

# RECLAIMING OUR COALFIELD COMMUNITIES

*Dalmellington  
Community Action Plan  
April 2018*





# Introduction

**The Coalfields Regeneration Trust's** overarching priority is to develop community capacity; everything that we do is about supporting coalfield communities.

Community-led regeneration is at the heart of regeneration. It is about people:

- ❖ Identifying issues and opportunities in their local area
- ❖ Deciding what to do about them
- ❖ Making positive changes in their communities

The Coalfields Regeneration Trust (CRT) supports community-led regeneration that:

- ❖ Increases the number and strength of locally-controlled, enterprising community organisations
- ❖ Supports local organisations to take ownership of assets such as buildings or land
- ❖ Helps people to coordinate action and respond to challenges in areas where there are high levels of disadvantage
- ❖ Helps people identify and act on the priorities in their areas

**The Electoral Reform Society** operates on a simple premise - that politics can be better than it is. ERS Scotland wants to build a democracy fit for the 21st century, where every voice is heard, every vote is valued equally, and every citizen is empowered to take part. s the longest-standing pro-democracy organisation in the world, ERS works alongside parties, politicians, academics and other campaigners across the country to secure a better democracy.

**Dalmellington** parish consists of the villages of Dalmellington, Bellsbank, Burnton and Waterside. The area was once thriving with mining, iron ore and textiles however today there are many issues affecting the area such as 4th generation of unemployment, poor attainment, social and rural deprivation.

The village is steeped in history and has natural untapped beauty spots that people travel to visit. This consultation has seen individuals and groups from all walks of life attend the open days and put their views forward freely for the future of the local area. This community has proven that they are willing and ready to work together to create a sustainable future for Dalmellington and the surrounding area.

The democratic voice of the local people has been recorded within this plan, and the priorities have been set to allow the local community to shape their own future and the future of their children and grandchildren.



## Community Futures

CRT has been involved over the last few years in helping local people develop their own Community Action Plans, blueprints for development, highlighting the needs to be tackled and new projects and services required for community regeneration. These have now been completed in 40 of the most deprived of Scotland's former coalfield communities.

The community of Dalmellington have now completed their first five year Action Plan and it is now time for them to look to the future.

CRT has worked with the Electoral Reform Society to consult the local community and create a new Action Plan based on feedback at consultation events – as well as comments left in the local library. The project to create the new plan is called “Reclaiming Our Coalfield Communities”.

## Reclaiming Our Coalfield Communities

This project is rooted in a highly structured programme of engagement and development that has strengthened the ability of the community to define and achieve their objectives.

A vital factor has been that local residents, groups and organisations were assisted to participate in the project helping them to ‘make the right connections’ by facilitating development of the influencing skills and the relationships that less deprived communities benefit from.

Over a six month period the community has been working in partnership with CRT and the Electoral Reform Society Scotland to deliver the project. We delivered a series of bespoke workshops and seminars about redesigning their local democracy to work better for them, enabling them to thrive all the more by taking control of their community's future.





## How we did it

*Our Democracy: Act As If We Own the Place* has a simple starting point: that people flourish when they have control over their own lives. We think that the vast majority of Scots realise that freedom and power is best exercised as a community. As lone individuals we can potentially do some good things but as groups of individuals we have so much more power, can create and build better, and have more fun. By doing this we find out how capable we all are, building trust in ourselves and in each other to run our own places.

If democracy is about anything it is about running our own affairs. That's why we got as many people from the community together as possible to talk about how they want to run their local place. Over two half day events we spent time discussing what people see as issues in their communities, learning about interesting ways that other places have taken back control, and coming up with local projects and solutions. By using different tools to draw out ideas and facilitating discussion, we ensured that every attendee's views were heard and considered.

Having a Community Engagement Worker based within the community for 6 months helped ensure that a large and representative group of people participated at each event. The findings of these events are given greater legitimacy by the fact that over the demographics of (1) education, (2) households with one member disabled or chronically ill and (3) families with children they are broadly similar to the overall community. Recruiting young people to attend the events proved the hardest, however a number of people under 25 did still come along.

## Event One

The intention was to give participants time to reflect on what had recently been achieved within their communities, as well focusing on what the current issues and concerns are.

It was important, before we looked forward to the next five years, to first look back in order to see if community members agreed on how successfully the previous Action Plan had been completed.

### Appraisal of the Past

For the Appraisal of the Past task the previous Community Action Plan was turned into a document where each action had a corresponding reference number (i.e. 1.1.1, 1.1.2, etc.). Groups were given a set of cards on which to write the actions reference number and a piece of string on which to attach the card, with the string representing a sliding scale of Successful to Unsuccessful.

Groups worked together to discuss whether specific actions had been achieved or not. The task also provided an opportunity to refresh people's memories and to learn about the successful (or unsuccessful) implementation of each of the community's actions.

### Asset Mapping

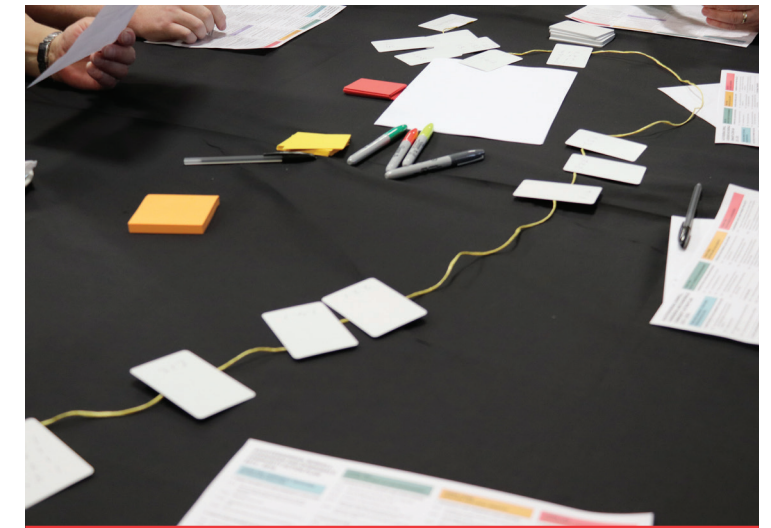
After appraising the past, the focus of the next task was to identify positive and negative community assets. Groups were given red and yellow cards to write down all the positive in their community (yellow = good asset, red = bad asset).

Next, groups were asked to map these assets onto a target. The centre of the target represented the assets which were most important to the community, with those that are less important placed towards the periphery. Related cards, whether they were yellow or red, were clustered together in order to generate themes.

### Themes and Priorities

The Asset Mapping exercise was used as a process to allow participants to discuss what the current issues and concerns were in their community and to begin to draw out - by clustering related cards together - new themes and priorities which would lay the basis for next Community Action Plan.

Groups were given worksheets on which to document their themes and priorities. After the first event, each groups themes and priorities were then analysed and collated in order to create a overall picture of the important current issues and concerns within the community.





## Event Two

The primary aim of the second event was to develop project ideas and community actions that would address many of the issues and concerns that had been highlighted at the first event.



### Organising Priorities

As some participants may not have come to the first event it was important to provide a space to go over the Themes and Priorities that were developed in Event One.

All priorities were turned into illustrated cards and on each table there was a traffic-light coding system. Groups went through all the cards and placed them on the corresponding colour depending on how easy or hard they thought each priority would be to achieve. The task created an opportunity for participants to think about what issues are most important, and also what is easy or hard to achieve.



### Top Five Issues

As a wide variety of priorities had been highlighted from the first event, ranging from systemic issues such as poverty to more surface level concerns such as dog fouling, it was important to narrow the focus and distill the issues and concerns.

After the priorities had been organised, groups were then asked to highlight their Top Five Issues from the deck of cards. Groups then placed related priorities around these cards in order to see how community issues were related. It also provided an opportunity for groups to reconsider the issues so that potential projects could tackle a range of associated priorities.

### Inspiring Projects

The next phase in the project was a Learning Phase. This involved presentations from people who have been involved in projects which might be inspiring for the community members to hear about and could provide information or insights which could help participants to think about what they could achieve in their own communities.

Speakers across the three communities were:

**Chris Strachan:** The Glasgow Tool Library  
**Abigale Neate-Wilson:** Agile City  
**Mike McCarron:** GalGael  
**Enid Trevett:** CRT



### Projects and Actions

The last task was focussed on developing community projects. For this phase, groups were given Concept Worksheets which provided a framework of questions that led participants towards well structured project ideas.

The worksheets asked participants to develop three project ideas for each issue, rather than just one. This format would encourage participants to not just think of the most obvious idea, but challenge them to think of other ways to tackle the issue. Participants were then asked to either pick the best idea or to combine elements in order to develop a final project idea. The final task involved writing a project timeline that would highlight the steps that are necessary to complete the project.

## Participatory Budget

On 15th May the voting event took place in Dalmellington Scout Hall. This event was for the community to decide on which projects would receive funding through the Participatory Budget that was provided by Coalfields Regeneration Trust. The six groups who applied for funding were present, showcasing their projects. Members of the public attended and voted for their favourite projects, each had two votes and tasked to vote for two different projects. All projects were successful in receiving funding. The results were:

**Be-Fit Family Fitness**  
**Dalmellington Amateur**  
**Boxing Club**

**Bellsbank Youth**  
**Summer Scheme**  
**Can In The Community**

**Disabled Access**  
**Dalmellington**  
**Community Association**

**Life in Dalmellington WWI**  
**Doon Valley**  
**History Group**

**Dalmellington Cycle Hub**  
**Dalmellington**  
**Community Futures Group**

**Development Trust**  
**Launch and Website**  
**Dalmellington Community**  
**Action Group**





# Themes and Priorities

These priorities and actions highlight the main strategies that have been identified by the community over the previous two events. The community, in partnership with public agencies, supports and partners, will work towards achieving the Action Plan over the coming years.

150 people attended the events and we would like to thank everyone for contributing and helping to shape the future for Dalmellington.



Heritage

Tourism

Priority	Action
Identify history around Dalmellington including motte area and historic graveyard	Encourage History group to develop this initiative Promote archaeological and ancestral history including covenanters
Promote village through identity and culture	Encourage history and community groups to work together to establish this action
Celebrate our working history including mining	Work with history group, schools and community organisation to develop website
Identify and promote historic walks an trails in and around area	Develop leaflet and website to promote local walking history
Potential Partners	History Group, local schools, Dalmellington Community Action Group, local voluntary groups, Coughtrie Holdings, East Ayrshire Coalfields Landscape Partnership

Promote tourist attractions	Link to East Ayrshire tourism strategy and visit Scotland
Develop website to link tourists	Develop robust website of the local area
Facilities and events to attract tourists	Develop local facilities and community events that are friendly, inviting and easy to access for tourists
Creation of tourism packages	Develop better accommodation, eating places and exciting attractions
Develop more creative and outdoor attractions	Local groups providing Craft Workshops and outdoor Education Centre
Cycle tourism hub	Cycle group to develop, design track and implement in an area of Dalmellington
Potential Partners	Eglinton Hotel, Coughtrie Holdings, Dalmellington House Hotel, Dalmellington Community Action Group, Craigengillen Estate, Dark Sky Observatory, Round House, Doon Valley Crafters, The Zone Initiative, Doon Academy, Biosphere, Adventure Doon, Dalmellington Community Futures, shops and cafes, EA Coalfield Landscape Partnership and East Ayrshire Council



Priority	Action
Creation of Development trust	Encourage the community to form a Development Trust
Public toilets	Development trust to find funding for public toilets
Upgrade community facilities including asset transfers	Community groups are encouraged to provide quality facilities for local community to enjoy
Lack of accommodation & places to eat	Work with local business and groups to develop more B&B
Develop community bank	Create a focus group to take this idea forward
Youth services in Bellsbank & more weekend services	Develop junior and senior youth clubs in Bellsbank
Development of community website, Doon Valley Gazette and notice boards	Work with the action groups to develop a community website, publication of local gazette and better usage of notice boards.
Provide more fitness, health and wellbeing activities for all ages	Work with Doon Valley ABC to develop better facilities and more activities for the whole community including family and people suffering from a variety of illnesses that can be tackled through fitness & wellbeing activities.
Potential Partners	CANI in the Community, Vibrant Communities EAC , The Zone Initiative Ltd, Dalmellington Community Action Group, Doon Valley ABC, Local Business, Dalmellington Community Association, Local Individuals and Groups, Visit Scotland, East Ayrshire Carers



Physical Environment

Town centre improvements	Encourage East Ayrshire Council to resubmit CARS bid and the Development Trust to prioritise town centre improvements
Derelict building in state of disrepair	Work with East Ayrshire Council, Development Trust, building owners, Scottish Government for repairs or compulsory purchase order on dangerous buildings
Improve housing appearance	East Ayrshire Council to improve housing stock
Improvement to building assets transfer taken on by voluntary sector	Work with groups to ensure East Ayrshire Council and funder recognise the importance of asset transfer taken by local people
Develop training opportunities for volunteers and young people	Encourage third sector to develop more training and work opportunities for volunteers and young people.
Potential Partners	East Ayrshire Council, Development Trust, local community groups, East Ayrshire Landscape Partnership, housing developers and Scottish Government



**Physical Environment  
and Local Economy cont.**
**Priority**
**Action**
**Local Economy**

Lack of employment opportunities	Encourage groups and businesses to create employment around the needs of the local area
Lack of support for small business start-ups and local businesses	Encourage start-up of a business forum and engage with small business enterprise, Scottish Enterprise and East Ayrshire Council
Identify and support new business ventures	Encourage old/new and innovative tourist attractions such as crafts shops, bike shops, extreme adventure sports, sporting activities
Development of employment hub and grow entrepreneurs	Develop an employment hub with support for entrepreneurs
Development of a business forum and community website	Provide a robust website to allow community and businesses to access and advertise to the wider community.
Create tourism hub and packages for visitors	Engage with local tourist attractions to come together and provide a tourism package
Develop training opportunities for young people	Provide training opportunities that links to tourism
Potential Partners	Visit Scotland, Active 8, Dark Sky Observatory, Loch Doon Caravan Park, Doon Valley Crafters, Roundhouse, The Zone Initiative Ltd, Dalmellington Community Action Group, East Ayrshire Council tourism officer and East Ayrshire Landscape Partnership


**Natural Environment**

Promote our local beauty spots	Engage with all interested parties with a vested interest in the natural environment
Concerns over wind turbines	Community Council to engage with wind farm companies and Local authority to raise concerns when appropriate
Enhance and develop the local area for tourists	Provide more exciting activities and places of interest for tourists
Support the promotion of Biosphere	Become a designated Biosphere
Promote the Osprey viewing centre	Develop viewing area that is attractive and inviting to tourists and local community
Promote village through website, social media and newsletters	Develop a robust community website that will promote Dalmellington as an excellent place to live, work and visit
Encourage businesses to develop and enhance our natural environment	Engage with business looking to develop services and attractions with the local area including Loch Doon
Development of an outdoor education centre	Engage young people and local community to care for our natural environment and its habitat
Create a cycle routes that enhance the natural environment	Develop an extreme mountain bike area and also family friendly routes for tourists
Potential Partners	Forestry Commission, East Ayrshire Council, Biosphere, Craigengillen Estate, Osprey Centre, Dalmellington Community Futures Group and East Ayrshire Landscape Partnership


**Priority**
**Action**

Greater police presence	Work with Police Scotland to increase policing in area Encourage community to report all anti-social incidents
Astro turf too expensive	Community Council meet with East Ayrshire Leisure to look at better pricing policy
Enforcement for illegal parking, dog fouling and litter	Work with East Ayrshire Council encouraging enforcement of litter, dog fouling and illegal parking Work with East Ayrshire Council on a joint approach to dog fouling
CCTV camera replaced with smaller digital type	Work with East Ayrshire Council to replace camera with smaller less obtrusive digital cameras
Cemetery needs essential repairs	Work with East Ayrshire Council to make sure all repairs required are done timeously
Improve, roads, pavements and parking	Work with East Ayrshire Council and Ayrshire Roads Alliance to continue upgrading of roads and pavements
Concerns over large vehicles in and around town	Community Council to work with Ayrshire Roads Alliance to ensure proper routes are being used.
Parity of access to services and fair treatment by East Ayrshire Council	Work with East Ayrshire Council, Local Councillors to ensure that Dalmellington is on the agenda
Economic investment in communities future	Work with East Ayrshire Council Economic Development, local businesses, The Zone Initiative Ltd
Upgrade playpark	Community Council to work with East Ayrshire Council to ensure parks are fit for purpose
Potential Partners	Forestry Commission, East Ayrshire Council, Biosphere, Craigengillen Estate, Osprey Centre, Dalmellington Community Futures Group, Police Scotland, Ayrshire Roads Alliance, The Zone Initiative, local businesses, Dalmellington Community Council, East Ayrshire Leisure



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## Event One

*‘Very good workshops’*

*‘Worthwhile Event’*

*‘I found it interesting’*

*‘First workshop could have had more time for discussion’*

*‘Listening to people’s views/opinions’*

*‘Good communication with groups’*

*‘Need to add support to existing groups’*

*‘I liked the methods used to gain the information’*

*‘Less items to go through. It was quite rushed’*

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## Event Two

*‘Thinking about democracy on a different level’*

*Found it all very interesting’*

*‘Need to add support to existing groups’*

*‘More time could have been spent on*

*final two activities’  
‘Interesting to find out other people’s thoughts/*

*ideas from the community’  
‘Local Empowerment is so important’*

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