

A large crowd of people, mostly young women, are gathered outdoors. In the foreground, a person is wearing a large, shaggy purple furry costume. The crowd is diverse in age and appearance, with many people smiling and looking towards the camera. The background shows trees and colorful decorations, suggesting a festival or community event.

WE MAKE
KILMARNOCK

Neighbourhood Board Meeting for Kilmarnock

CentreStage, Circle Lounge
3 – 5pm 2nd Sept 2025

Fiona McKenzie (Chair)

Billy Bowie

Susie Chow

Craig Hume

Lilian Jones MP

Chris McMail

Councillor Douglas Reid

David Cameron

Richard Grieveson (Deputy for Eddie Fraser)

Councillor Graham Boyd (Deputy for Barry Douglas)

Also Attending:

Pamela Clifford

Norman Gill

Karen Purves

Apologies:

Eddie Fraser

Angela Cox

Councillor Barry Douglas

Lynne McNiven

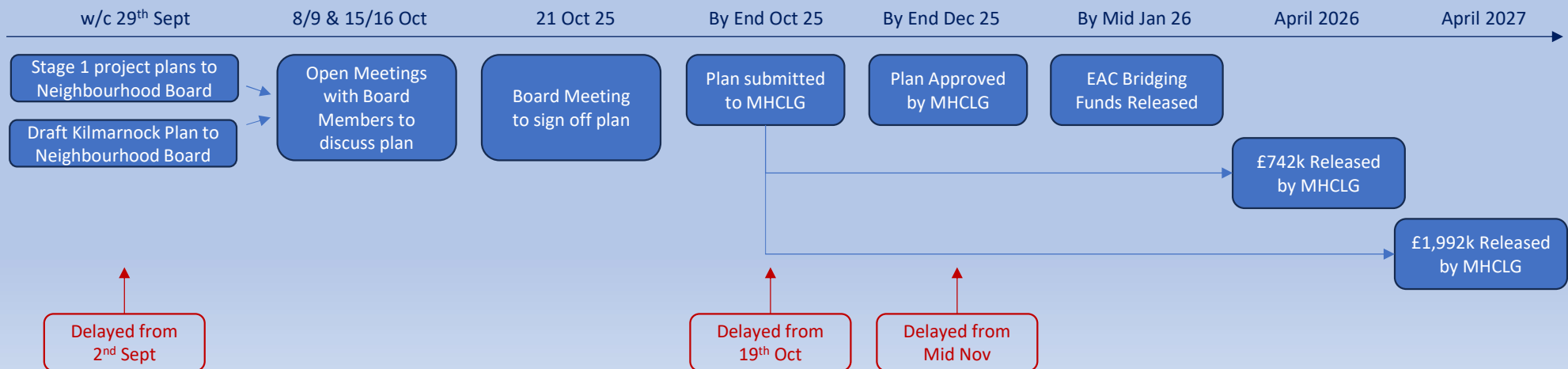
- | | | |
|---|---|---------|
| 1 | Welcome | FMc |
| 2 | Chair Update | FMc |
| 3 | Actions from Previous Meeting | FMc |
| 4 | Update from 1 st September Session | RG / PC |
| 5 | Submission of Regeneration Plan | NG |
| 6 | Initiative Update | NG |
| | - PR Agency | |
| | - Fund Manager | |
| | - Town Radios | |
| 7 | Decisions Required | NG |
| 8 | AOB | All |
| | - Date of next meeting (21 st October) | |

Item 3 - Actions Arising From Previous Meeting

- FMcK to extend invitation to Aberdeen Inspired following visit on 19/08
- Fiona will speak with Columba 1400 re leadership package for Neighbourhood Board
- BMcN to introduce BMcD to Scotlands Town Partnerships
- BMcD to link with Ayrshire College regarding parking investigations
- EF will arrange with the Risk Management Centre for a Board visit.

Item 5 – Submission of Regeneration Plan

- Completion of the Regeneration Plan has been delayed to allow for alignment with the Kilmarnock Regeneration Plan being developed by East Ayrshire Council.
- Following a meeting on 1st September we expect more clarity on this and how we can best align.
- This moves our timescales out, but leaves us well within the UK Government deadline of 28th November.



- In following the UK Government guidelines we have had to make several changes to the content and layout of the paper, which now runs to 74 pages, but will grow further.
- The following pages are taken from the draft paper and can be seen as examples of the tone and content you can expect when the papers are circulated.



Governance

Our route to market for this funding will follow two clear pathways. Firstly, initiatives identified and approved directly by the Neighbourhood Board via the process below will proceed through the established local authority procurement process. This ensures that projects are commissioned in line with statutory requirements, provide value for money, and meet the highest standards of governance and accountability. By working through the council's procurement framework, the Board can be confident that funded initiatives are delivered by capable providers and remain compliant with public sector regulations.

Secondly, funding will also be distributed through the Neighbourhood Board Fund, which will issue calls for proposals from local organisations. Applicants will be required to demonstrate how their projects align with community priorities, the outcomes they will achieve, and their ability to deliver effectively. This approach creates opportunities for grassroots organisations to access funding, fosters innovation, and ensures local voices help shape regeneration.





Our Initiatives





Platform Project

PR Campaign

Problem / Opportunity

Kilmarnock is a beautiful town with a rich history of culture, enterprise, innovation and academic success. It boasts a rich heritage with buildings of architectural and historical significance. And with a legacy of entrepreneurial spirit and diverse local heroes ranging from Johnnie Walker to Alexander Fleming and Biffy Clyro, it's never been a place that's been shy of influence. To this day Kilmarnock continues to have a strong sense of community and vibrant cultural scene.

But like many towns, Kilmarnock has faced real challenges and hardships in recent years. Economically, there have been struggles with the departure of key employers, fuelling a sense of pessimism about the local economy. The town centre has changed for the worse in many ways, with much of it now vacant and in desperate need of new life. Socially, the outlook for residents can be challenging. With an ageing population and almost a quarter of all children living in poverty, local residents can be caught in cycles of disadvantage and potential can feel limited. There is an evident feeling from the residents of Kilmarnock that they lack confidence in their town, and they struggle to believe that things can be, or indeed are, better than they appear right now.

There is an opportunity to change perceptions of their town for those living there, to allow them to see their town as others see it and to build belief that the future can be, and is, bright.

Proposed Solution

The services of PR experts will be engaged to run a series of campaigns and initiatives which will:

- Change local opinion about Kilmarnock among those living and working here, fostering a sense of pride, positivity and optimism about the town and its future (80%)
- Inspire and engage local residents about the impact the We Make Kilmarnock has and will continue to have on Kilmarnock (20%)

This work will provide a platform for We Make Kilmarnock to build on, paving the way for local people to get involved and feel inspired about what can be achieved.

Outline Costs

	25/26 (£000)	26/27 to 29/30 (£000)	30/31 to 32/33 (£000)	33/34 to 35/36 (£000)	Totals
Capacity RevEx	35	0	0	0	35
RevEx	0	50	30	30	130
CapEx	0	0	0	0	0
Total	35	50	30	30	145

Partnership Opportunities

No specific opportunities for this work, although all aspects of the plan will engage with the PR Campaign.

Fit with Pre Approved Interventions

This work sits within the capacity creation budget

Communication Objective

Primary Objective

Create a sense of good feeling in and about Kilmarnock

- We want to lay the groundwork for WMK comms by building positivity
- We need a 'hook' that has genuine appeal and can get traction with press and the public
- We need to consider who our messengers are – press, owned social and ambassadors from Alliances and the community are options
- We need to be mindful about who the perceived source is of our stories, as we don't want people to feel duped

Secondary Objective

Clarify what We Make Kilmarnock is and how it will work

- At some point, we will need to communicate with clarity about what WMK funding can and will be spent on, who can apply for it, when projects will begin, and how that process will be managed
- In the broad sense, we have a compelling story. Money is coming and will be spent in a way that reflects the wishes of the people have Kilmarnock. Presented in the right way, this explanation itself can help with our primary objective
- Specifics around funding, timelines and exact projects are TBD and not fully within our control. This needs to be carefully managed, but doesn't mean we can't say anything at all
- Indeed, most of the key information is already in the public domain, but is currently fragmented and poorly understood
- At a minimum, we recommend to have internal clarity so we can get key partners onside (in particular the Alliances) and have the ability to quickly respond to misconceptions, criticism or bad news stories. Or better yet, get ahead of them by briefing press and key partners

Key PR considerations

Ways to create good feelings

Survey-led

Using survey findings to spread the word of the 'hidden positive majority' and what people love to see happen in Kilmarnock

Community stories-led

Spreading good news stories of what people are doing within the community to make a difference
Leveraging existing groups and good news stories e.g. Youth Council and community centre renovations

WMK progress-led

Tell the local community what the high impact WMK initiatives are to improve the town in the short, medium, and long term.

These options are not mutually exclusive. We can employ each in turn to maximise impact.

Proposed approach

We recommend laying the groundwork within the public to say who WMK are, what you've done so far and what you will do in the future. This will allow us to begin to build trust and transparency with the wider community, give us context to tell positive community stories going forward and build in a layer of protection from any potential criticism ahead of any further, larger creative activation.

1

Clarify WMK internally

Develop a clear boiler plate and/or messaging explaining the organisation, the funding, how it works, what's been done already and what's next.

Share this around Alliances and ensure there are no misconceptions.

2

Who, what, how release

Get on the front foot, tell people who you are, what you've done so far and what you plan to do, including info on what has been proposed to UK Govt.

Think: 'We've done this and are building on that by doing this'

3

Positive survey results

Follow up from the general release with a good news story on the positive things that Killies' love, would change, and hope for their town and ways WMK are supporting this – this could double as a CTA for locals to get involved with Alliances. Use survey results to inspire a creative activation.

4

Amplify through Alliances

Create assets to be shared with Alliances (and other stakeholders) to use their networks to further reach and build understanding.

This could reinforce our survey coverage and help us find additional case studies to talk about.

Item 6 - Initiative Update – PR Campaign

Too much confusion about WMK, but potential for Alliances to be great messengers for us

- Many were unclear on what WMK's role is compared to council and Centre Stage, a lack of understanding about what the money can and will be used for and how they fit into the whole picture
- A number of references to start / stop feeling over the last year and they don't know whether that's down to Government or WMK
- A few misconceptions – e.g. that money only being spent on flowerbeds, is hard to apply for, residents haven't been consulted or that there will be a 'vote' soon on how to spend money
- Bad framing of information and misunderstanding of WMK is fueling negativity (in other words silence is hurting us)
- Underlying feeling that there is more positivity in the town that there might first appear – chiming with the idea of a vocal negative minority
- Many Alliances have great links to the community through partner organisations and can help reach, consult and spread the message to them
- Very clear desire from Alliances to be kept informed (and soon)

“It doesn't appear from the outside that they've worked out their process”

“Focus on... business park... and bringing more investment in good, but feels a bit horse before cart”

“I don't know what the bandwagon is to jump on”

“The idea of ring fenced is not getting through to everyone”

Next Steps

- Reiterate the key facts about We Make Kilmarnock (most of which are already in the public domain). Start by sending to key partners and stakeholders – in particular the Alliances.
- Be clear that some questions we can't answer, but will be able to soon once we have government sign off
- Develop a 'boiler plate' and Editor's Note with this information to provide to news editors and others on request
- Issue a release stating clearly the who, what and how's of WMK, including insight into the plans currently with the Govt
- Use the survey results to find a positive story to tell about Kilmarnock (combine with subtle messaging on WMK)

Boiler plate/Alliance FAQ

This is the most important and should be the first step no matter what, whether we plan to share this internally or externally. We need to make sure the WMK team and stakeholders, Alliances and third-party associates are on the same page. This means agreeing a concise articulation of the who, what, how and when of WMK.

- We Make Kilmarnock is driven by those who live, work, learn, and play in our town – led by the Kilmarnock Town Board, we are setting out to the town's long-term vision in close partnership with the community. The board will drive investment priorities and serve as trustees, managing this vision over the next decade
- We Make Kilmarnock has been awarded £20m over 10 years
- This funding will support local projects including town centre regeneration, green spaces, community initiatives, and arts, culture, and heritage programs
- In 2024, we shared £54k among our six community Alliances (Town Centre, North, East, South, West, and Youth Council) to fund local priorities
- Over 2,000 residents shared their ideas, helping shape spending plans
- The first round of funding in 2026 will use £592k to:
 - Improve shopping streets
 - Support local businesses
 - Tackle anti-social behaviour
 - Add to public art
- From 2027, We Make Kilmarnock will receive £2m annually to enhance Kilmarnock and pride in our town - we need your input to help shape how it's spent
- Visit wemakekilmarnock.co.uk to find out how you can get involved

Proposed Project Timeline*

	September	October	November	December
Internal	<p>Boiler plate development</p> <p>Who, what, how press release development</p> <p>Survey findings analysis</p>	<p>Creative stunt/installation ideation</p> <p>Positive survey results press release development</p> <p>Alliance comms</p>	<p>Creative stunt/installation production</p>	
Public Facing	<p>Who, what, how press release</p>	<p>Positive survey results press release</p> <p>Alliance comms/assets</p>	<p>Creative stunt/installation live</p> <p>Supporting press release/content</p>	

*Indicative timings as of 22 Aug, timings may change as plans develop.

Item 6 - Initiative Update – Town Centre Radios

- As of the end of August, the number of town radios in the town is 47, this number includes the newly added 9 users supported by We Make Kilmarnock.
- On Monday 1st of September another 20 users will be added, and these are all supported by We Make Kilmarnock.
- There are also another 7 potential users awaiting approval from an Area Manager.
- Crimewatch Scotland will continue to visit the area in a bid to get more radios out to new users.
- Crimewatch Scotland have their radio monitoring system up and running and are able to check the usage on each unit and contact the users if the radio has been offline for a period of time.
- It is our intention over the next few weeks to get out and speak to the users and ask them to display a window sticker that will say they are part of the scheme supported by We Make Kilmarnock.