

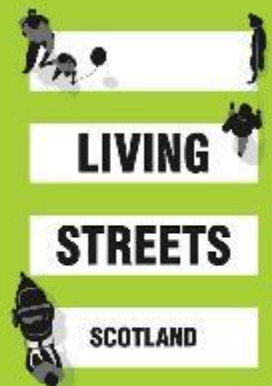
Living Streets

Community Street Audit Report

Banff
March 2018



We are Living Streets Scotland, part of the UK charity for everyday walking. We want to create a walking nation where people of all generations enjoy the benefits that this simple act brings, on streets fit for walking.



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Executive summary

We are Living Streets Scotland, (LSS), a part of the UK charity for everyday walking. We are working with Aberdeenshire Council Transport team, to help develop the Integrated Travel Town Masterplan, (ITTM), specifically looking at walking. We have previously worked with residents, groups and organisations in Inverurie. This year we have been working in Banff as part of a larger suite of work taking in Stonehaven, Banchory, Macduff, Oldmeldrum and Westhill.

The Transport team are working to produce an ITTM and LSS is supporting this work by looking at barriers and assets to walking, especially for the more vulnerable pedestrian. We have considered routes to key local trip generators within a town including amenities such as shops, schools, post office and GP. We considered the ease of access to public transport links on foot, e.g. bus stops and Rail stations where applicable.

Background to Banff audit

The Community Street Audit in Banff followed on from a workshop with representatives from Aberdeenshire Council Transport Team, Grampian Public Health, and Dementia Friendly Aberdeenshire. The workshop attendees identified assets and barriers to walking around Banff and their top priorities for change. This information was used to identify an audit route, which included High Street, Low Street, Back Path, Strait Path and Bridge Street. As the turnout for the workshops was low we also spoke to a group of older adults from a social group and members and their carers attending an Enable group.

Barriers to walking on this route include:

- Lack of adequate lighting on Low Street, St Mary's Car Park and Bridge Street.
- Advertising boards and street furniture causing footway obstruction.
- Narrow footways and railings on Strait Path.
- Poor footway maintenance on Low Street and Bridge Street.
- Lack of crossing on High Street at Banff Parish Church.

Recommendations for improvements include:

- Making business owners aware of best practice and guidelines for display boards.
- Repair and maintain footways on Low Street and Bridge Street.
- Investigate crossing solutions for High Street at Banff Parish Church.
- Improve the street lighting in the town.

Living Streets Scotland

We are Living Streets Scotland, part of the UK charity for everyday walking. We want to create a walking nation, free from congested roads and pollution, reducing the risk of preventable illness and social isolation and making walking the natural choice. We believe that a walking nation means progress for everyone. Our ambition is to enable people of all generations to enjoy the benefits that this simple act brings and to ensure all our streets are fit for walking.

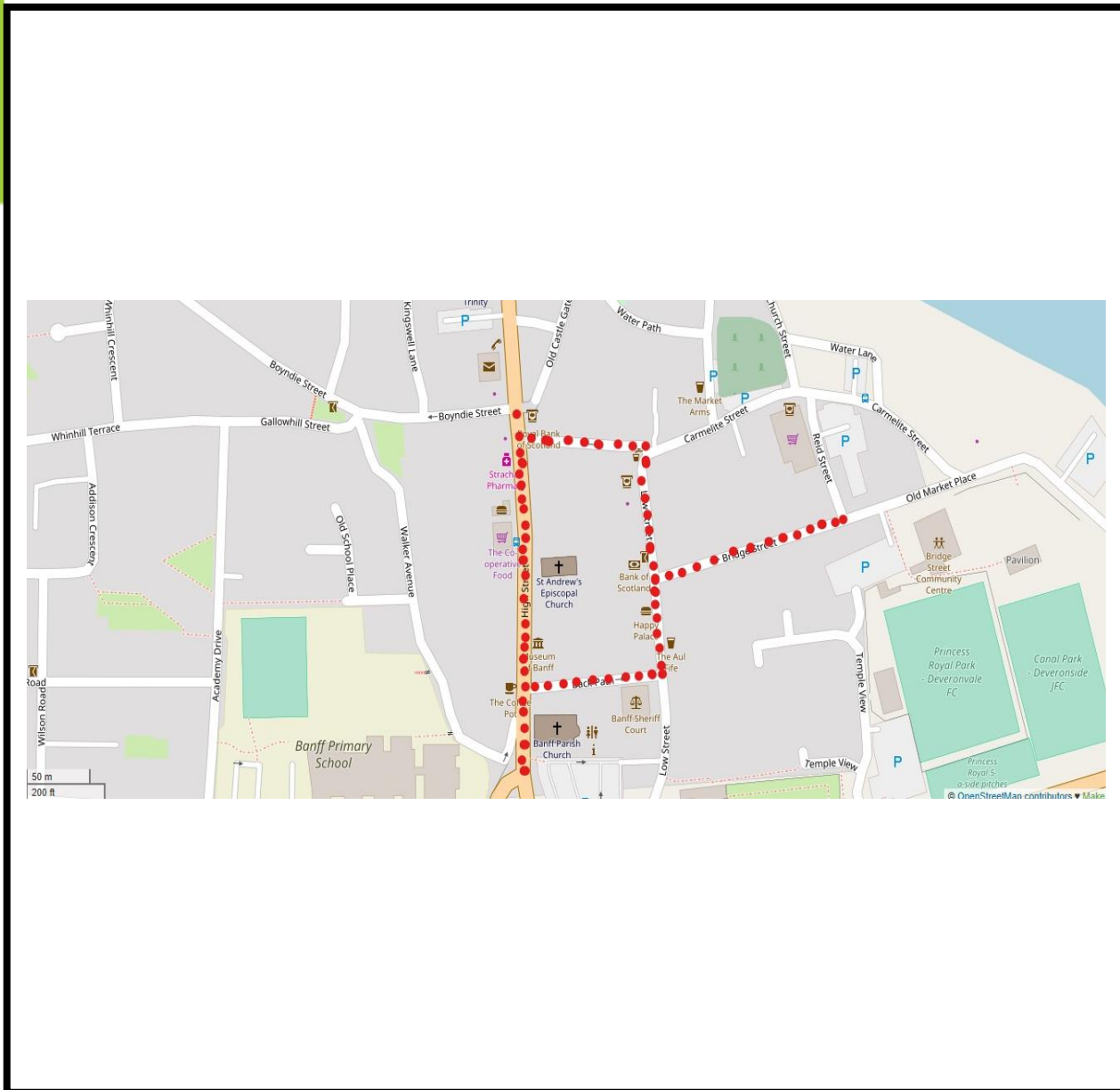
Introduction

Living Streets Scotland, LSS, was initially asked to speak to local communities in Aberdeenshire to gather evidence for their Integrated Travel Town Masterplan (ITTM). The Masterplan considers different aspects of active travel and public transport across Aberdeenshire, identifying actions to improve access to these travel choices and ensure they are better integrated, with the aim of encouraging fewer local journeys by car and an increase in journeys undertaken sustainably. Walking is the most popular active travel mode, and is always a stage in any journey undertaken by public transport. For this reason, Aberdeenshire Council asked LSS to take forward a small number of Community Street Audits examining barriers and assets for walking journeys on key routes in each community. Ensuring all members of a community are able to walk on local streets is a priority for both LSS and Aberdeenshire Council, and as such we focused much of our activity on engaging more vulnerable groups, the elderly, the young and those with physical and/or sensory impairments.

A workshop was carried out on 29th November 2017, with 4 people in attendance. These included a representative from the Transport team, Public Health practitioner, and representatives from Dementia Friendly Aberdeenshire. Assets and barriers were identified and priorities were discussed. A route along the High Street and Low Street was identified to audit.

The Street Audit was conducted in January 10th 2018 by the Communities Coordinator from LSS. On the 11th January 2018 the findings from the street audit were discussed with the attendees from the Coffee and Chat group and the Enable group, ensuring wider participation to capture the views of more vulnerable residents.

Map of area



© OpenStreetMap contributors

The red route indicates the route reviewed

Banff & Area profile

The town of Banff is situated approximately 46 miles north of Aberdeen. It is a coastal town dating from medieval times and has a population of approximately 4000.

There is a Community Hospital and GP surgery, post office and shops on the High Street as well as two small supermarkets in Banff. A new leisure and community centre was built to the west of the town near to the High School, replacing the community centre near to the High Street. The town has a popular local bus that serves the High Street and hospital.

Banff is about one and a half miles from Macduff and residents will rely to some extent on amenities in Macduff. There will therefore be some travel between them to access these.

Area findings

What Works Well

Banff has wide, mostly well maintained footways on the High Street. There is a pretty area to stop and rest on the High Street near the pedestrian crossing beside the RBS. There is also an area of interest at the bottom of Strait Path. There is a good well maintained pedestrian crossing on the High Street.

Good bus stops on Low Street



Planters and information boards on the High Street



Information signs and historical monuments on Low Street at the bottom of Strait Path.



What Doesn't Work So Well

1 – Road layout and space allocation

Bridge Street is a one-way road with parking on one side of the road. The footway surface is also badly maintained. There are plans to upgrade this street, and feedback gathered at the audit suggested either pedestrianising the area or removing the parking and widening the footway.



Strait Path is steep there are narrow footways edged with railings. It would be helpful to the less mobile to widen the footway if the railings are to be kept.



2 – Crossing points and desire lines

Crossing the A98 at the Banff Parish Church is difficult due to fast traffic and traffic merging onto the A98 from Institution Terrace and Sandyhill Road at a corner.

There are barriers along the footway reducing the space available to cross and there is a lack of dropped kerb in the space between the barriers, there is a dropped kerb opposite. This lack of dropped kerb in front of the Church may leave pedestrians using mobility aids or wheelchairs stranded on the road as the upstand is too high for them to easily access the footway.

Many of the people from the Coffee and Chat group use mobility aids and find it difficult to cross the road here and would have to make a long detour to use the pedestrian crossing. Many of the crossing points along High Street, i.e. at the junctions with Back Path and Strait Path, have dropped kerbs installed on corners with a slope which made them difficult to use if you use a wheelchair or mobility aid.



3 – Footway surfaces and obstructions

A boards and street furniture can be found in various places along the route. Low Street, High Street and Strait Path.



Poor footway surface on Low Street and Bridge Street.



Obstructions to footway on Back Path, Low Street and Bridge Street.



4 – Maintenance and enforcement

Issues that were raised by people included pavement parking in the town centre. There is also double parking at school run times in front of the school and at the community centre. Many found the wheelie bins left on the streets difficult to navigate past on bin day.

5 – Personal Safety

There were some issues raised regarding lighting on Low Street, it was felt that the lighting was poor. Also lighting in St Mary's car park was low, this is especially important to residents from Airlie Gardens Sheltered Housing who often walk to the High Street through the car park.

Airlie Gardens residents also felt that there was a lot of anti-social behaviour centred in the car park in the evenings, usually young people racing cars around the town and playing loud music. They found this quite intimidating due to proximity and the noise going on in to the early hours of the morning.

Members of the Enable group felt that the residential streets were not well gritted. As many of them had disabilities, both physical and sensory they felt unsafe to leave their homes in poor weather.

6 – Traffic

The A98 is a busy main road running through Banff, linking to Fraserburgh and coastal towns to the East. This leads to a high volume of traffic going through the town centre. This is especially evident to pedestrians walking across the Bridge over the river Deveron. One footway is narrow and people have commented that it feels unsafe to walk on when HGV's are passing.

Wider transport issues raised by residents

- Recently one of the GP's has moved from premises near the Community Hospital to premises in Macduff. It was felt that it was a welcoming and accommodating practice but that if you needed to use the bus to get to Macduff it was inconvenient as the buses were unreliable.
- There was no bus from Banff to the Care Home in Macduff. Leading to a costly taxi trip if no other option available.
- Difficulty accessing Aberdeen especially for hospital appointments, not only does it take a long time it means appointments need to be made for the middle of the day. Access to Aberdeen has been made even more difficult for some since the recent loss of the local volunteer transport.
- Good local bus but route should be extended to include more residential areas.
- Lack of understanding how to report issues and a feeling that council officers don't really understand the difficulties faced by disabled pedestrians.

Recommendations

Area/Issue	Recommended Action	Level of Action Quick Win/ long Term	Responsibility/ Involvement
1 - Obstructions	1 – Advertising Boards and street furniture on Low Street, High Street and Strait Path, ensure that business owners are aware of regulations and these are enforced. 2 – Work with refuse collection staff to ensure footways are kept as clear as possible on collection days. 3 – The raised entrances and steps on Back Path should be painted/highlighted for ease of visibility to the visually impaired.	1 – Quick win 2 – Quick win 3 – Medium term	Aberdeenshire Council
2 – Footway Surfaces	1 – Repair the footway surface on Low Road near the bus stop at the North West end and also near the Post Box. 2 – Repair the footway surface on Bridge Street. 3 – Install tactile paving at the High Street crossing with Boyndie Street	1 – Quick win 2 – Long term 3 – Medium term	Aberdeenshire Council
3 – Crossing Points	1 – Install a crossing point near Banff Parish Church on the A98, including adding dropped kerbs and removing the metal barriers. 2 – Extend the dropped kerbs at the top of Back Path and Strait Path.	1 – Long term 2 – Medium term	Aberdeenshire Council
4 – Maintenance and Enforcement	1 – Enforce parking regulations to reduce double parking on the High Street. 2 – Enforce parking regulations around the schools and leisure centre.	1 – Medium term 2 – Medium term	Aberdeenshire Council and Police Scotland
5 – Road Layout	1 – Bridge Street, reduce parking to allow increase in footway width. 2 – Strait Path, widen the footway whilst keeping the handrail.	1 – Long term 2 – Long term	Aberdeenshire Council
6 – Personal Safety	1 – Increase lighting levels on Low Street and in St Mary's carpark 2 – Work to reduce anti-social behaviour in St Mary's car park, boy racers and loud noise.	1 – Medium term 2 – Medium term	Aberdeenshire Council and Police Scotland

Action Plan

Action	Responsibility	Timescale
Advertising Boards and street furniture on Low Street, High Street and Strait Path, ensure that business owners are aware of regulations and these are enforced.	Aberdeenshire council roads team	
Work with refuse collection staff to ensure footways are kept as clear as possible on collection days.	Aberdeenshire council roads team and refuse team	
Paint/highlight raised entrances and house steps on Back Path.	Aberdeenshire council roads team	
Repair the footway surface on Low Road <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - near the bus stop at the North West end of the street - near the Post Box. 	Aberdeenshire council roads team	
Repair the footway surface on Bridge Street.	Aberdeenshire council roads team	
Install tactile paving at the High Street crossing with Boyndie Street	Aberdeenshire council roads team	
Install a crossing point near Banff Parish Church on the A98. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Install dropped kerbs 	Aberdeenshire council roads team	

- Remove metal barriers		
Extend the dropped kerbs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - at the top of Back Path - at the top of Strait Path 	Aberdeenshire council roads team	
Enforce parking regulations to reduce double parking on the High Street.	Aberdeenshire council roads team, Police Scotland	
Enforce parking regulations around the schools and leisure centre.	Aberdeenshire council roads team, Education and Police Scotland	
Bridge Street <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - reduce parking to allow increase in footway width - Feasibility of pedestrianizing street 	Aberdeenshire council roads team	
Strait Path, widen the footway whilst keeping the handrail.	Aberdeenshire council roads team	
Increase lighting levels <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Low Street - St Mary's carpark 	Aberdeenshire council roads team	
Work to reduce anti-social behaviour in St Mary's car park, boy racers and loud noise.	Aberdeenshire council roads team, Police Scotland	



Contacts

This report is being submitted to:

- Aberdeenshire Council Transport team
- Local Councillors and workshop participants



Contacts:




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Appendix

Community Street Audit Findings

Banff CSA: 10/1/18 11am – 12pm
Auditors Avril McKenzie,

Map Ref	Location	Findings	Effect on walking	Heading	Priority/solution
	Low Street, Fife Restaurant	A board blocking pavement, narrow pavement	Hard for wheelchairs or buggies to pass. May be forced on to the road.	Footway surfaces and obstructions	
	Bottom of Back Path/Low street	Dropped kerb on Low street is opposite road taking wheelchair users to the middle of the road at the bottom of Back path	Intimidating and difficult to cross with wheelchair, walking aid or buggy	Crossing points and desire lines	

	Back Path	Steep incline, one pavement wide other narrow. Badly maintained and difficult camber.	Surroundings would put less able walkers off using this route to High Street.	Footway surfaces and obstructions	
	Back Path towards top	Footpath is narrowed by build out ramp in front of garage		Footway surfaces and obstructions	
	Back Path towards top	Footpath narrows where there are steps in front of house		Footway surfaces and obstructions	
	Back Path towards top	Crossing at top, dropped kerb on curve on 1 side, kerb not flush on a slope and barriers around corner		Footway surfaces and obstructions	



East end of High Street

Busy main road, several junctions and no crossing. Break in barriers but kerb not fully dropped

Feels difficult and intimidating to cross even if you can cross quickly.

Crossing points and desire lines



High Street opposite library

Several cambers on footpath, sunken manhole covers.

Maintenance and enforcement

High Street opposite church

Bins narrow footpaths

Footway surfaces and obstructions









High Street, outside McColl's



Bike racks and bus stop, wide footpath




Enough space to pass even if bus stop busy

Facilities and signage

	<p>High Street, outside chemist</p>	<p>A boards and bins narrow footpath, disabled car parking space.</p>	<p>Can cause congestion on path</p>	<p>Footway surfaces and obstructions</p>	
	<p>West end high street</p>	<p>Signalised Crossing, easy crossing, narrow road</p>		<p>Crossing points and desire lines</p>	
	<p>West end High street area outside RBS</p>	<p>Disabled access to bank, wide area with finger signs to local attractions and planters no seating</p>	<p>Nice space but could benefit from seating</p>	<p>Facilities and signage</p>	

					
 	<p>Strait path</p>	<p>Very narrow footway with railings, most pedestrians walked on road. Very steep</p>		<p>Road layout and space allocation</p>	
	<p>Strait path</p>	<p>Several interesting shops and hairdressers. These could be hard to access if mobility limited</p>			

	<p>Strait Path</p>	<p>Towards bottom of road, there are steps on the footpath</p>	<p>Difficult to navigate for people with limited mobility</p>	<p>Footway surfaces and obstructions</p>	
	<p>Bottom of Strait Path and Low Street</p>	<p>Nice space, wide flat surfaces, signage, things of interest, seating on opposite side of the road.</p>		<p>Aesthetics</p>	

				Facilities and Signage	
	Low Street, bus stop	Wide footpath, bike rack, bins		Facilities and signage	
	Low Street	Lots of empty shop fronts		Aesthetics	
	Low Street, post box	Uneven manhole cover, disabled parking		Footway surfaces and obstructions	



Low Street BOS

No wheelchair access, 2 steps in



Low Street

Uneven flags, and manholes, pavement narrows

Footway surfaces and obstructions



Bridge Street

Narrow footpaths, feels dark and neglected

Pedestrians walk on road

Personal Safety



Bridge Street

1 way road, parking on 1 side of the road, pavement surface badly maintained.

Road layout and space allocation

Feedback from 2 local groups

Banff – Coffee and chat group, 11/1/18. (12 attendees)

- Crossing at the front of the Banff Parish Church (A98 High Street corner).
- Wheelie bins parked on the High Street. Bins should be in the gutter not on the pavement.
- Cars parked on the pavement.
- Town Centre buses, there are lots of pensioners up Sandyhill Road and Colleonard Road. The bus should expand its route.
- Banff GP moved to Macduff, many now have to take the bus but these aren't always reliable or accessible to the less mobile. A taxi costs £6. Macduff GP is more accommodating than Banff GP.
- Council people should go round in a wheelchair for a week to see what it's like.
- Bus stops are raised to help people to get on to the bus, but often there are no dropped kerbs to allow people to mount the pavement.
- There used to be a volunteer driver service for people in Banff and Macduff, this loss of service makes it difficult for some people to travel far. One lady has health issues where she needs regular stops so the bus wouldn't be a suitable travel alternative.
- There were issues with the crossing on the High Street but the ladies felt that the timing has been increased on the crossing.
- The wet flags are slippery and uneven.
- Bus 35 – Coast Bus, buses to GP in Macduff.
- Town Service Bus – Good drivers don't move off until everyone seated.
- There are 2 Care Homes in Banff with good bus links.
- There is one care home in Macduff, no bus link so need to take a taxi.
- The flower shop, plants outside block pavement.
- Airlie Gardens Sheltered Housing, residents find it hard to navigate along Low Street, especially at Fife restaurant due to A board and Flower shop due to outside plants.
- It's very dark in the evenings with the new street lights. One of the lights out in St. Mary's car park.
- Boy racers in the car park and around town cause a lot of noise especially near Airlie Gardens sheltered housing. It's very intimidating especially as it goes on to 1am. No one stops them!

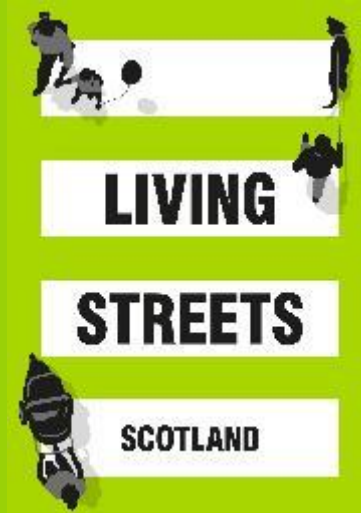
- There is no lighting at bus stops, bus drivers have mentioned that they can't see if there is anyone waiting until they get there.
- Bridge Street looks bad and feels desolate.
- The old community centre was in the town centre and easy to access, it has now moved up near the school so many of the older adults at the sheltered housing now no longer access activities.

Priorities

- Wheelie bins moved from pavement to gutter.
- Stop pavement parking.
- Seating at bus stops.
- A crossing at the East end of the High Street.

Banff – Enable Group, 11/1/18. (approx. 80 people in group)

- The Enable group used to meet in the old town centre Community Centre. They had the full use of the community centre. The group currently meets in a general purpose room with the use of a gym hall and the foyer area. One of the issues that they now have is accessing disabled parking as it is limited and often being used by 'waiting' parents as they pick up children. The group has asked the Centre manager to enforce the disabled parking bays but nothing has changed. If they have said anything to drivers, they said they got verbal abuse back.
- Boyndie Street, the pavements are in bad repair, the group also said that they weren't sure how to report issues to the Council.
- There was a feeling that there wasn't enough gritting around residential areas.
- Some of the assisted housing were on steep slopes, and some residents were partially sighted and found it hard to go outside in icy weather. It was felt that installing handrails would help them be more independent.
- They felt that Strait Path, Low Street and St Mary's car park were poorly lit, making them uninviting spaces.
- The brick bit at the Post Office is hard for wheelchair users to navigate.
- Banff town centre has many bad kerbs with corners and slopes and there is a lack of dropped kerbs.



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