimensions with pilgrim way walkers on the one hand and more general walkers exploring the local countryside on the other.

Key to this is creating a local walker friendly plan for this community but also taking time to engage with the other staging communities on the routes to ensure consistency as well as peer to peer learning and opportunities for collaboration.

GOOGLE MAPS AND GOOGLE PROFILES IN CULROSS

As highlighted, early in 2026 VisitScotland changed their visitor facing website to no longer provide their own business listings and it now draws on Google profiles and links to Google Maps.

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 to add to any listing

you had with them, and this approach streamlines things.

In terms of marketing and promotion a key action for businesses and community groups and organisations in Culross 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 has a response been given?

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 Search Engine Optimisation and AI, and also 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. A small community-based working group could progress this.

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 on visitscotland.com 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

- Bring the participants back together to review the findings and recommendations with the SCOTO facilitator to prioritise what the community would like to progress as the basis to a community led tourism activity plan and also which ideas could be fed into the Pride in Place deliberations
- 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 village to share the Press Pause® findings and recommendations plus agreed early actions to gather interest and involvement - potentially linked to a simple volunteer fayre staged with all local groups/charities
- Establish (or repurpose an existing) BeLocal Culross 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 tackled parking and traffic management (eg Luss and New Lanark)
- Agree a quick win project to galvanise everyone (eg the recommended map)
- Instigate a formal working group to oversee the Culross approach to being involved in the Pride in Place Neighbourhood Board and Plan, with a view to generating a prioritised list of projects.

The findings from this report will be integrated into the FPW overview report which was generated from the findings from Press Pause in Dunfermline, Markinch, Culross and St Andrews earlier in 2026. This will highlight the synergies and also opportunities for collaboration and project investment.



11. REFLECTIONS

The Culross Press Pause workshop was timely not least because the Pride in Place funding for 'West Fife Villages' has been announced and is at the early stages of development, but also because the community has been and continues to experience notable changes in relation to how tourism is playing out. Stopping to think what is and isn't working allows collective thought to focus on what is best for the village, what is best for the community, and how to influence what happens.

Culross has significant visitor appeal largely due to its outstanding built environment and the exceptional vision demonstrated by the National Trust for Scotland in the 1930s onwards to not just preserve so many of the architecturally significant buildings in Culross but to do so to allow the community to thrive.

There are ongoing challenges for NTS to continue to invest in and maintain all these properties and some are currently lying vacant, and it is understood others are being sold to tenants.

However, from a tourism perspective, Culross is unique in this regard and arguably has not experienced the high levels of second homes and self-catering units that nearby and other coastal communities have. More could be done to help visitors and locals understand the benefits of this and to celebrate it.

Culross has an outstanding built environment which has featured in a number of films and TV programmes. This has raised the profile of the village but also given a sense that it is primarily a film set rather than a place that many people call 'home'. More could be done to ensure this is better understood and appreciated.

The recommendations in this report are many and are a mix of small-scale simple fixes to tackle the here and now and also a bold rethink suggesting a new masterplan for Culross to allow the community to be in the driving seat A masterplan will bring together and consider the many challenges and potential solutions and seek to address these in a singular plan which also sets out the optimal phasing of the different components.

A bold approach is needed in Culross, and the Pride in Place opportunity provides the context for bold thinking.

There are great insights and lessons to learn from other communities facing similar issues, especially in relation to traffic and visitor management. Learning exchanges can be incredibly useful for understanding what could be done and potential pitfalls to consider.

However, the key to any success in Culross will rely on the community being able to build a consensus on what is desired and how that should be achieved. Individual thoughts are key to exploring ideas and opportunities and setting the ambition, and then collective agreement on what is then pursued.

The Pride in Place process is geared around empowering local residents and businesses through Neighbourhood Boards, and Culross being at that table and with a collective voice on behalf of the community is vital.

With focused effort on understanding and acting on what matters locally, any visitor to Culross in the future should be immediately aware they have the privilege of visiting a stunning place which is primarily a thriving community.



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 embrace tourism as a force for good.

The report 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 support community wellbeing and help 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.



PRESS PAUSE®
CULROSS, FIFE - APPENDICES














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				

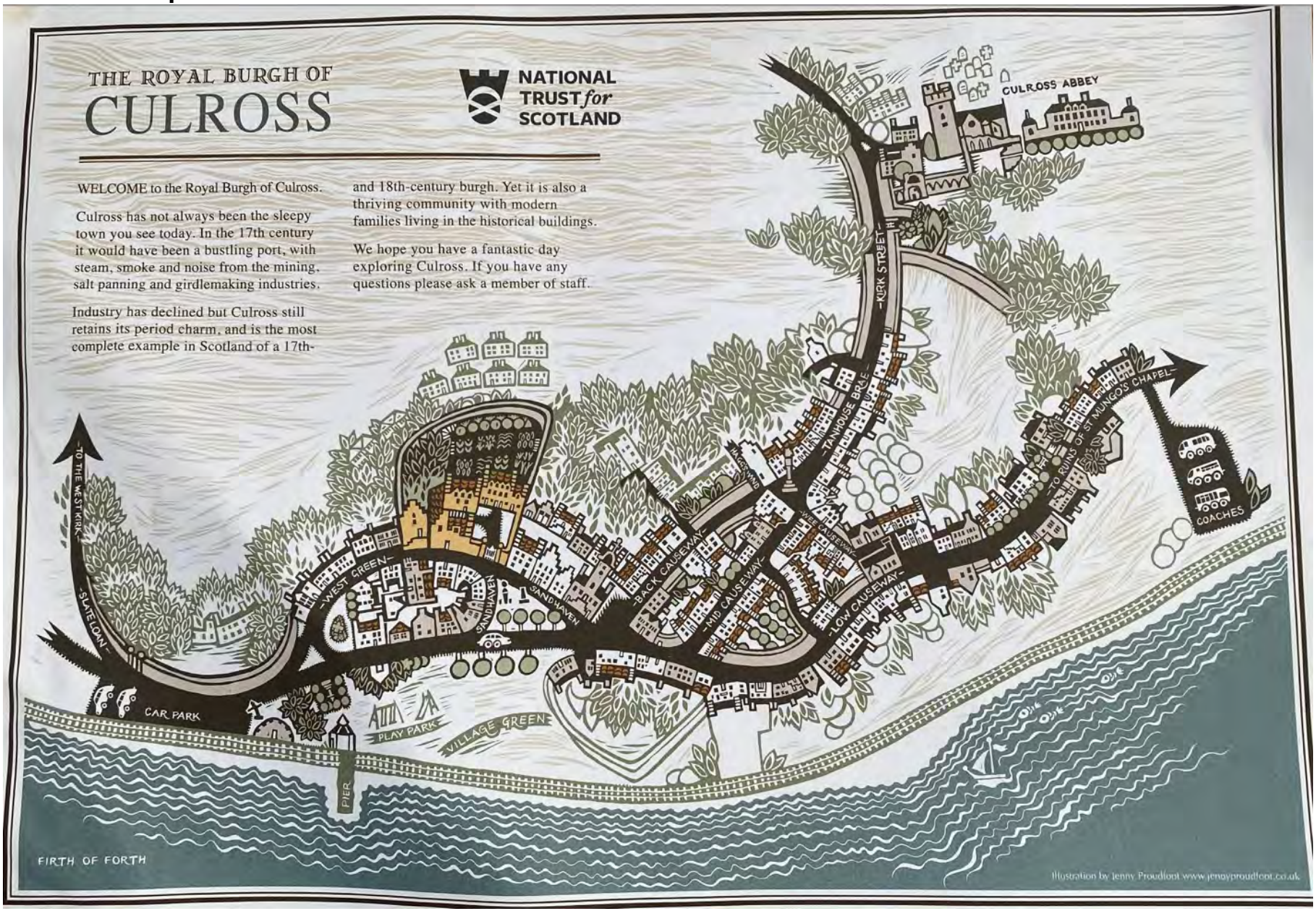
SECTION J – GOVERNANCE & DELIVERY
15. Who Owns This Plan?
- Community group?
- Church?
- Business association?
- Informal tourism network?

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):

APPENDIX 3: NTS Map of Culross



WHAT TO SEE IN CULROSS



Culross Palace
(Sandhaven)

Culross Palace was built in the early 17th century for Sir George Bruce, a wealthy merchant. It was never a royal residence but possibly got its name from a misinterpretation of the wording in the title deeds. The palace and garden have been extensively restored by the Trust.



Bennet House
(West Green)

Bennet House traces its origins to the late 16th or early 17th century. It was abandoned in the mid-1990s and left in desperate need of refurbishment. In 2015, the Little Houses Improvement Scheme purchased Bennet House and will sensitively restore it.



Town House
(Sandhaven)

The Town House was built in 1626, although the clock tower and frontage are later. The town council met here until 1975. At various stages in its history, the ground floor was used a tollbooth or prison for debtors, and 'witches' were imprisoned in the attic.



The Study
(The Cross)

Built *c*1610, the Study gets its name from the tradition that Bishop Leighton of Dunblane used it as a study on his occasional visits to Culross in the late 17th century. It has a superb restored painted ceiling.



Mercat Cross
(The Cross)

The cross itself dates from 1588 but only the base is original. The shaft was replaced in 1902.



St Mungo's Chapel
(Low Causeway)

Only ruins remain of the chapel, which was built by Archbishop Blackadder of Glasgow in 1503 in honour of the city's patron saint, who was reputedly born on this spot in AD514.

WATCH OUT!

Culross has many old buildings with low doorways, uneven floors and low light levels, so we have a few important do's to help keep you safe while exploring the town and palace.

PLEASE DO

- Mind your head when walking through low doorways and on low beams
- Be careful where you step
- Be cautious inside buildings with low light levels
- Take care when exploring the palace garden as it has some steep steps and slopes
- Make sure children are accompanied at all times in the garden
- Watch out for the hens as they have freedom to roam in the orchard

www.nts.org.uk/culross

Culross Palace

@CulrossNTS

LITTLE HOUSES IMPROVEMENT SCHEME

The Trust's Little Houses Improvement Scheme (LHIS) is a building preservation trust created to help protect Scotland's heritage.

The LHIS acquires threatened buildings of significance, repairs and restores them, providing them with viable new uses in their communities. Over the years the NTS has repaired 38 'little houses' in Culross and over 300 properties across Scotland.

As you walk around Culross, look out for the blue round plaques on the buildings that the LHIS has restored.

You can find out more about the LHIS in our new exhibition at the Town House or go to **nts.org.uk/buildings/LHIS**

GUIDEBOOK

For a more in depth guide to Culross you can purchase a copy of the NTS Culross guidebook from the shop in the Town House.

MEMBERSHIP

The National Trust for Scotland is a charity. The largest part of our income comes from our members – simply by becoming a member of the Trust you are helping to conserve and support our nation's most treasured heritage.

If you are interested in becoming a member of the National Trust for Scotland, please pop into the Town House shop and admission area to find out more or go to **www.nts.org.uk/membership**

FILMING AT CULROSS

For decades, the winding, cobbled streets and quaint houses at Culross have been a favourite location of film crews looking for an authentic backdrop.

Productions filmed in the burgh include *Kidnapped* (1971) starring Michael Caine, *The Little Vampire* (2000) starring Richard E Grant, Bollywood film *Kyun! Ho Gaya Na* (2004), *The 39 Steps* (2008), and *Captain America: The First Avenger* (2011). Most recently (2013–15), Culross has been one of the locations for US television drama *Outlander*, when several buildings around the Mercat Cross were temporarily painted grey and brown instead of the usual white.

The National Trust for Scotland for Places of Historic Interest or Natural Beauty is a charity registered in Scotland, Charity Number SC 007410 4087 PP 5m 8/19

