

NEW CUMNOCK

COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN

2014 - 2019

'New Cumnock will be a friendly and attractive community to live in and visit that provides excellent amenities and services for local people and visitors. We will make the most of our local heritage and environment and develop a healthier local economy'

Flow gently, sweet Afton

New Cumnock Community Action Plan Steering Group

Afton Water Leisure, Glenafton 99's, Improving New Cumnock (INC), New Cumnock Environmental Regeneration Volunteers (NERV), New Cumnock Community Association, New Cumnock Community Council, Glenafton Athletic, New Cumnock Disabled Club and New Cumnock Parish Church and local residents.

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Babylonian
Artifact

Lagoon
Sunset

Afon
Water

INTRODUCTION



Flow gently, sweet Afton

NEW CUMNOCK COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN

This Community Action Plan summarises community views about:

- New Cumnock now
- the vision for the future of New Cumnock
- 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.

NEW CUMNOCK COMMUNITY STEERING GROUP

The preparation of the Action Plan has been guided by a local steering group which brought together representatives from Afton Water Leisure (NC Swimming Pool), Glenafton 99's, Improving New Cumnock (INC), New Cumnock Environmental Regeneration Volunteers (NERV), New Cumnock Community Association, New Cumnock Community Council, Glenafton Athletic, New Cumnock Disabled Club, New Cumnock Parish Church and local residents.

LOCAL PEOPLE HAVE THEIR SAY

The Action Plan has been informed by extensive community engagement carried out over a five month period from May 2013 to September 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 children's views survey, conducted through the primary school
- preparing a community profile detailing facts and figures about the community;
- a Community Futures Event.

664 COMMUNITY VIEWS SURVEY FORMS WERE RETURNED FROM OUR **1,500** HOUSES

107 SURVEY FORMS WERE RETURNED FROM THE PRIMARY SCHOOL

28 STAKEHOLDER MEETINGS AND FOCUS GROUPS WERE HELD WITH LOCAL GROUPS, BUSINESSES, AND SUPPORT ORGANISATIONS

156 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 New Cumnock now.

LOCATION

New Cumnock is the 'gateway' to East Ayrshire and close to the boundary with Dumfries and Galloway. It is on the A76 the main road between Dumfries and Kilmarnock.

POPULATION

The village and surrounding rural area has a population of around 2,600 - a decline of over 17% in the last decade. The largest reduction is in the number of children and working age adults, with an increase in the number of people of pensionable age. Over 30% of the population are over 60 compared with 24% for East Ayrshire and 23% for Scotland. These trends reflect a continuing loss of population over the 40 years since the closure of the coal mines.

HOUSING

There are just under 1,500 houses in New Cumnock with a significantly high percentage of social rented housing and low levels of owner occupied housing compared to East Ayrshire and Scotland.

EMPLOYMENT AND THE LOCAL ECONOMY

Loss of the coal mines by the end of the 1960's was a devastating blow to our still resilient community and it has been hard to replace as a source of local employment. Unemployment is higher than the East Ayrshire and Scottish average with nearly a quarter of working age people claiming out of work benefits. The decline in employment and income to the community is reflected in the village with a loss of shops and closure of the local hotel.

Open cast mining has continued as a smaller employer but in 2013 a further blow to the area was felt with the closure of Scottish Coal opencast mines. Some of these are now being reopened again by Hargreaves.

Tourism is still seen as a potential growth area through making the most of the area's location, environment and rich heritage. The success of attractions like the Lochside House Hotel and Dumfries House and the growth of the Caravan Site in Afton Glen are positive signs.

TRANSPORT AND ROAD LINKS

New Cumnock is on the A76 and on the railway line between Dumfries and Glasgow with a station in the village. It has good access to nearby towns, motorways, and national rail routes. There is also a community mini bus service in the area provided by 'Coalfields Community Transport'.

EDUCATION

Primary Schools: New Cumnock Primary School and Nursery Centre

High Schools: Cumnock Academy and St. Joseph's Academy (Kilmarnock)

Further education: Ayrshire Colleges (Ayr, Kilmarnock and Cumnock Annex)

University of West of Scotland (Ayr)

COMMUNITY AND RECREATIONAL

Facilities: Town Hall; Games Hall and Gym, Open Air Swimming Pool, Community Centre, Churches, Library, Working Men's Club, Golf Course, Bowling Club, Football Pitches, Running Track, Greenhead Park, play area and playing fields.

Groups and Activities: There are a large number of local groups active within the community. They include Glenafton Community Development Group, Improving New Cumnock, New Cumnock Community Association, New Cumnock Community Council, New Cumnock Environmental Regeneration Volunteers, Afton Water Leisure, Afton Lily, Glenafton Athletic Junior Football Team, Glenafton Youth Academy,



New Cumnock Fishing Club, Age Concern, Art Club, Blue Angel Bikers, Heritage Group, History Group, Homing Pigeon Club, Newsletter Group, WRI New Cumnock, WRI Dalleagles, Passage to Monthraw, Young Farmers, groups that meet in the Baptist Church and Parish Church, recreation groups that use the Community Centre and Games Hall, uniformed groups (Girls Brigade, Boys Brigade, Scout Troupe), Youth Groups (EAC Youth Club, Pathhead Activity Group, The Railway Hub)....and others.

Events: Bank Pit Miner's Annual Reunion, Community Gala, The Herd's Fair.

The mining culture is still retained in local events – the Gala Day – in the local football club (Glenafton Athletics) and in the proud, close knit and resilient nature of the community.

HERITAGE

New Cumnock has links with 3 of Scotland's most iconic figures in history – William Wallace, Robert the Bruce, and Robert Burns. The Afton River is celebrated in the Burns poem 'Flow gently sweet Afton'. The Robert Burns Heritage Trail has been developed to allow locals and visitors to trace the footsteps of the local bard.

William Wallace and Robert the Bruce were both known to have spent time in the area. William Wallace is said to have held a royal house at Glen Afton and Robert the Bruce evaded capture in Glen Afton several years before the Battle of Bannockburn. King Edward II of England stayed for 10 days at Cumnock Castle (now the site of the Arthur Memorial Church) whilst in pursuit of Bruce.

The area also has links with the Covenanters - 'giving succour' to them in their 17th Century struggle for spiritual independence.

Its more recent history is closely associated with coal mining – and the miners memorials in the village and Knockshinnoch bear witness to that time and the losses endured. Prior to coal the area was mined for antimony, copper, lead and graphite.

ENVIRONMENT

Upper Nithsdale is an attractive area with hills, rivers, woods and farmland, cut through with Open Cast Mining. Environmental assets include the beautiful Afton Glen, the Nith and Afton Rivers, several community woods, and the reclaimed Knockshinnoch Lagoons Nature Reserve (walking area with bird sanctuary and hides). There is a network of local paths spreading out from the village into the wider countryside - routes include Afton Water, Glen Afton, Lagoons, Miners Walk, Pier Point and Afton Dam. The pools and marshland at Knockshinnoch serve as a migration stop for birds between the Clyde and Solway.

HEALTH AND CARE SERVICES

- 4 doctors operate from the new GP surgery which also provides a range of primary care services and Clinics
- There is a Community Hospital in Cumnock and hospitals in Ayr and Kilmarnock with A&E departments.
- East Ayrshire Council provide care at home, community alarms, community meals and home adaptations.
- Sheltered Housing is provided in the village with 35 units.
- Statistics show there are a number of health inequalities that need to be tackled including alcohol and drug conditions, chronic pulmonary disease, and smoking during pregnancy.



OUR COMMUNITY NOW

COMMUNITY VIEWS

LIKES

Over 750 responses were made by local residents in our Community Views Survey. The results help to inform this action plan. Here is what people said they like about the community now... and what they were not so keen on!

Community Spirit and friendliness	60%
Environment and Outdoor Recreation	47%
Nature of the Community	29%
Location, Roads and Transport	15%
Access to public services	13%
Community facilities, organisations, events	13%
Local shops and amenities	9%
History and heritage	7%
Nothing/not much	3%

What People Said...

The people. They make you feel special

The friendliest people in Britain live in New Cumnock

New Cumnock is full of characters. You could go to town in your slippers and nobody would care

The fantastic scenery and natural beauty which is massively underestimated and unexploited

Glen Afton – you couldn’t buy that Glen

Great base for all kind of walks/bicycle trips.

Where its situated – not too far away from any of the large towns

Rail links to Glasgow and Carlisle are an asset to New Cumnock

The new school and the new doctors surgery

Fantastic new primary school and nursery that brighten up the Castle end of the town.

The school and staff are a huge asset as they cherish the children and run the school with their heart.

The various organisations who do sterling work

Church family and organisations

Great swimming pool

The Lochside Hotel and the great work in promoting it

The Coffee Bean at the Church, Jonathon’s shop, Pathhead Bakers

The caravan park seems to be expanding and bringing people to the area

I like the strong associations with Burns

Local history e.g. Burns, Knockshinnoch



DISLIKES

Village Appearance	52%
Local Economy	29%
Open Spaces and Environment	18%
Threats to the community	17%
Poor Access to services	10%
Lack of community activities	9%
Community safety	8%
Roads, Traffic and Parking	8%
Housing Stock	8%
Nothing	3%

What People Said...

The first thing people see is the boarded up Crown Hotel – eyesore

Empty and derelict buildings

The village has the visual impact of a dying village – it looks poorly

Don't like how no-one sees the brilliance of the village

No employment

No clothes shop, no shoe shops, no electrical shops

The bank only opens in the afternoon 4 days a week

We have no café etc. for a meeting place

No B&Bs

The state the River Afton is in

Need to improve paths around the Lagoon

The prospect of being surrounded by Wind Farms

A forgotten wee village

No money has been invested into the place

Loss of local people due to the lack of jobs.

Limited and costly bus service... feel cut off with no suitable transport.

No police station, part time local council office

Teens and youngsters have nowhere to go and nothing to do.

No all weather pitches

Running track is not being maintained

No signposts from Dumfries – is someone trying to put us off the map altogether

Terrible parking and blocking of the Main Road down by the new school

No provision for car parking.

Exteriors of social housing very dilapidated

I don't like the way New Cumnock was used at one point to house people who couldn't be housed elsewhere.

NEW CUMNOCK 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.



To have
a main street
where the buildings
are used and it is a
pleasant place for
people to live

'New Cumnock will be a friendly and attractive community to live in and visit that provides excellent amenities and services for local people and visitors. We will make the most of our local heritage and environment and develop a healthier local economy.'

Better
places for young
people to go and
be active – to engage
young people in
community
projects



For New
Cumnock to be seen
for what it is already – a
vibrant supportive community
with economic activity - craft
centre, heritage centre, that will
draw people into the area and
boost the local community spirit.



MAIN STRATEGIES AND PRIORITIES

These are the main strategies and priorities identified by the local community through profiles, surveys and interviews, which were further prioritised at the Community Event.

MAIN STREET AND TOWN CENTRE REGENERATION

The village gives a poor impression that belies the true nature of the place and its attractive setting. Its appearance affects its economy and its spirit and needs revitalised. Derelict buildings, sites, and poor exteriors of some of the housing all need remedied. People want to see regeneration of the village's central core and to create an attractive 'main street' with focal points, parking areas, and quality open spaces. One of the top priorities at the community event was to knock down the Crown Hotel and create much needed parking space for locals and visitors.

Main priorities

- Develop an agreed 'master plan' for the restoration and refurbishment of the main street and then take action on priority projects.
- Develop programme of village enhancement – 'keeping New Cumnock beautiful'
- Reduce heavy traffic through the village/traffic calming
- Improve the external condition of council and private let housing

COMMUNITY AND RECREATIONAL FACILITIES

New Cumnock has a number of community and recreational facilities many of them now not fit for purpose or needing revamped and under review by the local authority.

The key aspirations that are high priorities for the community are to save existing facilities, redevelop the Town Hall, and to develop the community owned swimming pool (one of our main assets) and integrate it with the council run Games Hall – to create a modern recreation centre. Both the Town Hall and a developed and modernised recreation centre are seen as having the potential to be attractions to outside visitors as well as core community and recreational facilities for locals.

Main priorities

- Save, restore and make best use of the Town Hall
- Support the improvement and promotion of the Swimming Pool
- Develop an integrated Sports and Community Hub
- Improve facilities for young people

MAIN STRATEGIES AND PRIORITIES

LOCAL ECONOMY, TOURISM AND JOBS

There is thought to be an opportunity to develop the tourism based economy of New Cumnock by making the most of its location, potential for outdoor recreation, heritage, and its local produce, arts and crafts workers.

The aims identified by the community are to make New Cumnock more attractive both as a place to stop if you are passing by, and also as a place to choose to visit. A package of measures to encourage people to stop as they travel along the A76 would need to include: better parking, amenities like a local café, and more interpretation and information. It was felt that more could be made of New Cumnock's status as a gateway to Ayrshire.

There are also ideas to develop outdoor recreation and heritage centres that would provide a focus for attracting visitors to the area. Similarly the development of accessible arts and crafts workshops, a micro brewery, and market days would serve as attractions to boost the local economy and make the most of local skills, produce and resources.

There is a recognition though that people without work in the area need to be supported and be able to access job and training opportunities in East Ayrshire and beyond and we need to ensure that there is good local access to this type of support.

Main priorities

- Make New Cumnock a welcoming place to stop in if you are passing by
- Make New Cumnock a 'destination' worth visiting
- Develop and promote local produce, arts and crafts
- Access to training and jobs services

ENVIRONMENT, HERITAGE AND OUTDOOR RECREATION

The local environment of Upper Nithsdale and Glen Afton have the potential to be made more of – through the development and promotion of cycling, walking, horseriding and canoeing.

The consultation identified community interest in building on previous work done and to look at ways of developing an Outdoor Recreation Centre. This would involve continuing to improve and promote paths; cleaning the rivers for canoeing; developing bike and canoe hire; and providing café and accommodation facilities.

Similarly there were opportunities to make more of the local heritage – building on the work already done to develop and promote a heritage trail and in particular to explore the establishment of a Heritage Centre.

Main priorities

- Develop and promote walking, cycling, horseriding and canoeing
- Clean up rivers – Afton and Nith
- Develop outdoor recreation centre
- Develop Heritage Centre and trails

ACCESS TO SERVICES & TRANSPORT

There was a strong sense from the consultation that New Cumnock was seen as being on the periphery of East Ayrshire and that it needed to ensure that it was not forgotten and that it retained and developed its access to services. The need to have a greater police presence, improve public transport, and doing more to cater for the ageing population were all highlighted

Main priorities

- Retain local council offices
- Increase police presence
- Improve public transport
- Develop services for the elderly



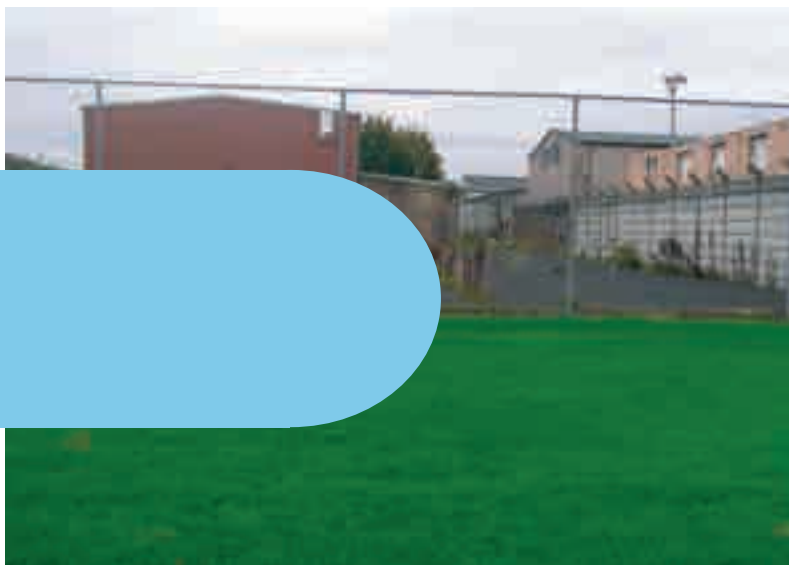
ACTION

A guide to the first steps to be taken within our 5 year plan.

THEME 1: MAIN STREET AND TOWN CENTRE REGENERATION

PRIORITY 1	Master Plan and action on main street regeneration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commission master plan/village design study to prepare plans for the regeneration of main street • Take action on priority projects e.g. Crown Hotel site, creating parking space, developing open spaces and focal points, interpretation etc.
Action by	<i>Improving New Cumnock, New Cumnock Environmental Regeneration Volunteers, Community Council, local businesses, Church, East Ayrshire Council</i>
PRIORITY 2	Village Enhancement Programme – Keeping New Cumnock Beautiful <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop programme of action and volunteering to remove litter, and make open spaces, gateways, and public realm more attractive.
Action by	<i>Improving New Cumnock, NERV, youth organisations, East Ayrshire Council, Keeping Scotland Beautiful</i>
PRIORITY 3	Reduce heavy vehicle traffic and traffic calming measures <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage with all relevant public and private bodies
Action by	<i>Community Council, East Ayrshire Council, Hargreaves, TranServ</i>
PRIORITY 4	Improve the external condition of council housing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved external maintenance of council housing
Action by	<i>East Ayrshire Council, Tenants</i>

ACTION



THEME 2: COMMUNITY AND RECREATIONAL FACILITIES

PRIORITY 1	Save and develop Town Hall <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop plans for restoring the Town Hall and making it a community asset and visitor attraction
Action by	<i>Improving New Cumnock, Community Council, East Ayrshire Council, Princes Foundation</i>
PRIORITY 2	Develop and promote the Swimming Pool <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the development of the pool • Develop plans for improvement and long term viability – changing rooms, retractable roof, exterior refurbishment, café etc.
Action by	<i>Afton Water Leisure, local volunteers, East Ayrshire Council</i>
PRIORITY 3	Develop integrated community and sports hub <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop proposals for an integrated community and sports hub that would bring together the swimming pool, games hall, community centre and related outdoor facilities (e.g. astro turf/all weather pitch development; running track, climbing wall, picnic areas, cafe etc)
Action by	<i>Afton Water Leisure, New Cumnock Community Association, Glenafton Athletic, Glenafton Youth Academy, local volunteers, East Ayrshire Council</i>
PRIORITY 4	Improve facilities for young people <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore ways of improving outdoor facilities and activities for young people (play park, skate park) • Support Glenafton Athletic to develop new facilities for Youth Academy • Support other initiatives e.g. Railway Project to develop further provision for young people
Action by	<i>Improving New Cumnock, New Cumnock Environmental Regeneration Volunteers, Glenafton Athletic, youth organisations, East Ayrshire Council</i>



THEME 3: LOCAL ECONOMY, TOURISM AND JOBS

PRIORITY 1	<p>Stop in New Cumnock</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop plans for a package of measures that would encourage passers by to stop in New Cumnock –parking, toilets, attractive open spaces, improved gateways, signage and interpretation, focal points. This could be done by commissioning a village ‘master plan’ • Identify and act on priorities to develop this package over the next 5 years
Action by	<i>Improving New Cumnock, New Cumnock Environmental Regeneration Volunteers, Community Council, local businesses, churches, East Ayrshire Council</i>
PRIORITY 2	<p>Visit New Cumnock</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commission feasibility study work to look at the best options for developing ‘attractions’ that would bring people to New Cumnock. • This should consider improvements to existing assets (Swimming Pool, Lagoons, rivers, paths etc) but also look at the potential for the development of new provision (Outdoor Recreation Centre)
Action by	<i>Improving New Cumnock, Community Council, New Cumnock Environmental Regeneration Volunteers, Afton Water Leisure, East Ayrshire Council</i>
PRIORITY 3	<p>Local produce, crafts and art</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify existing skills, local makers, and interest • Look at opportunities to develop and promote a local Market Day, accessible arts and crafts workshops, micro brewery, and the development of this sector of the economy
Action by	<i>Improving New Cumnock, Arts Group, local businesses</i>
PRIORITY 4	<p>Access to training and jobs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training linked to Glenafton Athletic, Outdoor Pursuits and Environmental Work • Helping local unemployed to carry out Job Search in New Cumnock e.g. Job Club
Action by	<i>Community Council, Improving New Cumnock, Glenafton Athletic, East Ayrshire Council, Job Centre Plus</i>



ACTION

THEME 4: ENVIRONMENT, HERITAGE AND OUTDOOR RECREATION

PRIORITY 1	Develop and promote walking, cycling, horseriding and canoeing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review existing footpaths, cycleways, trails and opportunities for canoeing • Prepare plan of action for physical improvements • Start to implement priority projects • Develop plans for promotion and improved signage and interpretation
Action by	<i>Improving New Cumnock, New Cumnock Environmental Regeneration Volunteers, Scottish Business in the Community, local stables.</i>
PRIORITY 2	Clean up rivers – Afton and Nith <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop specific plans to clean up rivers and surrounding paths to encourage greater recreational use • Take action in line with plans
Action by	<i>Improving New Cumnock, New Cumnock Environmental Regeneration Volunteers, East Ayrshire Council</i>
PRIORITY 3	Develop outdoor recreation centre <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build on and progress previous feasibility work
Action by	<i>Improving New Cumnock, New Cumnock Environmental Regeneration Volunteers, local sports clubs</i>
PRIORITY 4	Develop Heritage Centre and Trails <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the development of heritage initiatives • Explore potential to develop a Heritage Centre in one of the derelict/empty buildings
Action by	<i>Improving New Cumnock, History Club, School, East Ayrshire Council</i>

THEME 5: ACCESS TO SERVICES & TRANSPORT

PRIORITY 1	Retain local council offices
Action by	<i>East Ayrshire Council, New Cumnock Community Council</i>
PRIORITY 2	Increase police presence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lobby for improved police presence at key times and locations
Action by	<i>New Cumnock Community Council, Police Scotland, East Ayrshire Council</i>
PRIORITY 3	Improve public transport <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lobby for improved rail services at the weekends.
Action by	<i>New Cumnock Community Council, East Ayrshire Council, Network Rail</i>
PRIORITY 4	Develop services for the elderly <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigate the feasibility of building and operating a Nursing Home in New Cumnock
Action by	<i>New Cumnock Community Council, East Ayrshire Council</i>

MAKING IT HAPPEN



WORKING TOGETHER FOR NEW CUMNOCK

Local groups will continue to work together to take forward the priorities within the Action Plan.

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:

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, Scottish Government, Princes Trust, Princes Foundation, Scottish Natural Heritage, Forestry Commission, Scottish Wildlife Trust, Historic Scotland, Job Centre Plus, and Ayrshire LEADER.

ACTION PLAN THEME	CONTACT	
Main Street & Town Centre Regeneration	Ian Howat	T: 01290 332946
Community & Recreational Facilities	Ian Harper Andrew Clapperton	T: 01290 332310 T: 01290 332552
Local Economy, Tourism and Jobs	Mary Harper	T: 01290 332310
Environment, Heritage and Outdoor Recreation	Gette Fulton	T: 01290 810219
Access to Services & Transport	Jimmy Carmichael	T: 01290 338000

NEW CUMNOCK

COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN

2014 - 2019

This Community Action Plan sets out the priorities for the development of New Cumnock 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 New Cumnock
- 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.



This project is part-financed by the Scottish Government, European Community and Ayrshire LEADER 2007-2013 Programme