



Cree Valley Community Action Plan

2020-2025

Cree Valley Community Council

November 2020



Contents

1. Introduction and Background	3
1.1 Background and Original Drivers	3
1.2 The Organisation	3
1.3 Methodology and scope of work	3
2. Research	5
2.1 The Boundary of the Cree Valley	5
2.2 Demographics and Statistics	7
2.3 Community Assets and Community Groups	9
2.4 Business and Employment.....	11
2.5 Tourism in Dumfries and Galloway	12
2.6 Policy Context	12
3. Community and Stakeholder feedback	12
3.1 Community Survey	13
3.2 Stakeholder Interviews	17
3.3 Community Consultation Meetings and Focus Groups	18
3.4 Creative Competition	20
4. What We Found Out: The Big Issues	21
5 Action Plan	23
5.1 Vision for the Cree Valley.....	23
5.2 Thematic Areas	23
5.3 Values and Principles	24
5.4 Monitoring, Auditing and Evaluation the Community Action Plan	24
5.5 Project Themes and Priorities	24

1. Introduction and Background

1.1 Background and Original Drivers

Cree Valley is located in the district of Wigtown in the local authority area of Dumfries and Galloway in South West Scotland.

Cree Valley Community Council (CVCC) is working with Local Energy Scotland to establish a local community benefits package linked to a Cree Valley area benefits project. Through extensive consultation with the developers (Scottish Power Renewables), CVCC and the communities they represent it was agreed that a Community Action Plan should be produced.

A Community Action Plan will allow CVCC to utilise community benefit payments effectively. Community benefit funds are expected to come from Kilgallioch Extension, Clauchrie and Arecleoch Windfarms and may exceed £100,000 per annum. Robust community consultation in the Cree Valley will ensure the funds are used sustainably and effectively.

To maximise the opportunity provided by the community benefits package and other income that could come to the community in the future CVCC commissioned Community Enterprise in May 2020. Community Enterprise acted as an independent consultant to work with CVCC to help them to design and facilitate a community consultation process and produce a Community Action Plan (CAP) from the findings of that process.

The CAP sets out the community's vision for the longer term (up to 20 years) with more detailed priority activity across identified themes or outcomes over the short (1-3 years), medium (3-10 years) and longer term (10-15 years). The forthcoming community benefits package is a catalyst to conducting this process now but the CAP will encompass activity in excess of what the community benefits package will be able to support directly, providing a focus for other resources that the community may secure.

1.2 The Organisation

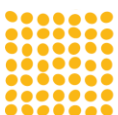
CVCC has led on this work and has formed the Cree Valley Area Development Trust in October 2020 in order to administer the funds.

1.3 Methodology and scope of work

Engaging with everyone in the local community is a critical part of any Community Action Plan. Community Enterprise, alongside Cree Valley Community Council carried out extensive and highly participative research throughout the Cree Valley area between June and September 2020 to ensure there was plenty of opportunity to share views. The Community Enterprise programme included time spent getting to know the area, encouraging engagement and building a presence in the community. Community Enterprise were able to conduct significant research in the time following an agreed workplan with CVCC.

The COVID 19 pandemic and the restrictions put in place by the National and Scottish Government relating to social distancing and social isolation, required the traditional approaches to face to face consultation to be remodelled into video meetings (ZOOM) and an increased use of telephone and email conversations. In addition, Community Enterprise built on existing research in the area. As such Community Enterprise and CVCC is confident that significant data and information have been gathered.

The aim of the research was to build up both a quantitative and qualitative picture of what local people think. Analysis of the consultation programme method can be found in Section 4.



The methodology can be seen outlined in the graphic below.



2. Research

2.1 The Boundary of the Cree Valley

Cree Valley is situated in south-west Scotland in the Dumfries and Galloway Region. The Cree Valley is a favourite for hill walkers and mountain bikers as it is near Galloway Forest Park, with internationally recognised biking trails amidst some of the most dramatic scenery in the south of Scotland.



Map 1: The Cree Valley Area Boundary

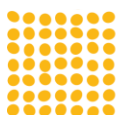




Map 2: The Cree Valley Area within Dumfries and Galloway



Map 3: The Cree Valley Area within Scotland



There is a wealth of wildlife, such as red and roe deer in the forest and hills, while wild goats thrive on the rocky slopes.

Newton Stewart is the main town in the Cree Valley. It is a small market town on the banks of the River Cree, surrounded by the Galloway hills. Historically, it thrived on its cotton and carpet industries, but is now more famous for its salmon and trout fishing on the River Cree. The town offers a wide range of shopping outlets (household names as well as many independent retailers) and places to eat.

The South West of Scotland has often been overlooked as a tourism destination, with many visitors heading to the more widely marketed and promoted ‘Highlands and Islands’ of Scotland. However, the South West of Scotland which was designated as a UNESCO Biosphere in 2012, has a rich natural and cultural heritage in its own right. Being less well known, its roads, its hills, its beaches are all quieter but the quality of authentic experiences that can be enjoyed are all there if only people knew where to go and what to see.

2.2 Demographics and Statistics

Cree Valley

Unless otherwise noted, the figures below are from Community Insight, a demographic software tool that collects data from over 30 databases including Census Scotland, Department of Work and Pensions, NHS and others. Community Enterprise does not own any of the following data. The headline results are shown below.

	<p>Cree Valley has a population of 4,770.</p>
<p>Population</p>	<p>At 26.6%, the proportion of the population aged over 65 is generally consistent with the Dumfries & Galloway average (25.5%) but higher than the Scottish average. The proportion of people of working age is slightly lower than the regional figures and 7.1% lower than national averages.</p> <p>The recent population trend in Cree Valley shows around a 2% decline since 2016. However, this area has been in a general pattern of growth over the past 20 years in contrast to the trend across Dumfries & Galloway as a whole.</p>
	<p>The pattern of car ownership in Cree Valley largely matches the regional and national averages as seen on the graph below. 22.9% of households do not have access to a car which is lower than the Scottish average of 30.5% but slightly higher than the levels for Dumfries and Galloway. 47.5% of households have access to one car, about 5% higher than national levels.</p>
<p>Transport</p>	<p>There is a significantly lower jobs density in Cree Valley than the wider region, and Scotland as a whole.</p>
	<p>The largest industry sector is Health (19.3%) followed by Education (12.4%) and Retail (10.9%).</p>
<p>Economy and Employment</p>	<p>Excluding self employed people, 30.4% of employees are employed in the public sector, compared with 20.6% across Dumfries and Galloway, and the Scotland average of 22.2%. The largest employment sector is health and social work (17% of people in employment) followed by retail (13%) and construction (11%).</p>





Housing

35.3% of dwellings in the Cree Valley area are detached and 30.4% are semi-detached – both considerably higher than the Scotland averages of 21.4% and 19.7%. Flats, maisonettes and apartments make up just 11.3% of dwellings, compared with 37.7% across Scotland as a whole.

62.4% of dwellings are owner-occupied, slightly lower than the regional average but comparable to national levels.

The Council no longer own dwellings for social rent, Housing Associations are the main providers of new and affordable social housing in Dumfries and Galloway and 20.8% is socially rented.



Households

There are a higher proportion of pensioner households than the Scotland average across Cree Valley at 28.3%. Over a third of households are married which is consistent with Scottish averages. The area has fewer one person households, lone parent families and no student households.



Health

Access to health services, such as GPs, hospitals, pharmacies, dentists and leisure services is poorer than for Scotland as a whole. GP services are provided in Newton Stewart. 24.5% of people have a limiting long-term illness, which is slightly higher than the Scotland average of 19.6%.



Environment and Infrastructure

The area falls within the UNESCO Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere Reserve and Galloway Dark Skies Park. The Southern Upland Way cuts through the area, passing near Glentroof.

In relation to broadband connectivity, the average broadband download speed is around half of Scotland’s average (41.80 Mbit/s).



Education

35.7% of people have no qualifications (higher than the Dumfries & Galloway average 32.9% and the Scotland average of 26.8%). 20.9% hold higher education qualifications, similar to regional figures and around 5% lower than the Scotland averages.



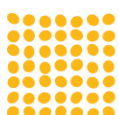
Vulnerable Groups

14.8% of pensioners are living in poverty in the Cree Valley area – a level slightly higher but largely comparable to the Scotland average. Levels of Universal Credit claims are 1.4% higher than the national average (14% vs. 12.6%).

SIMD¹

Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation ranks areas from most deprived to least deprived. The majority of people in the Cree Valley area fall within higher deprivation deciles; between 20%-50% most deprived. A smaller but notably population (658 people) can be seen with the 20-30% least deprived in Scotland illustrating a degree of inequality across the local area.

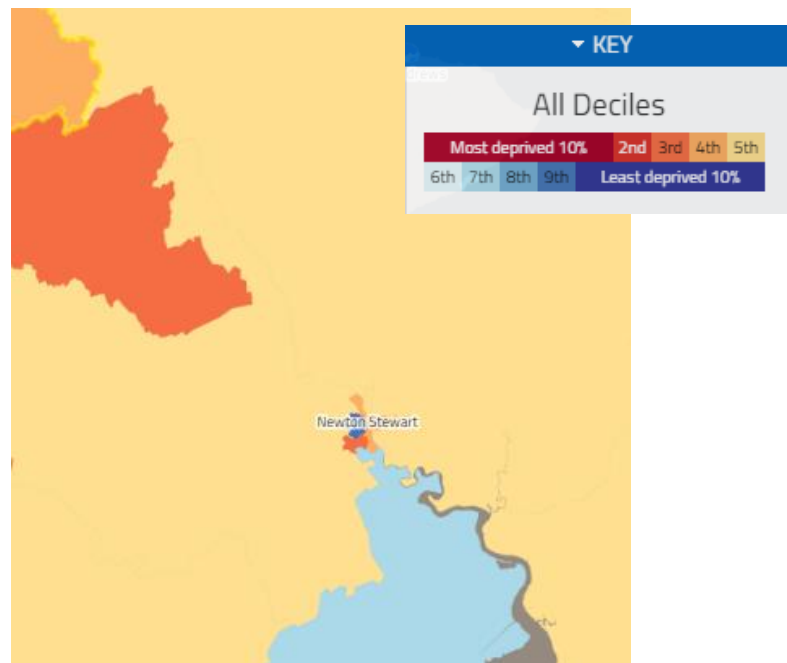
¹ The Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) identifies small area concentrations of multiple deprivation across all of Scotland in a consistent way. It allows effective targeting of policies and funding where the aim is to wholly or partly tackle or take account of area concentrations of multiple deprivation. SIMD ranks small areas (called data zones) from most deprived (ranked 1) to least deprived (ranked 6,976).



Whilst Cree Valley is not an area that could be classified as deprived in terms of education, health or housing, due to its mixed rurality, 807 people in the area do fall within the most deprived 10% for geographic access to services.

The map below shows the Cree Valley area according to the SIMD 2020 rankings. The red areas illustrate higher levels of deprivation and the blue areas correspond to areas of least deprivation. The map illustrates that much of the rural area outside of Newton Stewart has an overall ranking around the 5th decile (light brown). This sits in the middle of the deprivation profile.

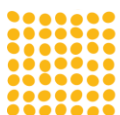
Within Newton Stewart, there is a mixed profile of deprivation with some areas highlighted in blue (lower deprivation) and some within the 3rd decile or 30% most deprived. Consideration of potential regional inequalities therefore can be considered important within the Cree Valley region. Efforts to engage with and reflect on the needs and priorities of the whole community are paramount.



2.3 Community Assets and Community Groups

The Cree Valley has a range of services available to its residents. The table below reflects these assets and services within the community to shine a light on the nature of the Cree Valley community, to identify gaps, to ensure against duplication, to invest in the good things that already exist and to encourage collaboration. It is a snapshot of the area and is not meant to be exhaustive.

Schools	Churches
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Douglas Ewart High School • Penninghame Primary School • St Ninians RC Primary School • Minnigaff Primary School • Newton Stewart Nursery School 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Penninghame St Johns Church • Our Lady and St Ninian RC Church • Jubilee Road Gospel Hall • All Saints, Challoch • Minnigaff Church



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minnigaff Nursery School 	
Outdoor Assets	Community Facilities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minnigaff Park • Galloway Forest Park • Kirroughtree Forest • Pennighame Forest • Glentrool Forest • RSBP Wood of Cree • River Cree • Loch Dee • Loch Trool • Clatteringshaws Loch 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Newton Stewart Centre • Activity and Resource Centre • Newton Stewart Initiative Community Shop • Glentrool Community Hall • Riverside Centre • McMillan Hall • Minnigaff Pavillion

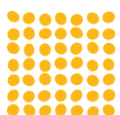
In Newton Stewart, there are a number of vacant buildings within easy reach of the main street which have or are falling into serious disrepair and are an eyesore in the community. Community activists have explored the opportunities for development into community use for these buildings which include:

- The old Douglas Ewart Secondary School B Block Site – community use and affordable housing
- Former Grapes Hotel – community use
- Former Newspaper Print Building and land – community use

The Minnigaff Park and pavilion has also been identified for a future community owned project.

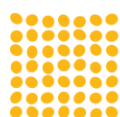
Community groups

In addition to the wide range of community assets detailed above there are some active community groups operating in the Cree Valley, all of which support the development and delivery of activity and events.



Church	Sport, Leisure and Activity	Community Groups
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Milestone Church Fellowship • Penninghame St John's Parish Church • All Saints Challoch • St Ninians RC Church • Monnigaff Church 	<p>In Newton Stewart</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rugby Football Club • Golf Club • Diving Club • Bowling Club • Angling Association • Football Club • Tennis Club • The Merrick Leisure Centre • BMX Track • Blairmount Park • Merrick Mavericks ASC • Angling Assoc <p>Other areas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Galloway Thistle FC • Dance X-Treme • Emma Louise Dance Club • Pony Club • Galloway Fishery Trust • Hatchery Trust 	<p>In Newton Stewart</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women of Minnigaff & Newton Stewart • Rotary Club • Round Table (and District) • Baby & Toddler Group • Newton Stewart Initiative • Penninghame Women's Guild <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cree Valley Area Development Trust • Various SWRI groups.(Stronord & Challoch) • Glentroll & Bargrennan Community Trust • Cree Valley Community Council • RBLS • RNLI
Youth	Heritage	The Arts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peace Advocate Group • Newton Stewart Brownies / Guides • Beavers / Scouts / Cubs • Dumfries and Galloway Youth work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Museum • Bruce's Stone • Murray's Monument • Grey Mare's Tail • Crafty Distillery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Craft Club • Newton Stewart Players • Newton Stewart Cinema
Environment and Outdoors	Music	Health & Wellbeing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Galloway Mountain Rescue • Extinction Rebellion • Galloway Forest Astronomical Society • Cree Valley Community Woodlands Trust • Galloway Fisheries Trust • Southern Upland Way • Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere • Add Wigtownshire Ramblers & Newton Stewart Walking Festival 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trad Music Trust <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Festival ○ Operate in the Vault 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Befriending Project • Red Cross • Peace Advocacy Project

2.4 Business and Employment



Cree Valley and the Dumfries and Galloway Region is in large part a rural economy and employment opportunities are varied from traditional rural industries such as various forms of farming and agriculture, to manufacturing, food production, construction, transport and professions. Within the public sector Dumfries and Galloway Council is the largest employer along with the NHS.

Tourism and hospitality are some of the top employment sectors in the area, with a number of leisure and visitor attractions including mountain biking, sailing, heritage and so on. There is therefore seasonal employment in the region, as well as high levels of self-employment within the private sector.

2.5 Tourism in Dumfries and Galloway

Newton Stewart is seen as and markets itself as “Gateway to the Galloway Hills”

Tourism statistics paint a varied picture of Dumfries and Galloway. A survey conducted by Visit Scotland in 2015 showed that a whole, Dumfries and Galloway attracts 630,000 UK visitors per year – the majority come from England (355,000) with 42,000 overseas tourists per year. In line with the rest of Scotland, most trips from UK residents last between 1 and 3 nights.

Visitors to Scotland are motivated by the scenery, landscape, history and culture. Repeat visits are frequent in Dumfries and Galloway – 43% of visitors surveyed were on a return trip. Overwhelmingly, 74% of visitors to Dumfries and Galloway travel there by car.

According to Dumfries & Galloway’s Regional Tourism Strategy 2016 to 2020, one of the growth sectors is “Nature based tourism” – developing the rich and diverse product associated with the region’s natural landscape (forest, hills, river, coast and lochs) and iconic international designations such as Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere and Dark Skies.

2.6 Policy Context

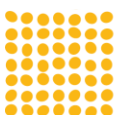
Community Enterprise undertook research into the policy context. The Community Action Plan reflects the priorities as outlined within the relevant national and regional policy context including community regeneration, elderly and social isolation, young people, heritage, the natural environment and conservation, tourism and economic development.

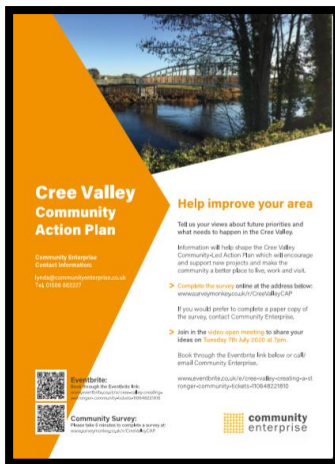
3. Community and Stakeholder feedback

The consultation and research aimed to gain wide representation of the community by using a variety of approaches including: Events, an online survey, Zoom focus groups, a covid-compliant village walk and one to one conversations.

A range of communication channels were used to inform and engage including: press releases, social media, posters, leafleting and word of mouth.

In addition the process included a creative competition. Local people were invited to enter drawings, photos, images or creative writing in under and over 16s category. The entries illustrated what people like about the area and the images were used in the final published plan.





The results of these are detailed in the following section.

3.1 Community Survey

The community survey was available online from June to mid - September 2020. A total of 99 individual responses were recorded. A significant number of these represented family groups rather than individuals and altogether, the survey represented the views of 262 people including children. 92% were local residents, 2% were visitors, 4% were people who worked in the area and 2% were professionals with an interest in the area. 48% of respondents were men and 52% were women.

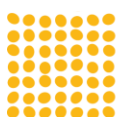
Profile

All age groups were represented although the 36-65 age brackets were most heavily represented

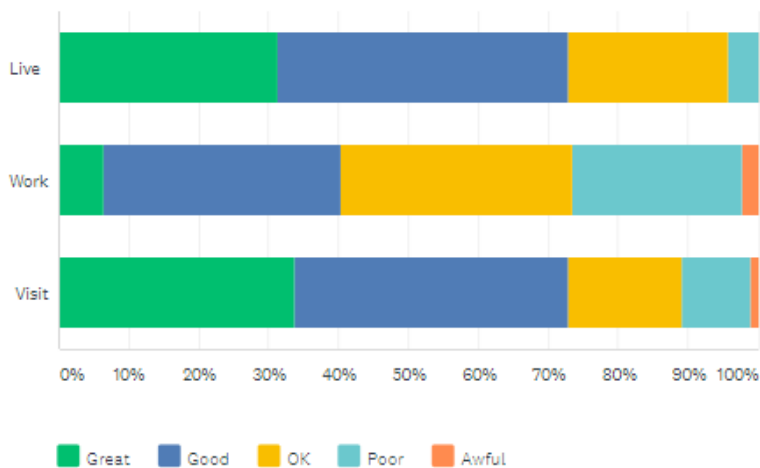
The majority of people have lived in the area between 6-30 years (48%) and more than 30 years (24%) indicating a settled community.

Feelings about the Place

A significant 85% of respondents felt they would still be living in Cree Valley in 10 years' time, indicating a long term commitment to the area. Only 1% said they did not intend to stay and the remaining 14% were 'not sure'. Those who don't intend to stay gave their reasons as moving for university/jobs, lack of job opportunities in the area, little to do and lack of financial support in Newton Stewart (when compared with Stranraer and Wigtown).



Rating Cree Valley



31% of people rated Cree Valley as an 'great' place to live overall.

A further 42% as 'good'. 23% rated it as 'ok.' 4% rated it as a poor place to live.

No-one rated it as 'awful'.

People were asked to rate specific aspects of life in Cree Valley. Health and wellbeing services was rated most highly, followed by recreation and leisure and, in third place, sense of community. Traffic and roads, housing and the local economy and jobs were rated the lowest.

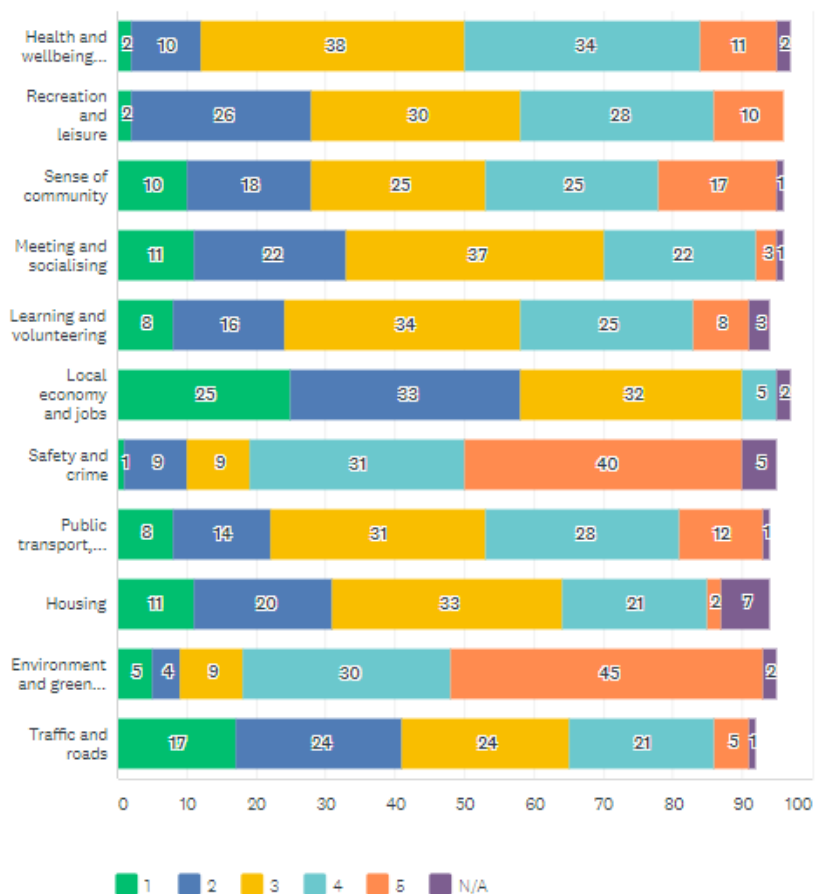
What is Valued Most, What are the Challenges and Project Ideas for the Future?

People were asked to rate aspects about the area

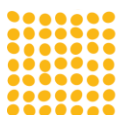
(1 = poor, 5 = excellent)

and identify future project ideas.

The graph shows the number of people from the 99 survey respondents and how they rated each area or issue.



The table shows what is important to people, what people like least and what projects they would like to see developed.



LIKE	CHALLENGES	PROJECTS
Local environment, scenery, peace and tranquility <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ‘Peace and quiet’ • ‘Beautiful place to live’ • ‘The outdoor spaces so near to us are stunning, there are brilliant places to visit, walk & cycle.’ • ‘The stuff we take for granted; we have beaches close by, hills, forests etc.’ 	Employment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ‘Jobs. We need ways to encourage more industries and business start-ups. Young people need to leave to be educated and to expand their job prospects leaving a majority of older residents’ • ‘Long term job opportunities and employment’ • ‘No long term employment prospects and wage levels among the lowest in Scotland’ 	Community spaces and groups <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ‘Community theatre, film night and kids cinema’ • ‘Using some of the rundown buildings for a well-managed community centre that caters for all needs’ • ‘Build on COVID resilience group and create a local organisation’ • ‘A friends of Cree group to help improve the local area e.g. litter picking with local schools’
Community and People <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ‘Kindness and generosity of people’ • ‘Friendly neighbours’ 	Transport <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ‘The lack of good access to and from the area is a problem i.e. poor road and rail connectivity.’ • ‘We are still very rural, and disconnected with the only transport options still having to rely on the A75. This impacts tourism, the economy and job prospects as it isn’t reasonable to travel outside of the local community for work when there is such distance to go.’ 	Paths, parks and environmental projects <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ‘Riverside peace path’ • ‘Woodland walks nearby’ • ‘Flower beds and continue the work of the women’s group’ • ‘Improve Glebe/Princes Rd Playpark’ • ‘More benches’ • ‘Creating a showcase community Peace Garden, Albert Street Gardens’ • ‘Environmental employability scheme to combat impact of covid’ • ‘Community growing zone where experienced horticulturalist can support local vegetable growing’ • ‘Craft fayre/farmers market’
Local Amenities and Services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ‘We are very lucky to have the cinema and now the vault as a live music venue’ • ‘Broad spectrum of services’ • ‘I love the local businesses, cafes, and shops which are all one of 	Isolation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ‘Getting to know my neighbours. People keep themselves to themselves’ • ‘Loneliness and isolation of older people’ 	Youth <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ‘Soft play area’ • ‘Youth and children’s clubs’ • ‘Places for children to play’ • ‘Dance opportunities’ • ‘New child friendly inclusive play parks in both Minnigaff and Newton Stewart’ • ‘Children in the arts support’ • ‘Youth employment support’



<p>a kind and real gems in the community.'</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'Good schools' 		
Pace and Quality of Life	Roads and traffic	Services and Facilities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'The peace and slower pace of life' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'Our roads are often not suitable for the amount of busy traffic and minor roads not adequate for the huge Tractors and Trailers hence difficulty passing in an ordinary cars' 'Road infrastructure is appalling, public transport is few and far between. No straight link from here to Ayr/Glasgow or Dumfries/Carlisle.' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'Better selection of shops and better stock in existing shops' 'Enterprise units' 'Shake up of rural development & planning - let derelict properties be restored in a cost-effective manner; give new business ventures hope' 'Maintenance of the library service' 'Revival of Main Street' 'More facilities for performing arts - dance, drama & music'
Safety	Lack of activity for young people	Litter and Waste
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'Safe place to bring up children' 'Low crime levels' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'Nothing for young people' 'There aren't enough things to do in the area, especially for kids' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'Green project to litter pick' 'Village recycling points' 'More bins, serious lack of dog poo bins' 'A partnership approach to a clamp down on litter'
Further education opportunities	Cleanliness of streets	Events
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'Further education options to school leavers and others' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Litter left by inconsiderate people.' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'A yearly arts festival' 'Community cinema' 'Community focused days/events' 'Annual Summer Festival' / Galloway Pageant with new ideas, New Year's celebrations etc.'
Sport and Active Opportunities	Not enough shops	Café / Bistro
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'Access to outdoor opportunities' 'Culture of cycling and running locally' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'We all complain that people go elsewhere to shop etc., aside from the supermarkets, there's very little to attract anyone to the town.' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'Sheltered areas for outdoor eating' 'Community restaurant' 'Space for outside cafes'





3.2 Stakeholder Interviews

A number of stakeholders were approached to take part in the consultation and give their perspective about the community and 12 organisations responded.

The Key Challenges	Project Ideas
Economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community resilience as a result of the Covid 19 pandemic • Support for businesses and the development of a Business Forum • Grow ambition for businesses to trade outwith the region through greater confidence • Regional Economic Partnership – strategy for the region to be linked to local area
Lack of connection between community groups and organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overarching umbrella organisation representing the groups and organisations throughout the Cree Valley • Working to agreed objectives and action • The development of a clear theme for the area e.g. A Health and wellbeing project would take into account: eating places, shops, activities, leisure, mental and physical health
Digital connectivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved digital connections to address isolation, economic opportunities. • Support for businesses to gain confidence in their digital infrastructure to achieve a wider reach. Young people may feel motivated to stay in the area for employment if better connected
Newton Stewart Town Centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regeneration programme • Community use of vacant and derelict buildings • Closer look at assets which would benefit businesses • One way town centre traffic system • Restructure of the pavements which are narrow • Improved street parking • Improved signage to local attractions, better use of notice boards and a centrally sited town centre map



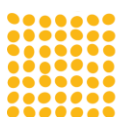
Tourism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developed profile to benefit tourism and awareness of local business driven by partnership working with the Council and a community interest group
Transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of a community transport scheme for the area
Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of old railway lines through fields to make pathways and safe walking and cycling areas. To include marked out paths with seats • Build on the river for leisure; walking, water sports, tourism, requires improved maintenance • Opportunity for qualified Countryside Rangers to engage with the population and lead regular excursions to places of interest.



3.3 Community Consultation Meetings and Focus Groups

COVID 19 restrictions and social distancing requirements meant that it was not possible to hold face to face community open meetings. An initial local Consultation Meeting was held by Zoom in June 2020 to launch the Community Action Plan Project. Another similar meeting was held in September 2020 to allow participants to consider the research findings, discuss and agree priorities for action and see the entries and winners for the creative competition. Both meetings were advertised by press releases, direct email contact, poster, social media and word of mouth.

Focus Groups were held throughout the period of research with: Community Groups, Cree Valley Churches and Young People. The elected members and local businesses were unable to attend focus groups targeting them specifically, so the same community contacts were invited to join community meetings.



Key findings

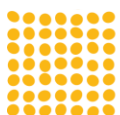
Transport	Heritage	Housing
There is a limited bus service and flexible, accessible and affordable transport scheme is needed as lack of this is a barrier to employment, leisure and social activities	Options need to be explored further including genealogy and church displays	There is a lack of affordable housing for young people to buy or rent.
Environment	Health and Wellbeing	Families and Young People
There are options for the River Cree and forests be developed for cycling, walking, fishing and sport especially as the local Outdoor Education Centres have closed.	<p>People are required to travel to health centre in Newton Stewart although there are GP practices and satellite services in other communities.</p> <p>The Council have invested resources to address young people's mental health which can be poor as a result of lack of social activities, poor transport, and isolation.</p> <p>The Peace Advocacy Project is very successful and has a positive impact on young people who are motivated to work with the entire community.</p>	<p>There is a need for more youth work services which are flexible to the needs and challenges faced by young people. There is a current Youth Participation and Engagement Strategy</p> <p>Families with young children struggle to find local activities and need to travel further afield as far as Dumfries and Stranraer e.g. soft play</p>
Tourism	Leisure	Economy
There is a need for Visit Scotland investment to sustain facilities for people. The return of festivals would be welcomed.	There are a lack of leisure opportunities for young people. The fenced areas at Blairmont are locked when young people need to use them.	There is concern about economic stability and there are very limited employment opportunities for everyone but especially young people both full time and part time.
Church	Crime and Safety	Tourism
<p>Congregation numbers are falling and ministers need to share resources. Development of the pilgrimage route opportunities</p> <p>Promote weddings, events and open weekends and</p>	There are low crime rates, but stereotyping of young people still exists, especially relating to anti-social behaviour.	Projects are needed to bring visitors to the area. This should be addressed as a priority.



encourage non church goers to activities		
Community	Learning	Other
<p>It's a close knit community however communication between communities and groups is poor.</p> <p>The reminiscence project with high school pupils and the CVCC was very successful and the model should be repeated.</p> <p>The area is resilient with a close community and young people are "strong and tough"</p>	<p>Local further education opportunities are limited and young people are forced to move away. A move to online would be good, but many young people in rural areas have issues with broadband and accessibility.</p>	<p>We need bespoke towns and facilities with no chain shops.</p>

3.4 Creative Competition

A creative competition for children and adults ran throughout the period of the research. A total of 16 entries were received (6 over 16 years category and 10 under 16 years category) depicting what people like about the Cree Valley. The winners were chosen by independent judges.



4. What We Found Out: The Big Issues

4.1 Summary

Key findings identified through analysis of the research and consultation shows that this is the nature of the community:

Assets

Geographical and Physical

1. This is an area of significant natural beauty that needs to be protected but could be used more effectively to improve the community. Specifically the River Cree offers excellent leisure opportunities which add to the fishing pastime current on offer
2. The area falls within the UNESCO Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere Reserve. The Galloway Dark Skies Park is located to the East and the Southern Upland Way cuts through the area. There are substantial opportunities to develop sustainable tourism. The new Tourism Strategy supports the development of this.
3. There are a number and range of physical assets including heritage, outdoor projects, forests and countryside.
4. Newton Stewart lacks an accessible building in the town centre which can offer flexible space for community activities and projects.

People

5. The newly established Cree Valley Area Development Trust will act as a community anchor organisation to bring organisations together and coordinate partnership activity.
6. Professionals and local people have confidence and a strong skill set which is a vital component to get things done.
7. Community organisations are well supported by motivated volunteers.

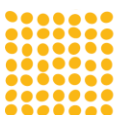
Challenges

A Changing Population

8. There is a higher proportion of people over 65 and a growing aging demographic while the numbers of young people is relatively low. The gap between older and younger populations and the reduction in working age people is likely to widen over time which results in pressure on services. Stakeholders identified a need to attract young families and appropriate businesses to the area and reduce the trend for youth outward migration.
9. The population of Dumfries and Galloway is projected to decline by 2.8% in the next 20 years, which compares to a projected increase of 1.8% for Scotland as a whole. Initiatives need to be put in place to protect the vibrancy of the community and the ability to live well.
10. Local people and recent research support the need to encourage youth involvement.

Work and the economy

11. There is a significantly lower jobs density in Cree Valley than the wider region, and Scotland as a whole.



12. Excluding self employed people, 30.4% of employees are employed in the public sector, compared with 20.6% across Dumfries and Galloway, and the Scotland average of 22.2%. The largest employment sector is health and social work (17% of people in employment) followed by retail (13%) and construction (11%).
13. The Covid 19 pandemic has required many more people to work from home and generally this has been successful. The local economy needs to build on this practice and promote the area as a place where people can live and work.

Lack of Access to Services

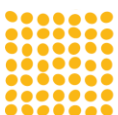
14. Access to health services, such as GPs, hospitals, pharmacies, dentists and leisure services is poorer than for Scotland as a whole mainly due to the rural geographic area.
15. Average broadband speed is less than half of Scotland's average

Connectedness

16. Although there are a large number of assets and organisations, evidence in the research indicates that information about them is poor and they tend to operate in isolation. This was clearly articulated by the stakeholders who have a good knowledge of the community.
17. There was a consistent concern about transport throughout the consultation. This includes a limited public transport system, the need for a flexible service and the need to own a car.

Hidden Deprivation

18. Whilst Cree Valley is not an area that could be classified as deprived in terms of education, health or housing, due to its mixed rurality, 807 people in the area fall within the most deprived 10% for geographic access to services. The pattern of service access across Cree Valley illustrates the mix of town and rural areas with a further 1,317 people within the least deprived in terms of service access.
19. There is a higher proportion of people providing unpaid care in the Cree Valley (10%, compared to the Scotland average of 9.3%). Of these, 1.9% are children and 3.1% of unpaid carers are providing more than 50 hours a week of care. These levels are both higher than the regional and national averages.
20. As part of the need to focus on local wealth creation and entrepreneurship, stakeholders considered affordability, economic connections, and trade important element to enhance equality and to attract and retain young families and young people to the area.



5 Action Plan

5.1 Vision for the Cree Valley

Cree Valley is a connected, interactive, inclusive community providing activities to promote health, community well-being, the environment and vibrant business growth highlighting the areas as both attractive and welcoming to visitors.

Vision statement ideas

The screenshot shows a Zoom meeting interface with a slide titled "A Vision for Cree Valley". The slide contains a grid of vision statement ideas with handwritten feedback (checkmarks, stars, hearts, and lines) in various colors. The ideas are:

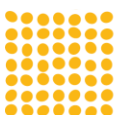
You told us, now select your TOP three	
A connected and interactive community with opportunities for everyone	Positive and forward thinking
Healthy and vibrant	Busy and lively with plenty to do
A welcoming place to visit	Enterprising and thriving
Sustainable and green	Innovative
Close knit, caring inclusive community	A place where young people want to stay

The Zoom interface includes a top bar with "Recording" and "View Options", a bottom bar with "Mute", "Stop Video", "Participants", "Chat", "Share Screen", "Record", and "Reactions", and a vertical sidebar on the right with video thumbnails for participants: Douglas Whitaker, Oliver, Anthony Bennett, Lynda Robinson, and Alan Marshall.

Open Meeting 21st September 2020

5.2 Thematic Areas

Based on the research findings, we have identified five key project areas for the Community Action Plan along with project priorities to be developed and delivered over the next 15 years. Projects will be developed by various groups and new groups within the community.





5.3 Values and Principles

The following values and principles will underpin the way in which this action plan is rolled out and implemented:

1. A plan for all – it is the responsibility of the whole community (individuals and groups) to unite and work together for project ambitions to be realised.
2. Transparency – all ideas should be planned and researched openly with a commitment to co-production where groups contribute to the ideas as they develop.
3. Partnership – working together with a shared agenda will be at the heart of any activity arising from this plan.
4. Inclusion – everyone is invited to participate and everyone benefits, regardless of age and ability.
5. Impact – the success of this plan will be judged on activities which have a positive influence on people and communities.
6. Involvement – ensuring the community is involved in decisions that affect their lives.

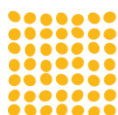
5.4 Monitoring, Auditing and Evaluation the Community Action Plan

Monitoring, auditing and evaluation are essential requirements of any Community Action Plan to ensure it is being implemented. The Cree Valley Area Development Trust will meet regularly to review progress on the plan. Keeping records against each theme and project will be a useful tool to ensure progress is being maintained. These meetings will be open and accessible to all groups and individuals. Evaluation provides an opportunity to reflect and learn from activities, assess the outcomes and effectiveness of a project and think about new ways of doing things.

5.5 Project Themes and Priorities

The CAP sets out the community’s vision for the longer term (up to 20 years) with more detailed priority activity across identified themes with outcomes which are categorised in colour in the tables below for when they will be achieved: **short term (1-3 years)**, **medium term (3-10 years)** and **longer term (10-15 years)**.

It is important to note that some of the project outcomes will be a “quick fix” where as others will take time to plan and execute. To achieve results and outcomes in the short, medium and longer term each project/outcome will have its own activity plan which will be Specific, Measurable,



Achievable, Realistic and Timely (SMART) and determined and agreed in the first year of the CAP implementation.

A Connected and Interactive Community

Aim

To ensure the community action plan is progressing effectively over the next 15 years, benefiting the people who live in the Cree Valley, who will be able to take control of the things and spaces that matter to them.

Summary

This is an action plan for the whole community and any local organisation or group of residents can come forward to lead on projects. Although it is not the responsibility of Cree Valley Area Development Trust to lead on everything, it will be required to oversee the process. The Development Trust has the powers to raise funds, acquire land and employ staff, to achieve community renewal goals. In time, a Development Officer may be required to provide support with project implementation.

A connections group will be set up in year one as a sub-group of the Cree Valley Area Development Trust. The group will support the promotion of new clubs / activities / events / initiatives arising from the plan, as well as share news and information on a range of topics that are relevant to the Cree Valley community. The group will also have a lobbying and campaigning role with things that are outwith the control of the residents, particularly in relation to tourism and transport.

The group will start to lead on changes to physical information points including notice boards in the towns and villages, and enhanced social media presence.

Existing Provision

There are a range of active community groups and organisations throughout the Cree Valley but they work in a fragmented manner with a lack of partnership working. Although the Cree Valley Area Development Trust is an embryonic organisation, it has been formed with support from the Cree Valley Community Council, a strong proactive organisation. The Trust will be a Cree Valley wide representative group with the ability to progress with projects.

Community ownership of an empty building is a priority for the community e.g. this would allow groups such as the Newton Stewart Players to meet again.

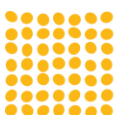
Supporting evidence

Most people have lived in the area for more than 30 years (48%) and a significant percentage (85%) of respondents felt they would still be living in Cree Valley in 10 years' time, indicating a long term commitment to the area. The research identified that bringing communities, organisations and groups together in a cohesive way through partnership working is essential. The community consultation meeting identified the formation of an umbrella organisation e.g. Cree Valley Area Development Trust to facilitate this.

Covid 19 has had a significant impact on opportunities for people to meet safely in their communities. However even before the pandemic there were a decreasing number of affordable and comfortable, flexible meeting spaces. Refurbishing empty buildings for community use was highlighted as a top priority in the community survey, stakeholder research and community open meetings. There are a number of buildings close to the Newton Stewart town centre High Street which are vacant and local eyesores which are ripe for community ownership including the Grapes Hotel, B Block of the old Douglas Ewart High School and the Print building.

Funding options

Local funds such as the Dumfries and Galloway Community Grant Scheme and Renewable Energy Fund may invest in this kind of activity. If this grows further funding from charitable trusts may be required.



Potential partners

It is important to connect the Community Council, Newton Stewart Initiative, the Primary Schools, Douglas Ewart High School, local businesses and other local groups and organisations through the development of the Trust and the Development Trust Association Scotland (DTAS) will be a strong partner in its development. The local Third Sector Interface may help the group in shaping the organisation, as well as support the group policies as more local people get involved.

Priority: Build Community Capacity	Priority: Flexible and accessible community meeting spaces	Priority: Build on community resilience activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop the Cree Valley Area Development Trust as a community anchor organisation to lead and coordinate activity with staff support if required Through partnership working identify opportunities for increased participation by local people in existing or new community groups Build capacity for community organisations to work with other organisations (community groups, third sector organisations, businesses, social housing providers, health and local authority) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake feasibility research and compile business plans to support the community asset transfer or purchase of an appropriate building or land area (to build on at a later date) Make full use of Asset Transfer opportunities to give more community control over community buildings and area assets, based on identified need e.g. Community Centre. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review current resilience activity and develop a Resilience Plan to be widely communicated Encourage volunteering to support community groups and link to health and wellbeing Develop and offer healthy food initiatives including a community growing zone, community cookery, community cafe

A Sustainable and Enterprising Economy

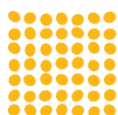
Aim

To support the Cree Valley society to manage and develop resources to meet the needs of present and future generations of local people and businesses by creating new strategies and activities that accelerate positive economic change.

Summary

By sustainably using the areas natural assets and supporting local businesses to develop responsibly, the Cree Valley can establish a thriving and resilient economy for the next generation.

Initiatives outlined in the Community Action Plan will aim to drive the economy forward with growth that creates opportunities for all, where the benefits of increased prosperity are shared. Projects will sustain and grow communities so that people thrive in the places where they live and work. This can be achieved through making the most of existing skills, resources and assets.



Existing Provision

The Cree Valley is mainly a rural economy and employment opportunities include traditional rural industries. However the largest employment sector is health and social work, followed by retail and construction. There is a significantly lower jobs density in Cree Valley than the wider region, and Scotland as a whole.

Supporting evidence

The consultation highlighted that there are real concerns about employment opportunities for all. Businesses have been negatively impacted by the Covid 19 pandemic and there have been fewer tourist visitors to the area. Covid 19 aside, people have a low level of confidence about long term job opportunities for young people and offerings to help them stay in the area. In the consultation survey, respondents felt that the local economy and jobs was the poorest aspect about living in the area.

Funding options

Scottish Enterprise, Visit Scotland,

Potential partners

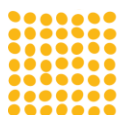
Dumfries and Galloway Council Economic Development, South of Scotland Enterprise (SOSE), Business Gateway, local businesses, South of Scotland Economic Partnership (SOSEP), Visit Scotland, Open Reach.

Priority: Support for people trying to get into work.	Priority: Increase opportunities to attract tourism and business to the local area.	Priority: Improve support and assistance for local businesses.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Further encourage local businesses to offer apprenticeships, internships, work placements to young people Identify and deliver new employment initiatives Establish “ready for work” projects and community mentor initiatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhance local attractions and natural assets to bring people to the area and encourage them to stay Develop a coordinated approach to preserving, developing and promoting local assets to expand tourism (attractions, events, activities) Make the Cree Valley an attractive place for inward investment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set up a local business forum to promote local businesses, access grants and alternative funding opportunities Better broadband to encourage new businesses and home working Incentives and flexibility to encourage social enterprises which support local need e.g. childcare, community transport and facilities for families

Healthy, Vibrant and Positive Community

Aim

To reduce isolation, develop community spirit and promote the well-being of the people of Cree Valley by bringing them together through events and activities in accessible community space, which will strengthen a sense of community and encourage people to look after each other.



Summary

Coming together as a community was seen as a priority for the action plan. Previous to the restrictions put in place by Covid 19, people informed the research that there is a lack of community activities especially for families and young people. A suite of accessible events for all ages will be organised that the Cree Valley communities can enjoy, from film nights to seasonal events, a reintroduction of the Galloway Pageant to community craft fayres. This will require an events group or existing organisation to take on responsibility for the development and funding of such events. Short term this could be part of the remit of the Development Trust to facilitate.

Existing Provision

The Galloway Pageant was a week-long social event but was reduced to a day in 2017. There are limited suitable and accessible community meeting places.

Supporting evidence

Participants who attended the community open meeting at the conclusion of the consultation chose their top three priorities from ideas and feedback generated throughout the CAP research. These were activities for everyone, a yearly Cree Valley Festival, regular community and music events.

Funding options

Connecting isolated people and developing place-based initiatives is a key outcome of the National Lottery Community Fund which may be a strong option for funding when their fund re-opens.

If there is an aspiration to take local buildings into community ownership, the Scottish Land Fund may be an option, and this will be considered during the action plan.

Potential partners

Existing groups such as the Community Council, Newton Stewart Initiative, churches, sporting organisations, informed groups and community arts will play a key role in supporting these events.

Priority: Increase the number of engaging events and activities for all ages	Priority: A Cree Valley Festival	Priority: A regular programme of community and music events
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Affordable events for young people and families with small children. • Accessible events and activities for everyone and work to address social isolation. • Increased attractions for people visiting the area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organise and deliver an annual public event in the park 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish Newton Stewart as “a Health and Wellbeing “Feature” Town and build on the attractions of cycling, walking, music etc



Getting About

Aim

To provide greater access to affordable and efficient public and community transport.

Summary

Existing Provision

There is currently a public transport bus service for the communities of the Cree Valley. The service is limited and does not give the flexibility for people of all ages to use public transport for employment, leisure and social activities.

Supporting evidence

The community survey identified that public transport does not meet the needs of the community in terms of timetables or accessibility, and most of the services people need are outwith the community and hard to access. 23% of households do not have access to a car which is slightly higher than the levels for Dumfries and Galloway.

The research highlighted significant support for the development of a community transport scheme which would provide flexible and accessible community-led solutions to respond to unmet local transport needs. It would represent accessible transport for many vulnerable and isolated people, often older people or people with disabilities. Successful community transport schemes exist in other parts of Dumfries and Galloway

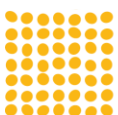
Funding options

NHS, Area Committees of Dumfries and Galloway Council, Integration Fund, donations, Scottish Government (Bus Service Operators Grant), contracts and local trade.

Potential partners

Dumfries and Galloway Council, Third Sector Dumfries and Galloway, Community Transport Association, CVCC, Dual The A75 Project, Reopen Dumfries to Stranraer Railway.

Priority: Improve public transport	Priority: Community Transport Project	Priority: Transport and Infrastructure
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Lobby for improvements to existing bus service to cover gaps in evenings and weekends.Meet with Dumfries and Galloway Council to secure commitment to a pilot "shuttle service" from the villages to Newton Stewart. Promote & evaluate pilot scheme.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Explore possibility of a community transport schemeRe-establish the Post Bus service	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Promote sustainability and a variety of approaches to transport eg electric car charging points. This will boost tourism and the affordability of the areaLobby for and achieve improvements to the road and rail infrastructures eg A75 the bypass



A Place Attractive to All

Aim

To increase pride in the Cree Valley and the town of Newton Stewart, encouraging people to make it more vibrant and attractive. In addition, increasing access to the outdoors and the pursuits the countryside offers will improve health and well-being, attract tourism and help to develop jobs and employability by enhancing skills, experience and qualifications.

Summary

Working with the Newton Stewart Initiative as the lead organisation, community members and businesses will work together to develop an improvement plan for Newton Stewart.

An Environment Group will be established initially as a group of local volunteers. They will coordinate and undertake local improvements, regular litter picks and other improvements such as raising funds for planters, seating and improvement to paths. Encouraging a sense of pride in place could be stimulated by establishing a “Cree Valley Pride of Place” award or taking part in Keep Scotland Beautiful initiatives. In the early years of the plan, a “living streets” project may be trialled, encouraging people to walk more and explore their local area which links to the “Getting About” theme.

Developing the River Cree into a valuable community asset is a key priority but this will take time and the environmental group will act as a steering group, securing funds for a feasibility study to think through the plans before finally undertaking an upgrade of the river and its banks and paths. Over time, there is an aspiration to encourage learning and employability in the Cree Valley. This will evolve organically but could look like a training hub or a placement for modern apprenticeships.

Existing Provision

Environmental initiatives have been taken on by Newton Stewart Initiative, the Peace Advocacy Project, Newton Stewart Women’s Group and the Community Council. A new Environment Group could help to pull together efforts and fill the gap left by reduced council funding by engendering a greater sense of community responsibility, as well as increasing the capacity for people to take up active roles in their community.

Supporting evidence

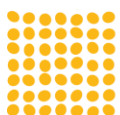
Issues and opportunities offered by the local environment was a key priority during the public consultation. 79% of respondents noted that the environment and green spaces are something they value but in terms of future projects the consultation highlighted that more could be made of the environmental assets. Specifically people highlighted a community growing zone and community garden, improving the River Cree as a recreational asset and developing walking and cycle paths as priority activities.

Funding options

Small funders such as Tesco Bags for Life and the Mushroom Trust could support start-up costs in relation to environmental work. Going forward, more substantial funds will be required from sources such as the Landfill funds, SUSTRANS and Paths for All. If there is an aspiration to take the Minnigaff Park into community ownership, the Scottish Land Fund may be an option, and this will be considered during the action plan.

Potential partners

The Newton Stewart Women’s Group, Newton Stewart Initiative, the Peace Advocacy Project and local businesses have been identified as important potential partners in environmental projects. The Community Council, with their interest in physical developments, will be actively involved as will small local community groups. External partners such as SUSTRANS, Living Streets, Paths for All and Greenspace Scotland may provide support and guidance.



Priority: Newton Stewart Town Centre Improvement Plan	Priority: Making the most of the natural environment.	Priority: Use the natural assets of the Cree Valley waterways to develop enterprise, sporting and business / tourism opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building on the CAP research, conduct further community consultation to generate ideas to enhance the town and make it an attractive place for all • Provide support to local businesses as the town adapts and thrives following the Covid 19 pandemic • Address traffic management and parking concerns by exploring the possibility of a new traffic system for Newton Stewart and Minnigaff • Improve Gateways to the Town including improved signage and public information boards, flowers, planters and seating 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing and improving the banks of the River Cree throughout the whole Cree Valley through a programme of essential maintenance and enhancement to the walk ways and paths, and freshwater environment • Establish an active waterway project for the River Cree and other walking and cycling routes e.g. woodlands to include “walking for wellbeing” • Re-energise play parks and play areas to facilitate their use by all ages and abilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a multi facet, environmentally friendly project within a national park which could include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • River map • River history • Boating, canoeing and kayaking opportunities • Cycling • Events • Fishing / Angling • Nature and wildlife • River Art • Walking • River safety awareness • Dark Skies Park • Forest Park • Biosphere

Get involved!

This plan has been created by the community, for the community – anyone can get involved. To help progress or deliver any of the ideas and projects in the plan, or if you have other ideas for the future of the Cree Valley, then please get in touch with:

Cree Valley Community Council

Charles Marshall (Secretary)

Email: cvcc.sec@outlook.com

Many thanks to all organisations, groups, businesses, stakeholders and individuals who contributed to the production of this Community Action Plan.

