

Sanquhar & District

COMMUNITY
ACTION PLAN
2022 - 2026

Introduction

In 2015 Sanquhar Community Council received funding to create the first Sanquhar Community Action Plan. This plan covered 2015 to 2020.

The original plan finished in 2020 and Sanquhar Community Council decided that a refresh was in order because the world is changing, and priorities have changed.

Community Action Plans are tools for change. They capture the community's aspirations describing where the town and community are now and where the vision is for the future. This new plan gives Sanquhar and its community the opportunity to reflect on what has been achieved and the priorities for the coming five years as well as for the longer term.

This new Plan will use the following themes:

- Sustainable Sanquhar
- Local Facilities and Activities
- Town Environment and Transport Links
- Culture and Heritage
- The Natural Environment
- Tourism, Business and Employment

Community Action Plans are used by communities as a tool for change, a road map to make things happen and as evidence when securing grant funding and support for projects. Often the common failure of Community Action Plans is that they describe where communities want to

be but fail to set out how to get there. This plan will describe how to get things done and who will do them. In this plan we hope to describe actions that will help facilitate how to get things done, not just talked about.

A community action plan needs to be:

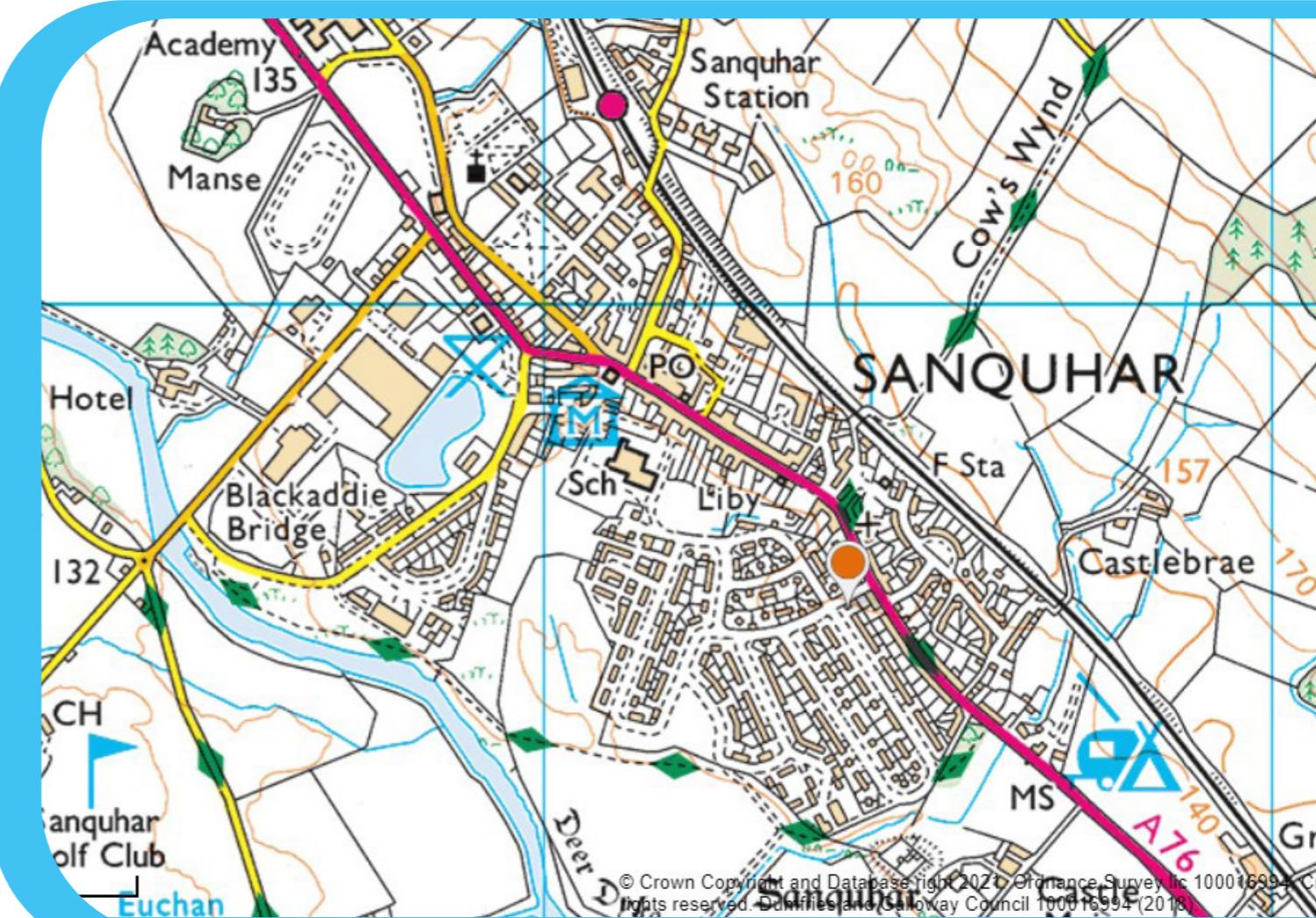
- clear, well-researched, robust, strategic, accessible and importantly, readable
- designed in a way to contribute to securing funds for projects
- able to help shape local services
- able to make best use of community assets - land, buildings, funds and people

The Action Plan encompasses priorities identified through the consultation and will show:

- What it is like to live in Sanquhar now
- What objectives from the 2015 to 2020 have been achieved
- How Sanquhar could change in the future
- What things matter most to the people who live here
- What the priorities are and how they can be addressed



Sanquhar Now



Sanquhar is situated in Dumfries and Galloway, halfway between Dumfries (27 miles) and Ayr (31 miles). It is set in the Nith Valley on the A76, which joins Kilmarnock with Dumfries. The town's name comes from the Gaelic for 'old fort' and there has been a settlement here for many centuries.

The population of Sanquhar is just over 2,000 and the average age is 45 (men) and 46 (women). The percentage of residents under 16 is 17.2%, in line with the Scottish average of 17.3%. Just under 60% of residents are aged 16-64 with the Scottish average almost 66%. Those aged 65 and over make up 23.3% of the Sanquhar

population compared with the Scottish average of 16.8%. Information is from Scotland's 2011 census, the next one being in 2022.

Home ownership accounts for 55.1% of households, compared with a Scottish average of 62%.

The percentage of households with at least one person aged 16 to 74 who is unemployed (and not a full-time student) or long-term sick or disabled is 16.1%, slightly higher than the Scottish average of 14.6%.



The top three industries in the area are: manufacturing (18.5% compared with a Scottish average of 8%); human health and social work (15.4% in line with the Scottish average of 15%); and wholesale and retail trade, and repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles (14.1%, about the same as the Scottish average of 15%).

The top occupations are; process, plant and machine operatives (19% compared with a Scottish average of 7.7%); skilled trades (16.1% compared with 12.5%); and elementary occupations (14.3% compared with 11.6%).

The town has good transport links with regular trains to Glasgow and Carlisle throughout the day, two bus services running regularly. Sanquhar lies on the A76 connecting with Dumfries and Kilmarnock as well as being half an hour's drive to the A74(M) which links Carlisle with Glasgow.

Sanquhar is well-served by community facilities, including a swimming pool, library and several churches. There is also a wide range of retail businesses in the town, including butcher, bank, baker, florist, pet shop, solicitors, pharmacy, accountant and newsagent, as well as hospitality businesses, such as cafés, hotels and restaurants.



The town is the home of the well-known oldest working post office in the world, established in 1712 and still in operation.

A' the Arts is an arts and crafts community centre, which runs workshops, classes, events and includes a café and arts and crafts shop. There are also many clubs and societies, such as the Horticultural Society, Women's Institute, Pipe Band, Golf Club, Heritage Society, Curling Society, Silver Band, Bowling Club, Karate Club, as well as an active Community Council and various Residents' Association.

The Sanquhar Riding of the Marches is an important annual event for the town and has an active committee undertaking the organisation of the event each year. The event creates a buzz in the town and supports local businesses.

Sanquhar has a long history, with a town burgh existing as far back as the 12th century and then became a Royal Burgh in 1598.

Following a long period of political and religious unrest, agriculture began to flourish and other local industries appeared, including coal mining, weaving, handknitting and carpet weaving.



Sanquhar has a long history as a centre of the knitting trade. Local knitwear was distinctive for its two-coloured patterns and intricate designs. In the 18th century, a cottage industry developed in the Sanquhar area. So popular did the knitwear become that the designs were exported overseas, but most of the Sanquhar knitwear was traded within the British Isles.

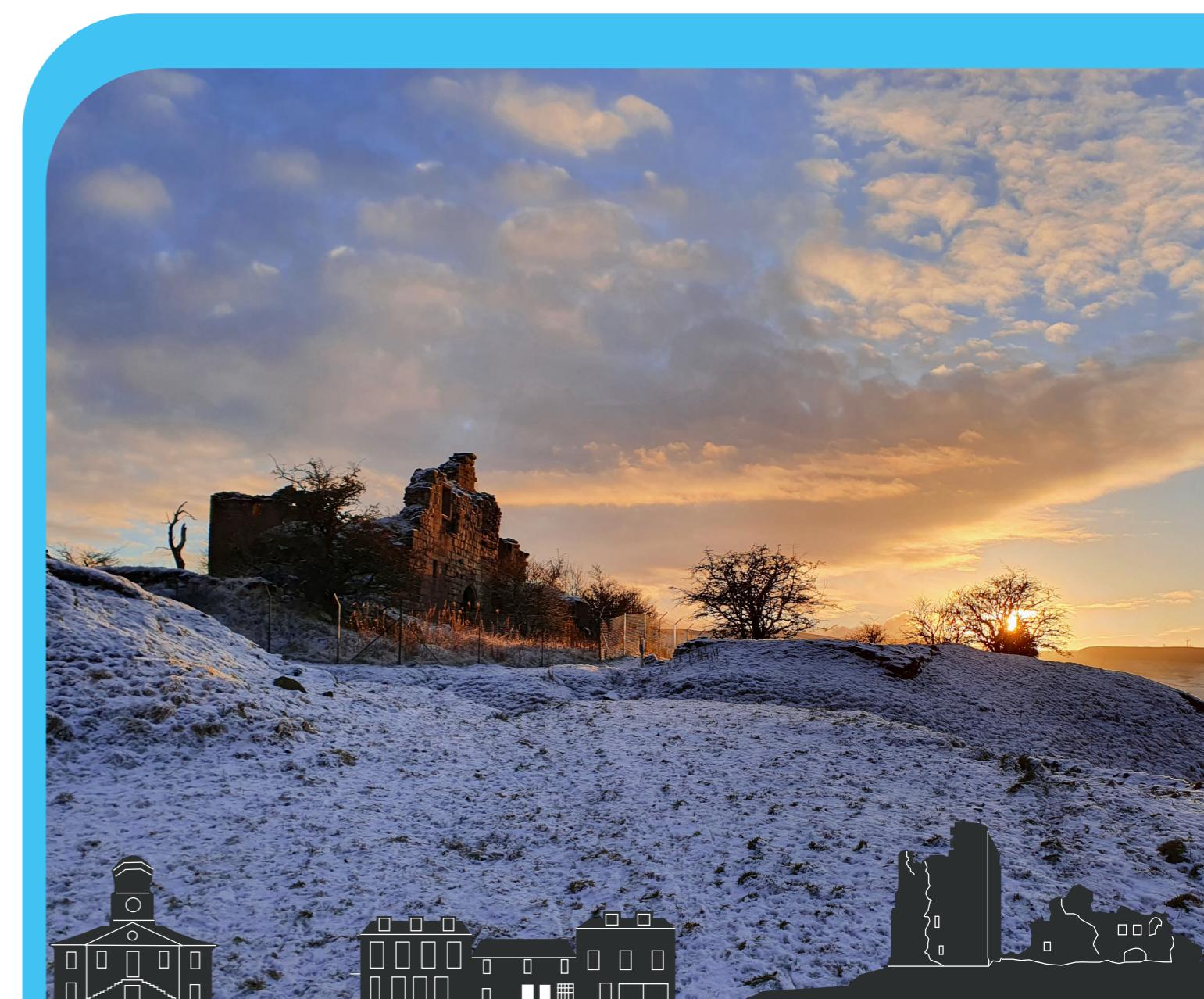
The traditional Sanquhar knitting pattern has experienced a revival in recent years, thanks to a project run by A' the Arts and dedicated individuals.

Sanquhar Castle was probably built in the thirteenth century by the Ross family as a replacement for an earlier motte-and-bailey fortification at Ryehill. Like that earlier castle, Sanquhar was built overlooking the River Nith, an important waterway that provided access to Dumfries and the sea. In the early fourteenth century, the site

passed into the hands of the Crichtons who started the current castle.

The earliest part of the Crichton castle was a three-storey tower, built about 1360, which overlooked a small courtyard extending to the north-east. This was enclosed by a substantial curtain wall which was augmented by strong natural defences consisting of the River Nith on the south and a burn to the north and west.

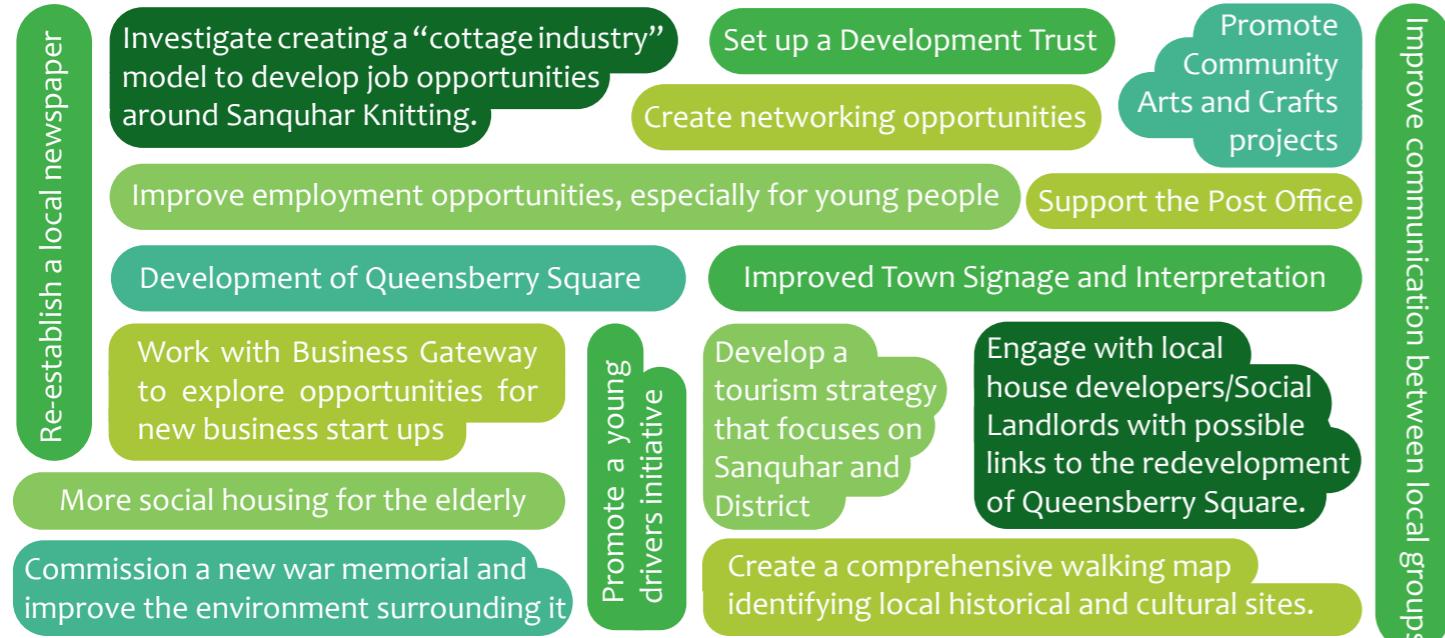
Sanquhar continued to be a major residence for the Crichtons until 1639 when it was sold to Sir William Douglas of Drumlanrig. He made extensive use of Sanquhar but, after his death in 1700, his son transferred the family seat to Drumlanrig. Thereafter Sanquhar Castle drifted into ruin. Some restoration was carried out in the late nineteenth century by the Marquis of Bute. The castle is still owned by the Marquis of Bute.



2015 - 2020 Community Action Plan

The 2015 to 2020 plan had some key objectives, a number of which were met or are ongoing, such as the creation of the Sanquhar Enterprise Company and Sanquhar Knitting established as part of A' the Airts. A new War Memorial has been installed. A newspaper has been re-established, brochures to promote walking have been created and a young drivers initiative was set up. In addition, funding has been secured to upgrade the Lorimer Play Park and Dumfries and Galloway Council upgraded the park in the square.

Achieved from 2015 - 2020 Plan



Ongoing

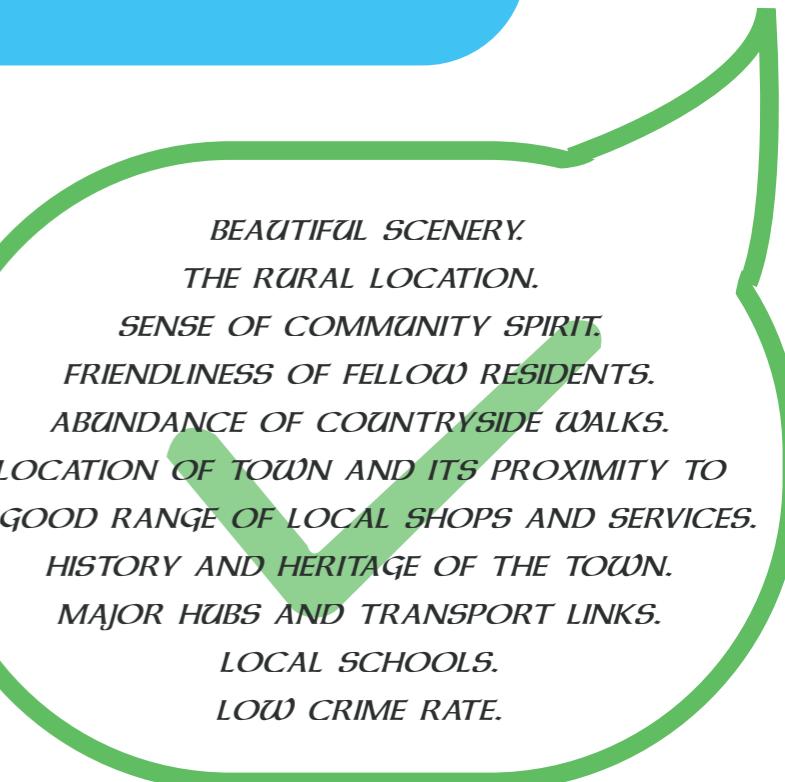


2021 - 2026 Community Action Plan

People have their say

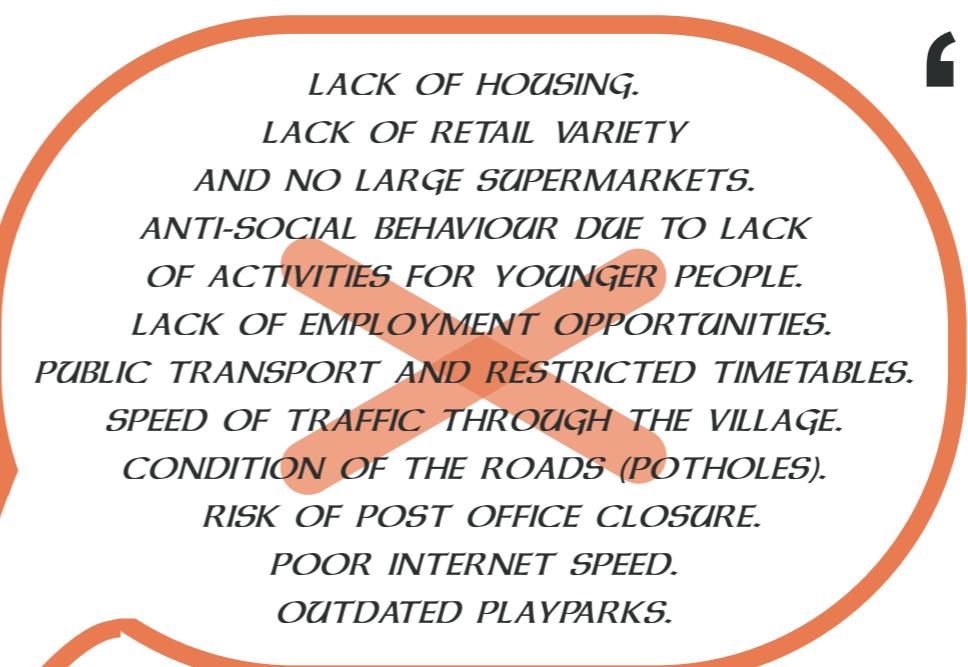
Methodology

Covid19 has created many challenges when trying to consult with communities and we are seeing mounting evidence that people are not responding at the levels we saw pre covid19. We believe there are several reasons for this; a) People have other things to worry about; b) People who would normally fill in a paper survey are reluctant to leave the house to hand in their response and c) With less people on the street word of mouth is not as effective. In addition to this it has been difficult to hold focus group or one to one meetings, in some cases people do not like internet-based meeting platforms like Teams or Zoom. However, under the circumstances the people of Sanquhar have been very active and supportive of the process despite the problems faced through Covid19 and by one-to-one meetings, phone calls, a paper and online survey, we believe we have established the key concerns and optimisms facing Sanquhar today.



Comments

The following points were made by respondents in the final section:



“ Activities are needed for older people in the community. ”

“ Whigams Inn could be used as a drop-in centre for young people. ”



“ Inclusion of young people on local committees would encourage buy-in and ensure needs were met. ”

“ No more housing should be built as it would lead to an increase in the population and services would be under pressure. ”

“ The Castle should be made safe. ”

“ New wind farms should be encouraged, to take advantage of the income they provide to the community ”

“ A Development Worker or Support worker would benefit the town as they would be able to identify individuals in need and help to co-ordinate town-wide projects. ”

“ A need for renovation of local buildings (e.g. Holland House). ”

“ Cleaning up the local area, including dog fouling, littering shop fronts, walks, local parks etc. would benefit residents and tourists alike. ”

“ Support should be provided to a range of businesses as opposed to the same businesses being supported repeatedly. ”

Survey Findings

156 responses were recorded (63 paper responses and 93 online responses). It should be noted that surveys were one per household due to the difficulty there is obtaining information about the make-up of households.

The top voted projects under each theme:

HERITAGE - Community map supporting walks, historical, cultural and industrial heritage

TOWNSCAPE - Restoration of Queensberry Arms Inn (was Whigham's Inn)

TOURISM - Promote Sanquhar as a walking destination

FACILITIES - Support the World's Oldest Working Post Office

COMMUNICATION - Develop a town website

Vision for the Future

In terms of specific improvements, respondents wanted to see the following from each of the five themes; Heritage; Townscape; Tourism; Facilities and Communication.

Whatever course of action the community decides to take, capacity to deliver and manage the process is critical. The Sanquhar Enterprise Company (SEC) has received funds to employ a Development Officer and they will work with Sanquhar Community Council and other stakeholders to deliver identified projects. Underpinning achievability of the actions from this plan is the issue of capacity. Most plans that fail or do not deliver what was expected and anticipated fail because the community did not have the capacity to develop or deliver the projects. Examples of community groups employing project workers/development officers are numerous and rarely are these appointments a failure.

As well as employing a project worker the SEC should consider joining Development Trust Association Scotland (DTAS). DTA Scotland is an independent, member-led organisation which aims to promote, support and represent development trusts in Scotland. Established in 2003, DTA Scotland now has over 300 development trust members.

A development trust is a community-owned and led organisation, working to combine community-led action with an enterprising approach to address and tackle local needs and issues. The aim of a development trust is to create social, economic and environmental renewal in a defined geographical area, creating wealth within that area and keeping it there.

Through the provision of information, advice and support, and the effective facilitation of our inspiring development trust network, DTA Scotland seeks to contribute to the building of independent, enterprising and resilient communities. This work includes an annual conference which regularly attracts over 200 delegates, a wide range of publications and resources, and a suite of training and support interventions including funding opportunities.



DTA Scotland is often at the forefront of new and creative approaches to community-led development. These include promoting and supporting community ownership/asset transfer and the use of community shares as an innovative form of social finance.

Following the 2015 Community Empowerment Act communities now have the opportunity to take ownership of local services and facilities. With reduced funding available to regional councils, services will shrink unless communities take control and deliver themselves. Communities who are ready to act on opportunities arising from these changes will be best placed to prosper in the long term.

In today's world with falling lottery revenues and the loss of EU funding, the competition for funding support will become ever more challenging. Access to community benefit funds is therefore a positive advantage for projects within a windfarm's area.



Achieved from 2015 - 2020 Plan

Sanquhar has a substantial advantage over many other communities due to having access to community benefit funds from several wind farms and used wisely could create a lasting legacy for the future. Of those who completed the survey and in particular answered the

question about the use of community benefit funding 90% agreed with the statement "Develop projects that make best use of windfarm money for long-term benefit to Sanquhar"

Although windfarm funds will continue to support small-to-medium size projects in the future it is hoped that longer-term, longer-lasting projects can also be brought forward.

Communities in receipt of windfarm funds can sometimes become too reliant on these funds for smaller projects. Where, in the past, there were fundraising social events, bringing communities together in dances, sales and coffee mornings, which often raised money for the smaller projects, the danger is that communities cease coming together to support a common cause and rely on the funding available from windfarms.

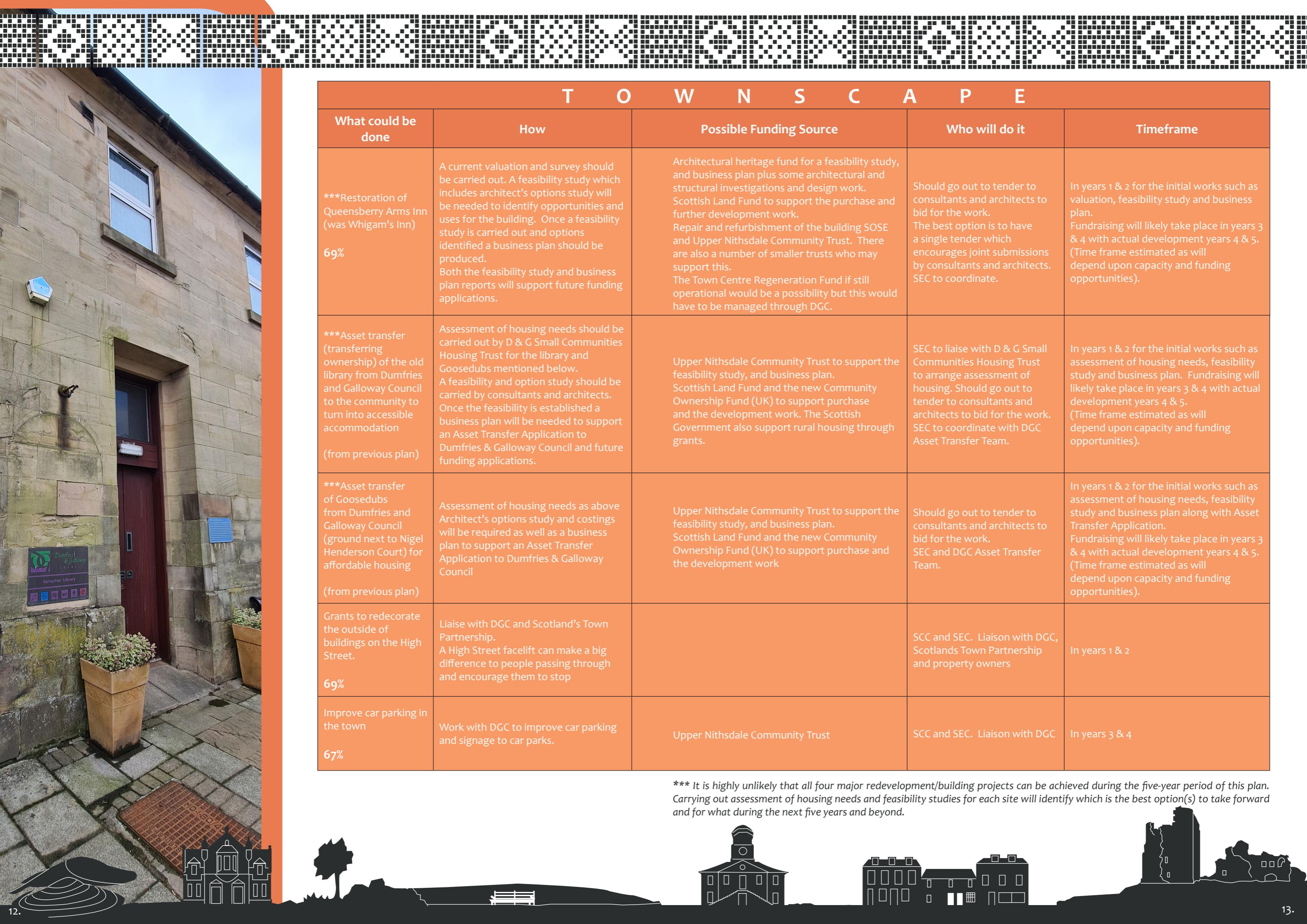
Community benefit funding can also be used to lever additional funds from other sources, this is particularly useful for larger key projects for example the redevelopment of Whigams. The SEC Development Officer should keep up to date with new funding opportunities and be able to match appropriate funds for different projects to make community benefit funding go further.

Themes and Projects

The following are the key projects identified by the survey.

The percentages indicate the level of support.

H E R I T A G E				
What could be done	How	Possible Funding Source	Who will do it	Timeframe
Community map supporting walks, historical, cultural and industrial heritage 96%	A' the Arts are creating a touch screen information sign which could include all this information. In addition this can link to the new Sanquhar website	A' the Arts has received funding to take this forward	A' the Arts with input from other stakeholders such as the Tourism Partnership, Heritage Group and Walking Festival Group	In years 1 & 2
Protected status for Sanquhar Knitting 88%	The patterns cannot be protected but Sanquhar Knitting can be promoted. Activity such as knitting tours and an online purchasing facility is helping to promote the heritage of the knitting. Add to this by including on the new town website.	Potential funding sources if required. For example for promotion of Sanquhar Knitting. Community Wind Farm Benefit Funds. Creative Scotland may also be a source of support.	The knitting team and A' the Arts. Support if required from SEC	Commencing in years 1 & 2 but then ongoing.
Supporting the Riding of the Marches 77%	The event is supported by the CC and SEC as well as by businesses of the town. Community Benefit Funds are also available to apply to for funding support the event if required. The event should feature on the new Sanquhar website.	Community Benefit Funds, Dumfries and Galloway Council	Riding of the Marches organising committee.	When required



T O W N S C A P E				
What could be done	How	Possible Funding Source	Who will do it	Timeframe
***Restoration of Queensberry Arms Inn (was Whigam's Inn) 69%	A current valuation and survey should be carried out. A feasibility study which includes architect's options study will be needed to identify opportunities and uses for the building. Once a feasibility study is carried out and options identified a business plan should be produced. Both the feasibility study and business plan reports will support future funding applications.	Architectural heritage fund for a feasibility study, and business plan plus some architectural and structural investigations and design work. Scottish Land Fund to support the purchase and further development work. Repair and refurbishment of the building SOSE and Upper Nithsdale Community Trust. There are also a number of smaller trusts who may support this. The Town Centre Regeneration Fund if still operational would be a possibility but this would have to be managed through DGC.	Should go out to tender to consultants and architects to bid for the work. The best option is to have a single tender which encourages joint submissions by consultants and architects. SEC to coordinate.	In years 1 & 2 for the initial works such as valuation, feasibility study and business plan. Fundraising will likely take place in years 3 & 4 with actual development years 4 & 5. (Time frame estimated as will depend upon capacity and funding opportunities).
***Asset transfer (transferring ownership) of the old library from Dumfries and Galloway Council to the community to turn into accessible accommodation (from previous plan)	Assessment of housing needs should be carried out by D & G Small Communities Housing Trust for the library and Goosedubs mentioned below. A feasibility and option study should be carried by consultants and architects. Once the feasibility is established a business plan will be needed to support an Asset Transfer Application to Dumfries & Galloway Council and future funding applications.	Upper Nithsdale Community Trust to support the feasibility study, and business plan. Scottish Land Fund and the new Community Ownership Fund (UK) to support purchase and the development work. The Scottish Government also support rural housing through grants.	SEC to liaise with D & G Small Communities Housing Trust to arrange assessment of housing. Should go out to tender to consultants and architects to bid for the work. SEC to coordinate with DGC Asset Transfer Team.	In years 1 & 2 for the initial works such as assessment of housing needs, feasibility study and business plan. Fundraising will likely take place in years 3 & 4 with actual development years 4 & 5. (Time frame estimated as will depend upon capacity and funding opportunities).
***Asset transfer of Goosedubs from Dumfries and Galloway Council (ground next to Nigel Henderson Court) for affordable housing (from previous plan)	Assessment of housing needs as above Architect's options study and costings will be required as well as a business plan to support an Asset Transfer Application to Dumfries & Galloway Council	Upper Nithsdale Community Trust to support the feasibility study, and business plan. Scottish Land Fund and the new Community Ownership Fund (UK) to support purchase and the development work	Should go out to tender to consultants and architects to bid for the work. SEC and DGC Asset Transfer Team.	In years 1 & 2 for the initial works such as assessment of housing needs, feasibility study and business plan along with Asset Transfer Application. Fundraising will likely take place in years 3 & 4 with actual development years 4 & 5. (Time frame estimated as will depend upon capacity and funding opportunities).
Grants to redecorate the outside of buildings on the High Street. 69%	Liaise with DGC and Scotland's Town Partnership. A High Street facelift can make a big difference to people passing through and encourage them to stop		SCC and SEC. Liaison with DGC, Scotland's Town Partnership and property owners	In years 1 & 2
Improve car parking in the town 67%	Work with DGC to improve car parking and signage to car parks.	Upper Nithsdale Community Trust	SCC and SEC. Liaison with DGC	In years 3 & 4

*** It is highly unlikely that all four major redevelopment/building projects can be achieved during the five-year period of this plan. Carrying out assessment of housing needs and feasibility studies for each site will identify which is the best option(s) to take forward and for what during the next five years and beyond.



T O U R I S M

What could be done	How	Possible Funding Source	Who will do it	Timeframe
Promote Sanquhar as a walking destination 95%	Link to existing walking leaflets and add the routes to the new Sanquhar website. Consider an interactive walking App showing all routes. Increase links to the Southern Upland Way and in addition some cycling routes might be added.	Awards for All. Upper Nithsdale Community Trust. Funding from Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund could be applied for through DGC.	SEC. Liaise with Upper Nithsdale Tourism Partnership and other stakeholders.	In year 1 & 2
Improve local walking routes to comply with safety regulations 95%	Assess each route for walking surfaces, overgrown vegetation etc. Liaise with Dumfries & Galloway Council re core paths.	Upper Nithsdale Community Trust and others..	SEC with stakeholders including Dumfries & Galloway Council.	In year 3 & 4
Preservation of Sanquhar Castle to make it safe 91%	This is a difficult project as the castle is in private ownership. To conserve the ruin would be very expensive both initially and on an ongoing basis. Suggestions to create a walk around the castle to link to existing walk. Install a new interpretation board on the walk by the castle itself. Liaise with landowners. Information about the castle should be included on the new Sanquhar website, including the walk.	Upper Nithsdale Community Trust. Historic Environment Scotland. Heritage Lottery.	SEC.	In years 3 & 4
Support for development of tourism initiatives 90%	Upper Nithsdale Tourism Partnership is active. Work with the partnership. Link all tourism offers and initiatives to the new Sanquhar website. Make links to the new South of Scotland Destination Alliance group.		SEC, Development Officer liaise with Upper Nithsdale Tourism Partnership	When required
Install brown tourist signs to direct people to Sanquhar's attractions 88%	Work with VisitScotland and Dumfries & Galloway Council to establish where they may be situated.		SEC	In year 1 & 2
General support for A' the Arts 70%	Ongoing support for A' the Arts. Link A' the Arts and its activities and events to the new Sanquhar website.		Liaison with A' the Arts by SEC	In years 1 & 2 add to new town website. Ongoing when required
Information touch screens/tourist information boards available 7 days a week 56%	A' the Arts are installing a touch screen information board. Suggestion that one is installed in the Crawick Multiverse to promote the attractions of Sanquhar and surrounds. There is a possibility of also using the telephone kiosk in the town. All the information on the touch screens should also be available on the new Sanquhar website.	Upper Nithsdale Community Trust	SEC to liaise with the various parties.	In years 2 & 3
Re-visit the idea to develop the quarry 55%	A feasibility study should be carried out to identify potential uses for the quarry.	Upper Nithsdale Community Trust	SEC.	In years 3 & 4



Facilities				
What could be done	How	Possible Funding Source	Who will do it	Timeframe
Support the World's Oldest Working Post Office 98%	Historical information about the post office should be included on the new Sanquhar website.			When required
Support for outdoor activities eg. Pony trekking, cycling, Riding for the Disabled, forestry trails 88%	These should be looked at by potential businesses or social enterprises. Support from SEC and SCC however will be available if required.			If and when required.
Upgrade play parks: 87% = Lorimer 85% = Bell Crescent 79% = Renwick Place 77% = Queensberry Square	Work with residents and resident groups to identify improvements.	Upper Nithsdale Community Trust, Awards for All, some smaller Trusts and Foundations. (Funding has been secured for Lorimer)	Resident representatives or if applicable resident groups with SEC.	In years 4 & 5
Add new summer seats 79%	Ready for installation as at the time of the issue of this plan.	Already funded	SCC	
All weather sports pitch/MUGA 72%	Work with community groups, DGC and Community Windpower to agree a site.	Community Windpower		In years 1 & 2
Re-activation of the Young Drivers' Initiative 74%	The original scheme put 15 young people through their first aid, theory and driving test.	Upper Nithsdale Community Trust, specifically Whiteside Hill Education and Transport Fund	SEC.	In years 1 & 2
Support for local clubs: 70% = Bowling Club 72% = Golf Club 66% = Fishing Club	Advice can be given by SEC Development Officer in particular with relation to funding. Link all clubs to the new Sanquhar website and promote events, competitions and activities	Dependent upon what projects the club want to take forward.	SEC acts as contact point for information and a liaison in relation to funding.	When required.

Communication				
What could be done	How	Possible Funding Source	Who will do it	Timeframe
Improve broadband access and speeds 92%	Identify areas of the town and surrounds that have poor broadband access and speeds and investigate opportunities through Digital Scotland		SEC.	In years 1 & 2.
Develop a town website – promoting what Sanquhar and surrounding area has to offer 84%	The website will bring together everything Sanquhar and can be used to promote the town and assets including events as well as being a point of contact for residents. Create a brief for the type of website detailing what will be included. Invite web designers to bid for the work. Liaise with the successful company to create a brand and content. The website should link to other sites relating to Sanquhar and surrounds.	Upper Nithsdale Community Trust	SEC, SCC and other stakeholders. SEC to liaise.	In years 1 & 2
Develop links with Crawick Multiverse 68%	SEC, CC and Development Officer set up regular meetings with the Project Officer of the Multiverse. Agree instalment of interactive information board with Crawick Multiverse. Link the new website to the Crawick Multiverse.		SEC	In years 1 & 2



Making it Happen

The coming years will present numerous challenges one of which is the fact that Scotland's population is ageing faster than any other country in the UK. As mortality rates rise, dependency levels and strain on support services will increase significantly. With the concentration of centralised services in urban and main-population areas, reductions in rural services will almost certainly ensue. The only way to maintain some services in a rural location will be to deliver them through local organisations. An attitude of community alertness will be necessary, and those communities that have put sustainable projects in place will fare better against this changing backdrop. The priorities in this action plan include some large key and sustainable projects but also some smaller everyday activities all will play a big part in improving the town of Sanquhar for the people who live, work and visit.

The actions of the plan will be taken forward by the Sanquhar Enterprise Company, supported by the Sanquhar Community Council and in conjunction with other stakeholders. It is important that liaison with relevant community groups takes place to ensure continuity and a joined-up way of making things happen in the town. Communities that develop a level of sustainability will attract more support from funders.

The SEC Development Officer will support the SEC Board to deliver the agreed projects.

Although within the action plan, a timeframe for each project has been suggested these are not fixed and could change dependent upon outside factors such as a change in the community priorities, capacity to deliver the project or new opportunities for funding becoming available which might suit projects not immediately scheduled. In other words, the delivery of projects should be flexible and be able to react to changes in opportunities particularly funding.

Ideally an annual project plan should be created which details which projects or which element of projects will be taken forward in the coming year. The plan should be agreed by SEC, SCC and other stakeholders, taking into account, capacity and funding availability. Communities that develop a level of sustainability will attract more support from funders.

Building or converting existing accommodation to create community owned houses/apartments will give the community an opportunity to create an income stream which can be re-invested in other community projects over the years reducing the long-term reliance on grant funding.

It is also important to learn from what others have achieved and making connections with support groups like DTAS, other communities and national organisations will help inspire and give confidence to the community as it moves forward.



If you would like to get involved with any of the projects or initiatives in this plan or for further information please contact either Sanquhar Community Council or the Sanquhar Enterprise Company via the email address sanquhar.cc@btinternet.com

Thanks to everyone who responded in the consultation process.

This Community Action Plan is funded by Community Windpower through Upper Nithsdale Trust

Written and designed by Creetown Initiative Ltd.



CREETOWN
INITIATIVE
LIMITED