

DARVEL

COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN

2014 - 2019

Darvel Community Action Plan Steering Group



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INTRODUCTION

DARVEL COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN

This Community Action Plan summarises community views about:

- Darvel now
- the vision for the future of Darvel
- the issues that matter most to the community
- our priorities for projects and action.

The plan is our guide for what we - as a community - will try to make happen over the next 5 years.

DARVEL COMMUNITY FUTURES STEERING GROUP

The preparation of the Action Plan has been guided by a local steering group that brought together representatives from local organisations, businesses and interested members of the community.

LOCAL PEOPLE HAVE THEIR SAY

The Action Plan has been informed by extensive community engagement carried out over a seven month period from May 2013 to November 2013.

The process involved:

- stakeholder interviews and focus group meetings - with different groups and individuals representing all aspects and ages of the community;
- a community views survey, which was delivered to all households;
- a survey of local businesses;
- a children's views survey, conducted through the primary school
- preparing a community profile detailing facts and figures about the community;
- a Community Futures Event.

515 COMMUNITY VIEWS SURVEY FORMS WERE RETURNED FROM OUR **1,500** HOUSES
10 BUSINESS SURVEYS WERE RETURNED BY LOCAL BUSINESSES
12 STAKEHOLDER MEETINGS AND FOCUS GROUPS WERE HELD WITH LOCAL GROUPS,
 BUSINESSES, AND SUPPORT ORGANISATIONS
295 PEOPLE ATTENDED THE COMMUNITY FUTURES EVENT

THANKS TO EVERYONE WHO TOOK PART – IT'S A GREAT RESPONSE AND GIVES WEIGHT TO THE PRIORITIES IDENTIFIED IN THIS PLAN

OUR COMMUNITY NOW

FACTS AND FIGURES

We have summarised below some of the main facts and figures from the Community Profile – a report produced by the Steering Group to give a picture of Darvel now.

LOCATION

Darvel is an attractive town in the upper River Irvine Valley with the wooded slopes of the Lanfine Estate to the south and Loudoun Hill to the North. It is on the A71 Irvine to Edinburgh road and is 9 miles east of Kilmarnock. It is one of several Valley Towns which include Galston and Newmilns.

POPULATION

The population of the town is now over 3,550 (2011 census) - an increase of 5.7% in the 10 years since the previous census in 2001. During this time the most significant increase (up by 25%) is in the percentage of people of pensionable age. 28% of the population is over 60 compared with 24% for East Ayrshire and 23% for Scotland.

HOUSING

There are around 1500 houses in Darvel and this reflects a steady growth in the housing stock over the last 20-30 years. The majority of housing in Darvel is owner occupied (with a higher percentage of homes in that category compared to East Ayrshire or Scotland). However the local authority still has over 360 properties and 111 people on the waiting list for council houses.

EMPLOYMENT AND THE LOCAL ECONOMY

At one time when Darvel was the centre of the lace making industry it was said that local people were 'Darvel Bred and Darvel Fed'. Changed days now with the last of the power looms closing in 2007 and Darvel a dormer town with most of the workforce commuting to work elsewhere. Having said that there are still many small local businesses in the town - with services, retail, trades and farming the main sectors. There are still 27 working farms in the area.

The loss of the Cooperative is still missed in the community and doubly so as the building still lies empty. Similarly the loss of a hotel and B&B in the village means that there is currently no accommodation in the town – although there is the excellent Gowanbank B&B nearby. This means for example that many visitors to the Darvel Music Festival or the Walking Festival end up not staying in Darvel and the benefit to the local economy is not maximized.

EDUCATION

Pre school: Darvel Early Education Centre
Primary Schools: Darvel Primary School,
Secondary Schools: Loudoun Academy (Galston) and St. Joseph's Academy (Kilmarnock)
Further education: The nearest opportunities are at Ayrshire Colleges (Ayr, Kilmarnock), University of West of Scotland (Ayr)

COMMUNITY AND RECREATION

Community Facilities: The Town Hall, Library, Church Halls, Scout Hall, Gavin Hamilton Sports Centre,

Community groups and clubs include: Darvel Community Council, Darvel Church, Darvel Horticultural Society, Darvel Improvement Group, Darvel Music Company, Darvel Mothers and Toddlers, Darvel Old Mens Cabin, Girl Guides, Brownies, Rainbows, Scouts, Boys Brigade, Beavers, Cubs, WRI, Bowling Club, Darvel Juniors Football Team, Darvel Victoria FC, Darvel Youth FC, Darvel Angling Club, Pre 5's, after school clubs, Darvel Skateboard Group,

Community Events: Darvel Music Festival, Walking Festival, Xmas Fayre, Gala.

HEALTH AND CARE SERVICES

- GP Surgery and Primary Care: Loudoun Medical Centre.
- Hospital & Acute Services: The nearest hospital is at Crosshouse in Kilmarnock
- Dentist: The nearest dentist is in Newmilns
- Care facilities: Collins Court catering for up to 17 residents is managed by Trust Housing Association.

ENVIRONMENT AND OPEN SPACES

The surrounding land is a mix of working farms, forestry and estates. Lanfine Estate which is used locally for walks is also of historical importance having been built by James Armour of Mauchline – the father of Jean Armour who married Robert Burns.

The most notable landscape feature is Loudoun Hill – an ancient volcanic plug and site of the Battle of Loudoun Hill in 1307. It provides an attractive backdrop to the village and there is a local path from Darvel to the Hill.

There is a good walking and cycling network of paths and routes and an annual Walking Festival. The network extends along and through the Irvine Valley and has been developed by the Irvine Valley Regeneration Partnership and our own environmental improvement group DIG (Darvel Improvement Group). The River Irvine is also an asset and the local angling club has created angling spots for people with disabilities.

Morton Park is one of the largest parks in East Ayrshire and has a lovely location by the River. Other smaller open space areas include Robertson Gardens and the Toll Gate Garden.

HERITAGE

Darvel's history and existence is closely connected to weaving and by the 1920s lace furnishings industry in the valley had become the largest in the world. Darvel is the birthplace of Sir Alexander Fleming the discoverer of penicillin. He attended the local primary school and Kilmarnock Academy.

Heritage features in the town include:

- The memorial to Sir Alexander Fleming in Hastings Square
- Weavers Cottages and houses, and water powered looms
- The Town Hall
- The Telephone Museum
- SAS and War Memorials
- Darvel Parish Church
- The Dagon Stone – a bronze age monolith?
- Chambered cairn at Loanfoot Farm, and site of Roman encampment by Loudoun Hill (now sadly no longer visible).



OUR COMMUNITY NOW

COMMUNITY VIEWS



LIKES

Over 500 responses were made by local residents of all ages in our Community Views Survey. The results help to inform this action plan. Here is what people said they like about the community now ...

Environment/Outdoor recreation	44%
Community spirit/friendliness	39%
Nature of community/Village appearance	23%
Community activity	18%
Local public services	14%
Local economy	12%
Sports & recreational facilities	11%
Location	9%
Nothing/Not a lot	2%
Housing	1%

What People Said...

There are great places to walk/cycle and good parks

Its town planning on an axis with Loudoun Hill makes it unique.

You can walk down Darvel Main Street and every person you see will say "hello" to you

Its heritage is amazing – The Lace Industry, Alexander Fleming, etc.

The Darvel Music Festival ... Fantastic Music Festival

DIG groups efforts taking pride in the village

Good Primary School, friendly library and Post Office

Variety of shops and other businesses

Sports Centre and children's play parks – All ages catered for just join in what suits.

The Big Park, all the nature, shopping, the skate park and the cage and so on

It's good that we have the school, the sports centre, the football pitches and the skate board park.

Ideal location – 30 mins from coast; 25 mins to A74; 45 mins from Glasgow

Nice houses and wide open spaces

Good selection of properties to buy or rent



DISLIKES

...and what they were not so keen on!

Declined and Run Down	43%
Community Safety/Anti-social behaviour	31%
Declining Local Economy	13%
Roads Traffic and Parking	13%
Housing Policy/Ownership	8%
Lack of Community Facilities/Activities	7%
Decline/Threat to Public Services	6%
Nothing	4%

What People Said...

Listed buildings should be used not left as nothing

Eyesores such as Turf Hotel and Co-op buildings

Unoccupied shops and factories and houses that passers by see.

Feeling unsafe or vulnerable on the street at night

Some local inhabitants appear to be addicted to illegal substances

Few businesses and employment opportunities

Lack of variety of shops making it a necessity to travel further afield.

Trucks laden with quarry material thundering through disobeying speed limit.

The amount of traffic through the village on the A71

Traffic calming measures that make trying to access the main road dangerous

The lack of direct public transport to Glasgow

Too many DHSS and homeless houses

The state of disrepair of some council properties on the main street

Some of the people that the council and private tenants bring into the town

Its not got enough things to do

Lack of community group activities and information

We need somewhere for our 13-17 year olds to hang out and socialise

Concerns about future of town hall and sports centre

The park could be tidied up a lot better

The way East Ayrshire maintains the town

No visible police presence, no lollipop man or lady

DARVEL 2020

OUR VISION FOR THE FUTURE

This statement has been prepared to summarise the main aspirations for the future as expressed by local people and organisations in their replies to the survey and stakeholder interviews.



An attractive residential town with a great quality of life

- A pretty town where people can enjoy bringing up their children
- A nice main street where the removal and renovation of derelict properties has made it more appealing to all



Recognised internationally as a Music Town

- A great place to enjoy music at the Darvel Music Festival
- With more regular music events throughout the year
- With music promoted throughout the town

Recognised for its heritage

- A great place to learn about the history of lace manufacturing and weaving
- A great place to learn about Sir Alexander Fleming

Recognised as a place with good open spaces and access into the countryside

- A place with good parks and recreational facilities
- A place that is a good base for walking and cycling and other outdoor activities



With good community facilities, events and activities

- Retained and developed community facilities which are well used and run
 - Friendly community with regular community wide events.
 - ...and strong community organisations working well together



... a market town with a good mix of shops, cafes, and places to stay.

- being known as a good place to set up and run a business
- and welcoming to visitors.



MAIN STRATEGIES AND PRIORITIES

These are the main strategies and priorities identified by the local community in surveys, interviews and profile and prioritised at the Community Event.

TOWN CENTRE REGENERATION AND TRAFFIC

Darvel is an attractive small country town – but is currently blighted by derelict buildings – in particular the old Cooperative building, The Turf Hotel and some Council property. The consultation for this action plan suggests there is potential to do something creative with the Cooperative building/site that would add to the village. The need to address these issues was the top priority at the Open Day Event.

There was also a need highlighted to improve parking and reduce traffic congestion, and to continue to support the work of the Darvel Improvement Group in making the town more attractive.

Main priorities

- Renovate/ remove derelict buildings in Main Street
- Village enhancement - Support the work of the Darvel Improvement Group
- Improve parking and develop safe routes to school
- Improve traffic flow and reduce HGV's through the village

COMMUNITY AND RECREATIONAL FACILITIES

The other top priority identified by the community was the need to retain the town hall, sports centre and library. They are seen as vital to the community and there was a strong view that they should be retained, developed and at the centre of community regeneration e.g. the Town Hall is key to the Music Festival, the Library could be used as a visitor information centre, the Sports Hall could be a hub providing facilities for visiting cyclists.

The Recreation Park and pavilion need upgrading to make the most of this great resource and there is a need to support young people to provide more activities for their age group e.g. there was a call for a youth club or café.

It was also thought to be worthwhile to investigate the development of a community run arts and music centre - as a potential use of one of the derelict buildings – and as a focal point for the development of Darvel's role as a 'music town'.

Main priorities

- Retain and improve community facilities – town hall, library, sports hall.
- Upgrade recreation park and pavilion
- Youth club and café
- Develop community arts and music centre

MAIN STRATEGIES AND PRIORITIES

LOCAL ECONOMY AND TOURISM

There is a real opportunity to promote Darvel's music culture, its heritage and its walking and cycling routes as a way of developing the local economy. The potent mix of the already successful music festival, the paths and walking festival, and heritage as the world centre of lace making and its fame as the birthplace of Alexander Fleming – are all there to serve the future regeneration of the community. At a more basic level there is the need to provide facilities (information, parking, toilets) that help encourage the use of local shops and services, and to look at ways of providing workspace and support for new small businesses – perhaps utilising one of the existing derelict industrial buildings.

Main priorities

- Develop Darvel as a Music Town
- Promote existing environment and heritage assets
- Develop and promote amenities, parking, facilities for visitors
- Support for existing and new small businesses

ENVIRONMENT AND HERITAGE

There is a real desire to see Morton Park developed as a major attraction for locals and visitors – suggestions from the community include high quality adventure play areas, improved all ability paths, improved drainage, more sports facilities (e.g. outdoor gym, tennis courts, putting green), improved entrances, improved rose garden.

A lot of work has gone into developing paths in Darvel and through the Irvine Valley and this needs ongoing support, development and promotion. As noted above this has real potential to support the local economy. Existing local paths e.g. to Loudoun Hill - that allow recreational access out of Darvel need immediate improvement.

There is a great opportunity to make more of Darvel's place in history as the birthplace of Alexander Fleming and its role at the centre of lace making.

Main priorities

- Improve Morton Park
- Improve, develop and promote the paths network
- Develop and promote local heritage

COMMUNITY SAFETY, CARE AND TRANSPORT

The impact of housing allocation policy has been seen to import problems from other communities and start to change the nature of the community. Darvel would request the close cooperation of the local authority housing department and local police to help address this issue.

We would like to develop more facilities and services for our growing population of elderly. There is also a desire to improve public transport services to increase their value to the community e.g. in getting direct access to nearby towns and Glasgow, and in assisting young people to travel around the area.

Main priorities

- Reduce anti social behaviour
- Develop day care and befriending services for the elderly
- Improve public transport





ACTION

This section sets out some of the action that will need to be taken to develop the priorities and which organisations need to be involved. It is an early guide to what needs to be done and should be reviewed in the light of progress.

THEME 1: TOWN CENTRE REGENERATION AND TRAFFIC

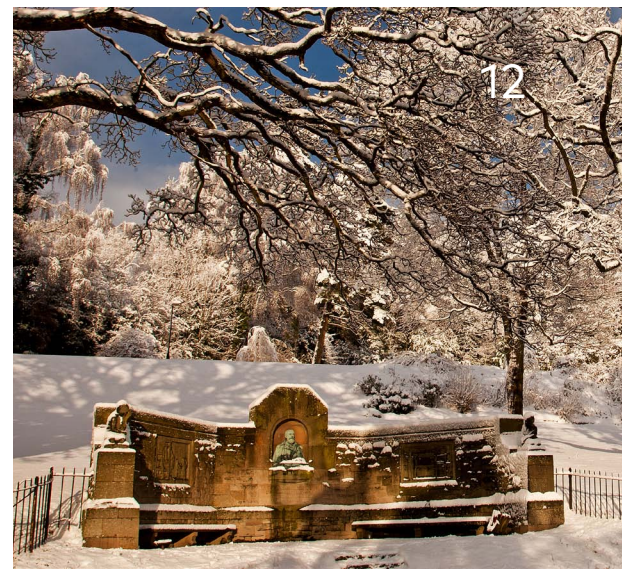
PRIORITY 1	<p>Renovate/remove derelict buildings in Main Street</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish working group to tackle Main Street regeneration • Decide on course of action and desired options for the buildings and sites • Engage with owners and other stakeholders • Feasibility study for development and best use of buildings/sites • Take action to implement feasibility study recommendations
Action by	<i>Community Council, Darvel Improvement Group, Darvel Music Company, East Ayrshire Council, Historic Scotland</i>
PRIORITY 2	<p>Village Enhancement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the ongoing work of the Darvel Improvement Group
Action by	<i>Darvel Improvement Group, local residents, local businesses, East Ayrshire Council, Keeping Scotland Beautiful</i>
PRIORITY 3	<p>Improve parking and develop safe routes to school</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage walking to school • Better signage of existing car parks • Consider car parking as one part of the possible use of derelict building sites.
Action by	<i>Community Council, School, Police Scotland, East Ayrshire Council</i>
PRIORITY 4	<p>Improve traffic flow and reduce HGV's through the village</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor traffic flow and HGV use of the village • Work with traffic police and local authority to explore how traffic flow can be improved and how the impact of HGV's can be reduced
Action by	<i>Community Council, Police Scotland, East Ayrshire Council</i>

ACTION



THEME 2: COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND ACTIVITIES

PRIORITY 1	<p>Retain and improve community facilities e.g. Town Hall, Library and Sports Hall</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Campaign to retain these important facilities • Develop plans for improvements to and additional roles and uses for the Town Hall, Library and Sports Centre • Take action to implement plans
Action by	<i>Local community groups and users, Community Council, East Ayrshire Council, East Ayrshire Leisure Trust</i>
PRIORITY 2	<p>Upgrade Recreation Park, pavilion and skatepark</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop proposals for a package of improvements including better power supply for the pavilion, resurfacing car park, completing fencing • Lighting for the skate park
Action by	<i>Local sports clubs, Darvel Skateboard Group, East Ayrshire Council, East Ayrshire Leisure Trust</i>
PRIORITY 3	<p>Youth club and café</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with young people to develop proposals for additional activities like a youth club or youth café.
Action by	<i>Local young people, schools, Community Council, East Ayrshire Council</i>
PRIORITY 4	<p>Develop community arts and music centre</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look at examples from other communities e.g. Sanquhar, New Galloway, Peebles • Develop proposals for a local centre – linked to wider plans to develop Darvel as a Music Town.
Action by	<i>Darvel Music Company, East Ayrshire Council, Creative Scotland</i>



THEME 3: LOCAL ECONOMY AND TOURISM

PRIORITY 1	<p>Develop Darvel as a Music Town</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support a town wide initiative to build on the work of the Darvel Music Company and the Darvel Music Festival • Develop feasibility study and business plan for 'theming' Darvel as a music town – to include how could it be done, what facilities, resources, events, activities, education should be developed and how they should be best organised and run. • Take joint action to take proposals and priorities forward.
Action by	<i>Darvel Music Company, Community Council, East Ayrshire Leisure Trust, East Ayrshire Council, local businesses</i>
PRIORITY 2	<p>Promote existing environment and heritage assets</p> <p><i>Please see Theme 4 Priority 3</i></p>
PRIORITY 3	<p>Develop and promote local amenities (e.g. public toilets), parking and facilities for visitors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and assess the current gaps in the visitor experience in Darvel – what is needed to encourage visitors to stop, stay and enjoy their time in Darvel? • Work to implement and promote priority projects to fill gaps.
Action by	<i>Community Council, local businesses, East Ayrshire Council</i>
PRIORITY 4	<p>Support for existing and new small businesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote the role of existing businesses in the community e.g. small business directory, local business forum. • Lobby for improvements to broadband • Involve local businesses in taking action on the other priorities in this theme.
Action by	<i>Community Council, Darvel Improvement Group, local businesses, East Ayrshire Council</i>



ACTION

THEME 4: ENVIRONMENT AND HERITAGE

PRIORITY 1	<p>Improve Morton Park</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore how other communities have developed their historic parks e.g. using the Parks for People Fund run by the Heritage Lottery Fund, through establishing Friends of Groups and working closely with the local authority • Raise funds for and commission master plan for the regeneration of the Park • Make funding applications for the development of the park in line with master plan.
Action by	<i>Community Council, Darvel Improvement Group, East Ayrshire Council, Heritage Lottery Fund</i>
PRIORITY 2	<p>Improve, develop and promote paths network</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the ongoing work of Darvel Improvement Group and the Irvine Valley Regeneration Trust to maintain and develop the path network. • As an immediate priority improve the path to Loudoun Hill • Support the development of longer walking and cycling routes into and through the Valley. This should include looking at how Darvel encourages cyclists to the area and requirements for facilities and services to support this. • Support the promotion of the network through local signage, parking, noticeboards, paths leaflets, and website – making a strong connection between the local economy and amenities and the network e.g. parking and interpretation in the heart of Darvel, use of the Town Hall Library as Information Centre etc.
Action by	<i>Darvel Improvement Group, Irvine Valley Regeneration Partnership, other Irvine Valley communities, East Ayrshire Council, Sustrans</i>
PRIORITY 3	<p>Develop and promote local heritage</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop proposals and recommendations for further interpretation of Sir Alexander Fleming's role in modern medicine and Darvel's lace making past. • Take action to develop facilities, interpretation, information based on recommendations.
Action by	<i>Darvel Improvement Group, Irvine Valley Regeneration Partnership, Community Council, local businesses, other Irvine Valley communities, East Ayrshire Council</i>

THEME 5: COMMUNITY SAFETY, CARE AND TRANSPORT

PRIORITY 1	<p>Reduce anti social behavior</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joint discussions with community, local authority housing and social work departments and local police on problems of anti social behaviour and its links to housing allocation policy • Joint Initiative to reduce and resolve problems identified
Action by	<i>Community Council, East Ayrshire Council, Police Scotland</i>
PRIORITY 2	<p>Develop day care and befriending services for the elderly</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore needs further and how other communities have developed services • Introduce additional services and activities as required
Action by	<i>Community Council, East Ayrshire Council, Darvel Parish Church</i>
PRIORITY 3	<p>Improve public transport</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop proposal for improved routes and advantages of a direct link to Glasgow, and routes to Strathaven and Hamilton 'that don't require 3 changes' • Lobby for reduced costs of transport • Encourage buses to allow bmx bikes on so that it is easier for young people outwith Darvel to access the skatepark • Negotiate with bus providers and passenger transport authority with support of local authority.
Action by	<i>Community Council, Stagecoach, Strathclyde Partnership for Transport/Transport Scotland, East Ayrshire Council</i>

MAKING IT HAPPEN



WORKING TOGETHER FOR DARVEL

We will continue to work together to take forward the priorities within the Action Plan. There will be key roles for the Community Council, Darvel Improvement Group, Darvel Music Company, Darvel Parish Church, Darvel Skate Group and other local community groups, businesses and willing local residents!

WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP

The projects listed here will need to be progressed by the local community with the support of a wide range of partners including East Ayrshire Council, East Ayrshire Leisure Trust, Irvine Valley Regeneration Partnership, Police Scotland, Keep Scotland Beautiful, Creative Scotland, Historic Scotland, Heritage Lottery Fund, Transport Scotland.

HOW TO GET INVOLVED AND CONTACT INFORMATION

As a practical way of taking things forward we will be setting up a number of small Action Groups to lead on each aspect of this Plan. If you are interested and want to be involved please contact:

ACTION PLAN THEME	CONTACT
Town Centre Regeneration and Traffic	Reid Ross Tel: 01560 324241 Email: ross31@btinternet.com
Community Facilities and activities	Alan Duncan Tel: 01560 323311 Email: andnc8@hotmail.co.uk
Local economy and tourism	Sheila McKenna Email: darvelmusic@gmail.com
Environment and Heritage	Les Pittams Tel: 01560 321526 Email: maggie.pittams@tiscali.co.uk
Community safety, care and transport	Max Flemmich MBE Tel: 01560 320780 Email: max@mflemmich.freereserve.co.uk

FOR GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT DARVEL AND ITS GROUPS

Contact: Reid Ross
Telephone: 01560 324241
email: ross31@btinternet.com
Web Site: www.S1Darvel.com

DARVEL

COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN

2014 - 2019

This Community Action Plan sets out the priorities for the development of Darvel over the next 5 years as determined by the community through an extensive process of community engagement organised and led by local community organisations and local residents and carried out over a five months period in 2013.

The Plan contains

- A summary of our Community Profile
- Our main likes and dislikes as identified in our Community Views Household Survey
- Our Vision Statement for the Future of Darvel
- The main themes and priorities for action
- Information on how you can stay in touch and get involved.

The Plan is for the whole community and is jointly owned by all the organisations and individuals that took part in its preparation. We will be working together to ensure its implementation over the next 5 years.

Thanks to all those who took their time to share their views and take part, and to all who gave their time voluntarily to participate in the Steering Group and the co-ordination of the Survey, and to the Vibrant Communities team of East Ayrshire Council who worked closely with the community and supported the Steering Group in carrying out all aspects of the work involved in preparing this Plan.

We are grateful to Ayrshire Leader for funding the Ayrshire 21 programme which has enabled us to prepare our local community led action plan and for the support received from East Ayrshire Council through the process of its development.

Specialist training, mentoring and support was provided by the STAR Development Group in carrying out the community engagement process and in preparing the Community Action Plan.



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