



Experience Lab
Digital Streets

Project Report →

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DIGITAL STREETS

Exploring the potential of a community tool to improve the street accessibility of Elgin High Street area with the aim to support collaboration between Moray council and various community groups, particularly those with disabilities.

Methods:

Community Street audit
Experience mapping
Imagining Preferable Futures
Backcasting
Innovation generator

9

Participants



TWO Labs
+ One pre-lab

(Community street audit)

Lab Team:



»»» Jeroen Blom

»»» Angela Tulloch

»»» Leigh-Anne Hepburn

Lab Locations:

Elgin High Street area
Elgin Town Hall

2016



x1



x1

Accessibility

Technology

Collaboration



8

Lab hours
+ 5 hours for
street audit

Tools:

- Wooden props
- Icon tiles
- Pins and flags
- Little bits electronic kit
- Future News template
- Hexagon building shapes
- Innovation generator map

“You want it (digital tool) to be interactive to ping up and link in the transport connections and the routes and things. So it’s got to be more than just a standalone bit, it’s got to be proactive.”



Executive Summary

The Digital Streets project explored the potential of a community tool to improve the street accessibility of Elgin. The tool aims to support collaboration between Moray Council and various community groups, particularly those with disabilities. The initial focus area was around Elgin High Street, with the potential to extend the tool to cover other areas. This concept was jointly proposed by the University of the Highlands and Islands and Moray Council. It was accepted by the Digital Health & Care Institute as Experience Laboratories, which took place between January and April 2016.

The design-led approach taken

in pre-Lab activities and within two Experience Labs provided the opportunity to explore the potential of a digital or physical community tool and aimed to deliver a set of requirements that were firmly user driven. This report presents the findings from Lab activities.

An initial pre-Lab Community Street Audit was led by Living Streets, a UK charity that aims to ‘create a walking nation, free from congested roads and pollution, reducing the risk of preventable illness and social isolation and making walking the natural choice’. Engaging a group of mixed participants comprising of people with disabilities, Experience Lab team members, representatives of community groups and partners from NHS Grampian



and Moray Council, the aim of the Street Audit was to identify issues that encourage or discourage everyday accessibility of Elgin High Street area for members of our communities.

In Experience Lab 1, experience maps were produced to capture both the specific positive and negative experiences of the group, including their general perception of the High Street area. The group also considered what Elgin might look like in 50 years time, and the steps required to reach that vision.

The second and final Experience Lab aimed to consider and articulate the requirements for a community tool, based on the insights gathered in previous labs etc. An innovation generator technique was used to encourage creative thinking and brainstorming to create new or repurpose existing inventions, from which user driven requirements were distilled. The outputs from the Labs, audio, photos, videos and field notes, were analysed for emerging themes and the findings provided valuable insights on user experiences

of the street accessibility, aspirations for the future of Elgin and knowledge of current technology. The resulting requirements highlight the importance of personalisation, opportunities for working with community groups, businesses, transport and public, increasing general awareness of accessibility challenges and easy to use application.

The Digital Health & Care Institute

Experience Labs were developed by The Glasgow School of Art's Institute of Design Innovation. They offer a safe and creative environment where researchers, businesses, civic partners and service users can collaborate to find innovative solutions to the health and care challenges facing our society. They are the core element in the Digital Health & Care Institute (DHI), a Scottish Innovation Centre funded by the Scottish Funding Council, in partnership with Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise.

In the Experience Labs, researchers use current and emerging design research methods to engage with partners and participants, who are encouraged to share their own experiences. Real-life practice is often replicated to allow new technology, services, processes and behaviour to be trialled rapidly. The resulting ideas become candidates for further research and development, allowing them to achieve their full potential.



Experience Lab Project Team

Jeroen Blom	Research Fellow
Angela Tulloch	Research Associate
Leigh-Anne Hepburn	Research Fellow

Academic Partner

Prof. Grant Cumming	University of the Highlands and Islands
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Civic Partner

Don Toonen	Equal Opportunities Officer, Moray Council
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Project background

Digital Streets was originally proposed in response to a number of societal challenges experienced by citizens today. In the UK, at least 1,782 toilet facilities have closed in the last decade and it is possible that more closures will follow. An unfortunate consequence of this is that some people with bladder/bowel conditions as well as women and young families may experience shrinking social involvement and increased isolation with negative consequences for wellness, self-care and quality of life. Digital technology has been used to begin to address these issues, for example ToiletFinder.

Additionally, the Moray Council receives regular complaints from people who, for various reasons have difficulties in accessing streets in Moray. Feedback from and discussions with disabled people in Moray has highlighted that people with disabilities face many obstacles that prevent them from making full use of Elgin's streets, resulting in increased social isolation. While many of these obstacles are a result of the historic development of the

streets and may prove to be permanent, others could be removed relatively easily, opening up substantial routes for people with disabilities. Other, temporary, obstacles are the result from a lack of understanding or consideration of the needs of other user groups, for example the elderly, people with a disability or families with pushchairs. Examples of these are inappropriate parking (vehicles covering the pavement), wheelie bins or A-frames blocking passages.

In response to these challenges, there was a recognised opportunity to address accessibility and improve public awareness. The proposed project involved developing a series of Experience Labs to explore the potential of a digital or physical community tool developed with users which could interface with council websites.



Project aims

The aim of the research project was to employ a designed approach to identify the challenges and opportunities to accessibility within the context of Elgin High Street and surrounding area towards the goal of delivering a set of requirements that were firmly user driven. The Labs provided a safe and realistic environment through which the Lab Team supported participants to explore the concept and share their feedback and ideas for improvement.

The project was structured as a pre-Lab, followed by two Experience Labs conducted over a four-month period.

Pre-Lab: Community Street Audit

Living Streets Scotland is part of the national charity Living Streets, which has been campaigning to create better streets and public spaces for people on foot since 1929. It has produced a toolkit for carrying out street audits and delivers training to community groups to enable them to undertake audits of their own local areas.

As a pre-Lab activity, participants were asked to undertake a Community Street Audit led by Living Streets Scotland. The aim of the Community Street Audit (CSA) was to identify issues that encourage or discourage

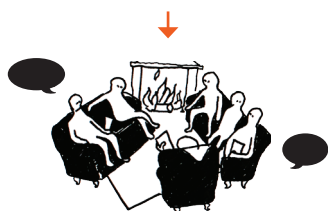
everyday accessibility of Elgin High Street for members of our communities with disabilities.

The Street Audit was conducted over a full day where participants experienced and recorded the positive and negative aspects of accessibility. The audit also provided an opportunity for researchers and project partners to explore these experiences first hand.

Pre Lab Outcomes

The data captured during the audit was presented in a report by Living Streets Scotland and was used to inform the preparation of the first Experience Lab. The full report can be seen in appendix A.

EXP LAB 1



What we did

The aim of the first Experience Lab was to understand the participants' perception of Elgin High Street area and everyday routes taken. The Lab enabled exploration of two main themes:

- Experienced positive and negative aspects of Elgin High Street area
- Future aspirations for Elgin High Street area

In this Lab, the focus was on the experience of using streets, in particular Elgin High Street, considering accessibility and barriers in that area. Using topics and examples from the Community Street Audit, participants were asked to work in two groups to create a map of their experience (Appendix B). Each group populated the map with imagery and objects to represent routes, barriers and positive aspects, as well as practicalities such as people, places, events and activities. Everyone then came together to share their maps, discussing commonalities and highlighting perceptual variations.



In the second part of the Lab participants considered what they would like Elgin to look like in 50 years time (Appendix C), and the proposed steps required to realise that vision. These experiences were then captured in a collective reflection on key themes using a progress map.



What we found

The visual maps and audio recordings from Lab 1 were initially analysed using 'analysis on the wall' in order to quickly translate the key insights thematically. The emerging themes were:

Support conversations between local businesses and community groups to raise awareness of accessibility issues:

- Create conversations with local businesses
- Create an environment people want to be in
- Cultural events for engagement

There was a strong emphasis around creating conversations with local businesses in order to raise awareness of challenges and highlight the potential advantages of an accessible street area; for example increased local footfall. Potential businesses for inclusion included The Drouthy Cobbler, Costa, Shopmobility and TSI Moray.

Many participants highlighted a need for creating an environment that people want to spend time in rather than just pass through. Organising or participating in cultural events was seen as a way to raise awareness among local businesses.

Experiences of street accessibility and routes, for example, issues with drop kerbs, tactile paving and disabled parking bays.

- Consideration of access points into the centre: bus station, disabled parking bays
- Experience of how close things are based on how accessible the route is
- Consideration of how different modes of transport interlink

Practicalities of routes and transport links were a recurring discussion point when considering access to the High Street area. Challenges of accessibility were experienced primarily on how routes connect geographically as well as the connection of different modes of transport.

The main access points to the High Street are the bus station and the designated disabled parking nearby. The parking was seen by some participants to be limited or inappropriate; for example for rear access vehicles parking on a slope. However it was pointed out that there are a number of car parks nearby. By improving how these routes connect to the High Street, it may lead

to reconsideration of what is defined as nearby and accessible.

Participants noted a lack of public awareness of accessibility concerns, highlighting the negative atmosphere and appearance of the bus station and the misuse of disabled parking. This included the blocking of parking bays with commercial bins. The accessibility of routes was further influenced by misaligned drop kerbs and A-frames or bins blocking narrow paths.

Support a feedback loop to the community where the council can briefly explain decisions relating to street accessibility, and gather feedback from the community on what works well or not.

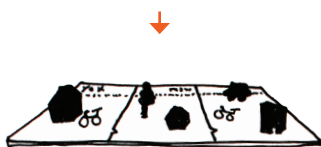
- Highlight what works well (no way to do this currently)
- Change the perception of the space rather than the rules
- Want to hear about what's wrong in order to make a case to improve it

There was a strong emphasis on perception of the High Street area, relating to people's mindset and how they interact with the area. Successful



examples were mentioned; for example the recently improved paving surface and layout of Batchen Street, which has given a more pedestrian-friendly feel and a decrease in unauthorised parking. Participants noted that it is important to gather feedback on these positive experiences to highlight the interventions that worked well and make a case for more similar improvements.

In contrast, the council also requires negative feedback in order to take action on some issues.



After the initial analysis of Lab 1, an update was created and distributed to participants. This enabled the sharing of Lab 1 findings, ensuring that contributions were recognised and valued. This also helped to keep people engaged within the project ahead of Lab 2 and included an invitation to attend the second session.

Full size page can be seen in Appendix D.

Est. 2016
UPDATE: 30th March 2016
FREE

Map of Elgin High Street from Lab 1 showing barriers, positive aspects and opportunities for improvement.

The story so far...

The purpose of Digital Streets is to explore ideas for a tool that supports residents and the council to collaboratively improve the accessibility of Elgin High Street area.

In the Street audit we gathered experience and examples of environments to use in preparation of the first Experience Lab.

In the first Lab, we made two maps to show people's experiences of the High Street area. These maps represent both the barriers and positive aspects. We also considered what we would like Elgin to look like in 50 years time, and the steps we can take to reach that vision.

Our goal...

In Lab 2 we will design the requirements for a digital community tool through looking at existing examples and how they can be improved to support collaboration in Elgin.

The aim of the tool is to enable people to share their experiences in an easy and accessible way, but to go beyond creating a list of barriers. The tool should support conversation between community and council.

Therefore it will be valuable to have you involved in the session and ensure all voices are heard.

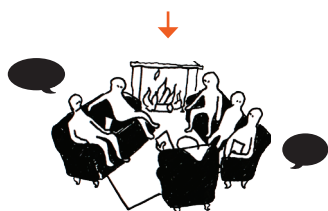
What has been important so far?

The activities have shown a number of key themes relating to street accessibility. These themes are:

1. Support conversations between local businesses and community groups to raise awareness of accessibility issues.
2. Provide support to capture and share real-life experiences of street accessibility. For example, issues with drop kerbs, tactile paving and disabled parking bays.
3. Support a feedback loop to the community where the council can briefly explain decisions relating to street accessibility, and gather feedback from the community on what works well or not.

We are looking forward to the second Experience Lab for Digital Streets and will be in touch with you again soon. We hope you can join us on **April 13th in Elgin Town Hall**. Best wishes from the Experience Lab Team.

EXP LAB 2



What we did

The aim in the second Lab was to collaboratively design requirements for a digital/physical community tool based on insights from the Community Street Audit and Lab 1. The proposed tool should:

- Support conversations between local businesses and community groups to raise awareness of accessibility issues
- Capture and share real-life experiences of street accessibility
- Support a feedback loop where council can explain decisions related to street accessibility and gather feedback from the community on what works well or not.

Experience Lab 2 was attended by all project partners, as well as participants representing Moray Council Sustainable Travel, disability and dementia community groups.

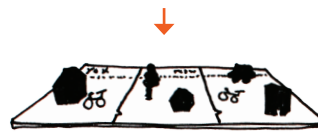
The Lab activities were based around creating constructive conversations, and were structured in three sessions using the innovation generator technique. Creative thinking and brainstorming led to the creation of new ideas and



the repurposing of existing programmes, from which user driven requirements were distilled.

The innovation generator map (Appendix E) was prepared by the design team to support participants through three key steps:

- Firstly, defining the problem and verifying the outcomes of the street audit and Experience Lab.
- Secondly, identifying existing case study examples (Appendix F) and prioritising the functions and values of these examples.
- Thirdly, generating ideas which address notes and insights from Experience Labs 1 and 2 to produce ideas for the community tool requirements.



What we found

The visual map, audio and transcripts were initially analysed using 'analysis on the wall' in order to quickly translate the key insights thematically. The transcripts were then subjected to a second analysis, to validate and refine the themes. A number of findings emerged from the data:

Show route options and information on obstructions (for example, local bin collection days) which may impact a journey.

In discussion about Euan's Guide, a website written by a wheelchair user in which venues are rated in terms of their accessibility, participants identified the need to be able to receive information on specific routes. This would go beyond the existing function of rating venues to include how best to navigate between destinations. This was further supported when discussing a scenario based on new visitors arriving in Elgin and their need for clear navigation information.



Provide a transparent function to allow the user to give feedback on the routes provided, including positive ratings and fault reporting.

The current reporting system on the Moray Council's website does not allow people to see what has already been reported or whether reports are being acknowledged. Based on the online platform Fix-My-Street, it was suggested that more transparent communication may create an environment where issues become more visible and can be responded to, with an indicated timeline from first report to solution.

Similarly, participants acknowledged that not all issues would be the responsibility of the local authority. It was suggested that it would be valuable to identify the correct contact to approach, e.g. the council, local shop or alternative service provider.

Being able to rate and give feedback on venues and routes was a strong theme throughout; this was seen as something that could create increased public awareness with the additional potential for venues to increase their customer numbers based on their rating.

"So what you need is all the people with disabilities having their coffee in the shop that doesn't put up their board. It's purchase power."

Awareness of transport services, specific provisions and who to contact

→ Provide Information on Transport Accessibility

Participants identified a need for clearer information about the accessibility of available transport options as well as easier connectivity between modes of transport. Specifically, participants talked about experiences related to the local bus provision offered to disabled users. One example was when a local bus could not accept a particular type of wheelchair, leaving the person without a travel option.

However, by contacting the bus service and bringing it to the attention of the person responsible they were able to address the issue for future use.

"That transport mannie, what's his name?"

*"I said, 'get in touch with him, tell him that you want on that bus service from Dufftown on a Friday to Elgin, you want a wheelchair accessible bus', and they did it!
"And she can now come into Elgin on a Friday."*

"But again, it's that knowing what the problem is and getting the individual..."

Participants also referred to the current public bus service, provided by Stagecoach, and mentioned access issues experienced when more than one wheelchair user wished to travel on the same journey.

"Say if you use Stagecoach there's only room for one wheelchair, if there are two people in a wheelchair wanting to go out together they can't use that."

Despite the identified issues with local bus services, participants identified examples of good practice within the rail service and discussed the value of the service provided.

Participants noted that they are likely to have done research prior to a visit to assess how accessible an area is.

Additionally, participants also expressed confusion and ambiguity around points of contact for help and how this might be addressed using a digital tool as well as the potential for dedicated information tailored to meet the needs of groups, for example wheelchair users. This information would work to inform people of specific consideration and link to the related support available.

→ Create a Training Opportunity for transport services, businesses and public places

In response to the identified issues, participants introduced the idea of training, or re-training as a way of up-skilling existing transport providers in order to provide a consistent and accessible service. Additionally, it was discussed that this could also make the public more explicitly aware of the transport options, including access and availability.

One participant shared an experience where a bus driver was unsure about whether they could board the bus with their wheelchair;

"If the driver is really awkward and won't let you go on forwards, get him to ring the manager at the bus depot, if he says, 'okay, go ahead on forward' you can do it. It's just getting them to say 'yes, okay.'"

Another participant responded with;

"Yes, it's all about training. We know how to use the wheelchairs, we're really qualified in what to do with them, they can turn on a sixpence, these big ones, but there's not a lot of space on the bus".

In addition to transport service information, participants

discussed the potential for offering information and training on accessibility to High Street businesses and public places. This has the potential of being combined with Urban Freedom platform, thereby not only providing support in moving between destinations, but also highlighting the accessibility of the destination.

→ Influencing policy

Participants discussed the potential of a digital tool going beyond community engagement to influence local or government policy:

"Does the bottom-up approach influence policy?"

However there was a general feeling among participants that while there was potential for this, it was outwith the remit of the project and the tool should remain local in the first instance.

Not just disability but mobility for everyone

This relates to a desire to raise awareness of accessible routes and places not just for wheelchair users but inclusive to all people:

- Wheelchair users
 - visual impairments
 - dementia
 - Alzheimer's
 - feeding mums
 - parents with young children
 - bladder/bowel conditions
- When discussing the Urban

Freedom Elgin Travel Guide map, a wheelchair user highlighted an issue with signage on cycle routes. Although the routes were built as "shared-use routes", there was a disparity between public communication and understanding.

"All the cycle routes are built to a standard that makes them wheelchair users routes as well so by signing for cycle routes we're kind of saying to people this is a route that anybody can use, your pushchairs, your wheelchairs, everything will go down it too... (we advertised it as) shared-use routes, rather than cycle routes."

Participants noted a need for creating increased awareness of Urban Freedom and street accessibility issues for those with restricted mobility. One participant shared how she receives a link to Euan's Guide in emails when being invited to events, suggesting that awareness does not need to be aimed at everyone but targeted to build momentum for the brand.

"I heard about it about three year ago in relation to going out and about and wanting to know where is accessible for wheelchair users."

The use of Radar keys for disabled toilets was discussed as an example for creating awareness of Urban Freedom routes. These keys are available to people with disability, parents with young children and can also be bought online and from shops such as Shopmobility.

"...anything that people would find useful to put on here that fulfils that brief of making life easier for people to get out and about, I'm happy to include it."

Common ground - Crossovers with other groups

Participants identified synergies with other groups and projects that Digital Streets could learn from and that may have potential for collaboration. Examples provided included Moray Council Sustainable Travel, a group that is looking at walking routes along River Lossie; the Dementia Friendly Community Project, a group that is currently developing walks that are dementia friendly and also provide environmental training for shops to support them to be more dementia aware; eleven health walking groups including buggy walks across Forres and North East Sensory Service who have an appointed technology officer who could explore the use of technology such as proximity aware beacons. There are also groups campaigning on other accessibility issues such as a feeding mums Facebook group, which aims to normalise breastfeeding.

Proactive digital platform using existing Urban Freedom Map

A need was expressed for a digital platform or application that incorporates more functionality geared towards people with various mobility challenges. The group identified that Urban Freedom, a local Moray brand, has the potential to be developed further.

"Ultimately I would like to an Urban Freedom app, without any doubt, but it may be that we shape it a bit differently on the back of what's going on here."

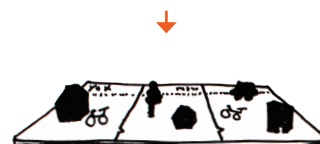
Participants discussed the importance of this being tailored to meet the needs of groups; for example wheelchair users or feeding mums, as this will impact the optimum information required by the user.

"I'm hearing 'disability' but are we getting pregnant mums with their pushchairs, people with dementia – is that all coming in a drop-down box so you go in 'my particular interest is...' wheelchair or buggy or breastfeeding."

A filter function was suggested as a way to allow the user to tailor the map to their specific needs. Examples included functions for people with visual impairments who require different colour schemes to the current map or an option for voice activation rather than having to read or touch, which

would require an assessment of compatibility with assistive technology.

"You want it (digital tool) to be interactive to ping up and link in the transport connections and the routes and things. So it's got to be more than just a standalone bit, it's got to be proactive."



Post Lab Update

After the initial analysis of Experience Lab 2, an update was created and distributed to project partners and participants. This enabled the sharing of Lab 2 findings, ensuring that participant contributions were recognised and valued. This also worked as a way to inform project partners of initial insights whilst a full report was being generated. The full-page update can be found in Appendix G.

DIGITAL STREETS

EST. 2016

UPDATE: 16 June 2016

FREE

Not just disability but mobility for all

The Digital Streets Experience Labs saw representatives from our disabled community, Moray Council and NHS Grampian work collaboratively through a series of activities to design the requirements for a community tool to improve street accessibility in Elgin.

Experience Lab 2

The second Experience Lab began by defining the problem – and verifying topics from the previous sessions which included a Community Street Audit, mapping experiences and imagining the future of Elgin High Street in 50 years.

Existing examples of both digital and physical tools such as Fix my Street, Neatebox, Living Streets and Euan's Guide were presented by the design team as a way to prompt discussion and tease out key functions and values.

The group collaboratively generated ideas for the community tool requirements, and prioritised these with consideration of different needs, such as wheelchair use, dementia or visual impairment. A visual generator map was used to help capture and guide the discussion through this process.

What has been most important so far?

Digital Streets Experience Labs has attempted to gain an understanding of experience of street access, hopes for the future of Elgin and what is most important when getting out and about. Some of the things we found were:

1. Proactive digital platform using existing Urban Freedom map

A need was expressed for a digital platform or application to incorporate more functionality geared towards people with various mobility challenges. The group identified that Urban Freedom, as a local Moray brand has the potential to be developed further.



"Simplicity is what we're looking for here, not adding more, so that people can look at it and say 'that's what (Urban Freedom) means'."

Participant, Lab 2



"It's important for you to know who to speak to and to know that something gets done."

Participant, Lab 2



Participants discussed the importance of this being tailored to meet the needs of groups, for example wheelchair users, as this will impact the optimum information required by the user. A filter function was suggested as a way to allow the user to tailor the map to their specific needs, for example, visual impairments which require different colour schemes to the current map or an option for voice activation rather than having to read or touch, which would require an assessment of compatible assisted technology.

2. Not just disability but mobility for everyone

Raising awareness of accessible routes and places not just for wheelchair users but inclusive of all people was of high importance to participants.

One participant highlighted an issue with signage on cycle routes, noting that although the routes had been built as "shared-use routes" there was a gap in communication and public knowledge.

A wheelchair user shared how they received a link to Euan's Guide in emails when being invited to events, suggesting that awareness does not need to be aimed at everyone but targeted to build momentum for the Urban Freedom brand as inclusive.



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3. Training opportunity for transport services, businesses and public places

Participants identified a need for detailed information on transport options and connectivity between modes of transport. For example the capabilities of specific bus services to take different types of wheelchair.

In addition to transport service information, the group discussed the potential for offering information and training on accessibility to High Street businesses and public places. The information on accessibility within places could become part of the Urban Freedom platform, thereby not only providing support in moving from A to B, but also highlighting accessibility of the destination.

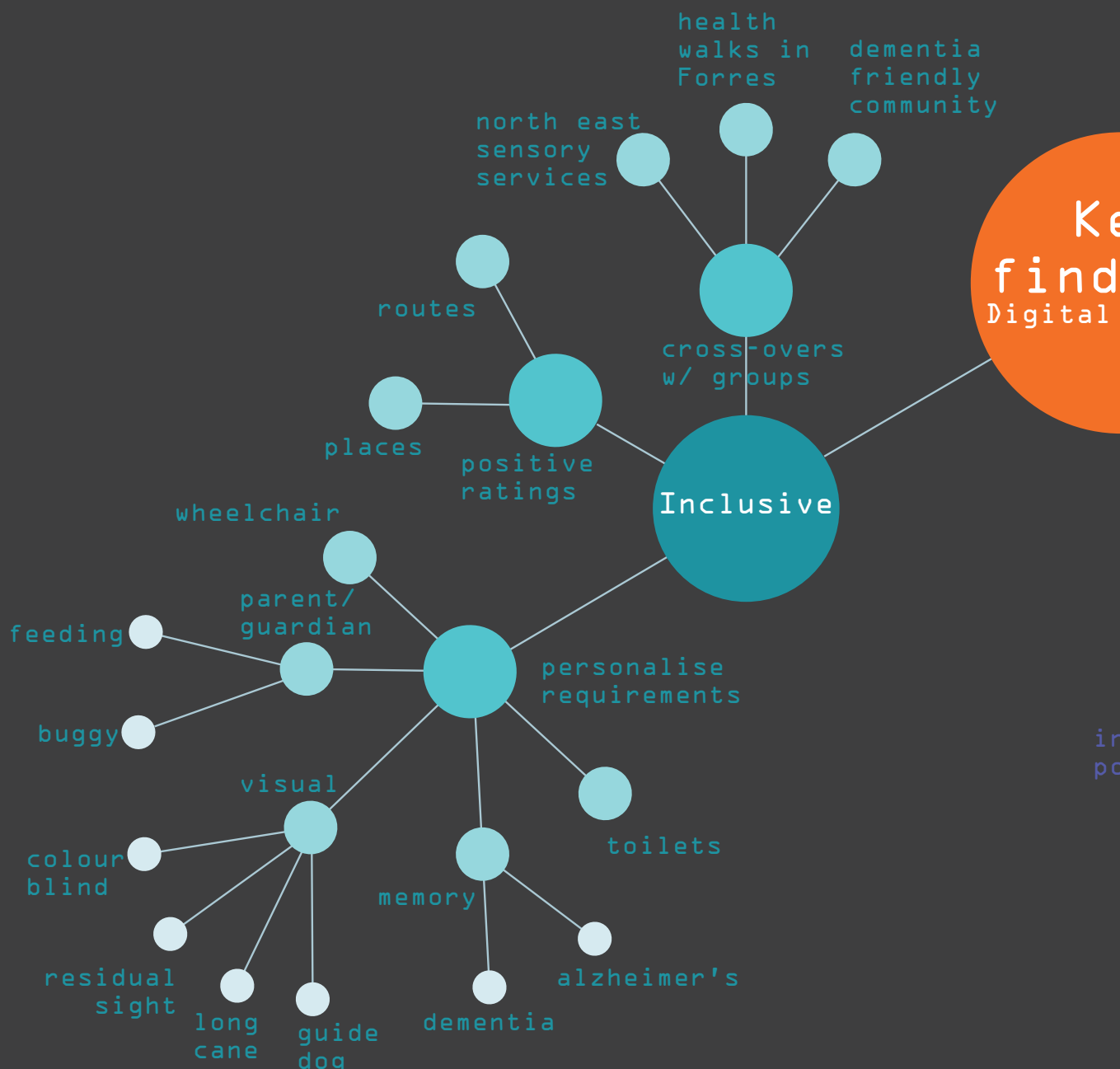
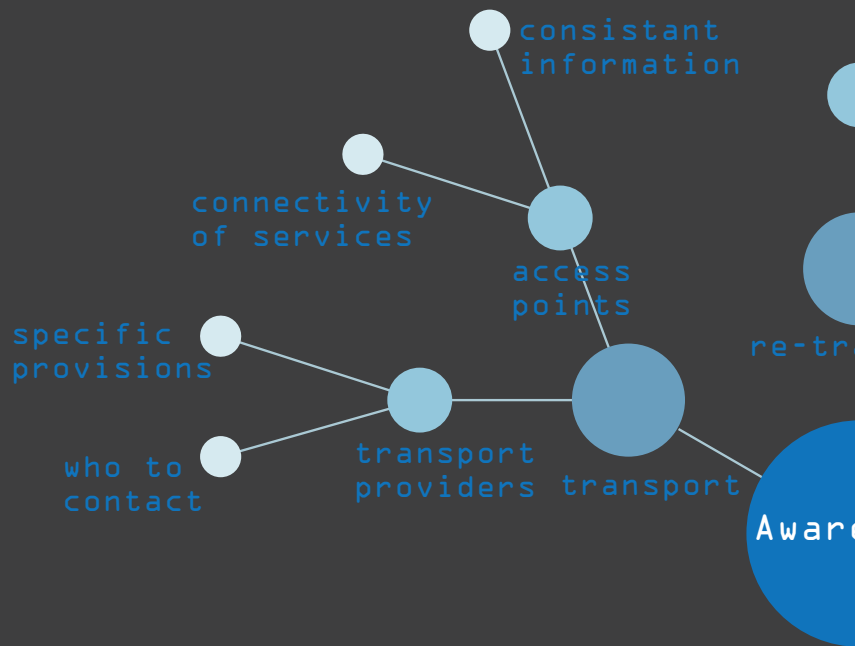
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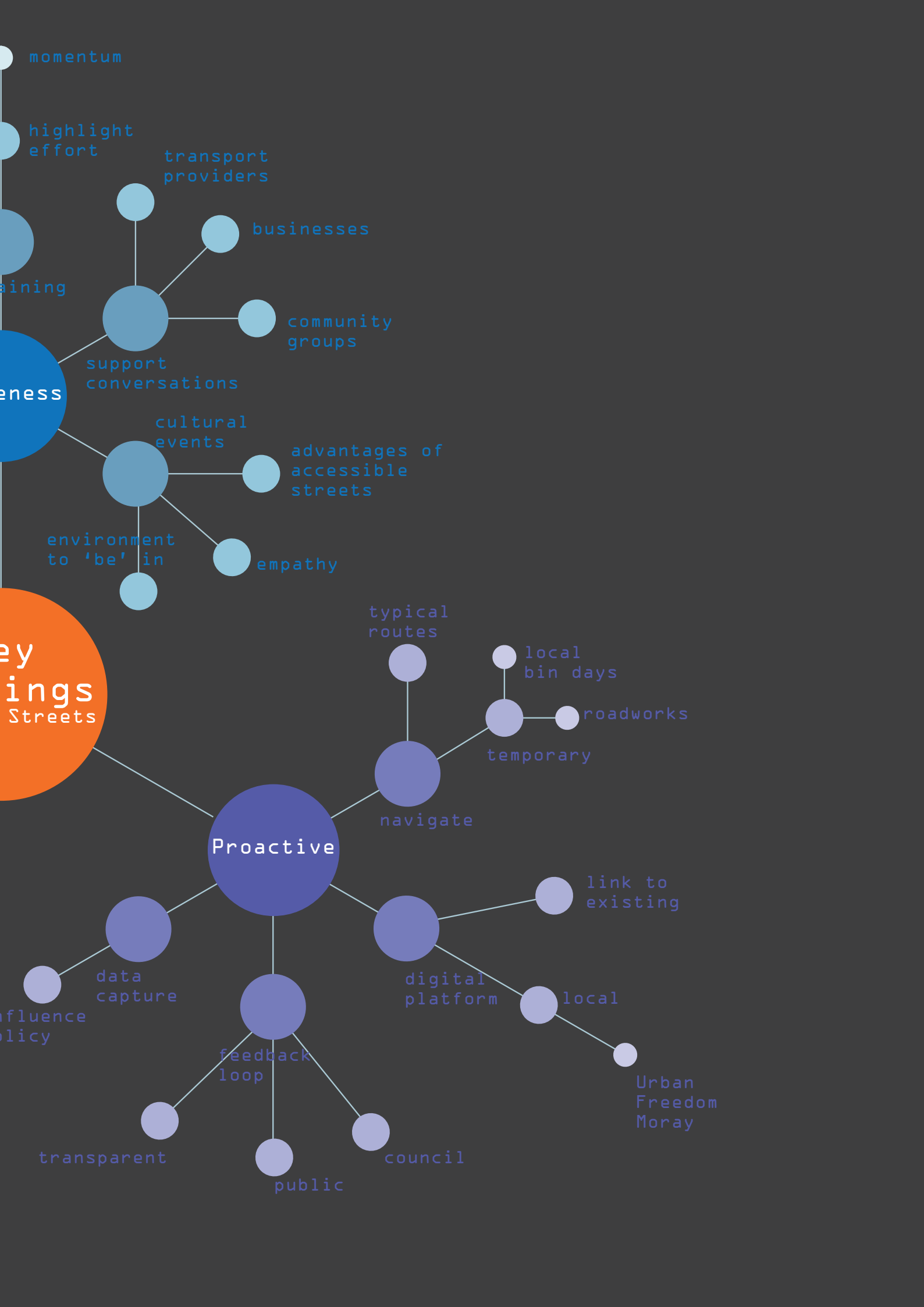
Participant, Lab 2

What's next for Digital Streets?

We wanted to share with you some of our findings so far as we discuss next steps with project partners. We would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone for being involved, your input has been invaluable to the development of the project.

Thank you for being part of Digital Streets Experience Labs.





RECOMMEN- DATIONS



Following the Experience Labs and the findings presented, a number of recommendations are given. These consider how the findings can be realised in a platform, and how that platform can reach and involve other stakeholders such as community groups, businesses and public resources.

Developing the platform

The Urban Freedom platform was considered to be a successful start to address shared-access routes. A key development of the platform would be to create a digital and interactive version to provide support to residents and visitors with the following elements.

→ Selecting profile

Street accessibility of routes considers a variety of users, including wheelchair users, the visually impaired and parents with strollers. But accessibility is also affected by less visible conditions such as living with dementia or requiring toilet access. Different people have different needs and certain places or routes may be more or less accessible to some than to others. Enabling people to select or create a specified profile will help ensuring the accessibility reflects their needs.



→ Finding routes

The platform can enable people to find a route leading from A to B with a preference for shared-access routes. When areas are known for limited access (e.g. narrow alleyways, or no disabled parking bays) these can be avoided.

→ Highlight temporary events

Temporary events such as bin days, road works or cultural events can affect the accessibility of routes. These events can be integrated in the platform to consider potential barriers. Additionally, this will then prove a useful resource for residents to check their journey for potential barriers even when they are familiar with Elgin already.



→ Providing feedback

When the accessibility of routes can be improved or specific barriers are experienced there should be the option for users to provide feedback. Visibility of feedback can help other users choose their route, and it can provide the council with an overview on where attention is needed to improve access.

→ Accessibility of places

In addition to accessibility of routes, the places that are being visited could be integrated in the platform as well. Euan's Guide is an established platform for this and can potentially be linked to the Urban Freedom platform.

→ Explore data-enabled accessibility

Data owned by the council on legislation, regulations, traffic, etc. could all potentially support street accessibility. It is key to understand what data is available and what the potential value could be. This is an explorative exercise that would benefit from community engagement and is enabled by the council sharing information that is publicly available.

Sharing the platform

To gain momentum for the Urban Freedom platform and share its existence it needs to be spread actively.

→ Email attachment

This can be initiated by the council to attach the platform to emails on events or activities. The attachment can invite to people to find an accessible route for their needs and express the intention of Moray Council to support and improve accessibility.

→ Champions within community groups

In addition to the council spreading the platform, the community groups involved in the development as well as potentially the organisations involved in the training can share the existence and use of the platform. It will benefit their members and allow for continuous involvement between council and the community groups.

“

Simplicity is what we're looking for here, not adding more, so that people can look at it and say 'that's what (Urban Freedom) means'.





Engagement

A key element in the project was the engagement between council and residents in addressing accessibility.

→ Provide training for local resources and businesses

Based on the diverse needs people might have, there is an opportunity to provide training on what affects accessibility, e.g. having a public toilet available, a ramp instead of a step to enter the store and becoming dementia friendly.

Different organisations can contribute to the training to ensure the diverse accessibility needs are covered.

Upon completion of training the businesses, organisations and public resources can be recognised for their effort with a simple public expression such as a sign. In addition, these places can be recognised on the Urban Freedom platform to highlight the effort made and the specific accessibility needs they support.

→ Community event to promote awareness

Organising or participating in cultural events was seen as a way to raise awareness and empathy at a local level. A need was highlighted for creating an environment that people want to spend time in rather than just pass through. These events could prototype the use of proximity aware technology, weighted suites and other empathy tools to urge people to think about accessibility and engage with Urban Freedom.

Conclusions

The Experience Labs provided a unique opportunity to explore and capture the lived experiences of people who access Elgin High Street. The community street audit provided an opportunity for real-time capture of actual experiences and highlighted the positive and negative impact on accessibility. Experience Lab 1 considered the wider perception of the street as an accessible environment while creating the opportunity for participants to consider what an accessible street might look like in the future. Experience Lab 2 built upon these findings, working to determine a set of potential requirements for a digital and/or physical tool for improved street accessibility.

Inclusivity was a key theme across both Labs, in relation to variety of needs expressed, sharing opinions and feedback of locations as well as routes, and consideration of crossovers of interest with other groups or businesses. Personalisation was of particular importance and will have implications for the usability of the proposed platform. The concept of 'not just disability but mobility for everyone' relates to raising awareness of accessible routes and places not just for wheelchair users but inclusive to all people.

The findings of the Labs revealed that an increased awareness of challenges to street accessibility was key to building momentum of the platform. Participants noted the importance of engagement with transport providers, businesses and public places to promote this awareness both through training and acknowledging effort as well as through events which promote empathy towards accessibility. Within this theme, communication of consistent information of transport options; connectivity of services; specific provisions and identification of points of contact were clear needs.

A proactive approach was seen to be crucial in the development of digital platform which is local and resourceful by linking to existing technology, going beyond other mapping technology to be more responsive to user circumstances and location. Two-way communication was also important, allowing increased transparency between stakeholders. The data collected could also be used to influence policy at a council level.

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