

Bill Pagan, Board member of BEFS and founding Board member of Cupar Development Trust, offers further thoughts on Cupar's CharrettePlus, led by PAS in March, which led to a Summit Meeting in the town in April.

I promised in my previous blog to report on the Summit Meeting on 21 April, when PAS, supported by Cupar Development Trust, presented the conclusions of the consultation process. The slides and the artists' impressions were welcomed both for their content and as ways of summarising the thoughts which had filled the Corn Exchange on those four days in March. They are available on the CuparCould website.

There is a familiar management cry: **What? So what? Now what?**

Cupar has reached the third of these. Delivery is now the major challenge - the enthusiastic responses of local individuals and organisations, with constructive ideas, deserve a determined follow up, and early delivery of at least some of the ideas proposed. All the usual constraints apply - time, energy and inevitably cash.

Concurrent Activity

It is helpful that Cupar is in the midst of a CARS/THI scheme, funded to a total of £1.5M. The bulk of that is committed already to the County Buildings and the Burgh Chambers, with some available to help Fife Council upgrade a few of Cupar's medieval closes network - as well as grants to individual owners towards the costs of vital repairs to the town centre's older buildings, the first project being now complete. The scheme provides also training in Traditional Skills.



A Planning application is about to be lodged for the former Burgh Chambers to become a Holiday Let, meaning there will be a management task for some organisation in the town. But the most visible work which is obvious to all is the painting of the street face of the County Buildings in St Catherine Street. The pink and white "Raspberry Ripple" of the past forty years is being replaced by stone colours to recreate the original effect, when the stone would not have been painted at all. The need for the work is evident from this photograph showing the colour menu.

Efforts Post Charrette - CuparCould to become "CuparCan"

While the final report is awaited, Cupar Development Trust is trying to keep the momentum going. In particular, members of the Board are, firstly, liaising with PAS over the format of the final report so that it will form a springboard towards actual action, and, secondly, seeking approval from other organisations in the town for the creation of a co-ordinating group to ensure concurrent and complementary activity. Cupar does not need another formal organisation for this - the town is blessed with many excellent, dedicated, organisations which make huge contributions in their own areas of expertise, not least Cupar In Bloom which wins awards for Cupar at UK national level. The response to the Charrette has to avoid burdening such groups with additional work, and of course Cupar Development Trust has neither the desire nor the

authority to lay down how the response is to happen - but it has ideas which it hopes will be acceptable.

The folk of Cupar will have to be realistic about what can be done and how quickly. Apart from projects which have already started under CARS/THI, there may not be a large number of physical outcomes to see this side of 2020 given the financial climate. The reality is that the financial climate is not expected to get much better before 2020. But the outcome was never to be just an exercise in urban design - and the Charrette has been a success in the softer areas of town improvement, bringing people together and achieving consensus on current realities and do-able improvements in the future. It is important to identify actions that individuals and organisations recognise their role in. Possibilities like upgrading Ferguson Square would combine a small amount of urban redesign with the softer side of encouraging activity and footfall.

Building on present strengths

During the Charrette, there was a strong buzz about the town, with accolades for Cupar as a place to bring up families - fine schools, many activities and good communications. The downsides and opportunities commented on often reflected the content of the BEFS Small Town Report of 2014, such as lack of hotel, the river as an opportunity to be built on, and the need to identify what will make Cupar a stronger destination of choice. It is already a hub for bus and train travel, and was described during the Charrette as the "creative commercial heart of North East Fife". A clear challenge is to identify what a sustainable market town of the 21st century should look like, and then mould Cupar to that - both by softer aspects and by physical design. Simple things like better sign-posting came up time and again during the discussions, and there was a particularly lively and purposeful discussion on business and commercial opportunities, which the town's businesses association, ABCD, will no doubt be expanding on. There is a grand base to build on, and it was gratifying to see six of Cupar's indigenous small businesses winning awards at the Fife-wide Business Awards ceremony in April. All six now go forward to the Scotland event.



Much has already been achieved towards creating easier pedestrian and cycle access. Here is an imaginative depiction of the town's routes, produced by Cupar Active Travel, which brought a lot of comment from visitors to the Charrette. It covers more than just the town centre, on which the Charrette was focused.

Similarly, much good work has been done by Sustainable Cupar, not least re-opening the old drove road over the hill to Ceres - not a town centre project, obviously, but one which may encourage greater footfall in the centre as well as providing a pleasant expedition for the town's families. Cupar Heritage is investigating rejuvenating the town's Heritage Trail.

I could go on. There are so many organisations and initiatives in Cupar contributing to making it a fine place to live. But it was clear from the Charrette discussions that so much more could be done, given adequate time, energy and cash. Making a deliverable plan of the priorities is the next focus both for PAS, in their final report, and for Cupar Development Trust as it looks for ways to harness Cupar's talent.

There will be a further blog on all this after the PAS report has been received.

Meantime, Cupar will be delighted if you follow progress via www.cuparcould.com, Twitter (@cuparcould), Instagram (@cuparcould) and Facebook (facebook.com/cuparcould).

Bill Pagan