

## UK's first data service for towns and cities launches in Scotland

A consortium, made up of the Carnegie UK Trust, Scotland's Towns Partnership, the Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLES), and the University of Stirling, has unveiled the UK's first online tool to help understand the facts, figures and interrelationships that underpin all of Scotland's towns and cities.

The launch took place today (29 April) in Musselburgh which saw Margaret Burgess MSP, Minister for Housing and Welfare 'switch-on' the new online tool.

*Understanding Scottish Places* (USP) answers a pressing need for better quality information to inform important decisions about how communities are organised and funded. It brings together 36,000 different pieces of data about places and people in Scotland into one online, visual, searchable database.

From today, anyone can access a full suite of information about any of 479 Scottish communities digitally – and compare that information with any other place across the country.

The launch of the new tool comes on the back of an Ipsos MORI survey carried out in March by the Carnegie UK Trust, leaders of the USP consortium, which encouragingly revealed that the majority (54%) of Scots value the services available in their local communities. Many of those questioned recognised the way in which places in Scotland are inter-related and rely on each other for different facilities and services, something that is explored further in USP. Almost 40% revealed that they travel to access the services they require.

Margaret Burgess MSP, Minister for Housing and Welfare said: "USP is a powerful resource for people working across the country giving them the opportunity to design better strategies for their communities - whether they are in councils, town partnerships or BIDs, traders associations, businesses or community groups.

"It's a great tool, ideally positioned to help local people see how their area is working for them and be inspired to get involved in revitalising their towns. It is just one of a number of measures that the Scottish Government is backing to help to deliver the Town Centre Action Plan. We hope that this platform will encourage communities to look at other towns with similar characteristics and start to share more of their success stories."

Martyn Evans, Chief Executive of the Carnegie UK Trust, joined Margaret Burgess for today's switch-on, and said: "USP is a valuable tool for all of those invested in making our town's better places to live. It recognises that different places have different needs, and require different services and resources. It explores the way in which each place has a unique identity and this is how we need to think about places when we design services, invest, and innovate. For the first time, the platform looks at the levels of interdependency between communities, to give us a more sophisticated and constructive picture of how our places work together.

“In the coming months, we will be consulting further across the whole country, to see what needs to be added to this platform to deepen that understanding and grow the sophistication of the data we can offer.”

The platform has been designed and built by the Carnegie UK Trust, Scotland’s Towns Partnership, the Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLES), and the University of Stirling. It is available now at [www.usp.scot](http://www.usp.scot). Co-funded by Carnegie UK and the Scottish Government, it is a practical output of the Scottish Government’s Town Centre Action Plan.

**ENDS**

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#### **NOTES TO EDITORS**

**The Carnegie UK Trust was established in 1913 by Scots-American philanthropist Andrew Carnegie. It seeks to improve the lives and wellbeing of people throughout the UK and the Republic of Ireland through influencing public policy and demonstrating innovative practice.** To change minds, the Policy Team seeks to develop objective, evidence-based policy to improve lives. The Trust’s work is focused on a set of three themes: enterprise and society, knowledge and culture and people and place. To change lives, the Trust’s Practice work takes forward the initiatives generated by policy and research, either the Trust’s own research or that developed by others, and developing them into practical pilot projects to be undertaken in partnership with other organisations interested in working in the same areas.