

THORNHILL COMMUNITY PLAN SUMMARY

This community plan was commissioned by Nith Valley LEAF Trust with funding from Local Energy Scotland. After a competitive tender process the project was assigned to Community Links Scotland. This report provides a summary of the final community plan; outlining the methodology, consultation findings, analysis, project ideas, and recommendations.



Background and Context

Using Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) statistics we found that Thornhill has a lower proportion of under 15 year olds and working age people than what is seen nationally. Conversely the proportion of individuals of pension age is significantly higher than what is seen nationally. We also found that the area covering Thornhill is not considered deprived; scoring well in national rankings in terms of education, health, employment, income, access to services, and housing.

The work carried out as part of the community plan contributes, and will contribute, to a number of key local and national policies and strategies concerned with the development of the Thornhill community. These include:

- *Scottish Government Purpose, Strategic Objectives and National Outcomes*
- *Scottish Government Regeneration Strategy: Achieving a Sustainable Future*
- *Scotland's Economic Strategy*
- *Dumfries and Galloway Local Development Plan*
- *Dumfries and Galloway Regional Economic Strategy 2014- 2020*

What Did We Do?

As part of the consultation work for the community plan we received 377 returned paper surveys, 36 online surveys, and 90 responses from S5 and S6 pupils at Wallace Hall Academy. In total we received 503 survey responses from the community; assuming there is no duplication, 28% of the total population of Thornhill Community Council area completed a survey.

Additional consultation work was also carried out with community groups, local businesses and primary school pupils. Face to face meetings and discussions were had with 15 local businesses and 33 business surveys were returned. From local community groups 16 surveys were returned, and face to face discussions were had with groups including Rotary Club, arts groups, and the Thornhill Community Centre Committee. Two sessions were also held at Wallace Hall Primary School, one with P6 pupils and one with P7 pupils, in total reaching 41 primary school pupils.

The final piece of consultation work carried out was two drop- in events in Thornhill. At these events community members were asked a series of more in- depth questions about their aspirations and hopes for the future of their community, building on residents' responses to the previous stage of the consultation. Between both of these consultation events held in December 2016 over 200 community members in total were spoken to.



What Did The Community Want?

Responses from the community to the survey which was sent out focussed on six main areas of action; Transport, Environment, Infrastructure, Tourism, Health & Welfare, and Community & Recreation. The following list details some of the most popular actions from the community survey and the level of support they received:

- *Supported housing for elderly/disabled- 92%*
- *Befriending service- 90%*
- *Access to emergency medical equipment- 89%*
- *Improved internet access beyond village- 86%*
- *Maximising community centre use- 86%*
- *Maximising use of vacant buildings- 85%*
- *Affordable housing for rent 84%*
- *Improved public transport- 81%*
- *Gardening services for elderly/ disabled- 80%*
- *Improved bus service- 79%*
- *Walkers' map of the area- 78%*
- *Developing new attractions- 78%*
- *Lunch club for older residents- 76%*

Consultation work with community groups and local businesses highlighted many similar demands, and some more unique ones. Community groups were particularly interested in having a **large hall available for activities** in Thornhill, facilities with **lockable storage**, and more **sports equipment**. Groups who used Thornhill Community Centre were keen to see improvements made to the centre **toilets**, improved **accessibility** and more **storage space**.

Interests among local businesses focussed on providing information on **potential grant funding**, access to **shared small business services**, and **sustainability advice**. Overall however, improved **village centre parking** was the most important issue for local businesses. There was also interest in providing **general aesthetic enhancements** in the village and **upgrading walking and cycling paths**. The interests of local businesses were very much focussed on making Thornhill more accessible and attractive to potential customers.

Action Points

We have been able to determine some clear community priorities for Thornhill which form the basis for the development of the following Action Points.

- *Retain care home*
- *Extended GP opening hours*
- *Expanding cottage hospital*
- *Promote befriending service*
- *Resurfacing and repainting roads*
- *More housing to rent*
- *More frequent local bus service*
- *Traffic slowing*
- *Improved parking layout*
- *Better maintenance of hedges, trees and paths*
- *Admin facilities for small businesses*
- *More activities and clubs in Thornhill*
- *Better access to sports facilities*

The Action Points above provide a useful starting point for the community to approach further discussions with relevant organisations such as the Health Board, Dumfries & Galloway Council, or TranServ. The Action Points provide evidence, based on the consultation exercises and further investigation, about what could be done to achieve the types of enhancements sought by the community.

Project Outlines

The project outlines come from the community's ideas which have the potential to be developed into more workable, longer- terms projects. It is intended that the project outlines will be used by Thornhill Community Council, and other local groups and organisations, to identify future areas of activity. The 11 project outlines detailed in the Community Plan are:

- ***Installation of Emergency Medical Equipment***: To equip the local community with a portable defibrillator especially designed for people with little or no medical background.
- ***More sheltered housing***: To ensure that there is sufficient long- term provision of sheltered housing in Thornhill to enable residents to remain in their community.
- ***Development of Unused Local Buildings***: To develop well- equipped and dynamic assets in Thornhill, providing a range of key services and amenities.
- ***Availability of Broadband in Rural Areas***: To ensure residents within the Thornhill Community Council Area can access broadband in their homes
- ***Reintroduction of Thornhill Railway Station***: To reintroduce Thornhill Railway Station.
- ***Walking/ Cycling Path to Closeburn***: To create a safe walking and cycling route between Thornhill and Closeburn

- **Upgrade Outdoor Space:** To improve the aesthetic appeal of Thornhill and make it a more attractive place to live, work, and visit with multi-use outdoor community spaces.
- **Gardening Service for Elderly Residents:** To ensure that all residents in Thornhill and the surrounding area have the means to maintain their gardens
- **Thornhill Community Centre Upgrade:** To provide an accessible, well- equipped community space in Thornhill for the provision of a range of services and activities.
- **Improved Play Park in Thornhill:** To offer the community a better equipped, and maintained, play park in Thornhill, for use by young people of all ages.
- **Thornhill Tourist Information Point:** To provide visitors and tourists to the area with a well-equipped point of contact with



information on local attractions and activities.

What Happens Next?

The next steps for the Thornhill community will be finding workable ways of implementing the recommendations and options contained within the plan. As a first action the community may wish to prioritise the Action Points and Project Outlines above.

So far the consultation work carried out as part of the Community Plan has facilitated the formation of Thornhill Station Action Group which now has an active local presence, as well as a significant online presence. The group is campaigning for the reopening of Thornhill Train Station and has been in discussion with local land owners. Furthermore, work carried out as part of the community consultation has been used by local groups to evidence local support for the reconditioning of unused local buildings. More specifically this work has focussed on bring the old primary schoolhouse in Thornhill back into use as an arts space with exploratory work ongoing.

Thornhill Community Council may also wish to explore options for the potential employment of a Community Development Officer. This staff post would be responsible for taking forward the Action Points and Project Outlines contained within this Community Plan. Further to this, it

may also be the case that a Community Development Worker would identify other suitable projects to address local need and demand within Thornhill as and when it arises