

DARVEL & DISTRICT COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN

2020-2025



ANNUAL REVIEW 2

SEPTEMBER 2022

DARVEL STRATEGY GROUP

INTRODUCTION

Consultation on the Community Action Plan commenced in June 2019 with its publication in September 2020. The plan contains a number of priorities for each of 6 areas of activity or themes:

- Town Centre Regeneration,
- Traffic and Transport,
- Community Facilities and Activities,
- Environment and Access,
- Local Economy Heritage and Tourism, and
- Community Safety and Wellbeing.

In January 2021 two further priority areas were identified for Community Safety and Wellbeing, reflecting the importance of community recovery from the pandemic. In August 2021 the Community Council agreed that a further priority should be included following the flash flooding event of August 8 2021 with the inundation of a number of properties on West Main Street.

There has been a considerable range of activity ongoing since the publication of the Community Action Plan (and indeed in the months prior to its publication), made even more impressive by the fact that activity has inevitably been impacted by Covid-19. This is the second formal annual progress report on the implementation of the Community Action Plan prepared by the Darvel Strategy Group, part of whose remit includes monitoring the implementation of the plan.

In this report each of the priorities with the themes is taken in turn and comment produced on progress made in taking the priority forward.

Sadly, since the start of the consultation we have lost three dedicated members of our community who gave much time, enthusiasm and commitment to the community. Sandy Mair was a long-standing member of the community council and through Andely Wines supported much community activity. Les Pittams was another long standing member of the Community Council and was also the chair of DIG. His commitment to the wellbeing of many of the elderly residents was well recognised. Most recently we have lost Reid Ross who was a former correspondence secretary of the Community Council and until his passing was a trustee of Darvel Community Trust.

There have also been recent changes within Darvel & District Community Council with a new chair, Brian Sutherland and a new treasurer, Luis Rico.

CONCLUSION

It is evident from this report that a considerable amount of progress has been made in the past 30 months since the conclusion of the consultation in February 2020. The Strategy Group will continue to ensure that, taking full account of the community and legal limitations, within which we must operate, that implementation of the priorities contained in the community Action Plan continue to be pushed forward.

For further information or questions about the implementation of the Action Plan contact George Gardner georgegardner50@googlemail.com Tel 01560 322257

TOWN CENTRE REGENERATION

Main Priority	Summary of Progress
<p>Address derelict property on Main St</p>	<p>Work on the refurbishment of the Turf Hotel is underway, with the repurposing of the premises into three dwelling houses.</p> <p>Significant delays have continued regarding the demolition of 85-87 East Main St due to technical considerations to do with the shared wall with 83 East Main St. Plans were drawn up by EAC for the provision of a community garden area once demolition has taken place. However, there is yet no clear indication of timescales.</p>
<p>Improve appearance of property and streetscape of Main Street</p>	<p>The Placemaking Exercise has been completed and the Local Place Plan for Darvel is due to be published following submission of comments on the final draft by DDCC.</p> <p>The former Horseshoe bar, empty for some time, is now converted to a second veterinary surgeon within the town.</p> <p>Funding for additional Christmas decorations has been secured from the Darvel Lottery and the National Lottery (totalling £15,000).</p> <p>In addition funds were made available from the Scottish Town Partnership for shop front improvements and five premises submitted proposals, all of which were successful.</p> <p>DIG continues to refresh community gardens and flower beds, planters and hanging baskets with the assistance of many community volunteers.</p>
<p>Ensure Corner development is completed</p>	<p>Work commenced on The Corner in June 2021 following delays associated with Covid-19 and the need to reallocate the contract to Coltarts of Kilmaurs. Further delays came as a result of workforce difficulties where large building firms were able to offer higher wages, particularly to bricklayers. Completion of the building work is anticipated to be in September 2022. DART is looking to have a formal opening in late autumn</p> <p>CCTV and lighting are incorporated in the works together with the completion of the store. Feature lighting will feature in the canopy and market stalls, temporary seating will also be purchased</p> <p>Repair to the gable wall and the pavements adjacent to the Corner will be carried out by East Ayrshire Council and Ayrshire Roads Alliance respectively. Subject to the availability of funds there is the possibility of creating a mural on the gable wall. Plans for the soft landscape have been drawn up to reflect the lace history of the town</p>
<p>Increase number of local shops and businesses</p>	<p>A long overdue addition to local businesses is the new coffee house and ice cream parlour (Stormin' Norman's). The former Ladbroke's Bookmakers premises in East Main St has been acquired by a local voluntary organisation, Verve.</p>
<p>Resolve the flash flooding issues on West Main Street</p>	<p>Following the flash flood in West Main St of 8 August 2021 (and the latest in a series of floods in the same area with a number of local houses inundated), this has been added as new priority. A formal DDCC report calling for immediate action was submitted to the relevant authorities and organisations and will be copied to elected members.</p> <p>A Flood Management Subgroup of the DDCC was set up with DDCC members and local residents directly affected. ARA and Scottish Water are collaborating in seeking a permanent solution to the issue. This will continue to be a matter that will be pursued by DDCC.</p>

TRAFFIC AND TRANSPORT

Main Priority	Summary of Progress
<p>Improve road and pavement maintenance</p>	<p>Repairs to the bus stops were completed by ARA following concerns raised by residents about safety issues. However there continue to be concerns about the impact the extended stops are having on traffic flow.</p> <p>As is the case in many Scottish towns, the condition of pavements and roads in the town remains a main cause for concern. There are particular locations within the town where the condition of the pavements is very poor indeed. DDCC will continue to submit further requests for improvement to ARA.</p> <p>DART has agreement from ARA for pavement repair in the pavements adjacent to the Corner.</p>
<p>Ensure road safety along Main Street (speeding and volume of traffic)</p>	<p>A subcommittee of the Community Council was established to identify specific traffic issues through the town and subsequently a road traffic survey was conducted by ARA along Main Street and in Priestland. The report on the outcome of the surveys was submitted to DDCC and led to further requests for the introduction of a 20mph speed limit through the town. ARA are looking to include permanent 20mph through the centre of the town in 2023-24.</p> <p>However, DDCC remain concerned that the far ends of Main St continue to be the stretches here speeding is most evident. This will be a matter that will be pursued by DDCC</p> <p>Meetings have taken place with Sustrans and Ayrshire Roads Alliance (ARA) to discuss giving greater priority to pedestrians in the town centre.</p> <p>ARA are also considering placing an additional road crossing at the junction of Kirkland Road and East Main Street potentially to be included in their 2023-24 capital programme and bollards have been installed at the junction.</p>
<p>Address Main St parking issues</p>	<p>ARA has a review of parking arrangements, particularly at the junction of side streets with the Main Street. Concerns relate both to visibility and safety of pedestrians. Action is awaited.</p>
<p>Sustain improvements in local bus services</p>	<p>Following submissions by the Darvel community, the four bus per hour service was reintroduced in 2019.</p>
<p>Consider options and opportunities to develop infrastructure that encourages sustainable transport</p>	<p>A cycle club (Darvelo) was established and Sustrans has funded the provision of a cycle station and storage in The Corner together with maps of walking and cycling routes.</p> <p>EAC has installed an electric car charging point at the Ranoldcupp Road car park. There remains a need for this to be properly signposted.</p>

COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND ACTIVITIES

Main Priority	Summary of Progress
<p>Maintain and expand the use of the Town Hall</p>	<p>A Report on the modernisation and future usage of the Town Hall produced by DDCC and DART. The report welcomed by East Ayrshire Leisure Trust and a steering group was established to develop detailed proposals for the modernisation of the hall, focussing on internal layout, lighting and sound, internal environment, accessibility and the frontage of the building.</p> <p>There has been a comprehensive consultation exercise, part of which was a consultation with user groups and interested parties carried out by an external organisation – Accelerate. A comprehensive report was submitted earlier this year. An architect has now been appointed to assist in drawing up detailed modernisation plans.</p>

<p>Further develop provision at Sports Darvel</p>	<p>Developments at the Centre include the installation of a new disabled toilet/shower; new children's toilets; a new Community Kitchen and a new gym with a wide range of health and fitness equipment. In addition, new inflatables have been purchased (bungee run, obstacle course, bouncy castle and ball pool) for use at children's parties / fun days. Revised Planning Permission has been obtained for the 20 x 10 feet modular extension which will form part of the Digital Learning Centre/ Café which will be developed in the next few months.</p>
<p>Widen the range of arts activity within the town</p>	<p>Darvel Photography introduced by DART with monthly best picture competition. Winning photographs featured in coop window and were included in the 2022 online Darvel calendar. This has continued this year with winning entries to be included in the 2023 calendar.</p> <p>DART has recently established an arts and crafts network, with the intention of drawing upon the skills of local people to lead workshops on a variety crafts. The first two have taken place, the first on marquetry and the second on abstract art. More workshops are planned for later in the year.</p>
<p>Widen the range of community events</p>	<p>Despite the impact of the pandemic, a very successful Christmas package of activities was provided in the town in 2021. 2022 saw the return of a whole host of community events – suspended in past two years because of Covid – the Walkfest, the Café in the Square, the biennial Gala Day, the Duck Race and the Scarecrow Festival. It is anticipated that the opening of the Corner will, from 2022 result in increased range of community activity, possibly including outdoor music and dramatic performances</p> <p>2023 marks the 150th anniversary of Darvel being granted burgh status. There will be a community exhibition – Darvel 150 - in February focussing on the history of the town and providing opportunities for local groups and organisations to showcase their activities. Initial plans are being drawn up to have a Darvel 2023 summer extravaganza</p>
<p>Look to develop appropriate facilities and activities for young people</p>	<p>Sports Darvel held a parents/carers/children free of charge Open Day in June 2022 and 80 children enjoyed playing on the new inflatables and soft play. In partnership with EAC Vibrant Communities, Sports Darvel hosted a Darvel Family Fun Day in August 2022 and 134 children attended a range of indoor and outdoor activities. Sports Darvel and Vibrant Communities are actively looking at options to restart its Friday night Youth Clubs. Revised Planning Permission has been obtained for the development of an Outdoor Gym and Children's play/agility trails and an application for funding has been made to help complete these developments / facilities.</p> <p>The youth organisations (brownies, ranger guides and scouts) have restarted following the easing of Covid restrictions. It is heartening to see these activities recommence after the necessary shutdown during Covid times.</p> <p>In general, however, there remains a concern that there continues to be insufficient attention given to the needs of young people and their use of free time and this summer there were concerns about the poor behaviour of a small number of youngsters from the town, but also from other parts of the valley.</p> <p>Meetings have been held with local schools, Police Scotland and Social Work to discuss ways in which the issue can be tackled. At local level VERVE put in place a whole range of summer activities that in total offered 566 places on a variety of activities.</p>

ENVIRONMENT AND ACCESS

Main Priority	Summary of Progress
<p>Address the site of the former factory on Jamieson Road</p>	<p>No real progress has been made in dealing with this issue. The former factory buildings are in a poor (and dangerous) state giving cause of concern for young people entering the buildings. Steps have been taken by EAC to improve security, but this proves to be an ongoing requirement. There have been meetings involving Council representatives and Sports Darvel to examine ways forward since the owners have shown no interest in any improvement or repurposing and as a consequence the site is now in the hands of the Crown Estate.</p> <p>Consideration may be given to the community acquiring the premises and looking to its subsequent development. But this is a large and challenging site with significant costs attaching to both the demolition of the existing factory and any redevelopment of the site. However, there are plans for EAC in collaboration with Darvel Development Trust (Sports Darvel) to undertake a feasibility study</p>
<p>Improve the look of derelict sites within the town</p>	<p>Good progress is being made in relation to some of the derelict properties as mentioned in the earlier section on town centre regeneration: - The Corner, Turf Hotel and Horseshoe bar together with the commitment of EAC to the demolition of 85/87 East Main Street and provide a garden area in its place.</p> <p>There is potential for some locations to be included in the wildflower initiative referred to below.</p>
<p>Continue to improve the green areas of the town and surroundings</p>	<p>Waterlip improvement project has been largely completed with replacement fence along the Glen Water, new benches and additional shrubs (in phase I) and the stabilisation of the riverbank at the western end of the pathway in a second phase. An application has been made for a third phase which would involve the resurfacing of sections of the path which are in a poor condition.</p> <p>Morton Park Regeneration Project has been initiated and project team is in place. Several surveys of the community have been conducted and the findings helping inform the report which will be prepared by the project team. Ideas generated from the community include the addition of more trees, further improvements to the riverside, creation of wildflower area and improvements to the children's play area. Other issues raised included the provision of lighting and of additional facilities in the park (eg toilets). East Ayrshire Cabinet in August 2022 has approved an allocation of £50,000 to DART towards redevelopment of the sandpit in the children's play area and additional funding from EAC will be able to provide for some accessible play equipment.</p> <p>A feasibility study looking at the retention and redevelopment of the Band Hall in Morton Park has been complete and will now be considered by DART. Welcome lecterns have been purchased for the two main entrances to the park and will provide some information and a positive welcome to the park.</p> <p>As indicated in the first annual review of the Community Action Plan, the first elements of the Bee'ing Better project, which is introducing wildflower corridors in Darvel and Priestland. The first phase has involved creating wildflower areas in Priestland and in Morton Park in the stretch adjacent to the Band Hall. Consideration is currently being given to extending the wildflower areas.</p> <p>There is continued communication with East Ayrshire Leisure Trust regarding improvement to Irvine Valley paths in the Darvel area. We are pleased to note that improvements to the Loudoun Hill Path have been largely completed. Contact has been made with the Whitelees Access Group regarding upgrading of the Weaver's Trail, but legal issues continue to cause delays.</p>
<p>Increase levels of effective recycling</p>	<p>Consideration has yet to be given to supporting EAC's attempts to encourage more effective recycling. DDCC had expressed concern about the negative impact that the charge for brown bins will have on recycling of garden waste. There is however limited evidence that this has increased Flytipping of garden materials.</p>

LOCAL ECONOMY HERITAGE AND TOURISM

Main Priority	Summary of Progress
<p>Encourage greater levels of local shopping</p>	<p>DDCC has conducted a social media campaign on Facebook page.</p> <p>Irvine Valley Directory of shops and business in the Upper Irvine Valley has been prepared and distributed with input from DART, the Newmilns Regeneration Association and Galston Community Development Trust. Copies remain available for further distribution.</p>
<p>Ensure Darvel remains internationally known for its music</p>	<p>Darvel Music Company was able to reinstate its successful musical concerts in November 2021 and in 2022. A publication marking the 20th anniversary of the Darvel Music Festival is currently in preparation.</p> <p>Planning for modernisation of the Town Hall by the Steering Group (see above) will include the upgrade for a permanent modern sound and lighting system and Darvel Music Company is included in the Town Hall Steering Group.</p>
<p>Continue to promote the history, heritage and culture of Darvel</p>	<p>As part of the Town Hall modernisation consideration will be given to the possible relocation and expansion of the heritage museum. Following a successful submission for funding from the National Heritage Lottery Fund by DART, digitisation of the printed and photographic materials in the museum is now underway. In due course the digitised material of much of the contents of the materials in the Heritage Museum will be available on the internet, through the Discover Darvel website and potentially through the Future Museums scheme being developed by East Ayrshire Council in conjunction with several other local councils.</p> <p>A Darvel Heritage Walk pamphlet has been prepared and is available in local outlets in the town.</p> <p>Darvel Improvement Group continues to progress proposals for the renovation of the Sir Alexander Fleming Memorial, together with a feasibility study for the refurbishment of the Alexander Morton memorial at Gowanbank.</p> <p>A DART project involving the gathering of memories of residents of life in Darvel will be held in late September and will give residents the opportunity to have their memories recorded and captured before they are lost.</p>
<p>Develop facilities to attract visitors and provide for residents</p>	<p>The Discover Darvel website, with a focus on 7 themes: music, environment, activities, heritage, arts & crafts, community) and events continues to be developed and extended. The website has a key objective of promoting Darvel both locally and beyond.</p> <p>Discover Darvel car stickers have also been distributed.</p> <p>A DDCC report “Darvel – A Town in Transition” charts a way ahead for Darvel to be regarded as a town to go to, rather than a town to go through.</p> <p>The regeneration of Morton Park, the project described above will consider the provision of facilities which will attract visitors to the town, and which will be of benefit to residents. These facilities could include a café/crafts premises, potentially in a renovated band hall, together with toilets should funding be identified in due course.</p> <p>A café and ice cream parlour (Stormin Norman’s) was opened on East Main Street in June 2021 and expansion is planned.</p>

COMMUNITY SAFETY AND WELLBEING

Main Priority	Summary of Progress
Increase visibility of police officers	Police presence in the town evident through use of quad bikes. DDCC continues to liaise with Police Scotland regarding police activity in the valley especially in the increased level of youth misbehaviour in the June-August period this year. This was the subject not only of meetings with schools but was a key agenda item at the July DDCC meeting which was attended by 30 concerned residents.
Continue to reduce anti-social behaviour	Littering issue remains a focus for activity from DIG with several litter picks organised during 2021 and 2022. An autumn litter pick will be organised for September/October 2022.
Increase the level of voluntary activity in local projects	<p>There continues to be a good level of local participation in local activities following the huge community support offered during the Covid pandemic. There has been excellent local support for the maintenance of flower beds, planters and hanging baskets along Main Street. In addition, the rose garden is regularly attended to by volunteers.</p> <p>The voluntary walking group TWALK has gone from strength to strength in the past year.</p> <p>The Dinner Ladies also continue to provide much support for individuals and families in need within the town, together with the Crossroads Hub and the Foodbank. A new initiative VERVE has been established to provide activities for socially excluded and vulnerable residents of the town.</p>
Ensure effective communication and dissemination of information about developments and activities within the town	<p>There continues to be a high level of activity on the Community Council's social media platform – Discover Darvel. Membership of the platform now exceeds 2300.</p> <p>A coordinating group (Darvel Strategy Group) was set up by the Community Council to assist communications and co-ordination. The group continues to meet on a two monthly basis</p> <p>The Darvel online Bulletin was first posted on Discover Darvel in 2020. 12 Editions have now been published and provide a great deal of information about local activity, events and articles of interest. Funding was secured from EAC to enable a number of copies to be made available to residents who do not have access to the internet,</p> <p>New Darvel website (Discover Darvel) was launched in June 2020 and its development continues. The Hastings Square information board is being refurbished and will be relocated in a more prominent position adjacent to the pavement. A wall mounted board will be purchased by DART and will be located on the freshly painted wall of the Universal.</p>
Response to Covid and support for community wellbeing	<p>Extensive support provided during the pandemic. The Coronavirus Support Group offered a range of support, together with online family fun nights and a summer music event.</p> <p>Get Darvel Cooking initiative is continuing with the Crossroads Hub.</p>
Renewal and Recovery from Covid-19	<p>Various submissions have been made by DDCC on post pandemic activity within East Ayrshire.</p> <p>DDCC also produced (in conjunction with DART) a report – Darvel A Town in Transition – that provides a road map over the coming years on how the town can recover from the pandemic and charts a number of potential developments. In doing so there are clear links to the Community Action Plan.</p>