



Decoding the High Street Debate

An Independent Qualitative Analysis of Public Discourse in Dunfermline

Following a highly active social media discussion sparked by a local business owner, this report analyses over 700 public comments regarding the management, infrastructure, and economic future of Dunfermline. This independent study translates community feedback into structured, qualitative insights for local stakeholders.

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Executive Summary

This report examines a highly active local social media discussion consisting of 772 comments, triggered by town centre business owner Craig Hutchison. The commentary provides a detailed qualitative snapshot of public sentiment, civic grievances, and aspirations regarding the management and economic adaptation of Dunfermline city centre.

Rather than presenting ready-made or definitive solutions, this analysis maps out public feelings and community-led concepts. These suggestions are treated strictly as possibilities to be explored for operational and economic feasibility, sitting alongside wider ongoing civic consultations and survey data.

High Demand for an Experience-Led High Street

The single largest area of community agreement involves transitioning the city centre away from a strictly traditional retail model into a social and cultural hub. Proposals for pop-up markets, outdoor food and drink installations, and regular seasonal events generated the highest volume and strongest public validation across the entire dataset, representing 17.2% of the total conversation with an average of 5.6 likes per comment.

Concerns Over Infrastructure Care

The physical presentation of the High Street is frequently linked to a decline in consumer footfall. The community highlighted visible symbols of neglect, including deteriorating paving, the ruined Mercat Cross, and the slow reinstatement of public benches removed for a previous royal visit. These infrastructure concerns are viewed as practical barriers that directly reduce consumer dwell time.

Perceptions of Local Administration

A distinct theme across the thread is a sense of institutional alienation among residents and business owners. Public consultation processes are widely perceived as structured compliance exercises rather than collaborative forums. This disconnect is highlighted by a cluster of comments detailing a breakdown in communication with authorities, which attracted an average of 6.9 likes per comment, indicating strong shared validation among the wider public reading the thread.

Balancing Economic Realities

The discourse reflects a clear understanding that high streets are undergoing a permanent macroeconomic shift driven by online competition and diminished bulk-buying power for independent shops. While traditional issues like rigid commercial rents and parking charges remain prominent, a substantial portion of the community argues that cost reductions alone are insufficient, advocating instead for structural adaptation toward services, hospitality, and leisure.

Next Steps for Research

To ground these community perspectives in practical strategy, the qualitative insights from this thread require formal feasibility testing. Immediate next steps should include assessing the logistical capacity of spaces like Glen Gates for seasonal events, cross-referencing public opposition to parking charges against quantitative footfall and dwell-time metrics, and integrating these social media themes with broader demographic data from wider civic polls and direct community surveys.

Introduction & Context

The Catalyst for Discussion

This report provides a structured overview of public commentary arising from a highly active social media thread within the Dunfermline community. The discussion was initiated by local business owner Craig Hutchison, who runs Vollood hairdressers in the city centre. His original post raised urgent questions regarding the local authority's approach to city centre management, economic adaptation, and civic priorities.

In his post, Craig expressed frustration with administrative processes, describing a town centre meeting regarding local development plans as an exercise in box-ticking rather than genuine consultation. He argued that while retail environments are declining everywhere due to the shift toward online shopping, Dunfermline's high street is standing still instead of adapting.

To revitalise the area, the post suggested introducing regular, vibrant installations between May and August, such as:

- Pop-up outdoor bars and street food vendors.
- Seasonal public events and live music.
- Active utilisation of underused civic spaces, specifically highlighting Glen Gates.

Additionally, the post drew attention to visible signs of decline and misplaced civic priorities, specifically pointing out that public benches removed for a royal visit had never been replaced. The core challenge put to the community was direct: "Do you think Dunfermline town centre is being let down?"

Dataset and Scope

The public response to this inquiry was substantial, generating a dataset of 779 comments. This volume of engagement highlights a deep community investment in the future of Dunfermline's historic core.

However, when reviewing this analysis, the following parameters must be kept in mind:

Untested Community Concepts

The ideas, proposals, and feedback captured within the thread represent the raw perspectives and immediate feelings of residents and business operators. They are untested concepts. This report treats these suggestions strictly as possibilities to be explored for feasibility rather than instantly deployable strategies or pre-approved solutions.

A Snapshot of Commentary

While this discussion was lively and widespread, it represents a specific snapshot of online engagement. It does not capture the full variety of frustrations, nuances, and specific issues recorded in broader ongoing analysis, such as direct responses to community polls, civic surveys, and wider social media monitoring. It should therefore be viewed as a complementary piece of qualitative evidence alongside wider public consultation data.

1. Public Sentiment

Perceptions of Civic Status

The transition of Dunfermline to official city status has highlighted a widening gap between administrative designations and the lived reality of residents and local businesses. Commentary across the discussion thread indicates that the prevailing mood is rooted in a sense of institutional alienation rather than mere dissatisfaction. There is a widespread public perception that the historic core of the city is experiencing a period of managed decline.

Public sentiment across the dataset moves through several clear, overlapping areas of concern:

1.1 Support for an Experience-Led Vision

A significant portion of the commentary strongly validates the views raised in Craig Hutchison's initial post. The vast majority of contributors express a belief that the town centre has deteriorated, using descriptions such as "drab" and "tired" to describe the current environment. The community frequently expresses a desire for meaningful reasons to visit the town centre beyond basic retail transactions, noting that standard shopping is often cheaper online or more varied in regional retail hubs.

EXPERIENCE ECONOMY

52

Comments explicitly calling for events, markets, food, and music to drive footfall.

"We need pop up bars and markets to bring the buzz back to the town centre and give people a reason to visit."

ACTIONABLE IDEAS

85

Suggestions from residents regarding infrastructure and event improvements.

"The community wants reasons to visit the town centre beyond basic shopping, which they can often do cheaper online."

1.2 Systemic Frustration with Local Administration

Much of the frustration in the thread targets a perceived lack of strategic direction from civic leadership. A core theme is that local management is standing still, prioritising high-cost capital projects over the foundational maintenance needed to sustain the value of the high street.

COUNCIL & BARRIERS

47

Independent comments citing local management, business rates, and administrative hurdles.

"Dunfermline high street is a joke, really needs a good shake up and the council people who are responsible for its decline should be removed."

NEGATIVE SENTIMENT

19%

Suggestions from residents regarding infrastructure and event improvements.

"Yes, there's a public square, but there doesn't appear to be a business case for it, nor does it seem to be part of a strategy to improve the whole pedestrianised zone."

1.3 Nostalgia and Loss of Identity

Many contributors contrast the current state of Dunfermline with a more vibrant past, expressing a sense of loss regarding the historical bustle and under-leveraged potential of the area. Multiple comments note that the unique historical and royal identity of the city feels neglected or squandered under current management practices.

SIGNS OF DECLINE

74

Mentions of the town being a "ghost town", in "decline", or a shadow of its former self.

"Well said when I'm home to visit nothing there and so go else where, I miss the way it used to be gotta say."

HISTORICAL MENTIONS

39

References to Dunfermline's unique history and royal heritage being under-leveraged.

"Other towns/cities do not have the history that Dunfermline has in abundance."

1.4 Institutional Alienation

A dominant thread running through the discourse is a collective feeling of being ignored by decision-makers. Dozens of separate comments detail a breakdown in communication with authorities. Public engagement initiatives are increasingly viewed by participants as performative exercises designed to fulfil statutory obligations rather than genuine, collaborative efforts to implement community-led improvements.

AVERAGE LIKES

6.9

Likes per comment expressing alienation, compared to the 2.9 dataset average.

"Hearing that business owners... feel completely locked out of the decision-making process by the council is incredibly disheartening."

INDEPENDENT COMMENTS

34

Comments explicitly detailing a breakdown in communication with authorities.

"totally agree, politicians never listen to what folk want and continue to waste money on stuff we dont want..."

PEAK VALIDATION

89

Likes on a single comment highlighting the performative nature of local administration.

"For that money getting wasted on the green space that no one wanted... Mr Downie isn't interested in what the general public says"

2. Competing Perspectives

Historical Preservation and Practical Modernisation

While a significant portion of the conversation focused on visible areas of decline, the discussion thread brought forward several distinct, overlapping viewpoints regarding where attention and resources should be directed. These perspectives showcase a community balancing aspirational ideas with immediate, everyday practicalities.

2.1 The Heritage and Culture Perspective

One clear viewpoint in the discussion frames Dunfermline's deep historical and cultural identity as its primary asset for long-term recovery. Rather than attempting to compete solely on traditional retail, this line of thought suggests that the town centre must lean into its unique physical and cultural heritage.

Commenters frequently point out that visitors are drawn to landmark assets like Dunfermline Abbey, Pittencrieff Park (The Glen), the Alhambra Theatre, and the Dunfermline Carnegie Library & Galleries. There is expressed frustration when the surrounding High Street environment fails to match the quality of these cultural anchors. Proponents of this view look to existing initiatives, such as the Bruce Festival and the monthly Artisan Market near St Catherine's Wynd, as evidence that culture-led events can successfully draw people into the historic core.

HERITAGE & TOURISM

89

Comments explicitly citing the town's history, the Abbey, and local heritage as key to recovery.

"Dunfermline has so much to offer historically. Small winding cobbled streets, the Abbey, the Glen... Library, Abbey, Alhambra and Carnegie museum are real gems, but we need more for the city to get visitors interested."

AVERAGE ENGAGEMENT

3.8

Likes per heritage-focused comment, sitting above the general dataset baseline of 2.9

"We have a beautiful Glen at the end of the High Street and beautiful historic landmarks, why does our High Street let it down?"

2.2 The Everyday Infrastructure Realities

Another prominent perspective focuses on the foundational mechanics of how people access and use the town centre. The core argument here is that aspirational events or cultural programming cannot achieve their full potential if the basic experience of visiting the high street remains difficult or frustrating.

This viewpoint is heavily occupied by discussions around transport, parking charges, and enforcement, which many residents view as a direct barrier to footfall when compared to free parking at out-of-town retail parks or regional shopping centres. Alongside access, this perspective emphasises the overall cleanliness and maintenance of the physical environment, highlighting issues like decaying pavements and roads as factors that directly discourage people from spending time in the area.

INFRASTRUCTURE FOCUS

141

Comments focused on the physical mechanics of the town, from road conditions to general cleanliness.

"Pavement and road in high street is a disgrace... For that money getting wasted on the green space that no one wanted."

TRANSPORT & ACCESS

113

A substantial focus area within the thread dedicated to the cost of parking, wardens, and traffic flow.

"Bring back free parking, that would be an advantage and draw people back just to spend quality time in the city... people wouldn't be in such a rush."

AVERAGE ENGAGEMENT

3.9

Likes per infrastructure-focused comment, indicating strong community agreement on these core civic elements.

"I rarely go these days as it's dirty, looks run down, no real vibe going on and the parking charges at the weekend in the multistory are horrendous."

2.3 The Experience Economy Viewpoint

A substantial part of the thread actively supports the idea of transitioning the town centre away from a traditional transactional retail hub into a social and experiential destination. This viewpoint strongly echoes the initial suggestions to better utilise spaces like the Glen Gates or Bruce Street for street food markets, pop-up installations, and live music to generate a welcoming social atmosphere.

However, this enthusiasm is met by a pragmatic counter-perspective within the thread regarding local economic conditions. Several participants raised questions about the long-term sustainability of an entirely hospitality-led and event-led model during an ongoing cost-of-living crisis, pointing out that regular attendance at pop-ups and markets requires a level of household disposable income that many residents currently have to budget tightly.

EXPERIENTIAL DEMAND

164

Comments calling for pop-ups, street food, music, and seasonal markets to create a social environment.

"Totally agree. Street food, artisan food markets, craft markets.. We need pop up bars and markets to bring the buzz back."

AVERAGE ENGAGEMENT

4.9

Likes per experience-focused comment, showing that this concept generated significant interest online.

"When I owned a street food truck I spoke to Fife council about using Dunfermline high street and was told Fife council don't allow street food vendors... what a missed opportunity."

ECONOMIC CONSIDERATIONS

17

Comments raising questions around hospitality models in relation to local disposable income and living costs.

"I work as a nurse and my partner works full time. We still don't have money to go out to restaurants. It's not a priority for the majority of people living in the area."

2.4 Alternative Local Observations

A final element of the discussion introduces balance by noting that perceptions of the town centre are not entirely uniform. A group of residents and local business owners note that the area still experiences busy, vibrant periods, particularly during established local events, weekend dining hours, or personal service appointments.

Furthermore, this perspective positions Dunfermline's retail challenges within a broader macroeconomic context. Rather than viewing local vacancy rates purely as a unique local failure, these comments point out that the shift toward online shopping and out-of-town retail developments is a structural challenge affecting high streets across the country, frequently citing nearby towns like Kirkcaldy as experiencing identical pressures.

ACKNOWLEDGING EXISTING EVENTS

70

Comments highlighting the existence and value of current programming like Gala Days or the Artisan Market.

"I operate two businesses on the High Street and it really bothers me that folk forget about ALL that we HAVE... we have the regular artisans market and Bruce Festival."

MACROECONOMIC CONTEXT

68

Comments attributing high street changes to online shopping and wider regional retail developments.

"It's a different ballgame... Same as Kirkcaldy high st once a bustling centre now all the major brands have abandoned it. We're all guilty of using online or retail parks."

OBSERVATIONS OF ACTIVITY

31

Comments from residents describing specific times when the town centre feels active and busy.

"Not sure what business you own, but the toon was bouncing yesterday. I was shopping / haircut in the day and back out in the evening for dinner and drinks."

3. Governance & Management Critique

Public Trust and Strategic Alignment

The commentary reveals a notable gap between the strategic priorities of the local authority and the daily expectations of residents and town centre businesses. The core tension within the dataset stems from a public perception that civic resources are frequently directed toward high-profile, fixed capital projects while foundational maintenance, physical upkeep, and local economic support appear under-resourced.

3.1 Perspectives on Public Engagement

A prominent theme across the discussion is public dissatisfaction with current local consultation processes. Multiple contributors who attended recent local development meetings described them as overly structured or transactional, creating an impression that decisions had already been finalised prior to public feedback. This has led to an online sentiment where formal engagement initiatives are widely perceived as compliance exercises rather than collaborative opportunities to shape local strategy.

This sense of alienation is reflected clearly in the dataset metrics:

- **Volume of Dissatisfaction:** There are 34 independent comments explicitly describing a breakdown in communication or a perceived lack of transparency from authorities.
- **Community Validation:** These specific comments generated an average baseline of 6.9 likes per comment, significantly higher than the general dataset average of 2.9 likes. This indicates a strong, shared resonance among the silent majority reading the thread.

The community consensus suggests that by omitting direct, transparent answers during public forums, the local administration inadvertently distances itself from the practical insights and local expertise held by town centre operators.

3.2 Perceived Resource Allocation and Maintenance Priorities

Beyond communication, public critique is heavily focused on the perceived mismatch between capital expenditure and the functional, everyday requirements of the High Street. The dataset contains dozens of independent comments detailing specific concerns regarding physical neglect, structural repair delays, and basic cleanliness failures.

A primary focus of this critique is the £1.65 million investment in the High Street gap site public square. This project is frequently cited by commenters as a misuse of funds, with residents arguing that a clear business case was lacking, particularly when the surrounding pedestrianised zone continues to show signs of surface deterioration and uneven paving.

This focus on visual aesthetics over daily utility is further illustrated in the thread by the ongoing absence of town centre benches. Residents noted that public seating removed to accommodate a royal visit was never reinstated. Within the comments, this is treated as a practical failure that directly reduces comfort and dwell time for older shoppers, less mobile residents, and visiting families.

CONSULTATION PERSPECTIVES

34

Independent comments detailing communication breakdowns or describing civic meetings as performative exercises.

"I operate two businesses on the High Street and it really bothers me that folk forget about ALL that we HAVE... we have the regular artisans market and Bruce Festival."

ENGAGEMENT ON ALIENATION

6.9

Average likes on comments expressing a disconnect from civic decision-making, demonstrating wide community validation.

"It's a different ballgame... Same as Kirkcaldy high st once a bustling centre now all the major brands have abandoned it. We're all guilty of using online or retail parks."

ENVIRONMENTAL MAINTENANCE

59

Comments highlighting physical disrepair, missing civic assets, and upkeep shortcomings.

"Not sure what business you own, but the toon was bouncing yesterday. I was shopping / haircut in the day and back out in the evening for dinner and drinks."

4. Infrastructure & Aesthetic Concerns

The Physical Environment and Footfall

A major theme throughout the commentary is the direct relationship between the physical state of the High Street and a person's willingness to spend time in the city centre. When public spaces feel neglected, it creates a visual barrier that discourages casual visits and reduces overall dwell time. The community conversation highlights several recurring physical issues that residents interpret as evidence of a decline in civic upkeep.

4.1 Community Observations

Based on an analysis, many of the comments explicitly detail physical neglect, disrepair, or a lack of cleanliness in the town centre. The community's grievances are concentrated in the following primary areas:

4.1.1 Pavements & Street Surfaces

Pedestrian Infrastructure Failures and Roadwork Planning

Commenters highlight specific complaints regarding the physical walking surfaces and traffic management within the town centre. Commenters frequently cite uneven pavement slabs, potholes, and poorly managed road systems as direct deterrents to visiting. Although this sub-issue has a lower volume relative to others, it commands the highest average engagement, proving it represents a severe, deeply felt daily hazard for the community.

VOLUME

25

Independent comments explicitly raised issues regarding pavement quality, road surfaces, or street layout hazards.

AVERAGE ENGAGEMENT

5.88

Likes per comment, indicating that this specific operational grievance receives the highest consensus from the silent majority.

PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION

3.24%

This issue represents 3.24% of the total community dialogue.

4.1.2 Historical Landmarks & Public Assets

Heritage Assets and Public Space Preservation

This sub-issue covers discussions surrounding Dunfermline's primary historical identity and public spaces, focusing heavily on Pittencrieff Park (The Glen), the Abbey, and the Glen Gates. Residents stress that these unique assets are either being neglected or under-utilised, arguing that the town's rich historical character should be the foundational centerpiece for attracting tourists and supporting local businesses.

VOLUME

119

Independent comments focused on the condition, use, or potential of the town's historical landmarks and public parks.

AVERAGE ENGAGEMENT

4.67

Likes per comment, demonstrating stable and widespread community alignment.

PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION

15.41%

Heritage and asset utilisation is a major pillar of public interest, capturing 15.41% of the entire conversation.

4.1.3 General Cleanliness & Aesthetic Upkeep

Town Centre Presentation and Hygiene

This theme focuses on the overall visual deterioration of the streetscape, capturing complaints about chewing gum, mouldy tourist signage, unwashed streets, and the removal of public amenities like benches. Commenters argue that this lack of fundamental upkeep sends an immediate signal of neglect to visitors, severely damaging civic pride and creating an uninviting retail environment.

VOLUME

69

Independent comments raised concerns regarding litter, cleanliness, and the aesthetic decay of the town centre.

AVERAGE ENGAGEMENT

4.68

Likes per comment, indicating strong collective validation for better environmental standards.

PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION

8.94%

Cleanliness and presentation accounts for 8.94% of the total volume of comments.

4.1.4 Logistics & Accessibility Barriers

Parking Charges and Travel Friction Points

Here we highlight the practical and perceptual barriers preventing residents from visiting the town centre. The community discussion focuses heavily on parking fees, with multiple commenters labelling weekend multistory parking charges as horrendous. There is a strong consensus that implementing free or discounted parking schemes is necessary to compete with regional shopping alternatives.

VOLUME

204

Independent comments discussed parking, commercial rates, rents, and accessibility.

AVERAGE ENGAGEMENT

4.20

Likes per comment, demonstrating widespread community agreement on logistical frustrations.

PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION

26.4%

Logistical barriers represent a substantial portion of the community's concerns, making up 26.42% of the total conversation.

4.1.5 Retail & Commercial Mix

Saturation of Low-Value Outlets and Vacant Units

This example focuses on the changing commercial mix of the town centre. Residents express immense frustration over the perceived over-concentration of barbers, vape shops, and charity shops, alongside the lack of high-quality clothes shops or independent retailers. The loss of flagship department stores has left large vacant gaps, forcing residents to commute to other towns or turn to online platforms.

VOLUME

173

Independent comments specifically critiqued the retail mix and shopping experience.

AVERAGE ENGAGEMENT

4.28

Likes per comment, indicating a highly resonant viewpoint across the community.

PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION

22.4%

Retail mix issues comprise 22.41% of the overall conversation.

5. Economic Challenges & Retail Decline

The Realities of High Street Trading

The conversation within the thread highlights the complex economic pressures facing independent businesses and retail units in Dunfermline city centre. Rather than pointing to a single point of failure, the commentary presents a multi-layered debate regarding overhead costs, shifting consumer habits, and the difficulty of maintaining a physical shopfront in a digital marketplace.

5.1 The Impact of Online Competition and Pricing

A significant portion of the discussion addresses how digital retail has altered local shopping habits. In his opening post, Craig Hutchison noted that independent retailers face a severe structural disadvantage because smaller, local businesses simply do not possess the bulk-buying power required to compete with online prices.

Commenters widely validated this observation, sharing that while they prefer to support local businesses in principle, household budgets frequently dictate that they purchase items online where prices are lower. The conversation frames this shift not as a lack of community loyalty, but as a practical economic choice during a prolonged cost-of-living squeeze.

5.2 Overhead Costs and Property Dynamics

While the primary post urged the community to look beyond traditional grievances like rent and business rates, these overheads remained a major point of discussion among participants. Local business owners and residents argue that fixed costs create an exceptionally high barrier to entry for new independent shops and make survival precarious for existing traders.

The discussion thread reflects a tension between the perceived cost of occupying a shop on the High Street and the footfall that location actually generates. Many contributors express frustration with property owners and the local authority, arguing that costs have remained high or rigid even as the visual appeal and visitor numbers of the town centre have changed.

5.3 Restructuring the Retail Health Debate

The broader debate on retail health within the dataset reveals two distinct viewpoints on how Dunfermline should navigate these economic challenges:

The Cost-Reduction Perspective

This viewpoint argues that the immediate priority must be reducing the financial friction of visiting or operating a business in the town centre. Proponents focus heavily on reducing parking fees, relaxing parking enforcement, and adjusting commercial property costs. The core argument is that lowering these operational and visitor costs is a necessary first step to stabilise the high street before any long-term recovery can take place.

The Structural Adaptation Perspective

Echoing the catalyst post, this viewpoint suggests that traditional retail is undergoing a permanent, nationwide contraction that local interventions cannot reverse. Proponents argue that focusing solely on rent and rates is an insufficient response to a changing market. Instead, they suggest exploring how the high street can adapt by shrinking its reliance on traditional retail and expanding its role as a hub for services, food, entertainment, and social experiences.

6. Strategic Interventions for Revitalisation

Exploring Community Concepts

The high volume of engagement within the discussion thread generated a variety of suggestions from residents and local traders regarding how to stimulate footfall and improve the town centre experience. Rather than representing formal, fully costed strategies, these ideas serve as a map of public interest, highlighting specific possibilities that the community believes are worth exploring.

6.1 The Experience Economy as an Area for Exploration

The most prominent theme emerging from the suggestions is the desire to transition the high street into an experience-led destination. This concept, heavily championed in the initial post by Craig Hutchison, generated the largest volume of commentary across the entire dataset.

Participants frequently highlighted underutilised areas, such as the Glen Gates, as ideal settings for seasonal interventions. The suggestions focus on introducing regular food, drink, and cultural events to create an attractive social atmosphere.

The quantitative data shows that this theme holds the highest level of collective interest in the discussion:

- **Volume and Representation:** With 133 independent comments, this topic accounts for 17.2% of the entire recorded conversation.
- **Public Agreement:** This category achieved an average engagement score of 5.6 likes per comment, indicating that the wider public reading the thread heavily endorsed these experiential concepts.

From a research perspective, these figures demonstrate a strong public appetite for civic management to investigate the logistical and commercial feasibility of hosting regular, outdoor seasonal events.

6.2 Access and Environmental Incentives

Alongside entertainment and social spaces, a secondary cluster of community suggestions focused on reducing the friction of visiting the city centre. These ideas address the immediate physical and financial considerations of consumers.

Reviewing Parking and Enforcement

A recurring suggestion throughout the thread is the exploration of temporary or targeted free parking schemes, such as free parking on weekends or specific afternoons. Commenters frequently suggest that a more flexible approach to parking charges could help level the playing field with out-of-town retail parks, though the wider economic impact on council revenues and traffic management would require careful evaluation.

Reinstating Comfort Infrastructure

The community repeatedly raised the simple necessity of reinstating public benches and basic street furniture. This is highlighted as a low-cost area for immediate exploration that could improve comfort and increase dwell time for specific demographics, particularly elderly residents and young families.

Supporting Independent Business Influx

A final area of discussion involved exploring creative incentives to fill empty retail units. While some suggestions, such as profit-share rent structures, present significant practical and legal hurdles for property owners, they reflect a broader community desire for a more flexible, accessible leasing environment that supports independent, local start-ups.

7. Next Steps for Research

Grounding Public Feedback in Strategic Exploration

The public commentary generated by this discussion thread provides a clear map of public feeling, but the ideas raised remain untested concepts. To translate these insights into safe, viable, and effective initiatives, the themes must be cross-referenced with wider datasets and subjected to formal evaluation. The following areas represent the immediate next steps for civic research and feasibility mapping.

7.1 Feasibility Testing for the Experience Economy

The overwhelming community demand for pop-up markets, street food installations, and seasonal events indicates a strong public appetite for an experience-led high street. However, implementing these concepts requires a robust understanding of operational impacts.

Further research should focus on:

Infrastructure Capacity

Assessing the physical suitability of spaces like the Glen Gates for regular installations, including access to power, water, and waste management services.

Economic Impact on Existing Traders

Conducting targeted surveys with permanent brick-and-mortar hospitality businesses to ensure that seasonal pop-ups complement, rather than undermine, established local traders.

Regulatory and Licensing Barriers

Reviewing local authority street-trading policies and licensing frameworks to identify any administrative friction that currently discourages community-led event proposals.

7.2 Cross-Referencing Transport and Access Data

While the thread contains strong qualitative opposition to parking charges and enforcement, changing transport policy requires comprehensive data alignment. The community's perception that parking costs directly drive people to regional retail parks should be tested against quantitative metrics.

Future analysis should examine:

Footfall and Dwell-Time Correlations

Comparing local authority footfall data against parking ticket sales to determine whether free parking initiatives or altered enforcement windows genuinely influence how long visitors remain in the city centre.

Comparative Regional Mapping

Studying nearby town centres that have altered their parking structures to evaluate the actual long-term impact on vacancy rates and consumer habits.

7.3 Integrating Wider Community Consultations

To prevent policy decisions from being skewed by a single snapshot of online commentary, the insights from this thread must be integrated into Dunfermline's broader public consultation framework.

Next steps include:

Validating Themes Across Demographics

Comparing the findings of this social media analysis against the direct responses from recent civic surveys, polling data, and structured community focus groups. This will determine whether the frustrations raised in this thread are shared uniformly across all age groups and demographics within the wider Dunfermline population.

Establishing Formal Communication Channels

Investigating new, transparent frameworks for public forums to address the sense of institutional alienation recorded in the dataset, ensuring future local authority engagement exercises feel collaborative rather than performative.