

To: Leadership Board

On: 20 April 2022

Report by: Head of Economy and Development

Heading: Spotlight Report on the Retail Improvement Scheme – 2016 to 2022

1. Summary

- 1.1 Since 2016, the Retail Improvement Scheme has helped 58 Renfrewshire businesses and owners improve their commercial shop frontages. This has included both enhancements to existing commercial properties and support to return some 16 vacant units to beneficial use.
 - 1.2 Outcomes of the scheme have supported the economic viability of our town, local and village centres and in doing so have supported them as centres for their communities, the '20-minute neighbourhood' principle of our place making objectives. The scheme has also supported a range of local businesses and contractors, generating wider economic benefits across Renfrewshire.
 - 1.3 This report provides a summary of the scheme from 2016/17 – 2021/22. Updates on future rounds of the scheme will be reported to the Board as appropriate.
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2. Recommendations

- i. The Board is asked to note the content of the Retail Improvement Scheme Report contained in Appendix 1.
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3. Spotlight on the Retail Improvement Scheme 2016 – 2022

3.1 The spotlight report attached as Appendix 1 sets out the key highlights of the Retail Improvement Scheme between 2016 and 2022. These include: -

- Enhancements to 58 commercial properties have been funded since 2016/17, representing an investment of £475k.
- Applications have varied in both type and scale, from full ‘conservation’ style shop fronts to simple gable repairs or replacement of solid roller shutters.
- 16 vacant units have been brought back into use as a direct result of RIS assistance since 2016-17. The 2021/22 round will contribute to a further 4 units being brought into use.
- In 2020/21 funding for the scheme from Invest in Renfrewshire was redirected into local business support measures to help the local economy through the restrictions of the Covid-19 pandemic.
- The scheme’s relaunch for 2021/22 utilised funds from the Place Based Investment Programme and 14 applications will be funded in this round with a predicted spend of £92k.

3.2 Officers continue to consider how the RIS could be developed further to support opportunities for economic growth, town, and village centres and 20-minute neighbourhoods across Renfrewshire. Updates on future rounds of the Retail Improvement Scheme will be reported to the Board.

Implications of the Report

1. **Financial** – None.

2. **HR & Organisational Development** – None.

3. **Community/Council Planning**

- Our Renfrewshire is thriving – regeneration projects result in a stimulus to the local economy via contracts won and visitors and user numbers. The RIS supports the objectives to develop Renfrewshire’s economy, including its Town Centres as thriving places, supporting local places, businesses, and communities.
- Our Renfrewshire is well - The delivery of actions through RIS projects have the potential to positively impact on physical, emotional, and mental health and wellbeing.

- Our Renfrewshire is safe - Working in partnership with community, public and private sector stakeholders, and organisations to achieve positive outcomes.
- Reshaping our place, our economy, and our future - The projects secure the productive re-use of a buildings and provide new facilities and services which will contribute to supporting growth. Increased footfall offers potential benefits to traders, assisting the economy of our town centres.
- Working together to improve outcomes - Renfrewshire Council is working with businesses and owners and providing support to maximise the opportunities for regeneration in Renfrewshire's settlements.

4. **Legal** – None.

5. **Property/Assets** – None.

6. **Information Technology** – None.

7. **Equality & Human Rights**

- (a) The recommendations contained within this report have been assessed in relation to their impact on equalities and human rights. No negative impacts on equality groups or potential for infringement of individuals' human rights have been identified arising from the recommendations contained in the report.

8. **Health & Safety** – None.

9. **Procurement** – None.

10. **Risk** – None.

11. **Privacy Impact** - None.

12. **COSLA Policy Position** – Not Applicable.

13. **Climate Risk** – Not Applicable.

List of Background Papers

- a) Report to Leadership Board, 15th September 2021 - Place Based Investment Fund 2021/22.
 - b) Report to Leadership Board, 20 June 2018 – Invest in Renfrewshire Future Funding and Services.
 - c) Report to Economy and Jobs Policy Board, 25th May 2016 – Invest in Renfrewshire: Retail Improvement Scheme Update.
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Spotlight on...

Retail Improvement Scheme 2016 - 2022



Renfrewshire
Council

Overview

The Retail Improvement Scheme (RIS) supports owners and occupiers of small business properties in retail areas throughout Renfrewshire with grant assistance towards the cost of shopfront/front elevation improvements.

Since its launch (circa 2012), the RIS has helped over 175 businesses improve their commercial shop frontages and has contributed to a number of vacant units being returned to beneficial use.

Outcomes of the scheme have supported the economic viability of our town, local and village centres, supporting their role at the heart of communities and the principle of the '20 minute neighbourhood'. The scheme has also supported a range of local businesses and contractors, generating wider economic benefits across Renfrewshire.

Applications have achieved a wide geographical coverage and vary in both type size and scale, from 'conservation standard' shop front enhancements to simple gable repairs and replacement of solid roller shutters.

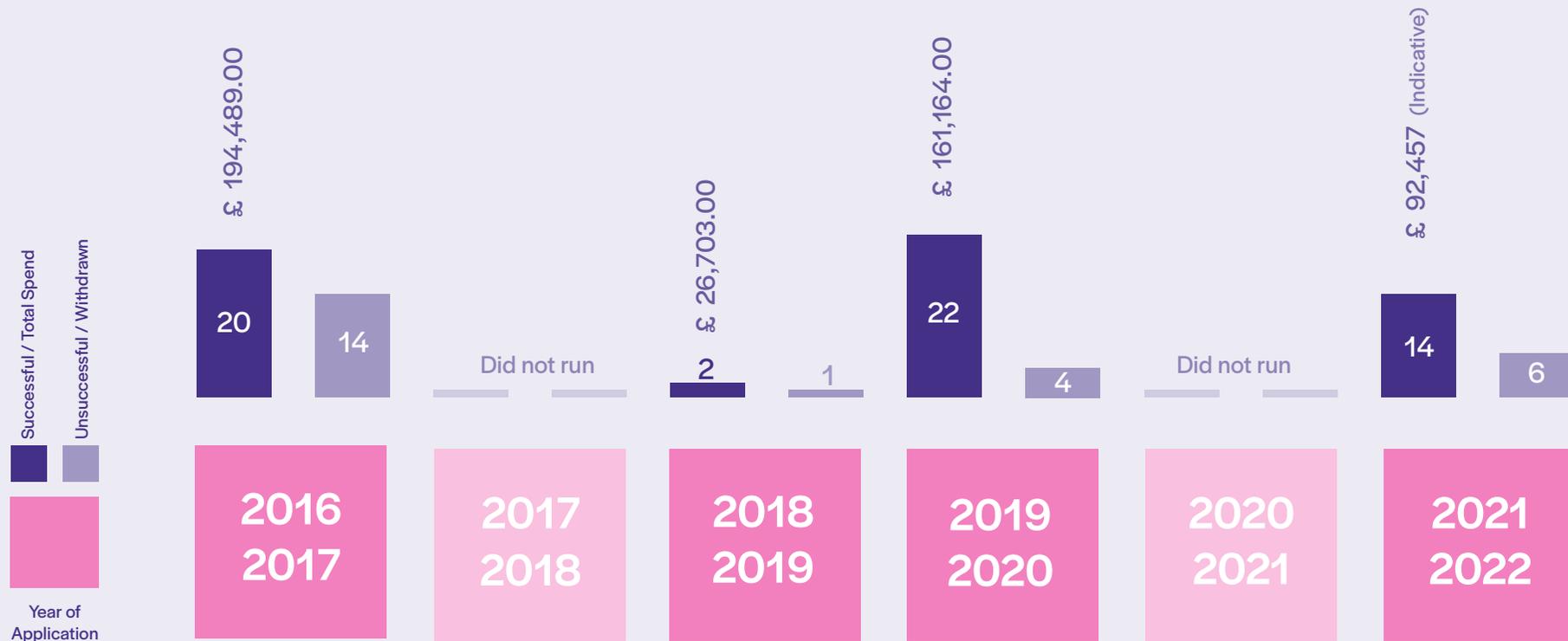
This report sets out the key highlights of the RIS over the last 5 years and includes the current 2021/22 round. It should be noted that the scheme did not operate in 2017/18 or 2020/21.



Key Statistics 2016 - 2022

Number and spend

A total of 58 awards applications were made between the 2016/17 – 2021/22 period, including 14 in the current round. This represents some £461,000 of grant funding supporting local businesses across Renfrewshire.



Applications by area

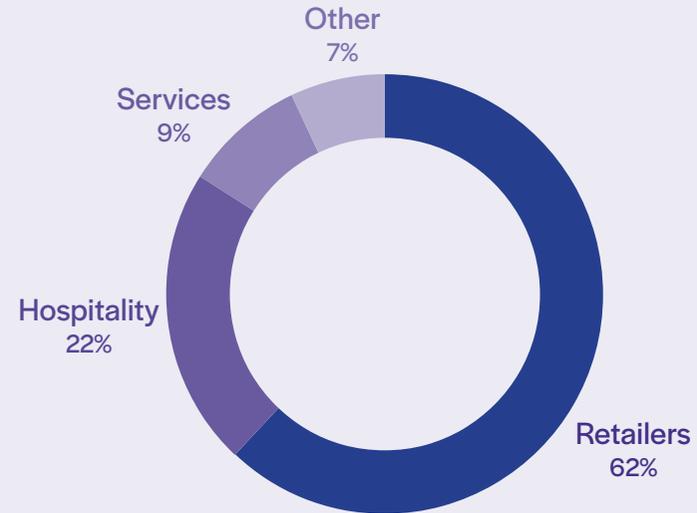
The majority of applications received were from businesses based in Paisley, reflecting the role of the town as the strategic centre for Renfrewshire.

A range of applications were received from larger centres such as Johnstone and Renfrew, as well as with from towns and villages across Renfrewshire.



Applications by use

The vast majority of applicants were retailers followed by cafes, restaurants and drinking establishments, professional services and finally sui-generis businesses such as hot food takeaways.



Number of vacant premises brought into use

In the five-year period, 20 businesses were vacant at the time of their RIS application. Following approval and subsequent work undertaken on frontages, 16 premises have been returned to beneficial use and are presently trading.

The remaining 4 vacant businesses are included in the current 2021/22 round. These businesses have received grant awards but are yet to undertake works. It is anticipated that following completion, these premises will become occupied.



Current RIS round (2021/22)

RIS 2021/22 was launched in October 2021 operating with a total budget of £100k allocated via the Place Based Investment Fund (PBIF). Following the close of the grant deadline on 31 January 2022, a total of 20 applications were received with 14 receiving grant awards.

Final consents, checks and paperwork are currently in process, with projects anticipated to be complete in autumn/winter 2022.



2016
2017

Bridge of Weir

Support for enhancement of salon within the village centre of Bridge of Weir.

Works included repair of stall risers, new paintwork and signage.



Before



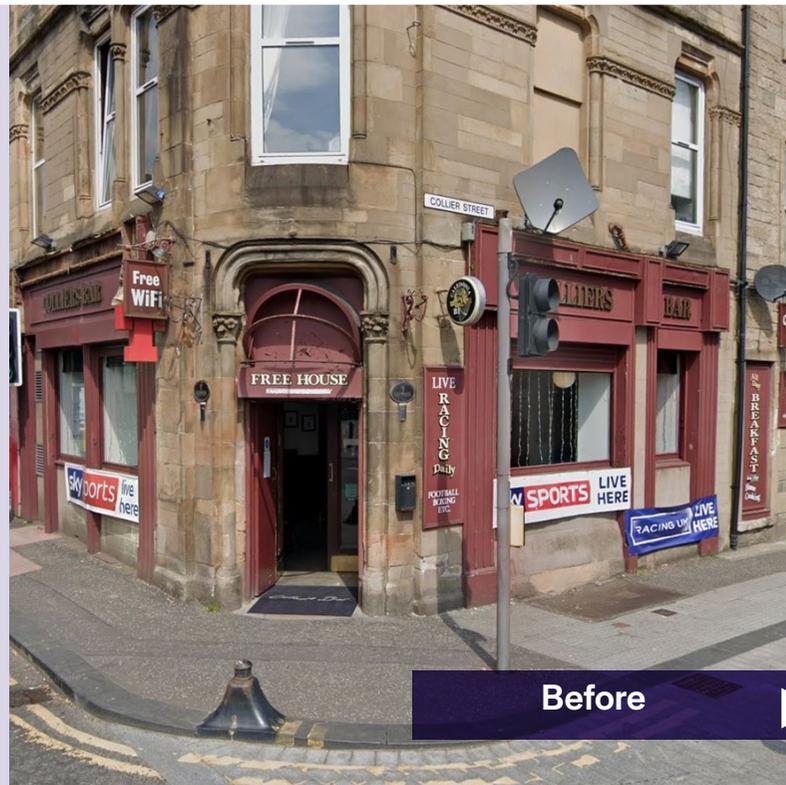
After

2018
2019

Johnstone

Uplifted grant provided due to quality of proposal and prominence of unit.

Works included new fascia, repairs to stonework, improved entrance and windows and brick bond roller shutters.



Before



After

2019
2020

Renfrew

Grant support provided to assist in the modernisation of a longstanding commercial unit in Renfrew High Street.

Works included new brick bond roller shutters, new fascia, frontage painting and stall riser repair.

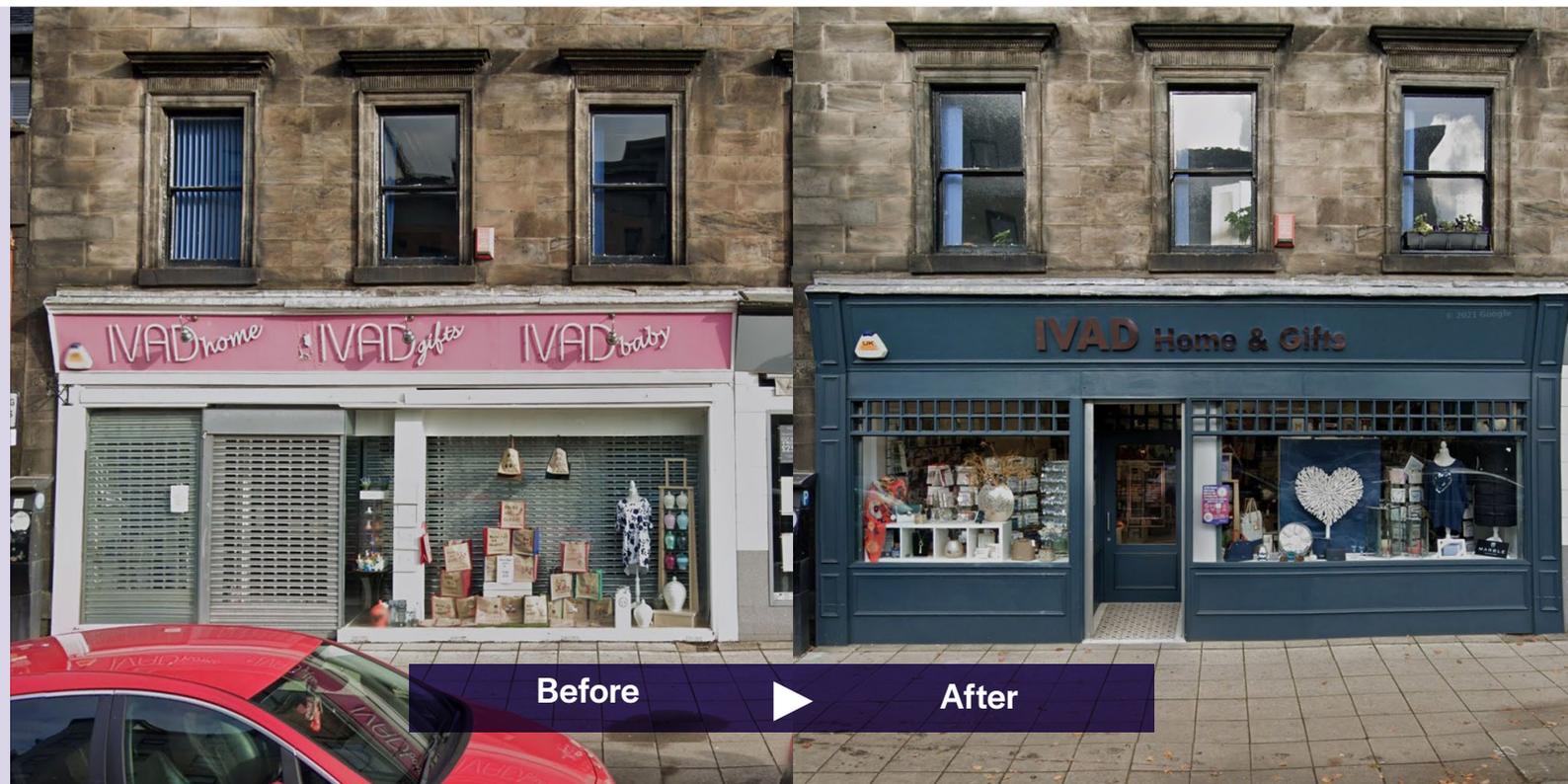


2019
2020

Paisley

Support provided to enhance commercial unit within Paisley.

Works included new frontage, fascia and paintwork.



Impacts of the Pandemic

As with all parts of Renfrewshire, the pandemic significantly impacted the RIS. In March 2020, businesses across the UK went into formal lockdown and 'non-essential' premises in Renfrewshire were required to close for long periods.

As the RIS relaunched for the 2021/22 round, interest in the scheme was limited as businesses began to re-establish and recover from the pandemic restrictions. In addition many businesses reported difficulty in obtaining quotes for works as a result of the high demand on contractors.

In this context several mitigation measures were introduced in the 2021/22 round, including:

- More substantive marketing promoting the RIS, including a targeted social media campaign.
- Extension of the deadline for submission of applications.
- The level of maximum grant uplifted to £12,000 to reflect rising material costs seen across the construction market.
- A more 'hands on' approach in pre-application guidance.

Future of RIS

The Council meeting of 3 March 2022 allocated a further £150k for the RIS which will be utilised in 2022/23.

A review of the RIS format, guideline and criteria is being undertaken to support the successful scheme in future years. This will be informed by key lessons from previous rounds and will seek to ensure that the regeneration and economic benefits of the scheme continue to be realised across Renfrewshire.

In this context options are being considered to support more flexible timeframes, supporting increased opportunities to apply for funding, as well as the development of an online 'portal' approach to simplify the procedure for applications.