



OCHILTREE & SKARES

*Community Action Plan
2017 - 2022*

*Our vision is to create a vibrant, attractive,
welcoming and inclusive rural community that can be
enjoyed by residents and visitors alike.*



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Ochiltree and Skares Community Action Plan Group

The Action Plan sets out the public views on the main priorities of Ochiltree and Skares for the next 5 years.

A steering group was formed in 2016 after 2 public meetings were organised. This brought representation from various groups and residents within the community, including Ochiltree Community Council, Ochiltree Pre-5 Toddler group, Spark of Genius Netherton, Church groups, Ochiltree Community Hub and Skares and Kin residents group. They also worked in partnership with residents, businesses, voluntary organisations, schools, local farmers and East Ayrshire Council Vibrant Communities.

Aims of the Action Group:

- To provide an opportunity for the communities to come together to plan and implement change.
- Share views and ideas of what needs to be changed in their communities.
- Raise the profile of their areas and celebrate achievements together.
- Work in partnership with all existing groups and identify gaps for improvement.
- Deliver a vision through the Action Plan for the next 5 years.
- Work with communities and partners to achieve the priorities identified in this plan.

How this was achieved?

197 community surveys were returned from **468** households

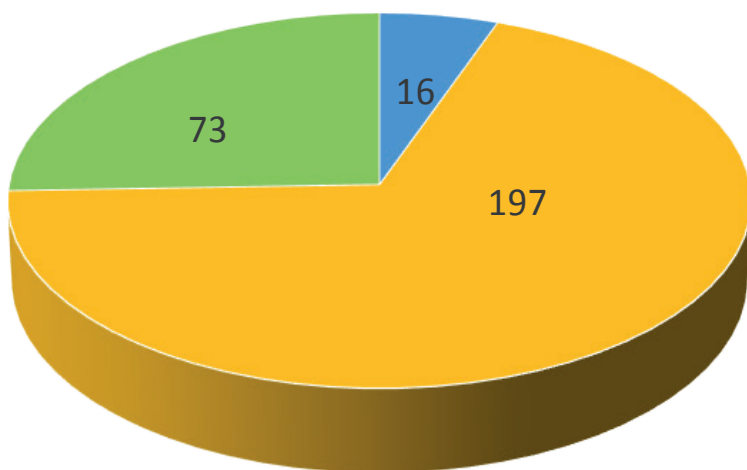
73 surveys from young people and schools

16 stakeholder meetings

Over **175** people attended the Community Open Event and voted on their top projects for action



Consultation Process



Consultation Returns

- Stakeholder Interviews 16
- Household Survey Returns 197
- Young People Returns 73

Total 286
Making a 61% return rate.

Our Community

We have summarised below some of the main facts and figures from the Community Profile, which was produced by the action group to give a picture of Ochiltree and Skares now...



Location

The village of Ochiltree is just under 12 miles due east of Ayr on the A70 to Cumnock and is the largest settlement in the community area. At its highest point the village is 145 metres above sea level, with the surrounding land rising to 350 metres.

Ochiltree (Ochiltref) is one of the oldest settlements in Ayrshire with evidence dating back to at least the Bronze Age and perhaps beyond. Its position on a hillside overlooking the Lugar Water and the Burnock Water was of strategic importance. It was given Burgh status in 1669. The village has historic associations with William Wallace, the Colville family, John Knox, the Covenanter's, Robert Burns, James Boswell and is the birth place and former residence of George Douglas Brown (House with the Green Shutters).

It has always been part of an agricultural community, but in the past also had many cottage industries including, snuff box making, cotton weaving, tile works, dye works and the manufacture of reaping tools. Until recently mining of minerals and coal had provided significant employment but with the demise of these industries the demography of our rural communities has changed as has employment opportunities.

Skares is located some three miles southwest of Cumnock. It used to have a football team called Skares Bluebells. Skares consisted of an older core of a village and three miner's terraces. They were called 'The Auld Raw', 'The New Raw' and 'The Tap Raw'. These were built as mining expanded in the area: today mining has gone except for the opencast mine behind Skares.

Population

Source: Census 2011

The current population of the community area is 761 (2013) and a significant proportion of the population is over 30 years old.

The population of Ochiltree has remained static in the last ten years from 752 in 2004 to 761 in 2013.

The current population of Skares is 36.

The main points to note are:

- Ochiltree community area has a smaller percentage of 16-29 year olds than regional and national figures.
- Ochiltree is in line with the percentage of over 60s in East Ayrshire and Scotland as a whole.

Housing

Ochiltree reports a higher level of owner occupied housing than the East Ayrshire and Scotland average. As a result, the area reports a lower level of rented accommodation from council than the East Ayrshire average.

Tenure - Ochiltree	No: of Houses
Owned	361
Rented from Council	67
Other social rented	2
Private rented or living rent free	38
Total	468

Source: Ochiltree Data Census 2011, Council Area and National, Census 2011, Scotland's Census Website

The Highfield housing development along with other smaller scale developments has increased the proportion of privately owned homes within the village of Ochiltree. The general state of repair of the village is good with the result that it is an attractive place to stay. This is reflected in the maintenance of the school roll.

The designation of part of the village as a Conservation Area has ensured that it retains significant links with its heritage.

There are no social housing available at the moment through the Council in Ochiltree.

At present there are 16 houses in Skares with only 1 owned by East Ayrshire Council.

Employment



There are limited employment opportunities within the areas with more people commuting to work to Ayr, Kilmarnock and Glasgow.

Some employers in the area include:

- Ochiltree Tyres
- Shopsmart
- Ochiltree Bowling club
- The Bakery Box
- Over Fork Over
- Dumfries House
- Auchinleck House
- Green Shutters Pharmacy
- The Commercial Inn

Bigger employers within the area include:

- Egger
- Barr Environmental
- East Ayrshire Council
- Local Farming Industry
- NHS

Employment within the area is very limited although a number of small businesses exist. The nearby establishment of Egger Barony, the developments at Killoch, the restoration of local surface mines and the potential for wind turbine development are all factors influencing the communities economy and regeneration.





Transport

The local bus service is provided by Stagecoach, route 42 with buses running approximately every half hour passing through Ochiltree to Cumnock, Auchinleck and Ayr and with connections to Glasgow and Dumfries. A Coalfield Community Transport bus is also available by registration and request. This service is particularly valuable to Skares, which has no other transport links. A Day Hopper service provides a shopping and excursion service to individuals in receipt of benefits, older or unemployed people, lone parents, people with disability or who are geographically disadvantaged. An Away Hopper service is also available to members of the Day Hopper club.

There is a train station at Auchinleck (3 miles) which connects to Dumfries/Carlisle/Newcastle or Kilmarnock/Glasgow and another at Ayr (12 miles) with connections to Prestwick and Glasgow airports.

Although there is a reasonably good bus service to the village car ownership has increased dramatically in the last 20 years. Road connections are good and commutes to Glasgow are not uncommon.

The 2011 census indicates that there are 385 locally owned cars or vans in the area, although 17.7% of residents reported that they did not own a car or van.

Source: Census 2011

% of households	
Households with no cars or vans	17.75
Households with 1 cars or vans	40.8%
Households with 2 or more cars or vans	31.2%
Households with 3 or more cars or vans	10.3%
Total number of cars or vans in area	385



Education

Pre-5

Auchinleck Nursery, Jacaranda Nursery (Coalhall), Catrine Nursery, registered childminders and Ochiltree Pre-5 Group in the Church.

Primary

Ochiltree Primary School is located in the heart of the village. School attendance rates at Ochiltree Primary School have traditionally been higher than the authority average: In 2014/15 attendance was 1.0% higher than the authority average.

Secondary

There are two secondary schools within the area located in Cumnock and Auchinleck, however most children in the area attend Auchinleck Academy.

Schools	Number of Pupils
Ochiltree PS	112
Cumnock Academy	3
Auchinleck Academy	83

Further Education

Ayrshire Campuses

- Ayr
- Kilmarnock
- Kilwinning
- University of the West of Scotland (Ayr)





Health

The general consensus as evidenced by questionnaires is that the environment, rural lifestyle and general ambience of the Ochiltree/Skares community area are conducive to health and well being. However there is both direct and indirect evidence that the area has a high prevalence of serious health conditions notably coronary heart disease (CHD), cancer, stroke and transient ischemic attack (T.I.A). It is particularly concerning that figures for rates of occurrence of serious health conditions are considerably higher than East Ayrshire, Ayrshire and Arran and National averages. This in part may be due to lifestyle choices, lack of physical activity, poor diets and, or engagement in the past with high risk employment such as the local coal mining industry.

Another, and perhaps a more fundamental factor impacting the averages may just be the demographic fact that a significant proportion of the population is over 65 and therefore more likely to experience periods of ill health. Whatever the causes, old age health is a key issue in the Ochiltree and Skares area, which is evidenced by the high rate of 65+ emergency admissions (30,986 per 100, 000) and with 65% of the 65+ population being physically limited by long term health conditions.

Smoking behaviour:

One-third of the population are estimated to be regular smokers, a rate which is considerably higher than East Ayrshire, Ayrshire & Arran and National averages. The rate of lung cancer registrations in Ochiltree is considerably higher than East Ayrshire and national average rates.



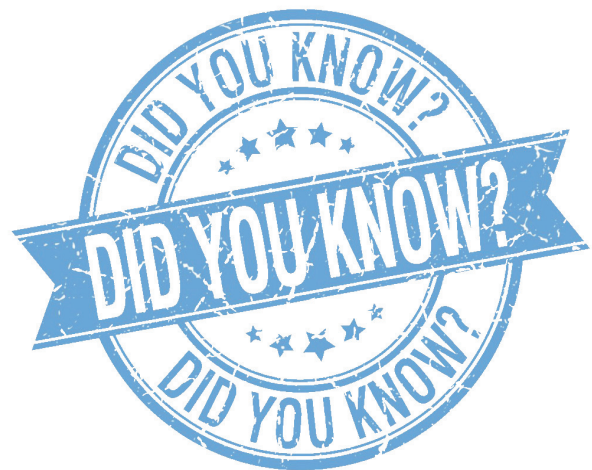
Risk Behaviour

High rates of hospital admissions attributable to various risk behaviours including respiratory, digestive, coronary heart disease, cancer and cerebrovascular disease indicate a central issue of risk behaviour.

The high prevalence rates recorded by the Auchinleck Surgery / Ochiltree Clinic regarding: cancer, coronary heart disease (CHD), chronic kidney disease (CKD), diabetes, heart failure, hypertension and smoking-related conditions also supports the notion that risk behaviours are a factor to a considerable extent in the area.

Digestive disease and coronary heart disease admission rates in addition to the prevalence rates of hypertension and smoking-related conditions recorded in the area are particularly concerning as such figures were considerably higher than East Ayrshire, Ayrshire & Arran and National averages.

Such behaviours are often interlinked and will likely include substance use (tobacco, alcohol, and drugs), a lack of physical activity and poor diets.



Ochiltree Curling Club was formed in 1841.

Their 175th anniversary dinner was held in Ochiltree Bowling Club.



Environment

Agriculture

Farming has played a massive role in shaping both the landscape and the culture of the Ochiltree and Skares area. From the earliest days of forest clearance and drainage through the establishment of tenant farms, the revolution in crop production and animal breeding of the 17th and 18th century, through the war years and the mechanisation and industrialisation of food production the agriculture sector has dominated local land use. Today the uncertainties of global markets and the ever present battle with product prices still challenges the farming community. Through all of this the generations of farming families have provided support to the wider community through the school, the church and as guardians of the landscape.

Forestry

The war years and the establishment of the Forestry Commission had a profound impact on the production of timber in the UK. The removal of woodlands and forests were reversed by the large scale planting of commercial forestry plantations. Whilst these new forests did not replace the indigenous woodlands they have developed to provide recreational opportunities and access to previous inaccessible areas. The North Kyle Forest Master Plan now offers the possibility of a major public area close to Ochiltree and Skares with possibilities of access and provision of services. At the same time the work of Ayrshire Woodlands at Whitehill Colliery and Auchlin has transformed derelict industrial sites into wildlife sanctuaries and pleasant walking areas.

Paths and access

There are a number of rights of way and designated core paths around Ochiltree but less so around Skares. Walking is a popular activity with some routes such as the High Road, the Poole Pad and the River Lugar Walk being well used. There is much support for the improvement of local paths and in particular the development of routes to Dumfries House, Auchinleck House and the River Ayr. In addition the proposals for the North Kyle Forest offer great opportunities for new links and access points particularly at Skares.

Wildlife

The wildlife of the area, which has shown great resilience to change, is showing signs of benefiting from a more enlightened approach. Controls on water pollution and a willingness to incorporate environmental assessments into planning proposals have had an impact. Having said this it is important that future planning proposals and changes to land use are rigorously inspected, to ensure that the area maintains a suitable high quality environment to support the plants, animals and insects that characterise our countryside.

Sites of Special Significance

The preservation and protection of historical, wildlife and cultural sites is vital as part of our heritage. It is accepted that times move on, but where possible, the past should be both remembered and if possible preserved for future generations to learn from and enjoy. A number of archaeological remains, which include Pedens Cave, Ochiltree Mill, Mote Toll area, and The Camp (Mill Road) are listed as archaeologically important. Some of the houses have been given conservation status, including The House with the Green Shutters (the birthplace of George Douglas Brown, author of the book by the same name). The raised bog at Barlosh Moss has been given Site of Special Scientific Importance (SSSI) status, and the woodlands of the Lugar Water at Auchinleck Estate are also listed as important. Nearby, Whitehill Colliery and Auchin are nature reserves maintained by Ayrshire Woodlands.

Other Environmental Issues

There is particular concern in the village relating to heavy traffic. Noise, vibration damage, air pollution and the potential for serious accident's are all associated factors.

Issues relating to agricultural runoff and offensive smells caused by the spreading of agricultural waste have been raised.

Concern has been expressed about air quality as a result of discharges from the Egger Factory at Barony, methane discharges from Garlaiff Coup, and potential problems with the proposed development at Killoch.



Collared Cinerary Urn, Bronze Age, 2000 - 1500 BC. This urn was found at Moathill, Ochiltree around 1838. Cremated remains were often placed in this urn and buried upside down.



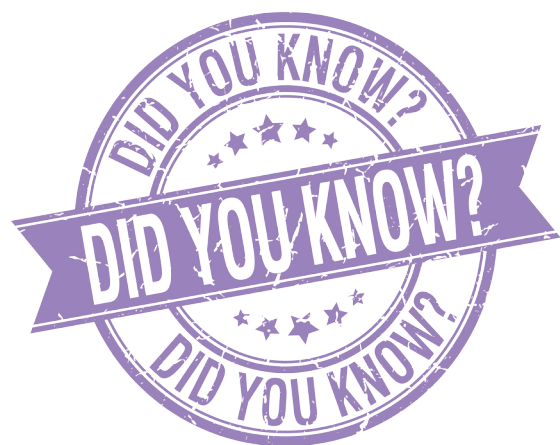
Poole Pad

Robert Campbell
Photography



Old Cemetery

ROBERT CAMPBELL
PHOTOGRAPHY



*Some of the gravestones in the old
cemetery date from the 1700s.*



What People Said...

OCHILTREE & SKARES COMMUNITIES Needs your opinion

WHY?

To help improve our area and attract funding for the things we need!
From 22nd of August 2016
Volunteers will be delivering, to every household in Ochiltree and Skares communities, a very short survey to enable a Community Action Plan to be developed.



Community Boundaries in Red

Please support your area and make your views count

Your views really matter

The survey results will be used to help put together a Community Action Plan which will identify the main priorities for development in Ochiltree and Skares over the next 5 years. A Community Action Plan will help local groups to secure funding and support for the main projects and developments that people would like to see. Information shall be gathered from individual residents, voluntary groups, other agencies and organisations. The Action Plan will also be the basis for Ochiltree & Skares Communities to work in partnership with East Ayrshire Council's Vibrant Communities.

Who is carrying out the Survey?

The survey is being organised by Ochiltree & Skares Community Action Group - which brings together representatives from: - Church groups, Toddler group, Community Association, Community Council, Ochiltree Hub, Local businesses, Young People and Local residents.

Find out the Results of the Survey and vote for your Priority Projects....

The findings of this survey and further community consultation will be presented at a "drop in" community event and exhibition in the near future.

If this has been delivered to your house please fill it in - one of our survey team will be back to pick it up in the next day or two.

.....will call back onto pick up the completed form.

THE SURVEY CAN ALSO BE COMPLETED ON LINE AT:

<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/Ochiltree-Skares-Communities>

THANKS FOR YOUR HELP (Please keep this sheet for information!)

ALL INFORMATION PROVIDED IS CONFIDENTIAL AND NOT ATTRIBUTED

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

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Ochiltree Community Futures Business Views Survey

1. What do you like about having a business in OCHILTREE and SKARES?

East Ayrshire Ochiltree Community Action Plan Stakeholder Interviews

Business:
Date:
In Attendance:

1. Introduction

History:

What do you like about having a business in Ochiltree and Skares?

Ochiltree and Skares COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN 2016 - 2021 Business Views Survey

Business views wanted

We would like to find out what local businesses think about Ochiltree and Skares - what is good and what you would like to see changed for the better. Please take a few minutes to answer the attached questions.

We are also carrying out a household community survey to find out what local people who live in Ochiltree and Skares and conduct a five year action plan to improve the area and make it better for you to live in, work in or visit.

Why?

The aim is to put together a 5 year Community Action Plan which will highlight the issues that are important to local people and as a guide for local community groups, agencies and organisations to develop the projects that matter the most to the community.

The Action Plan can be used by all community groups and organisations to develop applications for priority projects, as it will be a guide for local community groups, agencies and organisations to develop the projects that matter the most to the community.

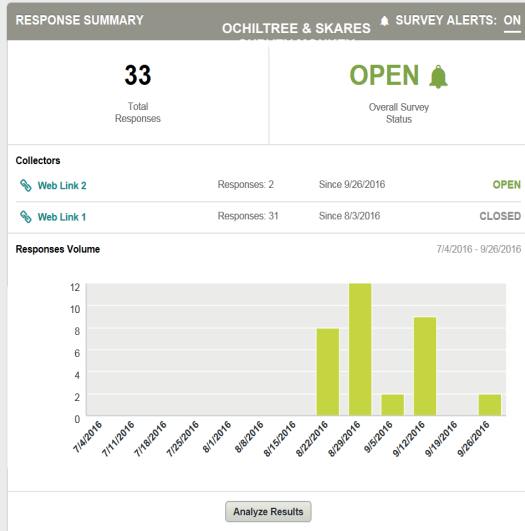
Who is carrying out the survey?

The survey is being carried out by the Ochiltree & Skares Community Action Group which is made up of local groups and organisations supported by vibrant communities.

Results of the Survey....

There will be a Community Event where the survey results will be presented and community consultations will be held to discuss the findings of the survey and to promote your business.

THANK YOU
Please keep this sheet for information!



Ochiltree & Skares Communities Survey

We would be grateful if you could take a few minutes to answer the questions in this survey. We want to find out what local people in Ochiltree & Skares Communities think about their community and how you think it could be improved. This information will be used to develop a five year action plan to improve the area and make it better for you to live in, work in or visit. This survey is being carried out by Ochiltree & Skares Communities Action Group, which is made up of a combination of local groups, businesses and residents.

1 What do you like about Ochiltree & Skares Communities?

What do you like about Ochiltree & Skares Communities?

What do you like about Ochiltree & Skares Communities better to live in?

Now where views are coming from, so we can tell you where you are from (please circle)

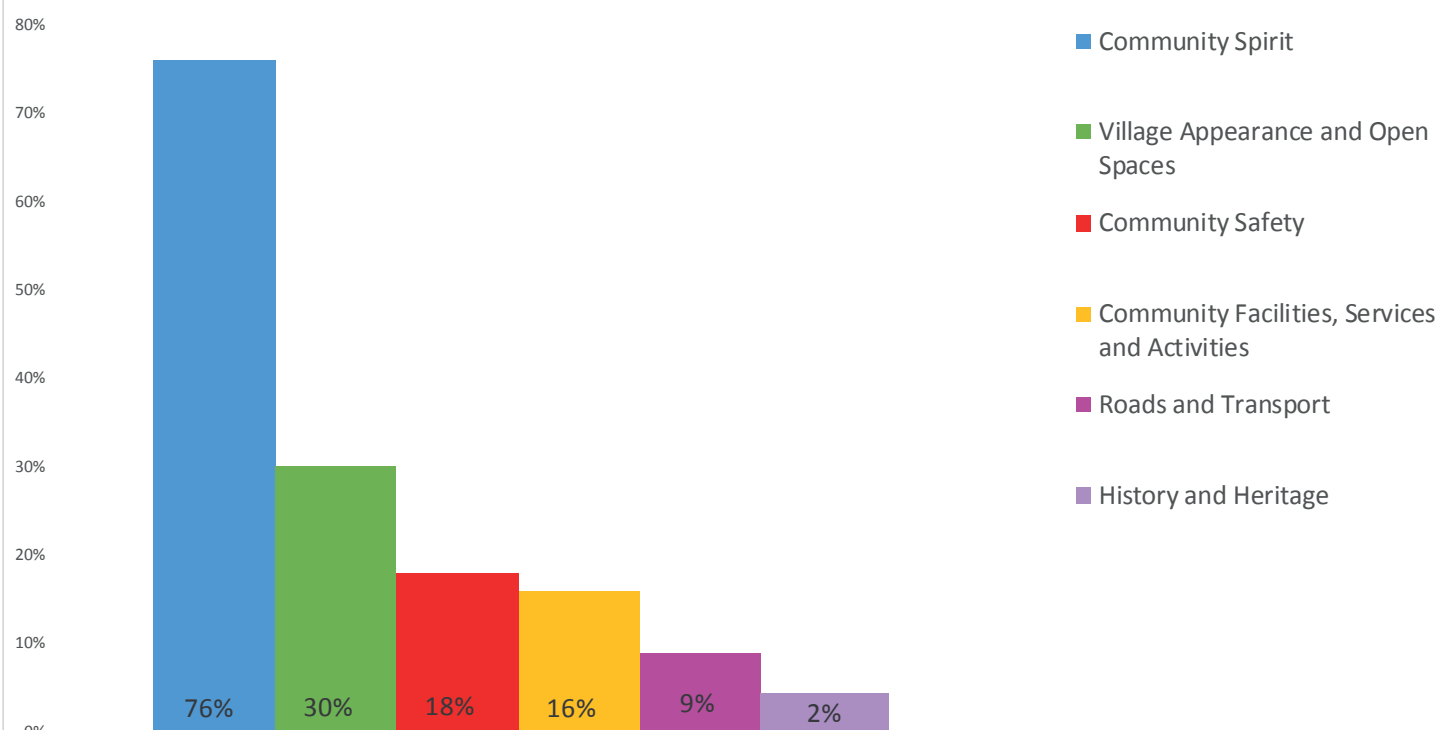
25-44 45-59 60-69 70+

Male ☐ Female ☐

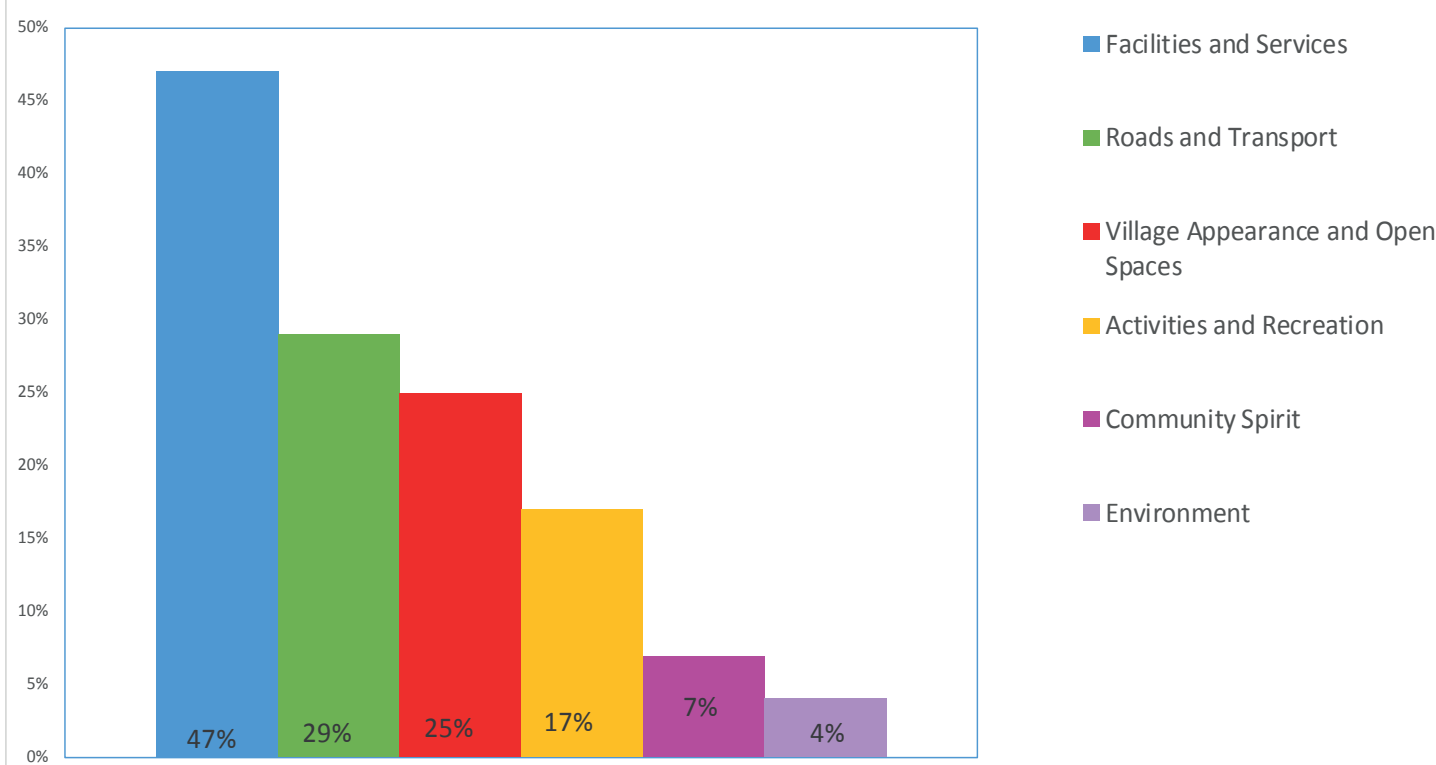
Likes and Dislikes

286 responses were made by local residents of all ages in our Community Views and Stakeholders survey. Shown in the charts below are the responses. This information has been used by the Action Group to develop the themes and priorities that are important to the people of Ochiltree and Skares.

What we LIKE!



What we DISLIKE!





Here is what the community said they liked about Ochiltree and Skares now... and what they disliked.



Likes

- *'Quiet and peaceful'*
- *'A sense of belonging'*
- *'Friendly welcoming people'*
- *'Active community'*
- *'Positive people'*
- *'People getting involved in the community'*
- *'Helpful'*
- *'Decent area'*
- *'Good neighbours'*
- *'Everyone says hello'*
- *'Peace and tranquillity'*
- *'Friendliness of locals'*
- *'There is always someone willing to lend a hand'*
- *'Friendly caring community'*
- *'Good people trying hard to better their village'*
- *'The people'*
- *'A small helpful and friendly community'*
- *'Newsletter and Hub magazines keep everyone up to date'*
- *'Great community spirit'*
- *'It's a quiet sociable place'*

Dislikes

- *'Lack of things for children to do'*
- *'Not enough for young and older people'*
- *'Lack of facilities'*
- *'No children's clubs'*
- *'Pub closed'*
- *'Nowhere for teenagers to go'*
- *'Loss of services such as Post Office Community Centre, Library'*
- *'Lack of shops'*
- *'Lack of community spirit and participation in community events'*
- *'Not many amenities'*
- *'Access to eating facilities'*
- *'No facilities for children'*
- *'Not enough paths connecting other communities'*
- *'Lack of employment'*
- *'No nursery provision'*
- *'Services focused on Kilmarnock'*





MAKE THINGS BETTER...

- *'Better social activities'*
- *'Community area where locals can meet, hold functions and discuss village affairs'*
- *'A centre that will cater for young people and elderly, run by the people of the village'*
- *'A more welcoming community centre'*
- *'New community centre with indoor activities for all ages'*
- *'Appropriate facilities'*
- *'A Community centre with good modern facilities'*
- *'Better roads'*
- *'A more thriving economic place for business to grow'*
- *'Crime free'*
- *'Socially active and inclusive for all ages'*
- *'Happy and safe'*
- *'New school and nursery'*
- *'More shops'*
- *'A place where everyone can come together'*
- *'Seating area for families at Kay Park'*
- *'Better activities in the park'*
- *'Good public foot / cycle paths around the village'*
- *'Less litter'*
- *'Less rubbish in the roadside'*
- *'Develop a Community facility in the football park'*
- *'Dog poo bins'*
- *'A continuous foot path connecting other communities'*
- *'More control over dog fouling'*
- *'Designates signed walks'*
- *'Footpath to Dumfries House'*
- *'The bridge railings need painted'*
- *'To be a closer village'*
- *'A lively community offering facilities for young and old alike'*
- *'To see Ochiltree and Skares receive better funding and care'*



Vision for Future

Our vision is to create a vibrant, attractive, welcoming and inclusive rural community that can be enjoyed by residents and visitors alike.



‘That all sectors of the community are supporting each other’

‘New ‘Hub’ replacing the community centre that can be at the centre of village’

‘A thriving community’

‘The village to have a new community centre with café as proposed including more facilities for teenagers and other children’

‘A friendly village Inn’

‘Pothole free streets’

‘I would like to see Ochiltree and Skares receive better funding and care’

‘I would strongly like to see the construction of an Ochiltree by-pass to remove heavy volume and dirty traffic’

‘I would like to see Ochiltree as the third point on the ‘Golden Triangle’ between Ochiltree/Auchinleck Estate/Dumfries House’

‘A lively community offering facilities for young and old alike’

‘Upgrade paths and roads in village to make the area look good’

‘No-one feeling alone or lonely, for us all to be a great friendly community’

Ochiltree & Skares Mission Statement

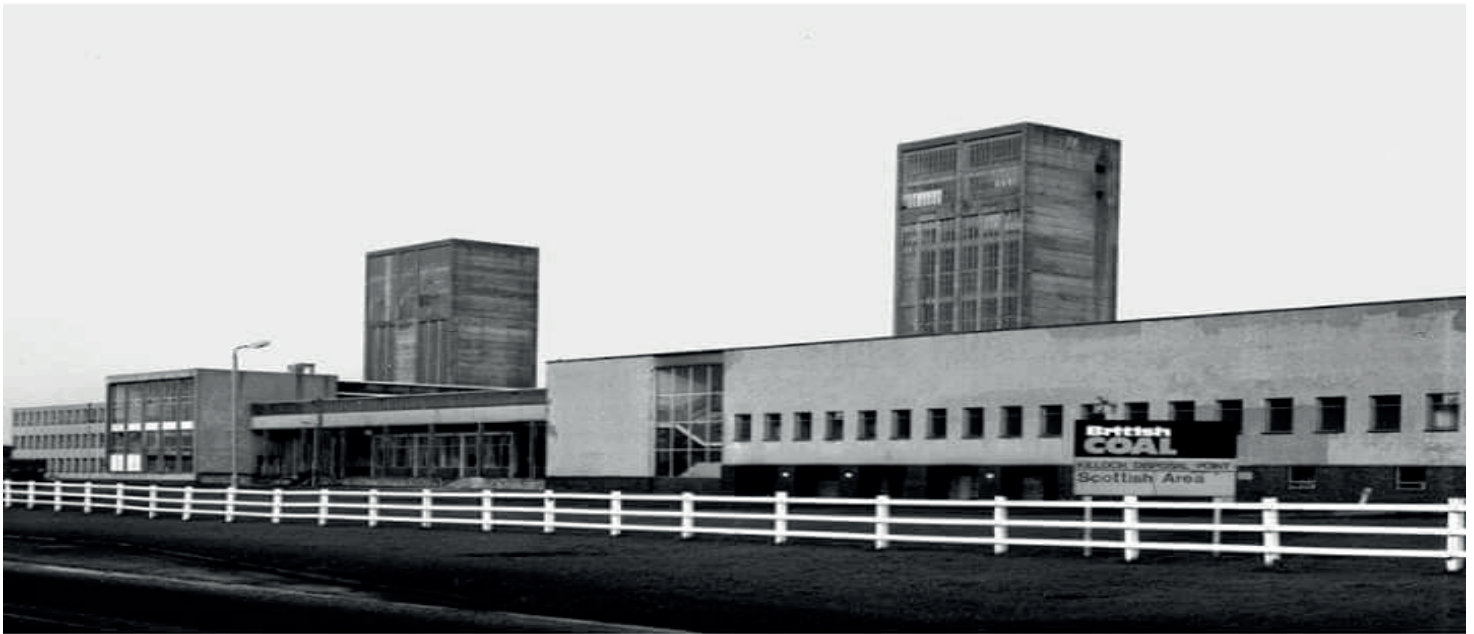
Our mission is to engage with the community, harness their enthusiasm and secure a positive future for the rural community through:

- *Creating facilities that facilitate education, recreation, health and wellbeing, leisure and cultural growth.*
- *Create an attractive and welcoming rural community.*
- *Encourage inward investment to support the local economy, develop services and attractions and promote tourism.*
- *Create a destination worth visiting through offering access to historical locations and recreational activities whilst also conserving, encouraging and celebrating our landscape and wildlife.*
- *Create and maintain attractive and welcoming villages.*





Our Community Our History



Killoch colliery started production in 1960 and in 1965 was the first Scottish pit to produce 1 million tons of coal in a year. It was a huge employer in the area and ceased production in November 1986.

Ochiltree in the Middle Ages was spelled Uchletree. It is near Auchinleck and Cumnock. Ochiltree is one of the oldest villages in East Ayrshire, with remains dating from the Stone Age.



The House with the Green Shutters

Source: 'Places of Interest in and around Ochiltree' written by Sophie Reid age 10

The House with the Green Shutters on Ochiltree's Main Street is the house where George Douglas Brown was born on 26th January 1869. He went to school at Ochiltree, Coylton and Ayr. He wrote the novel 'The House with the Green Shutters', which is about Scottish life and character. The village 'Barbie' in the book is believed to be Ochiltree.





Our Community Our History

By the early 1900's, Skares had its fair share of social, educational and sports activities. Skares Memorial Hall opened in 1922 to commemorate the 14 Skares men who gave their lives in WW1. The hall had reading and games rooms with seating for 200, where wedding receptions and concerts were held and where various social groups and public meetings met. These included the Free Gardeners, Rechabites, Juvenile Football Club, Brass Band, Dramatic Club. Quoiting Club, Phonetic Class, Good Templars and an Ambulance Corps. Various football teams were also formed: Skares Victoria, Skares Athletic, Skares United, Skares Brunton Lads and of course the famous Skares Bluebells.

Source: Cumnock History Group - research by Bobby Grierson



Primary school children attended nearby Garrallan School but due to increasing demand a new brick built school was built in Skares capable of holding 200 pupils with children over 12 attending the nearby Cumnock School. Around 1904 the Parish School Board purchased a new piano for the school as the old one had been gnawed by rats! Facilities for further education were offered in the continuation classes to young people age 15-18, where discussion groups, country and modern dancing and youth service classes were all well attended. Skares Primary continued as a one-teacher school until 1966 having only 7 pupils, when it closed.

Source: Cumnock History Group - research by Bobby Grierson



Our Community Our History



In 1666 the Covenanters gathered at Ochiltree.

Four parties of Covenanters gathered from South West Scotland, mustered and rested at Ochiltree, led by Colonel James Wallace. They then passed through Cumnock and Lanark, heading for the fateful battle at Rullion Green 28th November 1666.

John Knox the great reformer married Ochiltree's daughter Margaret Stewart.

Burns Epistle to William Simpson, Winsome Willie, Headmaster Ochiltree School

I gat your letter, winsome Willie;
Wi` gratefu heart I thank you brawlie;
Tho`I may say't, I wad be silly,
An` unco vain,
Should I believe, my coaxin billie,
Your flatterin strain.

Ev`n winter bleak has charms to me
When winds rave thro` the naked tree;
Or frosts on hills of Ochiltree
Are hoary gray;
Or blinding drifts wild-furious flee,
Dark`ning the day!

(only an extract from the 18 verses written by Robert Burns)

Source: Poems: Selected and edited by William Beattie and Henry W. Meikle



Our Community Our History

How a Sheep's head destroyed Ochiltree castle

On the banks of the river Lugar before Wallace's came are the remains of Auchinleck castle on one side and very few remains of Ochiltree castle on the other side.

In the 15th century the family called Auchinleck lived in the Auchinleck castle and the Colvill family lived in Ochiltree castle.

They had a rope going from one castle to the other across the river Lugar, which they used to send messages and other things to each other.

The two families fell out and the Laird Auchinleck sent over a sheep's head in a parcel over the rope to the Ochiltree castle.

The Colvills at Ochiltree castle were furious and attacked Auchinleck castle and slayed Laird Auchinleck.

Laird Auchinleck was a relative of the Black Douglas, a powerful warrior from Lanarkshire, and when he heard what had happened, he came swiftly to Ochiltree castle and burned it to the ground, and killed the head of the Colvill family.

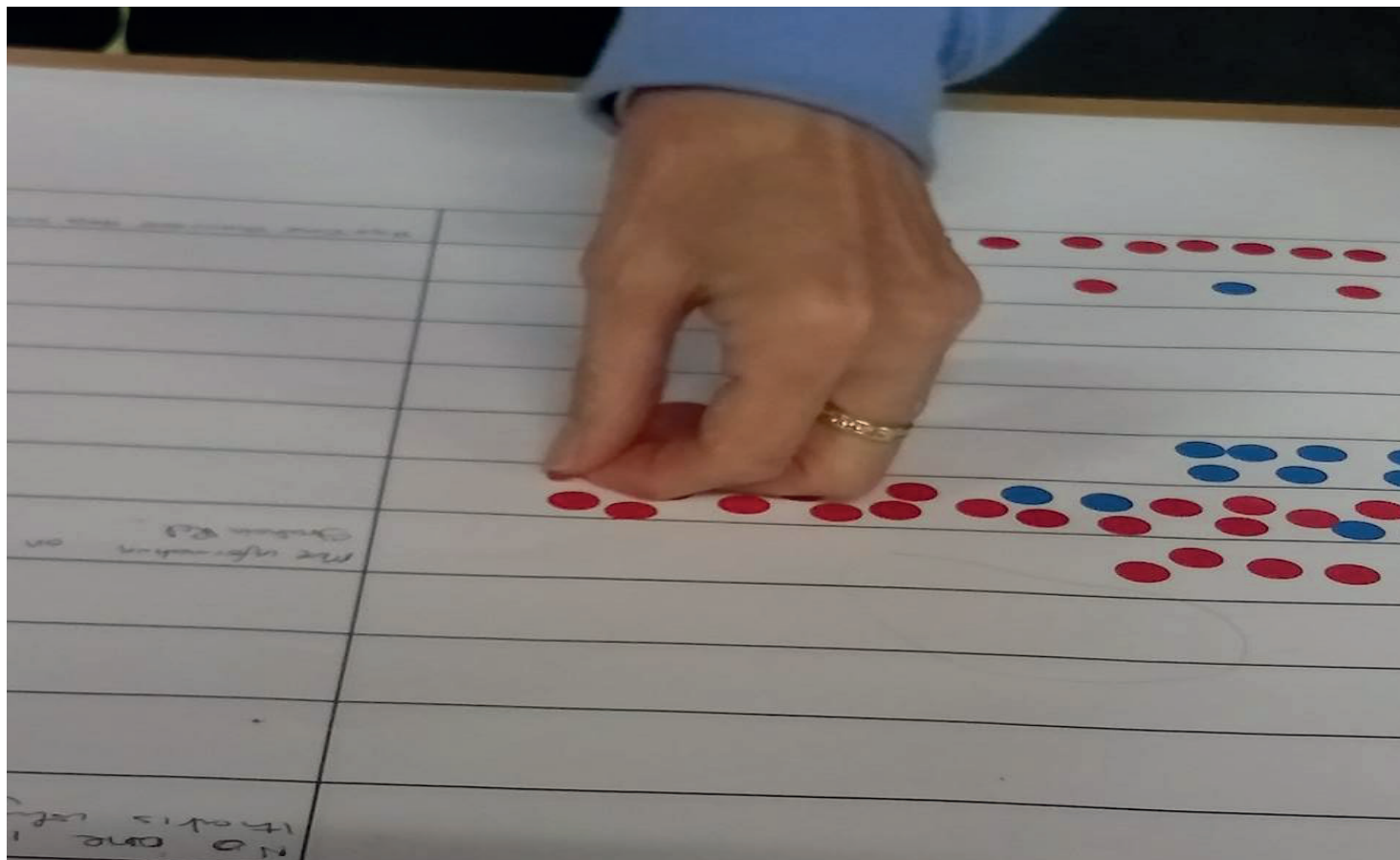
Ochiltree castle was never rebuilt !

Source: 'Places of Interest in and around Ochiltree' written by Sophie Reid age 10



Main Themes & Priorities

A guide to the first steps to be taken over the next 5 years in Ochiltree and Skares.



Community Facilities & Services

Building Local Economy & Tourism

Community Spirit / Activities & Events

Improve Roads, Transport & Paths

Village Appearance & Open Spaces



Main Themes & Priorities

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

Community Facilities & Services

There was a very strong belief that a new Community Hub / Centre for the Village of Ochiltree was really important to continue engaging with the whole community and to attract new and existing groups to the area with a warm safe environment for them to meet and socialise.

The community feel very passionate about improving education facilities and ensuring that every child has a great start in life through their local Primary School.

Other services that the community identified were investment in good quality social housing and the upgrade of existing ones, to allow more affordable accommodation to attract new people to the area.

Building Local Economy & Tourism

The area of Ochiltree and Skares is predominately agricultural, however there is a strong feeling that more shops and businesses would allow more opportunities for the area and attract more tourists.

There is a belief that promoting the tourist attractions / information within the areas e.g. Wallace's Cave, The Green Shutters, Ochiltree Castle, Auchinleck House, Pedens Cave, The Miners and Dumfries House would attract more people to the area helping with the economy and raising the profile.

Community Spirit / Activities & Events

More activities and events were highlighted within the priorities and people want to see more social events for both elderly and young people. Surveys suggested that they would like to see the Gala Day coming back, more after school activities and youth clubs.

There is a great sense of community pride and spirit within the areas, however people would like to see more volunteers coming along to help with the local groups and activities. There is also a need to ensure that all activities are promoted and accessible to everyone.

Improved Roads Transport & Paths

Improving Public Transport was highlighted in the priorities and people feel that there is limited access to main services for the rural areas, the bus service in the rural areas could be improved.

Throughout both areas the community feel that pathways and walkways need to be upgraded with people voting on a path from Auchinleck House to Barony A Frame to Dumfries House to Ochiltree. Skares would like to see the woodland walk upgraded too.

The Kay Park is also an area that could be developed to ensure that it is used to its full potential.

People feel that the roads could be improved and traffic calming measures investigated.

Village Appearance & Open Spaces

While both areas have beautiful countryside around them, there is a feeling that there is still a lot that could be improved, as Skares would like to see the Opencast behind the village restored to its natural habitat. Ochiltree would like to see improved signs at the entrances to the village as they have deteriorated over the years.

There is an issue with dog mess and litter and people get very frustrated by people just not respecting the area and cleaning up after their pets.

Theme: Community Facilities and Services



Library

Mobile library visits on every second Monday and Wednesday.

Village Halls/Community Centre's

Church Hall & Bowling Club are available for functions and private lets.

Community Café

Operates twice a week in the Ochiltree Community Hub Office (top shop) – Tuesday afternoon and Saturday morning.

Ochiltree Community Hub Office

When the Community Centre and library closed in March 2016 the group felt it was important to have a base and they applied to Comic Relief for funding, who granted them money to run the office and open it to other community groups. The Hub base keeps focus in the village.

Sport Facilities

Football pitch and basketball cage at Kay Park.

Parks

There are 2 children's play parks at Broom Crescent and Douglas Brown Avenue.

School Groups

Football and Swimming.

Priorities

Ochiltree & Skares is TRANSFORMING...

Improve Facilities for the Whole Community

Actions

- Create a new Hub.
- Create a Leisure Centre incorporating sport.
- Develop and improve the library service.
- Investigate longer hours at the surgery.
- Liaise with the Church with regards to the Church Hall being upgraded.

Ochiltree & Skares is WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP...

Upgrade School and Nursery Provision

Actions

- Investigate a Nursery provision within the School.
- Liaise with School with regards to an upgrade to provide a more modern provision.
- Investigate building an extension to the School.

Ochiltree & Skares is IMPROVING...

Housing

Actions

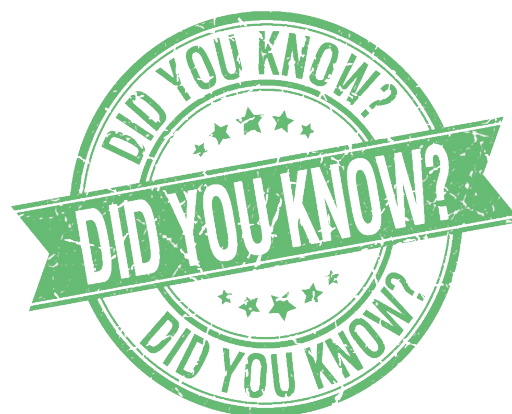
- Upgrade existing houses.
- Develop more social housing.

Ochiltree & Skares is SUPPORTIVE...

Improve Services

Actions

- Link with Council to improve the bin service.
- Liaise with internet providers to increase broadband.
- Upgrade the cemetery and car park.
- Investigate the need for public toilets.



*Ochiltree Community Centre
was built in the 1970's and
closed in March 2016*

Who could help move this forward?

The above actions can only be met through working in partnership with various groups. We have identified various groups and organisations that could assist with these actions.

They are:

East Ayrshire Waste Management, East Ayrshire Housing, Internet Providers, Ochiltree Community Hub, Schools, Nursery, Funders, Volunteers, Community Groups and Residents.



Theme: Building Local Economy & Tourism



Agriculture and mining were for years the bedrock of the local economy. Pre 1940's small cottage industries were common in our community but in more modern times these have died out. Today the internet offers opportunities for home business but there is limited opportunity for them to feed into the local economy. Services such as the shop, takeaway, garage and public house are well used and provide some employment.

There is an identified need for tourist related services, particularly accommodation as such developments would attract more visitors and provide a need for support services. Identifying, developing and promoting more tourist related opportunities is vital for the future economy of the community. Government support for the agricultural sector post Brexit is of major importance to our rural community.



Priorities

Ochiltree & Skares is RAISING THE PROFILE...

Attract New Investment

Actions

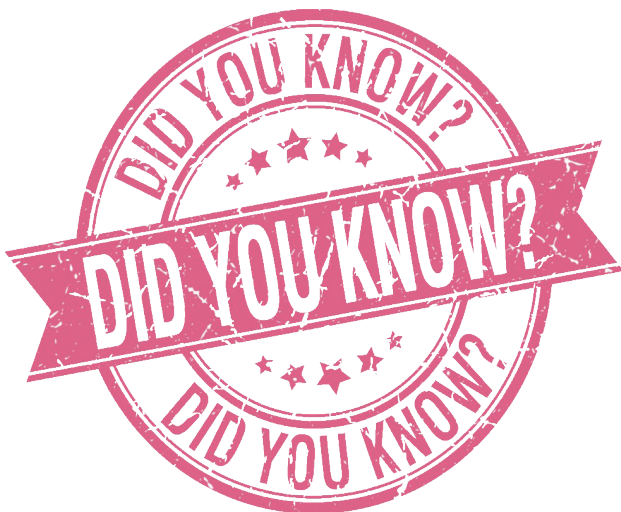
- Attract new businesses to the area e.g. more shops, coffee shop, hairdressers, country pub and vet surgery.
- Investigate an independent Post Office.
- Apply for public and external funding to improve the local economy.

Ochiltree & Skares is INSPIRING...

Increase Employment Opportunities

Actions

- Develop unique tourist opportunities through the A Frame, Robert Burns and William Wallace connections.
- Investigate and promote opportunities for local businesses.
- Develop training opportunities within the village and surrounding areas through volunteering.
- Identify groups that can provide training opportunities for young people.
- Introduce a job club.
- Assist with the North Kyle Forest Master-plan.



SKARES BRICK WORKS

Had 1 Hoffman Kiln with 28 chambers and produced 47,000 bricks a day with 16 men.

Who could help move this forward?

The above actions can only be met through working in partnership with various groups. We have identified various groups and organisations that could assist with these actions.

They are:

Local Businesses, Training Providers, Funders, Tourist Information, Job Centre Plus, Ochiltree Community Hub, Community Groups and Residents.

Theme: Community Spirit / Activities & Events



When the Ochiltree and Skares area was part of a thriving Ayrshire mining community, the culture of 'work hard, play hard' supported a vibrant public entertainment venue at the British Legion in Ochiltree. It was a place not just for fun and entertainment but also a meeting place where folk would catch up with local 'gossip' and information. Equally the Bowling Green enjoyed strong patronage and provided recreation and inter community connections. Gala days, farm shows, school and church related events all added to the mix.

Following the demise of the deep mines and more recently the increase in popularity of home based entertainment the demand for community events and activities has changed. The closure of the British Legion and the reduction in public houses did not result in the increased use of the community centre and a general decline in attendance at the Bowling Green made its future insecure. This was a period of dramatic change and economic uncertainty. An era came to an end, a new generation was emerging.

Since that time things have moved on and with new housing, new residents and a fresh approach to community cohesion we have seen Gala days and recent special music and entertainment events well attended. The Bowling Green has survived and has received new investment. Above all the enthusiasm for the replacement of the old Community Centre (now demolished) is an example of the overwhelming will to bring back the community spirit of the past and to develop new ideas for the future.



Priorities

Ochiltree & Skares is **DEVELOPING OPPORTUNITIES....**

Develop Activities for Young People

Actions

- More youth clubs / after-school activities.
- Develop activities for teenagers / sporting activities.
- Improve the park.

Ochiltree & Skares is **WORKING TOGETHER...**

Increase Community Events

Actions

- Organise and support a gala day.
- Organise more social events for older people.
- Organise tea bingo's.
- Organise armchair aerobics.

Ochiltree & Skares is **SUPPORTIVE...**

Community Participation

Actions

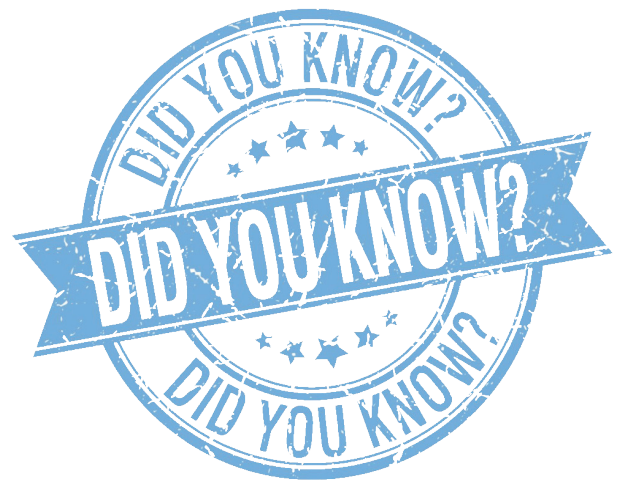
- Encourage participation through volunteering.
- Support local groups.
- Raise awareness of local events through social media.

Ochiltree & Skares is **ACCOMMODATING...**

Raise the Profile

Actions

- Encourage intergenerational learning.
- Share the history and heritage.
- Promote a safe, friendly community.



GALA DAY

*The last gala day was
Saturday 16th June 2012.*

Who could help move this forward?

The above actions can only be met through working in partnership with various groups. We have identified various groups and organisations that could assist with these actions.

They are:

Local Schools, Youth Groups, East Ayrshire Outdoor Amenities, Council of Voluntary Organisations (CVO), East Ayrshire Leisure Trust, Ochiltree Community Hub, Community Groups and Residents.

Theme: Improve Roads, Transport & Paths



A map of the area clearly shows that Ochiltree and Skares are well connected by road to other parts of Ayrshire and beyond. Currently there is a reasonable bus service and both rail and airport services can be accessed without too much difficulty.

The A70 as a major artery does however cause some problems for Ochiltree and for many years a bypass has been discussed but, realistically it is an unlikely development.

Ochiltree and Skares are ideally placed to be at the centre of a public path and cycleway network and existing rights of way could easily be expanded to take advantage of nearby tourist developments.



Priorities

Ochiltree & Skares is CONNECTING...

Extend Path Network

Actions

- Develop a path from Ochiltree to Barony A Frame, Dumfries House and Auchinleck House.
- Create a safe pedestrian / cycle track.
- Develop a path from Auld Brig to Auchinleck Estate.
- Upgrade pathway next to the river.

Ochiltree & Skares is SAFE...

Upgrade Roads and Paths

Actions

- Liaise with the Council to upgrade all roads.
- Investigate improvements at the Cross.
- Increased gritting service in Skares and Ochiltree.
- Upgrade Kay Park lighting and road.
- Investigate more parking in all areas.

Ochiltree & Skares is IMPROVING...

Road Safety

Actions

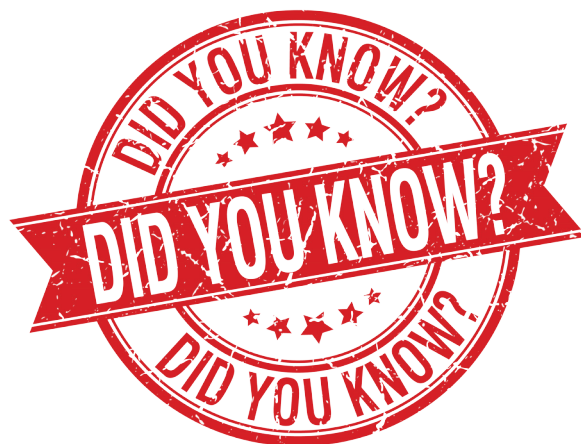
- Develop traffic calming measures.
- Increase off street parking.
- Investigate a pedestrian crossing.
- Introduce speed bumps at Mauchline Road.
- More speed signs throughout the village.
- Investigate management of the Cross.

Ochiltree & Skares is ACCESSIBLE...

Local Transport

Actions

- Create a by-pass.
- Improve bus service through Skares and Ochiltree.



SKARES RAILWAY STATION

*The station opened on 1 July 1872,
and closed on 10 September 1951
and was situated towards the
north of the village.*

Who could help move this forward?

The above actions can only be met through working in partnership with various groups. We have identified various groups and organisations that could assist with these actions.

They are: Central Scotland Green Network, Ayrshire Rivers Trust, Ochiltree Community Council, East Ayrshire Leisure Trust, East Ayrshire Woodlands, Greenspace, Ochiltree & Skares Action Group, Ayrshire Roads Alliance, Ochiltree Community Hub, Stagecoach, Scottish Passenger Transport (SPT), Community Groups and Residents.

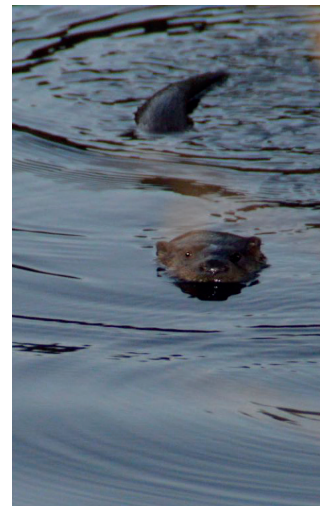


Theme: Village Appearance & Open Spaces



Both Skares and Ochiltree still retain architectural character that reflects their past: Ochiltree in particular has benefited from a conservation order protecting many of its oldest properties. There is a considerable amount of historical importance in both settlements and the surrounding area as well as a very pleasant landscape and amenable environment.

To enhance the communities action to combat despoliation by mining, fly tipping and proliferation of utility poles is ongoing and partnerships with agencies to conserve the landscape are being supported. Hands-on activities by the community such as litter picks and the monitoring of dog fouling are examples of the strength and depth of concern and interest.



Priorities

Ochiltree & Skares is BEAUTIFUL...

Village Clean Up

Actions

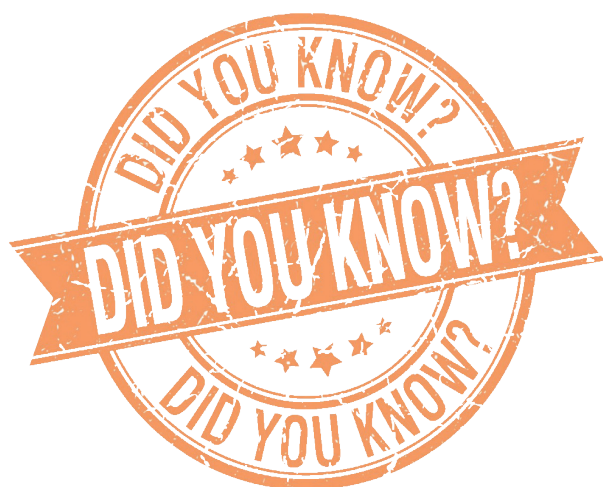
- Tackle dog mess and litter.
- Introduce wardens.
- Use real flowers in baskets.
- More bins throughout the areas.

Ochiltree & Skares is VIBRANT...

Upgrade Public Spaces

Actions

- Restore opencast sites.
- Reduce pollution in the area.
- Develop picnic areas and play parks.
- Improve village entrances and signs.
- Upgrade the dam.
- Plant more trees in Glebe area.
- Upgrade walks around Ochiltree and Skares woods.
- Develop areas for visitors and tourists to enjoy.
- Assist with the North Kyle Forest Master-plan.



CATTLE SHOW

Ochiltree is now one of the longest running Cattle shows. It is the 167th Cattle show this year.

Who could help move this forward?

The above actions can only be met through working in partnership with various groups. We have identified various groups and organisations that could assist with these actions.

They are: East Ayrshire Council Waste Management, East Ayrshire Outdoor Amenities, Keep Scotland Beautiful, East Ayrshire Woodlands, Ochiltree Community Council, Community Hub, Local Schools, Central Scotland Green Network, Ayrshire Rivers Trust, Community Groups and Residents.

Making it Happen

Working together for Ochiltree and Skares

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

Working in partnership

The projects listed here will need to be advanced by the local community and its community organisations with the support of a wide range of partners including East Ayrshire Council, Police Scotland, NHS and Scottish Government.

Theme	Contact
Community Facilities & Services	osactionplan@gmail.com
Building Local Economy	osactionplan@gmail.com
Community Spirit / Activities & Events	osactionplan@gmail.com
Improve Roads, Transport & Paths	osactionplan@gmail.com
Village Appearance & Open Spaces	osactionplan@gmail.com



This Community Action Plan sets out the priorities for the development of Ochiltree and Skares, over the next five years as determined by the community through an extensive process of community engagement.

Research was organised and led by local community groups and local residents and carried out over a nine month period from July 2016 to May 2017.

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 Ochiltree and Skares.
- The main Themes and Priorities for Action.
- Information on how you can stay in touch and get involved.

Many Thanks...

Ochiltree & Skares Action Group

Alex Baird, Margaret McMenemy, Mary Campbell, Penny Richardson, Lynn Morrison, Dagmar Bell, Mike Howes, Denzel Ralph, Morag Gilbin, Julie Brown, David Reid and Rosalina Rowan.

Stakeholders

Ochiltree & Skares Community Council, Ochiltree Bowling Club, Ochiltree Community Hub, Ochiltree Parish Church, Ochiltree Farmers Society, Ochiltree Primary School, Skares and Kin Resident Environment Society, Ochiltree Tyres, Ochiltree Curling Club, Ochiltree Pre-5 Group, Ochiltree Sunday School, Bardarroch Supplies, Spark of Genius Netherton, Ocharton Farm, Green Shutters Pharmacy and Barr Environmental.

Research / Photographs

Robert Campbell, Sophie Reid age 10, Bobby Grierson (Cumnock History Group), Morag Ross, Tom Barclay (Carnegie Library) and Ochiltree & Skares Action Group.





*Our vision is to create a vibrant, attractive,
welcoming and inclusive rural community
that can be enjoyed by residents
and visitors alike.*

East Ayrshire Community Led Action Planning is based on the Community Futures Programme
designed and supported by STAR Development Group

www.stardevelopmentgroup.org

Ochiltree and Skares Action Group working together with

active connected
vibrant
COMMUNITIES