

EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCILCABINET5 October 2023Report by Director of EnvironmentCLARKSTON PARKLETS – COMMUNITY REVIEW RESULTS**PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1. The purpose of this report is to inform Cabinet of the results of a public consultation regarding the future of the Clarkston Parklets and to seek approval to progress with the recommended option as detailed in the report.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

2. The Cabinet is asked to:
- a) Note the background of the Clarkston Parklets; and
  - b) Approve the retention and refurbishment of the Clarkston Parklets until 2026.

**BACKGROUND**

3. In July 2016, East Renfrewshire Council commissioned consultants to work alongside the Council, the local community and stakeholders to develop a vision and strategy for Clarkston Town Centre through a Town Centre Charrette. The Council is committed to developing a long-term vision and strategy for Clarkston Town Centre that was informed by and developed in consultation with the local community and other stakeholders.

4. A number of key issues emerged during the Town Centre Charrette engagement process including the lack of a community hub, heavy traffic flows through the town centre making it difficult for pedestrians to cross Busby Road and for cyclists to get around, poor and uninviting linkages to the Library, Clarkston Hall and adjacent car park, issues with parking, a lack of sense of arrival and a feeling that the main street is cluttered and run down, a lack of variety of shops, not enough for young people to do, and no public meeting space.

5. The vision for the town centre developed during the workshops was summarised as:
- a more pedestrian and cycle friendly town centre, less dominated by traffic – particularly the section of Busby Road from Clarkston Toll roundabout to the railway station entrance
  - a more attractive, distinctive and bustling town centre with more cafe culture, public space, activity, colour and greenery.
  - more business and community activity in the town centre, before and after dark
  - a hub for the local community with more places to meet and spend time.

6. In 2019, a temporary widening of the pavement and provision of benches & planters known as Parklets were installed by East Renfrewshire Council (ERC) on Busby Road, Clarkston. This provided people with places to congregate, rest, eat and places to secure their cycles within the town centre and aimed to help generate economic activity, social value and community benefits. The total costs of the Parklets were £172,546.

7. The Parklets were introduced as a temporary measure for a trial period and as such, were installed using materials suited to the temporary nature of the project lifespan which is approximately 5-10 years. The Council committed to a review of the Parklets after a period of 18 months with a decision on their future to be made at Cabinet. This review was delayed due to the Covid 19 Pandemic.

8. In March 2021, East Renfrewshire Council commissioned Stantec to undertake a public consultation of the Parklets in Clarkston to gauge attitudes across the wider community in respect of their introduction and future. The final report was published in June 2022.

## REPORT

9. The consultation process involved the following: a leaflet drop targeting all houses and businesses within 10 minute walking radius (3,500+ properties) directed them to the online survey; face-to-face public life surveys; link to Survey Monkey for views via the Council's online consultation hub and via existing social media pages.

10. A total of 927 responses were received following the leaflet drop, face to face interviews and online survey process. The respondent groups are shown in Table 1 below:

**Table 1 – Public Consultation – Survey Analysis**

Answer Choices	Responses	
Local resident	83.82%	777
Representing a business (please specify in Other)	0.86%	8
Visitor to shops/ amenities in the area (including the train station)	11.76%	109
Travel through the area	2.91%	27
Organisation (please specify in Other)	0.65%	6
	<b>Total</b>	<b>927</b>

\*Please note that not all respondents answered every question in the survey

11. The online survey asked whether respondents would like the Parklets to be made permanent and to select an answer from 1 of 4 options detailed in Table 2. Table 2 below shows the summary of responses, which includes the option to modify the design or incorporate changes.

**Table 2 – On line Survey**

Respondent/Group	Yes	Yes, but with some changes to design/location	Total Yes + Yes with changes to design/location	No
Local resident	174	144	318	376
Visitor to shops / amenities in the area	23	17	40	51

(including the train station)				
Travel through the area	1	3	4	17
Representing a business (please specify in other)	1	0	1	5
Organisation (please specify in Other)	1	3	4	1
Sub-total	200	167	367	450
<b>Total</b>			<b>367</b>	<b>450</b>

\*Please note that not all respondents answered every question in the survey

12. During face to face interviews people were asked whether they would like the parklets to be made permanent. Table 3 below shows the summary of responses, which includes the option to modify the design or incorporate changes.

**Table 3 – Face to Face Street Interviews**

Respondent/Group	Yes	Yes, but with some changes to design/location	No
Local resident	44	5	9
Representing a business	0	0	0
Visitor to shops/amenities in the area	6	2	0
Travel through the area	4	0	2
Organisation	0	0	0
Other	2	0	0
Sub-total	<b>56</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Total</b>		<b>63</b>	<b>11</b>

13. In summary, the conclusions from the survey are as follows:

- 927 responses were received from local residents, businesses, visitors and those travelling through the area for online and face to face surveys
- 461 people responded that they were not in favour of the parklets being made permanent
- 430 responded that they would like to keep the parklets + yes with some changes to design/location
- A small majority of the responses (52%) were in favour of not making the parklets a permanent feature. 48% indicated there support for the retention of the current structures.
- Despite there being no responses from local businesses via face to face survey, Clarkston Business Improvement District (BID) Manager has confirmed that they are generally supportive of the parklets but there should be tables, bins and an ongoing maintenance regime

14. A meeting with Ward Elected Members was held on 14 August 2023 to update on the research findings and discuss options with Officers from the Environment Department. There was support by Ward Elected Members to retaining and refurbishing the existing parklets and planters at the existing site with an established maintenance regime being put in place.

#### Clarkston Active Travel Proposals

15. The Council have secured funds from Sustrans to design active travel routes between Clarkston Toll to Muirend and Williamwood High School and Spiersbridge roundabout, with this project going via the current parklets location. This design work will be progressed over the next 12 to 24 months.

16. These plans will consider road space reallocation to improve access and safety for those walking, wheeling and cycling, improved bus stops, railway station accesses, and improved short stay parking, with a view to improving the public realm to be a more inviting space for everyone. The parklets as they currently stand are likely to be impacted to accommodate changes.

17. Based on the public consultation responses, an assessment of value for money, alignment with local and national government policy and plans, 3 options were considered by officers.

- Option 1 - Remove parklets structure and return to previous standard layout;
- Option 2 - Retain and refurbish the existing parklets and planters at the existing site with an established maintenance regime put in place until 2026; and
- Option 3 – Retain the parklets in the same location but with more durable permanent materials.

18. In considering all of the information available, Option 2 is considered the preferred option recommended for approval for the following reasons:

- It is the most cost effective option being the least expensive of the 3 options considered and maximises the value of the existing Council investment by extending the life of the parklets to 2026.
- It reflects the feedback from the Clarkston Business Improvement District (BID) with support from local businesses to retain but make improvements to maintenance regime and some refurbishment.
- 48% of the public consultation is supportive of retention with some improvements made and 52% did not want the structures made permanent. This option delivers on both these options by extending the parklets until 2026. Future permanent use of the space will be considered once Active Travel proposals are finalised.
- Strategically retaining the parklets aligns with local, regional and national policies that support Active Travel, Wellbeing and Get to Zero.

#### **FINANCE AND EFFICIENCY**

19. The total costs of the Parklets were £172,546, which was paid from the Council's General Fund Capital Programme.

20. An additional budget required of £30,000 would be used from the Council's General Fund Capital Programme in 2023/24 to deliver on Option 2. This is available from existing budgets. It should be noted that retention of the Parklets in any form would result in ongoing maintenance costs for the Environment Department. Arrangements will be made to provide a maintenance budget up to 2026.

## **CONSULTATION AND PARTNERSHIP WORKING**

21. In the development of this project, East Renfrewshire Council have involved local residents, businesses and community groups as part of the Charrette process and through a public consultation review of the Parklets.

## **IMPLICATIONS OF THE PROPOSALS**

22. There are no staffing, property, legal, IT, Subsidy Control, equalities, sustainability or climate change implications associated with this report.

23. A Climate Change Impact Assessment was completed in August 2023 for the preferred Option 2 approach of retaining the existing parklets until the delivery of a council Active Travel Plan in 2026. On this basis no significant detrimental impacts were identified. The existence of Parklets may encourage more people to walk (because they are able to rest) and/or to cycle (because they are able to secure bikes) and this would in turn reduce emissions. This approach also supports the Scottish Government target to reduce car kilometers travelled in Scotland by 20% by 2030.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

24. The Clarkston Parklets were installed as a measure to promote a better sense of place and to improve the local amenity of Clarkston as a local retail centre. The extension to 2026 with improvements made to the parklets provides an extended period to provide these outdoor spaces and seating areas. It will further provide support for walking and cycling in the areas and some greenery. Any permanent changes will follow on from the outcome of the Active Travel Routes design and feasibility work after 2026 and be the subject of future reports to Cabinet.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

25. The Cabinet is asked to:

- a) Note the background of the Clarkston Parklets; and
- b) Approve the retention and refurbishment of the Clarkston Parklets until 2026.

Director of Environment

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