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# DALMELLINGTON PARISH

## COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN

2012 - 2017



COALFIELDS  
COMMUNITY  
FUTURES



the coalfields  
regeneration trust



Little Village - Big Personality

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# INTRODUCTION

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**532 COMMUNITY VIEWS SURVEY FORMS WERE RETURNED FROM 1300 HOUSEHOLDS  
AROUND 60 SURVEY FORMS WERE COMPLETED BY LOCAL SCHOOLCHILDREN  
STAKEHOLDER MEETINGS WERE HELD WITH LOCAL GROUPS AND INTERESTS  
26 OUT OF 50 LOCAL BUSINESSES TOOK PART IN THE BUSINESS SURVEY  
OVER 212 PEOPLE ATTENDED THE COMMUNITY FUTURES EVENT**

**This Community Action Plan summarises community views about:**

THE COMMUNITY NOW  
IMPORTANT ISSUES

THE VISION FOR THE FUTURE  
ACTION AND PROJECT PRIORITIES

## **DALMELLINGTON COMMUNITY FUTURES STEERING GROUP**

The preparation of the Action Plan has been guided by a local steering group. The steering group brings together members of the Community Council, the Community Association, Bellsbank Tenants and Residents, Dalmellington Partnership, Loch Doon Caravan Club and other local volunteers. This Action Plan will provide a guide for all community organisations over the next 5 years.

## **LOCAL PEOPLE HAVE THEIR SAY**

The Action Plan has been informed by extensive community engagement carried out over a four month period from July – October 2011.

The process involved:

- carrying out a community views survey, which was delivered to all households;
- conducting a business views survey;
- stakeholder interviews and meetings with different groups and individuals representing all aspects of the community;
- preparing a community profile detailing facts and figures about the community;
- holding a Community Futures event.



We have summarised below the main facts and figures from the Community Profile and some of the views from the Community Views Survey. Full copies of these reports are available from the Steering Group on request.

## LOCATION

Dalmellington parish lies at the most southern tip of East Ayrshire, approximately 15 miles from Ayr on the A713 Ayr to Castle Douglas road, which is part of the stunning Galloway Tourist Route. The main settlements are Dalmellington, Bellsbank and Burnton. Bellsbank, approximately ½ mile from Dalmellington, was originally built between the wars to provide housing for miners, and is now a community in its own right.

## POPULATION

The most recent estimate (2010 Scottish Neighbourhood Statistics) shows the population of the area at around 2,800. This is split fairly evenly between Bellsbank and Dalmellington. While the population in Dalmellington has stayed steady over the last 10 years, there has been a decrease in the population of Bellsbank, falling from 1,629 in 2001 to 1,409 in 2010.

Bellsbank has a much higher percentage of children (around 21%) than Dalmellington (around 12%), but the percentage of children is falling in both areas, and the percentage of older people is increasing. In fact, the percentage of pension age population is now higher in Dalmellington than in the rest of East Ayrshire and Scotland. This could be due to the care homes in the area.

## EMPLOYMENT AND LOCAL ECONOMY

Mining was the mainstay of the economy until the 1970's, when pit closures had a devastating effect on local employment and the economy. Combined with subsequent decline in employment in manufacturing and in forestry, this has resulted in three generations of worklessness for some families.

The main local employers are the 2 Care Homes in Dalmellington, and 2 in nearby Patna, as well as around 140 jobs in opencast mining. However, this is a far cry from the boom days of mining when over 1500 local men were employed in the pits.

There are over 50 local businesses – including a variety of shops, hairdressers, cafes and pubs, garages, taxis and haulage contractors. Craigengillan Estate also provides training and employment for local people.

There is an IT training unit at the Area Centre, and also rooms available for meetings. The Zone is a community run project which provides accredited training for young people.

## HOUSING

Across the area, there is a very high percentage of Council or housing association rented houses. In Bellsbank, almost 80% of the houses are for social rent, compared to around 34% in the rest of East Ayrshire.

## EDUCATION AND CHILD CARE

Primary education at Dalmellington Primary, Bellsbank Primary and St Xaviers in Waterside. Pre-school nursery at Dalmellington and Bellsbank Primaries.

Part time crèche available at Bellsbank Family Centre, mainly to allow parents to access classes and activities. Dalmellington Mother & Toddler Group meets on a Friday at the Community Centre. The Bellsbank Adventure Playground (or “the Hut” as it is known locally) provides out of school care.

Dalmellington has its own High School, Doon Academy which is integrated with the primary school and Doon Valley Leisure Centre. The current school roll stands at around 360. The Academy has a very active music and arts department.

## SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY

Community Facilities include:

- Dalmellington Community Centre, owned and maintained by East Ayrshire Council, and managed by the Community Association
- The Scout Hall
- Dalmellington Parish Church – Halls in both Dalmellington and Bellsbank
- Bellsbank Community Wing, attached to the Primary School, managed by East Ayrshire Council Community Learning and Development, including a community cafe and an IT learning suite
- The Bellsbank Project which organises classes and activities and runs the crèche

Youth Facilities include:

- The Zone in Dalmellington runs a youth club 5 nights/week; an accredited training centre and the Go Play project
- In Bellsbank, the church runs a youth club on a Wednesday night
- Youth Club run by East Ayrshire Council on a Tuesday night in Bellsbank

## LEISURE AND RECREATION

The Council run Doon Valley Leisure Centre is shared with the secondary school, offering a swimming pool, gym and cafe. It is available for community use out with school hours.

Multi use games area (MUGA) near to the Dalmellington Community Centre, which is well used and valued by local youngsters. A similar facility exists in Bellsbank, adjoining "the Hut", accessible during opening times for the out of school care.

There are two new children's play grounds in Bellsbank, and one in the King George V Playing field in Dalmellington, a running track and grass football pitch. Other facilities include the Bowling Club, the Doon Valley Amateur Boxing Club, community gym and the Library.

The Dalmellington Silver Band is well renowned, and has its own practice facility next to the Community Centre. There is also a Junior Band.

## ACCESS TO SERVICES

The Dalmellington Area Centre provides a shared central and accessible venue for East Ayrshire Council services, the Police and the Health Centre. The Fire Station is opposite, and the new pharmacy in the Square is very welcome.

Parking and public toilets are available (but not well advertised) at the Area Centre. The Library is soon to be moved to the Area Centre, with future use of the existing building undecided. There is a frequent bus service to shops and services in Ayr, but no train station in Dalmellington.

## ROADS & TRAFFIC

Dalmellington lies just off the A713 main tourist route to Castle Douglas. There is very little signage from the main road to indicate services available in the town, so it is frequently by-passed by tourists.

Within the town, traffic management is a problem, with narrow roads and pavements, and poorly signed parking. The condition of road surfaces is a matter of some local concern, particularly the road in Broomknowe which is used by heavy traffic to avoid the town centre.

## ENVIRONMENT & ACCESS

The area is surrounded by forested landscapes which include several Sites of Special Scientific Interest, the most notable being Loch Doon. The area is on the edge of the New Galloway Forest Park and Dark Skies area. Craigengillan Estate consists of 3000 acres encompassing a designed landscape, woodland, pasture and water providing a diverse habitat.

There are many locally known walks around the area, and an annual walking weekend is organised in August, which includes the Rhinns O' Kells 17 mile walk.

## HERITAGE

The area has a rich industrial history of weaving, mining and iron manufacture. Doon Valley Museum in Dalmellington, run by East Ayrshire Council, is open 3 days a week and has a heritage display, family history information and exhibition space.

The Ayrshire Railway Preservation Group, situated at Dunaskin a couple of miles out of Dalmellington, has become a heritage attraction providing steam railway trips on summer Sundays. Part of the line is still used by the local open cast mine.

Sites of historic interest include the old Graveyard, the Mac-Adam family mausoleum, and the Motte. There is a recently established local History Group.





# OUR COMMUNITY NOW <sup>6</sup>

## COMMUNITY VIEWS SURVEY: **LIKES**

7%

leisure facilities

9%

convenience of location

10%

local shops, eateries

17%

access to services

18%

history

54%

countryside

57%

sense of community

## WHAT PEOPLE SAID

I love the people – especially those who take an interest in the village  
Sense of community spirit especially the older people.

The fact my family has been living in the area for hundreds of years.

The rural setting is great with no great pollution that is dominant in city life.

Estate owner has opened up a lot of walks for the public to enjoy.

The heritage – we are proud of our mining history.

Excellent amenities for locals including medical centre, bus service, library, shops.

One of the best villages for amenities.

The big improvement of a new chemist and council-police-doctor amenities.

The shops are good, and the co-op staff are always ready to help you.

All the local shops are well stocked and you can get most things you need.

3 buses an hour to Ayr.

Easy access to airports, city, M6 and ferry links.

Variety of activities and facilities on offer in Bellsbank wing.

The work going on with young people e.g. the Sunday school, Lazars, Trailblazers, The Silver Band, The Zone, Boxing club, Swimming clubs, Dance groups, Scouts, Cubs, youth groups, Sunbeams, football training.



# OUR COMMUNITY NOW <sup>7</sup>

## COMMUNITY VIEWS SURVEY: **DISLIKES**



## WHAT PEOPLE SAID

The amount of drugs available in Dalmellington/ Bellsbank.

Underage drinking – more policing is needed to stamp this out.

I think some houses and business areas could do with painting to brighten the place up and make Dalmellington a more attractive place to visit, the shop fronts and High Street look tired and run down.

The village hasn't got a public toilet for visitors.

More public toilets, cafes open after 2pm.

During the day there is nowhere to go for a snack or a meal.

The lack of jobs, majority of people on benefits.

Lack of jobs (it's even harder if you're classed as an outsider).

Nothing to do for young and older generations i.e. pool hall and walking area for older people.

The roads need resurfaced, they are appalling.

Cars parked everywhere.

More thought given as to how housing is allocated with more priority given to young families.

Say no to turbines!

# DALMELLINGTON

## OUR VISION FOR THE FUTURE

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*This statement has been prepared to summarise the main aspirations for the future as expressed by local people and organisations.*

**We are a proud and confident community...**

**D**oon the river  
**A** good place to stay  
**L**ovely walks and scenery  
**M**eat the villagers

**...Welcoming to visitors while providing quality services, jobs and activities for local people**

**E**xciting Parks to play  
**L**eisure centre to brighten your day  
**L**ittle village big personality  
**I** think it's great

**...Caring for and promoting the spectacular nature and wealth of heritage that we have around us**

**N**ature everywhere  
**G**reat community

**... With community groups working together to support all our generations and citizens**

**T**he square is the heart  
**O**f the village

**N**ow that's what I think about  
Dalmellington.



# MAIN STRATEGIES AND PRIORITIES

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*These are the main strategies and priorities the community will work towards achieving in partnership with public agencies and other supporters.*

## TOWN CENTRE IMPROVEMENTS

Dalmellington town centre has a strong identity and heritage, with a number of historic buildings and sites surrounding the main “square”. However, the fabric of many of the buildings is in a poor state, there are several empty, dilapidated properties adding to the “run down” feel. Traffic congestion caused by narrow roads and lack of obvious parking is also a problem in the town.

Renovating and upgrading the town centre was the top priority for residents and businesses in the Community Views Survey. Many businesses have started to do what they can to improve the look of their premises, but it is important that this is co-ordinated and supported. The Dalmellington Partnership has undertaken a number of environmental improvement projects already and has approached East Ayrshire council about planning requirements and potential funding for town centre improvements.

### Main priorities:

- Improve buildings and frontages in the Town Centre
- Environmental improvements - less litter and more floral displays
- Traffic and parking management
- Support business development

## TOURISM AND HERITAGE

Since the demise of mining in the 1980's, Dalmellington has struggled to provide jobs and a viable economy for its residents. Our main hope for regeneration is to develop our tourism offering, capitalizing on our location and natural and historic assets. The nearby Craigengillan Estate over the last 10 years has developed and promoted a range of recreational activities to attract visitors, and will soon be the location for the Dark Skies Observatory project.

We have a wealth of heritage in the community, and we are fortunate to have the East Ayrshire Council-run Doon Valley Museum. However, the museum is only open 3 days a week, and some important historical features are poorly maintained and run down, with very little in the way of signage and interpretation. To reach our potential and make the most of the exciting developments at Craigengillan, we will need to improve and promote what is here already.

### Main Priorities:

- Heritage information
- Historic sites
- Signage and visitor information
- Visitor friendly facilities



# MAIN STRATEGIES AND PRIORITIES

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## ENVIRONMENT & ACCESS

Dalmellington is surrounded by a wealth of natural assets – New Galloway Forest, Craigengillan Estate, planted woodlands, Loch Doon, River Doon, Ness Glen – and soon to be within the UNESCO Biosphere designation for the Galloway & Southern Ayrshire area. Despite the effects of opencast mining and the very present threat (or opportunity?) of wind turbine development, our natural environment is our “golden egg” and we will protect it, cherish it and share it. Working with Forestry Commission Scotland, we can develop walking and recreational woodlands for locals and visitors.

At a more local level, there is a need to improve the quality and access to our open spaces and village environment, including key locations such as the riverside area and the King George V Field.

### Main Priorities:

- Community woodlands
- Riverside area and paths
- Improve access in the King George V Field

## COMMUNITY PRIDE, FACILITIES AND EVENTS

Dalmellington and Bellsbank have strong family bonds and community ties. People generally feel a sense of belonging and want to be part of the community. However, there is a sense that this community spirit is eroding gradually, with increasing fear of crime and evidence of anti social behaviour. Well over half the respondents in the survey stated that this was what they like least about living here.

We need to develop our community and recreational facilities, organisations and activities – especially for the older and younger generations – to maintain and build on the existing community spirit and pride. Popular annual community events such as the Christmas Fayre and the Halloween Howl Walk and Hoolie are a great way to bring the community together and build community spirit. We want to build on these, but in doing so we need to co-ordinate and share information among all the community groups.

### Main priorities:

- Reduce anti social behaviour
- Improve community buildings and facilities
- Youth recreational facilities and activities
- Community events & information





## First Steps to be taken over the next 12 months

### THEME 1: TOWN CENTRE IMPROVEMENTS

PRIORITY 1	<b>Improve the buildings and frontages in the Town Centre</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Commission artist to depict a vision for what the Town Centre could look like, using traditional colours and signage styles</li> <li>•Work with businesses and community groups to agree this vision, and create an overall plan of town centre improvements</li> <li>•Secure funding and support for a shop front and building improvements scheme, including liaison with EAC Planning and Economic Development</li> </ul>
PRIORITY 2	<b>Environmental Improvements - less litter and more flowers!</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Conduct a litter campaign involving schools</li> <li>•Ask local gardening group to work with school to produce plants for hanging baskets and floral displays</li> <li>•Involve businesses and school in maintenance of floral displays</li> </ul>
PRIORITY 3	<b>Traffic and parking management</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Work with EAC to commission a traffic management study</li> <li>•Implement results of study</li> <li>•Improved signage to direct traffic to existing parking</li> </ul>
PRIORITY 4	<b>Business Development</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Explore potential for a Dalmellington Business Association, to provide a strong business voice in these projects</li> </ul>
Action by:	<i>Dalmellington Partnership, Dalmellington CC, Businesses, East Ayrshire Council.</i>



## THEME 2: TOURISM AND HERITAGE

### PRIORITY 1

#### Heritage Information

- Look at potential for Doon Valley Museum to be opened by volunteers in addition to times when it is staffed by EAC
- Research and design local history leaflets providing information about the heritage of the area
- More information on the heritage of Loch Doon, to tie in with development of Loch Doon Caravan and Camping Park

#### Action by:

Local History Group, Doon Valley Museum, EAC, Loch Doon Caravan Club

### PRIORITY 2

#### Historic Sites

- Improve the steps, signage and pathways at the Motte
- Better maintenance and signage of the Old Graveyard
- Explore project idea to have a heritage trail around historic sites in the area

#### Action by:

Local History Group, Steering Group, Historic Scotland, EAC

### PRIORITY 3

#### Signage and Information

- Make a list of what signage is needed in the area, and commission design of signs
- Raise funding for signage and have it installed
- Project to design a Dalmellington Map, showing points of interest to visitors, to be displayed in the Square, and available widely in shops and businesses
- Work with Dark Skies Observatory Project to ensure information is available for local businesses

#### Action by:

Steering Group, Dalmellington Partnership, Schools, Dark Skies Group

### PRIORITY 4

#### Visitor friendly facilities

- Improve formal caravan and camping facilities at Loch Doon
- Encourage local businesses to open longer hours to serve locals and visitors
- Explore potential for a local pubs/cafés to provide toilets for public use & publicise toilets available at the Area Centre

#### Action by:

Loch Doon Caravan Club, Dalmellington Partnership, EAC





## THEME 3: ENVIRONMENT AND ACCESS

### PRIORITY 1

#### Community woodland

- Work with Forestry Commission Scotland to establish a Community Woodland area at the new cemetery above Dalton Terrace
- Establish a volunteer Woodlands and Environment group

#### Action by:

*Forestry Commission Scotland, Woodlands and Environment group*

### PRIORITY 2

#### River area improvements

- Support the project planned by Dalmellington Partnership to create path from Cathcartson to Craigengillan, including a footbridge and two fish passes.

#### Action by:

*Dalmellington Partnership, funding from Leader & Score already secured*

### PRIORITY 3

#### Improve access in the King Georges Field

- Liaise with EAC and Fields in Trust to secure necessary permissions for access improvements
- Design improved entrance and paths to play area
- Involve children and families in design of other potential improvements to the field (including seating, garden area, natural play area etc)

#### Action by:

*Dalmellington Community Council, Steering Group, East Ayrshire Council, Mother and Toddler group,*



## THEME 4: COMMUNITY PRIDE , FACILITIES AND EVENTS

### PRIORITY 1

#### **Reduce anti social behaviour**

- Provide advice/leaflet to residents and businesses about how to contact police
- Work closely with community police
- Monitor situation and continue to liaise with Divisional Commander

*Action by:*

*Community Council*

### PRIORITY 2

#### **Improvements to community buildings and facilities**

- Agree a programme of improvements to Dalmellington Community Centre to be jointly implemented by Council and Community Association (e.g. toilets and external refurbishment)
- Improve Dalmellington Scout Hall for wider community use
- Improve kitchen facilities at Dalmellington Parish Church (Bellsbank) to be able to offer wider access by more groups

*Action by:*

*Dalmellington Association, Dalmellington Parish Church, Scouts*

### PRIORITY 3

#### **Better youth recreational facilities and activities**

- Continue to work with EAC to secure an all weather sports pitch at Craigmark, which would be available as a community facility
- Encourage and support volunteers to organise youth recreation (eg football team, bowling, outdoor pursuits at Craigengillan, Loch Doon etc)
- Expand community gym and changing facilities at Doon Valley Amateur Boxing Club

*Action by:*

*Craigmark Football Club, Doon Valley Amateur Boxing Club*

### PRIORITY 4

#### **Community events and information**

- Organise a series of community wide events (including Jubilee celebrations, Halloween Howl
- Walk, Hoolie, Christmas Fayre, Walking Weekend)
- Produce a Yearly Calendar/Diary of events in the area
- Promote events using new noticeboard, website and a newsletter (if there are volunteers to do this)
- Regular meetings of all community groups to co-ordinate activities and share information

*Action by:*

*Dalmellington Community Council, all community groups*





Local community organisations have come together for the first time to prepare this Community Action Plan. The process has generated a real sense of cohesion and partnership which we are determined to retain and develop as we move forward with our priorities.

## STEERING GROUP AND ACTION GROUPS

The Dalmellington Community Futures Steering Group – made up of representatives of several community organisations - has now been formally constituted, and will take the lead in co-ordinating the actions in the Action Plan.

We have looked into setting up a community development trust, but at this stage, we think that the existing groups will be able to take on the projects and actions identified. As a practical way of getting things done, we would like to set up a number of “Action Groups” such as the Woodland and Environment group, under the Steering Group umbrella to take the lead on some of the actions in the Action Plan.

However this will depend on more people coming forward as volunteers – we would really appreciate your input!

## HOW TO GET INVOLVED

If you are interested or would like to be involved in any of the priority themes or projects, please contact any of the following people.

### Town Centre Improvements

Shop Fronts:  
Elaine Stewart  
elaine.stewart@thezone-online.co.uk

### Tourism and Heritage

Local History:  
Anne Park  
Tel: 01292 550851

Signage:  
John Paterson  
pitbingview@gmail.com

### Environment & Access

Woodlands:  
Lyndy Renwick  
lyndy.renwick@forestry.gsi.gov.uk

Riverside:  
Dave Donaldson  
daved1951@live.co.uk

King George V Field:  
Milissa McCulloch  
milissa.mcculloch@east-ayrshire.gov.uk

### Community Pride, Facilities and Events

Community Centre:  
Davie Marshall  
d.marshall105@btinternet.com

Events & Info:  
Sharon Smith  
sharonrowan@hotmail.co.uk

## KEEPING THE PLAN UNDER REVIEW

The Steering Group will convene regular “Community Forum” events for all community groups and volunteers to come together and share their progress. In this way, the Action Plan will be kept under review. There will be a commitment to involving the whole community on an annual basis.



# DALMELLINGTON PARISH COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN 2012 - 2017

This Community Action Plan sets out the priorities for the development of Dalmellington over the next 5 years as determined by the community through an extensive process of community engagement carried out during 2011

## THE PLAN CONTAINS:

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

Thanks to all those who took their time to share their views and take part.

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.

This community action plan was funded through the **Coalfields Community Futures** program which was set up by the **Coalfields Regeneration Trust** to help communities build capacity and attract their fair share of funding and support for their regeneration.



We are grateful for funding for our work from the Coalfields Regeneration Trust and community development support from the Small Town & Rural Development Group.

For more information on the Coalfields Community Futures program contact: Coalfields Regeneration Trust at [www.coalfields-regen.org.uk](http://www.coalfields-regen.org.uk)