

the stove network

PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

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Public Support for Town Centre Regeneration Plans

Over 800 people have completed an online survey which asked for views on the future of Dumfries town centre, following a two-day event held at The Bakers Oven by The Stove Network. The Midsteeple Quarter project proposes to encourage more people to live back in the town centre, and the survey allowed people who were unable to come to the event a chance to get involved and show their support.

Proposals have also been on display for comment at Bakers Oven and The Stove in the town centre, in which a total of 483 local people have signed The Dumfries Pledge to actively support the community partnership in their plans to bring buildings under local control and create new housing and services on the High Street.

Melissa Gunn of University of the West of Scotland - who are members of the community partnership leading the project – commented, “We have been overwhelmed by the response from people; we were not expecting to receive as many as we did, considering the number of people we had through the doors during our Bakers Oven event. Online surveys often bring out more negative responses, but here the opposite was true. We were particularly surprised by 40% of people saying they themselves would be keen to live in the town centre.”

The Midsteeple Quarter survey was completed by a wide age range of people with 20% of respondents under 35, the majority between 35 and 60 and 23% over 60. People felt that a populated town centre was important for a vibrant town centre. There was also strong support for a mix of accommodation from affordable tenancies to student accommodation and private flats available above in the upper floors above the shops.

Confirming previous work conducted by The Stove Network, the consultations revealed support for a more diverse approach to the future of the town centre with a very positive response to ideas of enterprise, education, live-work, health services and restaurants/nightlife all being available in the town centre as well as more events, festivals and markets to encourage more people to come into the town.

The Midsteeple Quarter project is developing fast with other recent developments including progress with transferring the Bakers Oven building to community ownership. Dumfries & Galloway NHS have also joined the community partnership, and there are plans for the formation of a new community company called Dumfries High Street to steward the project for the benefit of local people. Next steps will include a national architectural competition to test out the public’s ideas and shape a vision for the project that can be delivered by the community partnership.

Matt Baker of The Stove Network commented, “Everyone in the team is just delighted by the progress to date – this feels like a very different approach for the town with a diverse

mix of local people and groups leading the project. Everyone is bringing their own expertise and experience and being respectful of what others have to contribute. We have had excellent support from right across the Council –this really could be the beginning of the long hoped for turnaround in the fortunes of Dumfries town centre!”

People can keep up to date with Midsteeple Quarter by signing up to the mailing list for the project and/or popping into The Stove and talking to the team there. There is also information available at www.thestove.org.

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Notes

The Stove Network is an artist-led organisation based in Dumfries and creating new activity and opportunities in the town centre based around The Stove, 100 High Street.

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