

Traditional Shopfront Improvement Scheme

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The Traditional Shopfront Improvement Scheme is an important part of Falkirk Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI). The grant investment aims to help make Falkirk town centre a more attractive place to live, work and visit through improving the appearance of shop fronts in the area by restoring them to their original design & detail.

The THI is able to offer grant funding for up to 85% of eligible works towards shopfront improvements. Initially this funding will be targeted at certain priority shopfronts in strategic locations; however owners of all traditional shopfronts within the THI area are eligible to apply for grant funding. The maximum grant awarded will be determined by the priority category assigned to the property and the nature of the works.

The types of improvement works that will be eligible for grant funding include:

- removing & replacing inappropriate modern alterations such as external roller shutters, plastic signage, and excessive shopfront clutter;
- re-instating the original architectural detail, scale and proportions of the shopfront using traditional materials and techniques
- new signage;
- painting and decorating;
- replacing solid roller shutters with alternative security measures;
- repair to the historic pattern and detail of distinctive architectural features, for example tiling, decorative ironwork, canopies and other historic finishes;
- Professional fees, provided the advisors belong to a recognised institution such as RIBA/RIAS, RICS etc;
- Sundry costs including planning fees, surveys, necessary prelims, and any VAT that cannot be recovered.

Grant funding will not be available for inappropriate alterations such as: fitting a standard 'off the shelf' shop front system; installing solid roller shutters; conjectural restoration; or any works using non-traditional, low quality or artificial materials like uPVC, plastic or aluminium.

A Shop Front Design Guide has been produced by Falkirk Council Development Services and is available to applicants for information.

If you have any questions or would like to apply for funding to improve your shopfront, please contact the THI Project Officer on:

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Why improving shop frontages in Falkirk Town Centre is good for business

It has long been accepted that there is a clear link between the quality of the built environment and the economic success of a place.

Shopfronts play an important role in defining the character of an area. Because they are situated at ground level, shopfronts are highly visible and the image they project has a huge impact on the quality of the built environment and the way people who live, work and visit feel about an area.

Well-designed shopfronts, constructed from high quality materials with appropriate signage, interesting window displays and an inviting entrance, fulfil their commercial purpose to display goods for sale and attract customers. They also make for more attractive streets and encourage people to visit or spend more time in an area, thus increasing business for traders.

The opposite is also true. Rundown, unattractive and out of character shopfronts can have a negative impact, detracting from the area they are situated in and discouraging shoppers.

Properly maintained traditional shopfronts add interest and variety to a street, help to foster local distinctiveness and define a unique 'sense of place'. This attractiveness is increasingly important nowadays when shoppers can choose to shop on the internet or in out of town shopping malls. In order to remain competitive, local shopping areas need to offer a different experience - such as a nice environment to spend time in and interesting places to interact with the community and meet people. So it makes sense to make the most of heritage features and foster local distinctiveness in order to attract more visitors and shoppers to Falkirk Town Centre.

Therefore, improving Falkirk's traditional shopfronts is not just about aesthetics or 'doing up' old shops - it can also have a positive impact on the economic and social success of the area and contribute to the regeneration of Falkirk town centre through:

- Improving the overall attractiveness of the street;
- Creating a high quality urban environment with a unique character - a place that people will want to visit, linger, meet friends and shops;
- Enriching the quality of life of people who live & work in Falkirk;
- Increasing footfall to the shopping area, leading to new opportunities for businesses and jobs.

Shopfront improvement schemes elsewhere in the UK have been successful in returning a sense of quality to an area, and subsequently increasing economic activity. By local shop owners working with the THI, there is no reason why the same success should not be achieved in Falkirk Town Centre.