

# **Wigtown and Bladnoch Local Place Plan**

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2024 - 2029

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**Let Wigtown  
Flourish**



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Wigtown is unique.  
The place and the people  
combine perfectly to create  
a community that is vibrant,  
resilient, supportive, and very  
special.

It used to be the County Town, a centre for trade and commerce, with a shipping link to Liverpool and beyond, and the town houses and shops that the merchants built have changed little over the generations. They overlook the town square with its ancient market cross, still hosting busy summer markets that transform the town centre into a tented village inviting residents and visitors to stop and browse. The McGuffie gardens provide a quiet place to sit, contemplate, or read a recently purchased book. The gardens are a precious outdoor space, well used for community events and gatherings and cared for by our own Wigtown in Bloom



volunteers. It changes with the seasons and the switching on of the Christmas Lights is a special occasion with lights, music, and the people who linger long after the end of the event to socialise; it is simply magical. The bowling green is yet another attraction that completes the ambiance of the square and all are overlooked by the County Buildings, the iconic, sedate, much used and much-loved heart of the town.

Wigtown has been Scotland's National Book Town for 25 years and the town is the venue for the annual book festival that is nationally and internationally known as a quality event. Books are the foundation of our economy and many of the authors who visit are amazed at the friendly welcome that the residents extend to them during their stay. There are over 100 residents of Wigtown and the Machars who volunteer during the festival to ensure that everyone gets a warm welcome, confirming how special this small community really is. The Place Plan builds on what has been achieved by providing a better experience and more facilities for residents and visitors alike.

The Town Team has thoroughly enjoyed the experience that preparing this Place Plan has provided. It has been a pleasure meeting, talking, and listening to the residents of Wigtown and Bladnoch, and it has been clear from the beginning that they are aware of the benefits of being Scotland's Book Town and consider themselves fortunate to live here. Yes, there are changes that can be made to build and better what we have now, but the general tone of all the discussions has been positive.

This Place Plan is Wigtown and Bladnoch's vision for the future. It addresses some of the gaps in the life of our community and builds on the infrastructure we already have. It makes more of the outdoors, acknowledges the need for community transport, alternative energy, local housing and much more. The proposed changes will allow Wigtown to continue to flourish by attracting more tourists, creating more jobs, and instilling an even greater pride in what we have to offer.

As I have already said, getting here has been an enjoyable experience but it would not have been possible without the help of many. Thanks are due to Community Enterprise Ltd, Dumfries, and Galloway Council Officers, SOSE (South of Scotland Enterprise), NHS Dumfries and Galloway, and Third Sector Dumfries and Galloway. They have organised the engagement events, attended the themed events and supported us along the way. Finally, a very big thank-you to the residents of Wigtown and Bladnoch for giving of their time and ideas to help create this, our vision.

**Sandra McDowall**

Convenor, Wigtown and Bladnoch Town Team

# Introduction

01



Our Place Plan sets out an ambitious ten-year vision for Wigtown and Bladnoch. We are excited about the opportunity to regenerate and grow Wigtown and Bladnoch into a vibrant, and resilient community. The town of Wigtown and village of Bladnoch are located on the Machars peninsula in the west of Dumfries and Galloway. A brief history of these settlements is provided in Appendix 1.

Our plan has been prepared in the context of the Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal. Wigtown is one of five places in Dumfries and Galloway targeted for investment through the Deal's Place Programme. The preparation of this Plan is the initial step to identify the local vision and ambition for the area from which a range of new initiatives and projects will emerge, some of which may be funded through the Borderlands Place Programme, some by other means.

We have developed our plan around five key investment themes which when taken together form an ambitious ten-year vision which develops our current strengths and addresses our future needs as a community.

The priorities and interventions set out in the Local Place Plan covers both Wigtown and Bladnoch as can be seen below. This enables us to register our Place Plan with the Local Authority covering the wider area. The area that is eligible for capital investment from the Borderlands Local Place Programme is more tightly defined around Wigtown. This is shown on the map below.



# Our Vision for Wigtown and Bladnoch

02

# Our vision is for a vibrant, resilient, and supportive community with:

- a flourishing town centre celebrating our history and culture.
- effective transport links to nearby villages, larger towns, and cities.
- good provision of services, shops, and amenities.
- warm, efficient homes for everyone.
- a natural environment and green spaces that are valued and protected.
- growing businesses, jobs, and training opportunities.
- a strong tourism and events offering.

## 2.1 Our Investment Themes

The Place Plan process has identified five core thematic areas that will underpin and support the achievement of the vision.

These are:

1. A Revitalised Town Centre
2. Better Connected Transport
3. Better Homes for All
4. A Green and Natural Place
5. A Growing Economy

The need to address carbon reduction, and health and wellbeing are common threads through all our investment themes. Our young people highlighted a need for greater awareness of climate change and suggested a community pledge to address this.

## 2.2 Strategic Objectives

Directly aligned to the investment themes, the town has five strategic objectives with the specific purpose of setting out what the town wants to achieve and to express where it wants to get to. These are:

### Theme 1: A Revitalised Town Centre

Strategic objective: Maintain and raise the standard of the physical environment of our unique town centre and make a place for events and activities that attract more visitors to spend time and money in the area.

### Theme 2: Better Connected Transport

Strategic Objective: Improve transport provision and create active travel routes to provide better access to services, jobs, and training as well as to make it easier for visitors to get here.

### Theme 3: Better Homes for All

Strategic Objective: Maintain and increase the number of people living in Wigtown and Bladnoch by addressing local housing needs, creating warm, efficient homes, and encouraging people to raise their families here.

### Theme 4: A Green and Natural Place

Strategic Objective: Value and safeguard our natural environment and green spaces, create growing spaces in the town, build resistance to climate change, and improve access to the countryside.

### Theme 5: A Growing Economy

Strategic Objective: Build a strong, sustainable, and growing economy that supports local businesses to grow, creates new jobs, learning and training opportunities, increasing economic participation and benefits across the community.





# Our Challenges and Needs

03

Wigtown is Scotland's National Book Town. The historic town centre is a conservation area, with striking County Buildings, the McGuffie Gardens and town square at the heart of the Main Street. We are a welcoming community that offers a high quality of life. Visitors are particularly attracted to events like the Wigtown Book Festival, and to attractions like the distillery in Bladnoch.

### Population

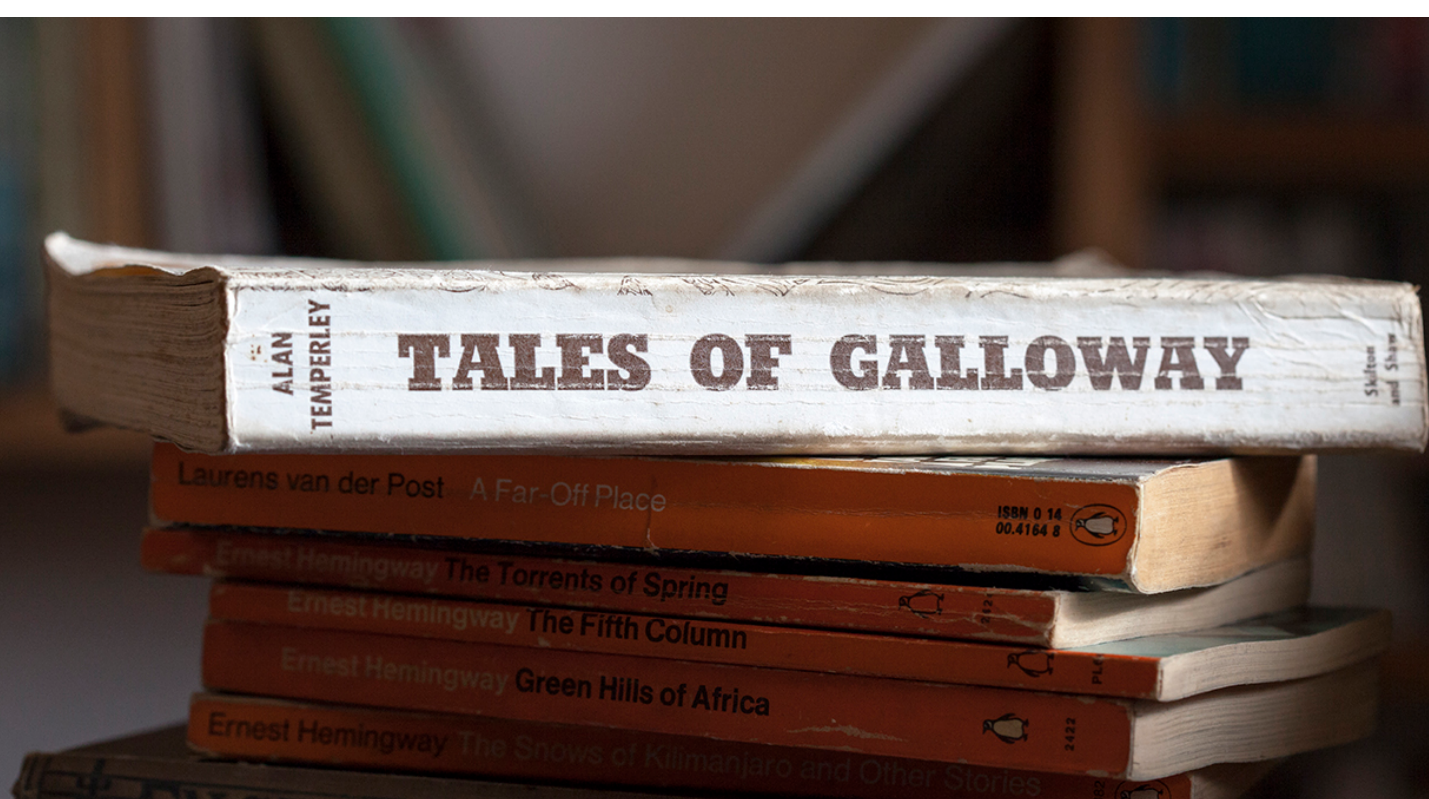
Wigtown and Bladnoch has a population of 876 which has declined by 14% over 20 years, whilst the population of Scotland grew by 5% over the same period. This has a direct impact on our ability to grow and retain local services and on job recruitment. There is a higher proportion of people (33%) over 65 compared with the national average of 18.5%. Our challenge is to attract young people and families to help grow our community through the provision of affordable housing and jobs.

### Housing

Housing is identified by our community as a high priority. Properties in Wigtown had an overall average price of £192,138 in 2023 which is higher than the average price for Dumfries and Galloway (£156,000) and Scotland (£190,341). From 2020-2022 Dumfries and Galloway had the lowest mean hourly earnings in Scotland. The tenure split is 61% Owner Occupied, 23% Socially Rented, and 16% Private/ Other Rented.

Our community is therefore concerned that there is insufficient affordable social and community housing available to meet local housing needs, particularly for young adults, families and those requiring supported accommodation. A Housing Needs and Demands Assessment has therefore been commissioned to help inform us of the future housing requirements and ways to address them.

There is also a desire for homes in Wigtown to be energy efficient. Energy efficiency is measured using Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP) points. Wigtown and Bladnoch scores very poorly in relation to energy efficiency with a score of 47.72 out of 100 compared to the national baseline of 64.94. The difference between the current rating and the potential rating identifies opportunities to improve energy efficiency, producing warmer homes and positively contributing to addressing climate change.



## Transport

Wigtown and Bladnoch are in the west of Dumfries and Galloway approximately 6 miles from the A75. This is the main route linking Stranraer and its ports at Cairnryan with the A74(m) at Gretna. The only public transport is by bus. The travel times by car to the nearest major settlement of Dumfries is over an hour and Glasgow, the nearest city, is over 2 hours away. 22.6% of households do not have a car. Transport and connectivity were highlighted in the community survey as a major challenge, with 78% saying current provision is poor or very poor. We therefore need to develop transport solutions that effectively connect us to key services and work and enable visitors to easily travel here.

## Economy

Wigtown and Bladnoch face numerous economic challenges, which our local place plan is looking to address through the priority projects identified.

The economic impact of the Covid 19 pandemic severely affected many rural towns and industrial sectors. Gross Value Added (GVA) in Wigtown in 2021 in Wigtown was £5.8 million, having declined by 15.6% in real terms from 2019 compared to a 7.1% decline in real GVA for Dumfries and Galloway and a 4.8% decline in real GVA in Scotland within the same period. We are looking to reverse this trend.

We have a smaller proportion of working age population at 15% compared to Dumfries and Galloway which has a working age population of 17%. Local businesses told us that this has an impact upon recruitment and there is a need to attract more people of working age. Provision of suitable housing was seen as a way of addressing this.

The three key employment sectors in Wigtown and Bladnoch are retail, construction, and health. Employment in Wigtown has also declined significantly over this period from 285 people employed in Wigtown in 2019 to 215 employed working in Wigtown in 2022.

Dumfries and Galloway has the lowest median household incomes for Scotland. In 2021 the median household income for Wigtown was £23,754 compared to £27,111 for Dumfries and Galloway.

As is common in rural communities, there are more people who are self-employed (15.4% whereas the Scotland average is 7.5%).

We therefore need to grow our working age population, have a wider range and choice of jobs, and attract and encourage new businesses.

## Health and Wellbeing

The need for improved access to health services was an issue that came strongly through the community engagement. One of the key issues identified was the difficulty travelling to Newton Stewart, Stranraer and Dumfries for hospital appointments, particularly for the elderly.

26.2% of people say they have a limiting long-term illness compared with the Scotland figure of 19.6%. It might be assumed that this is in relation to the older population but in fact 20% of those between 16 and 65 have a limiting illness compared to 15% across Scotland.

Access to health provision locally is therefore a key concern to be addressed.

## Green Space

The amount of green space in Wigtown is 11.76% compared to a Scottish average of 0.58%. Green space can play an important role in promoting positive health and wellbeing through walking and cycling, recreational activities and initiatives such as community growing schemes.



# Interventions and Investments

04



## Theme 1: A Revitalised Town Centre

### Strategic Objective: Maintain and raise the standard of the physical environment of our unique town centre and make a place for events and activities that attract more visitors to spend time and money in the area.

The Town Centre First Principle recognises that “Place is where people, location and resources combine to create a sense of identity and purpose and is at the heart of addressing the needs and realising the full potential of communities.”

Wigtown has a strong identity as Scotland's National Book Town. This is reflected by the number of bookshop and the Wigtown Book Festival, which has brought more than £50 million into the local economy since it first started.

At the heart of Wigtown is a historic town centre which is a designated Conservation Area. The “B” listed County Buildings built in the 1860's as the Sheriff Court dominates the western end of the High Street, overlooking the Bowling Green, McGuffie Gardens, and the market square. Our engagement showed that local people value the Town Centre and want to maintain and raise the quality of its physical environment for the benefit of the community and visitors. The ambition is to therefore reimagine and regenerate the County Buildings and the public realm of the town centre to meet modern requirements.

Regenerating the town centre will enable the community to build upon of the success of the Book Festival increasing the numbers of visitors who stay and spend money in the area. This can benefit the local community by helping to grow shops, cafes, restaurants, and other facilities in the town.

**The town centre needs to be a place that supports all of the investment themes in this plan, it needs to attract visitors all year round and support both a thriving daytime and evening economy. To be sustainable amenities need to suit local people and visitors.**

### Theme 1 Priority 1: Repurposing the County Buildings

The County Buildings is regarded by local people as a crucial asset to the town. There is a desire for the community to take on the running of the County Buildings like the Moffat Town Hall Development Trust model with the aim of upgrading the building and maximising its use.

At the turn of the Millenium, a major upgrade was undertaken and now a further phase of work is required to meet new challenges arising from the advance of technology and the need to move to Net Zero. This includes Wi-Fi throughout

and looking at renewable energy solutions to provide future electricity and replace the current oil-fired heating.

An exciting opportunity exists to reimagine the buildings maximising their use and helping to secure their future as the hub of the community. The County Buildings also have the potential to be a catalyst for economic development. There are a wide range of ideas for the future use of the County Buildings to be explored through an initial feasibility study.



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## Theme 1 Priority 2: Physical Regeneration of the Town Centre

This priority aims to maintain and raise the physical quality of the town centre focussing particularly on the public realm which comprises the McGuffie Gardens, the market square and Bowling Green. Improving this area and making it more functional for markets and events will encourage local people and visitors to spend more time in the town centre.

The project will focus upon:

- Restoring and repairing the McGuffie Gardens as a valued recreation and events space;
- Exploring renewable energy options for events, and an active travel hub.
- Improving functionality accessibility, parking, and traffic circulation;
- Revamping the Mercat Square to improve and increase space for the market
- Upgrading the Bowling Pavilion

Our first task will be to develop a vision document which identifies what we want to achieve over time, and clear phasing and funding for the different elements.



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## Theme 1: Other Initiatives

There are also plans to develop the Plough Hotel as a community owned social enterprise.



## Theme 2: Better Connected Transport

**Strategic Objective: Improve transport provision and create active travel routes to provide better access to services, jobs, and training as well as to make it easier for visitors to get here.**

Transport provides links to education and employment, to social connections, to shops and services, health and to leisure activities. Currently there is only one form of public transport and 22.6% of household do not own a car. From the community survey, transport was identified as the biggest challenge with 78% saying it was poor or very poor. This is endorsed by the Scottish Indicators of Multiple Deprivation which shows Wigtown and Bladnoch to be in the worst 10% in terms of geographical access to services.

The 2024 Transport Poverty report indicated that “a lack of transport options that are available, reliable, affordable, accessible and safe, referred to as transport poverty, creates serious health and social implications by blocking people's ability to meet their daily needs and provide a good quality of life”. Addressing our transport needs is therefore critical to the health and wellbeing, resilience, and sustainability of our community.

Wigtown is located on the Southwest Coastal Path Network and the South of Scotland Coast to Coast Route and has a core network of local paths that are attractive to residents and visitors, but all require further development and improvement. The links to national footpaths and cycleways play a key role in attracting tourists to Wigtown and Bladnoch.

Dumfries and Galloway Active Travel Strategy encourages people to make sustainable choices when travelling and moving around in our region by defining collaborative local action to meet both communities and national aspirations for better walking, wheeling, and cycling conditions.

**Wigtown and Bladnoch aim to become an active community with accessible, reliable, and safe routes that connect neighbouring communities. This will encourage healthy lifestyles and help our town be more sustainable and meet our net-zero ambition. To achieve this, we would look to work collaboratively with Dumfries and Galloway Council, SWestrans, Sustrans and NHS Dumfries and Galloway.**





## Theme 2 Priority 1: Community Transport

It is important to the social and economic wellbeing of our community that we have transport solutions that meet local needs. The current public transport provision does not achieve this. This priority focuses upon the opportunity to explore and develop green community transport solutions aimed at improving access to neighbouring communities, larger towns like Newton Stewart, Stranraer and Dumfries and access from these locations to Wigtown. We have already started to look at best practise elsewhere for example **Badenoch And Strathspey Community Connections** ; **Dial A Community Bus** ; **Galloway Community Transport** ; **Wheels to Work Scheme Hampshire County Council** ; **Hooky Car Club Hook Norton** ; **Demand Responsive Transport - Perth & Kinross Council** . This will help inform our development of a tailored community transport scheme for Wigtown and Bladnoch and potentially the Machars.

This could deliver improved access to employment and training opportunities and health services. It could also enable people to see friends and socialise across communities.



## Theme 2 Priority 2: Walking, Wheeling, and Cycling

Active Travel is any form of transport that is primarily based on physical activity, such as walking, wheeling, and cycling. This includes the use of standard bikes, adapted bikes or trikes, e-bikes, and other micro-mobility devices to support day-to-day trips.

This priority focuses upon Wigtown and Bladnoch developing good infrastructure including:

- accessible, reliable, and safe routes that connect our local communities,
- facilities such as an active travel hub and safe bike storage.

This will help make walking, wheeling, and cycling more attractive. This will be complementary to the development of community transport.





## Theme 3: Better Homes for All

### Strategic Objective: Maintain and increase the number of people living in Wigtown and Bladnoch by addressing local housing needs, creating warm, efficient homes and encouraging people to raise their families here.

The Local Housing Needs Strategy has been developed in the context of national housing policy and sets out the strategy for Dumfries and Galloway. It primarily focuses upon encouraging the development of affordable housing, addressing fuel poverty, tackling poor housing conditions, increasing independent living, and supporting the integration of health and social care.

Our community engagement highlighted housing to be a major issue in terms of the ability for young people, families, and older people to access affordable housing to meet their needs. A high proportion of the population (33%) are over 65 years of age, so it is important that the future needs for

Assisted Housing and Sheltered Housing in Wigtown and Bladnoch is considered.

There is also a recognition of the importance of housing to increase our population. This will help to grow and retain facilities and services, and some local businesses said that it could help them with recruitment.

The houses and places we live in have an important influence on our health and wellbeing. The overall average price of houses in Wigtown and Bladnoch in 2023 is £192,138 and is higher than the average price for Dumfries and Galloway (£156,000) and in Scotland (£190,341). The high price of housing linked to low incomes means that affordable housing is an issue for Wigtown and Bladnoch. Increasing the supply of affordable housing is key to addressing housing need and tackling child poverty.

Dumfries and Galloway Local Development Plan 2 identifies 3 housing sites with a total allocation of 92 units. These sites are all in private ownership and two of the sites are currently going through the planning process and may offer an opportunity for affordable housing. Consideration needs to be given in Local Development Plan 3 as to whether these sites can meet affordable and community housing needs, or if further land allocations will be required.







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## Theme 3 Priority 1: Housing

A Housing Needs and Demand Assessment for the Wigtown and Bladnoch area has started which will inform future proposals for affordable housing and community led housing.

Our ambition with this priority is to create affordable, warm, and efficient homes. New housing stock will be built to high energy standards with an aspiration for **Passivhaus standards**

if possible. Consideration will be given to new models such as community-led housing and inter-generational assisted living. It is important that there are affordable and appropriate options for young people, first-time buyers and young families while ensuring that older people get the care they need within the community as they grow more vulnerable.

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## Theme 3 Priority 2: Warm Homes - Training and Jobs

Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP) is a methodology used by the government to estimate the energy performance of homes in the UK. The current SAP rating for Wigtown and Bladnoch of 47.72 out of 100, which means that the energy performance of homes in our community could be greatly improved. This would lead to opportunities to improve energy efficiency, leading to warmer homes, contribute to addressing fuel poverty and positively contributing to addressing climate change and progress to Net Zero.

**We will initially focus upon enabling access to green training and jobs for young people and our local trades. The Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLES) estimates that retrofitting homes in the South of Scotland could sustain up to 2,239 direct jobs within Dumfries and Galloway and the Scottish Borders by 2030, rising to 6,690 direct jobs by 2045.**



## Theme 4: A Green and Natural Place

### Strategic Objective: Value and safeguard our natural environment and green spaces, create growing places in the town, build resistance to climate change and improve access to the countryside.

Wigtown and Bladnoch are located within a high-quality natural environment with the Wigtown Bay Local Nature Reserve (LNR) which is the largest LNR in Britain, and the Cree Estuary Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

Being part of the Machars Peninsula, the town sits within the UNESCO Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere Reserve, Dark Sky Park. A bid has been lodged to make the area Scotland's third National Park from which social, economic, and environmental benefits will flow, if successful. These designations offer an opportunity for the community to work with others to protect and support biodiversity in our local area.

The Solway Coast and Marine Project (SCAMP) brings together a range of agencies and covers 200 miles of the Solway Coast including Wigtown Bay. It is a 10-15 year project

which aims to “monitor, restore and protect coast, shore and marine habits for people, nature and climate”.

Our engagement showed people appreciate the countryside and the green spaces in the town and the importance of looking after them. The amount of green space in Wigtown is 11.76% compared to a Scottish average of 0.58%. A particular concern is the need to protect, enhance and maintain our footpaths, including the provision of interpretation boards to highlight our history, nature, and wildlife. This will primarily be dealt with through Theme 2 Priority 2, but links will be made with the SCAMP project.

**Growing spaces such as allotments, a community garden and orchard were highlighted by local people in the community survey and in engagement with young people as an aspiration. Spaces of this type combine the benefits of being outside in a green space, the physical activity of gardening, the improved social contact and sharing an activity, interest and skills with other people and improvements to diet.**

Wigtown and Bladnoch have a range of recreation spaces including Lightlands Play Park, the McGuffie Gardens, the Bowling Green, The Golf Club, Football Pitches and Rugby Ground. Our young people told us that they would like to see the MUGA (multi use games area), and park repaired and developed and that they would also like a youth shelter with Wi-Fi. They also said that they would like the football pitches to be upgraded.

### Theme 4 Priority 1: Natural and Green Spaces

SCAMP seeks to address carbon sequestration, biodiversity loss and the health of commercial fishery in the Solway estuary. This presents an opportunity for our community to work collaboratively with SCAMP and other partners to:

- Improve the core path network.
- landscape enhancement around Wigtown Bay and the River Bladnoch.
- environmental education for all to learn more about our unique environment, the impacts of climate change and how we can protect it.

Working with the Biosphere as part of this will enable us to promote the natural assets of our town to those with an interest in wildlife, astronomy, and outdoor activities.





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## Theme 4 Priority 2: Growing places

Our community want Wigtown and Bladnoch to become a growing place and for those interested to come forward and volunteer to make this happen. Working together we will identify specific projects and locations for community growing spaces. Part of this can be supporting Wigtown in Bloom with the McGuffie Gardens. An opportunity exists to build upon the work of Galloway Glens in supporting the revival of the Galloway Pippin, an apple variety native to Wigtown.

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## Theme 4 Priority 3: Recreational Spaces

This priority focuses upon the need to upgrade all our green recreational spaces. A priority will be the renovation of Lightlands Playpark to accommodate an inclusive play area, a MUGA and a shelter for young people. There are also aspirations to replace the bowling pavilion, improve golf club facilities, upgrade the football pitches and the continued renovation to the buildings at the rugby club.



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## Theme 4: Other Initiatives

Young people would like to see a better awareness of climate change and a community pledge to work towards Net Zero.

The improvement of the boardwalk at the Martyrs Stake has recently been completed which improves the experience for local people and visitors.





## Theme 5: A Growing Economy

**Strategic Objective: Build a strong, sustainable, and growing economy that supports local businesses to grow, creates new jobs, learning and training opportunities, increasing economic participation and benefits across the community.**

The South of Scotland Regional Economic Strategy sets out a bold and compelling vision for the South of Scotland to be Green, Fair and Flourishing by 2031 by:

- having skilled and ambitious people,
- being innovative and enterprising,
- ensuring rewarding and fair work,
- enabling cultural and creative excellence,
- being green and sustainable, and
- having thriving and distinct communities.

This provides an ideal framework for how we see Wigtown and Bladnoch's economy growing.

Tourism is an important part of the economy in Wigtown and Bladnoch. Wigtown's status as Scotland's National Book Town, together with Wigtown Book Festival has proved successful at turning around Wigtown's fortunes. It generates £4.3 million for the local economy each year; that is £23 generated for every £1 of public funding received. Since the festival began, over 3000 authors and performers have taken part, bringing over 300,000 people to Wigtown. There is now an opportunity to build upon this success strengthening and diversifying the tourist offering for the benefit of both the community and visitors.

**Community engagement highlighted a desire for a range and choice of jobs, access to training and qualifications including remote learning within Wigtown. Young people would like to have the choice to pursue careers in Wigtown and Bladnoch with opportunities to learn trades and access apprenticeships, internships and mentoring within existing businesses. Young people would also like support to set up new businesses. Some employers want to see more affordable housing so that they can retain and employ more staff.**

Concerns were raised by the local community about the number of second homes and Airbnb's in Wigtown and Bladnoch. From 2024/2025 second homes across the region will be charged double Council Tax. In Wigtown there is a need for holiday accommodation to help sustain the visitor economy, as well as a need to address local affordable housing needs.







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## Theme 5 Priority 1: Transforming Tourism

This priority focuses on building upon the Wigtown Book Festival and the town's Book Town Status to transform tourism across Wigtown and Bladnoch by working together to develop and improve the current tourism offering. The aim is that by doing this we can increase the number of visitors, the amount of time they stay and how much they spend for the benefit of the community. There is a need to find a permanent home for the Book Festival to enable it to develop and ensure its sustainability.

**Wigtown and Bladnoch have a great deal more to offer tourists including: a beautiful town centre, live music and other events, history, and heritage, walking and cycling, wildlife and our natural environment, a golf course, and a distillery.**

Wigtown is looking to become a Biosphere Town which will enable us to work with the biosphere and promote our town to a wider international audience. Revitalising our town centre and the County Buildings as a focus for events. Our community recognises that what is available to tourists and local people can be improved. The opportunity exists to ensure we work together to:

- provision of more places to eat, drink, and socialise in the evenings,
- transport options to help those without a car to get here easily,
- ensuring a choice of accommodation,
- encourage coaches, and camper vans to come by providing parking and associated facilities.
- effectively market Wigtown and Bladnoch

Elements of transforming tourism are picked up across the priority projects in the previous themes.



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## Theme 5 Priority 2: Grow Businesses, Jobs and Training Opportunities.

Opportunities to grow our economy will be afforded through the widening of our tourism offer, the expansion of The Market and access to green training and jobs, and through the priority projects we have identified. We also recognise the importance of attracting and growing businesses and supporting new businesses. To achieve this will require the right infrastructure in particular access to reliable, high-speed Broadband.

Our first task will be to establish strong relationships with relevant agencies and local businesses to learn what is already available in terms of business support, training and learning opportunities, and what is required. We can then work together to ensure access to these opportunities.

The County Buildings (Theme 1 Priority 1) could provide a catalyst for the growth of our economy by providing a venue from which to provide business support, career support, and training and learning opportunities and potentially incubator space.

**Public and community transport solutions will be considered under Theme 2 Priority 1 to enable access to jobs and training beyond Wigtown and Bladnoch.**

New housing provision (Theme 3 Priority 1) can help expand the working age population to enable people to come and take up the opportunities.





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## Theme 5: Other Initiatives

The Wigtown and Bladnoch Community Initiative is looking at the possibility of acquiring the Plough Hotel, which if successful could make an important contribution to these priorities. The initiative have also purchased the Church Hall and will be providing events and activities that are complementary to the County Buildings and will support the evening economy.

# Development of the Plan

05



This Place Plan has been steered and developed by Wigtown Town Team collaborating with Community Enterprise Ltd and a core officer group made up of statutory and third sector officers.

### 5.1 The Town Team

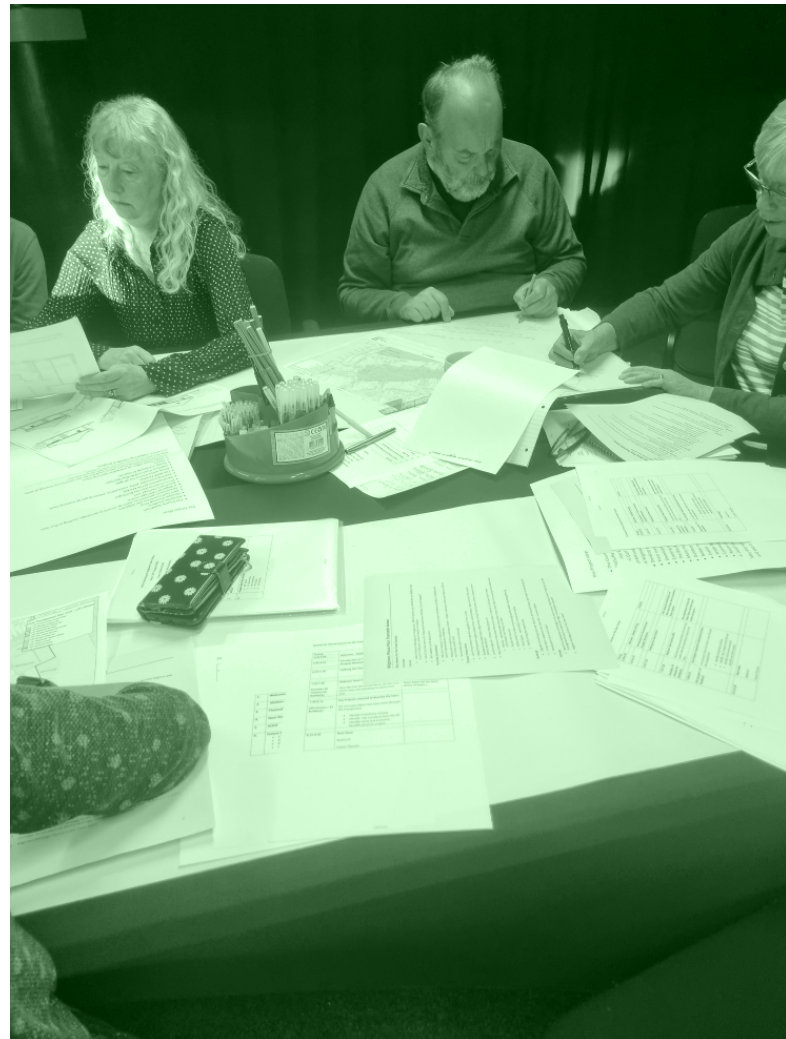
The starting point for our Local Place Plan was September 2022 when Dumfries and Galloway Council Officers began working with The Royal Burgh of Wigtown and District Community Council to start the process. The Community Council agreed to apply for funding to engage a consultant to work with the Town Team when established.

On 16th March 2023 an initial community engagement event was held giving an opportunity for businesses and community groups to volunteer to be on the Town Team. Our first Town Team Meeting took place on 19th April 2023. By this time Community Enterprise Ltd, the Consultants engaged to deliver our Local Place Plan, had been appointed.

The Town Team is a locally led group that has co-ordinated and driven the Local Place Plan. The members listed below are drawn from a wide range of businesses and local organisations:

**Sandra McDowall (Convenor), Nicole Court (Deputy Convenor and Accommodation Business), Ada Montgomery (Community Council), Anne Barclay (Wigtown Book Festival), Carol Lochrie (Machars Action), Caroline Scholefield (Wigtown Bowling Club), Cora Sharp (Wigtown Primary School), Gill Hay (The Market), Alison Adams and Shona Herries (Lightlands Park Initiative), Paul Tarling (Community Council), Pete Dobson (Wigtown & Bladnoch Community Initiative) Shaun Bythell (Association of Booksellers).**

Community Enterprise Ltd, officers from Dumfries and Galloway Council and South of Scotland Enterprise supported and attended the meetings. There was also a wider core group of officers from Dumfries and Galloway Council, South of Scotland Enterprise, NHS D&G, and Third Sector D&G.



### 5.2 Overview

Our Place Plan has been community-led. The Place Plan preparation has followed the steps detailed in the Borderlands Place Programme guidance as set out later in this document. The Plan does not however align solely and exclusively with the Borderlands Place Programme and its associated funding as we aim to have our local place plan approved both as a Borderlands Local Place Plan and registered as a Local Place Plan. It is recognised that not all the priority projects identified will be eligible for Borderlands funding, either because they lie out-with the Borderlands Area or do not meet the criteria of the Borderlands Growth Deal.

The Borderlands Place Programme will however be an essential partner for the delivery and realisation of a number of the Place Plan priority projects. As such, the Place Plan follows the Route Map detailed in section 5.3 which identifies the steps that will be taken to develop projects to a stage of investment readiness.

The Place Plan has been developed using different engagement methods, all designed to ensure the widest representation of views from within the community. These are summarised below in section 5.4.



### 5.3 Process

The process is as follows.

## 01 Stage 1: Town Selection

- Local Authorities select towns based on agreed criteria
  - Borderlands Partnership Board approve town templates
- 

## 02 Stage 2: Place Plans

- Partnership-led development of individual plans
  - The Place Plan will go through a 28 day public consultation at the draft stage to ensure it can be registered as a Local Place Plan.
  - Assessment, review and endorsement of each plan by Borderlands Place Programme Board (following a process of feedback and refinement)
  - Once place plan is approved, town is invited by the Place Programme Board to develop a Town Investment Plan, focusing only on the projects to be supported with Borderlands Place Funding
- 

## 03 Stage 3: Town Investment Plans

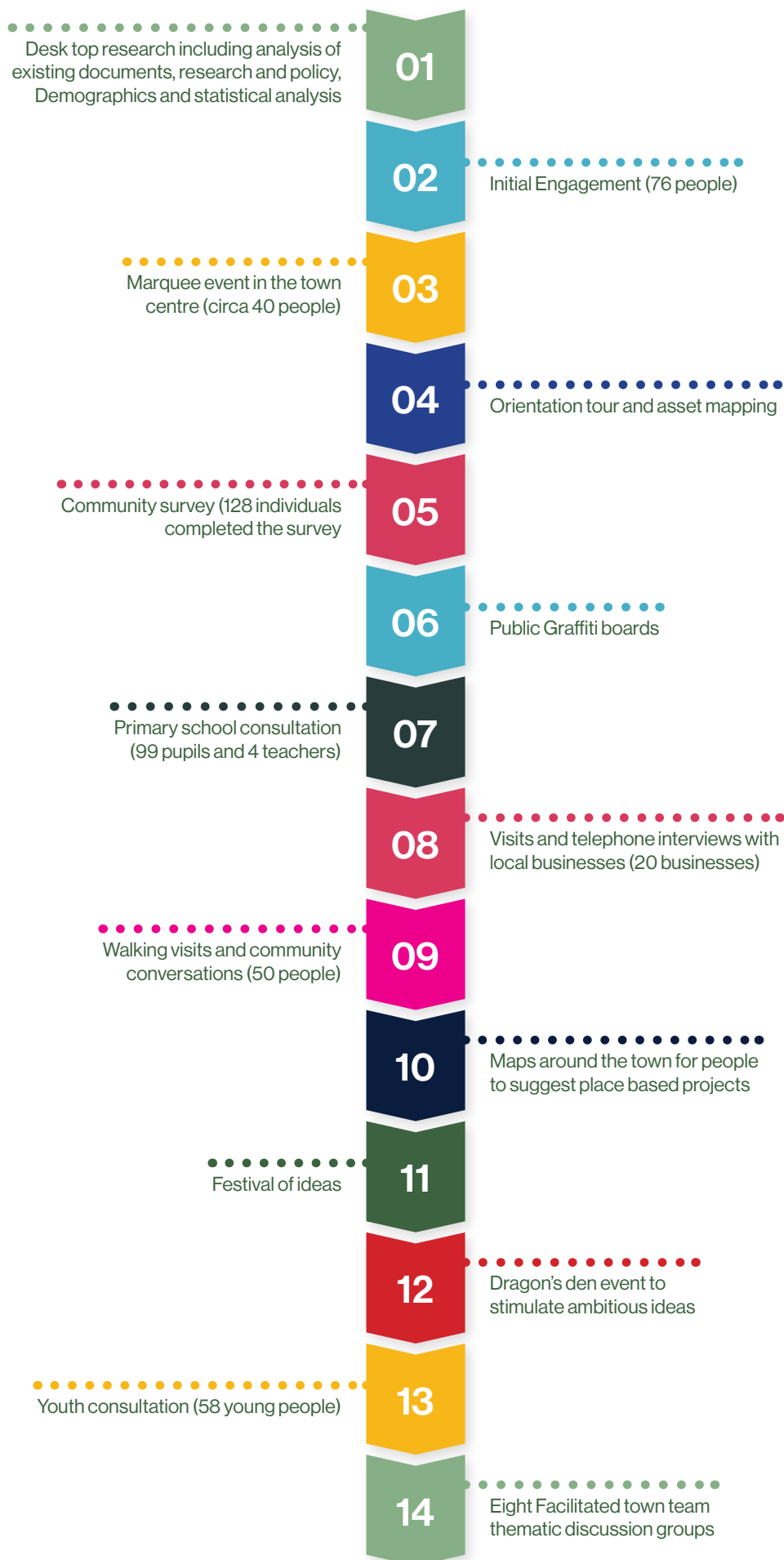
- Detailed Plans describing the specific projects to be supported with Borderlands Funding in each town.
  - Approval by Lead Local Authority
  - Assessment and Approval of Town Investment Plans by Place Programme Board and Borderlands Partnership Board
- 

## 04 Stage 4: Delivery

- Delivery of Individual Projects supported by Borderlands Funding
  - Regular performance, monitoring and reporting
-



## 5.4 Methodology



Our Place Plan was developed using a variety of different community engagement mechanisms, aimed at giving as many people as possible the opportunity to share their views.

### Strategy & Policy Review

Community Enterprise Ltd conducted desktop research reviewing local, regional, and national strategies as well as analysing local demographics and statistics. Previous research such as the 10,000 voices has also been valued and absorbed. This work was complemented by a site visit and walking tour of the area by the consultants, who had conversation with around 30 local people in the streets and cafes.

### Getting the Message Out

Wigtown and Bladnoch have a population of 867 and so one of the best ways of getting the information out is to hand deliver it through the door. This was complemented by flyers and posters around the town and the use of local news particularly the Machars Action Newsletter. Machars Action, Shops, the Library and County Buildings all promoted information, and the Primary School helped keep parents and children informed.

### Community Survey

A community survey was launched to gather people's views. It was available in hard copy from key locations such as the Library and Machars Action, and online. The survey sought views on what was most important and needed to be invested in. It also asked where the challenges were and what needed to be improved, and asked people to prioritise the big issues that needed to be addressed. This helped to form the 5 investment themes. 113 individuals answered leaving around 300 ideas. The headlines from the survey have already been outlined previously in Section 4.1.

### Stakeholder Consultations

An initial engagement session was held in March 2023 in the County Buildings to introduce people to what a place plan is, share their thoughts about what they liked and disliked about the town, and what they saw as opportunities. 61 people came along to the session. A similar session was held by Youth Services in the Kaos Cafe at which 15 young people shared their views.





In April there were coronation celebrations after which a marquee was retained in the McGuffie Gardens. Around 40 people visited the marquee to learn about the place plan and share their views. A graffiti board was left at the library afterwards so local people could write their views.

A visit was made to the Wigtown Primary School in April where 99 pupils and 4 teachers took part in an interactive and creative session to contribute ideas from their perspective to the plan.

The team undertook community conversations over three separate visits and this engaged with around 50 individuals.

In July a "Festival of Ideas" was held in the County Buildings with a Family Fun Session with an entertainer for children in the afternoon and a Dragons Den event in the evening. This allowed local people to pitch fundable ideas on what they would do in Wigtown and Bladnoch if they had £1million for a project. Large A1 maps were placed around the town and people encouraged to write their ideas on them.

Community Enterprise Ltd worked in partnership with Dumfries and Galloway Youth Services who successfully facilitated a session with young people from Wigtown and Bladnoch attending the Douglas Ewart High School and Kaos Café (part of Dumfries and Galloway Youth Services) and received valuable views and information from young people. 58 young people engaged in total.

**As well as the visits to businesses across two separate days, Community Enterprise Ltd undertook a concentrated business focussed series of telephone interviews. 20 took part in detailed interviews, some face to face and some by telephone interview. Between this and the face-to-face visits to businesses, their thoughts are well represented.**

## Themed Sessions

A series of 8 themed sessions were held with the Town Team, so that they could get a clear insight into what had come through the community engagement. It was also an opportunity to listen to representatives from different agencies and organisations, gain an understanding of the wider context within which the place plan sits and make contacts we can collaborate with going forward. These lively discussions led to the identification of the 5 Investment Themes and Priority Projects.

6 sessions were on: the Town Centre, Housing, a Connected Place, an Enterprising Place, an Active Place and a Natural Place. Speakers included representatives from SWestrans, Dumfries and Galloway Council's Active Travel Team, South of Scotland Enterprise, NHS Home Team, Dumfries and Galloway Chamber of Commerce, South of Scotland Community Housing, Galloway and South Ayrshire Biosphere and the Solway Coast and Marine Project. An additional

session focussed on a future for the County Buildings and one reviewed the whole thematic architecture of the plan.

## Fact Finding Visits

The Town Team went on a fact-finding mission in January to meet other communities across Dumfries and Galloway to gain an understanding of what has worked well elsewhere, to make connections, listen to lessons learned from others and make new contacts. These visits included:

Palnackie Village Shop and Flounders Community Cafe who are community owned and also provide a base for the Post Office twice a week.

Closeburn Housing and Community Garden run by Nith Valley Leaf Trust who are based in Closeburn and have carried out several projects on behalf of the community. One is the Passivhaus project which has provided two energy efficient family homes for local people. They have also developed the Closeburn orchard and garden.

Moffat Town Hall run by Moffat Town Hall Redevelopment Trust on a 21-year lease from Dumfries and Galloway Council. The Town Hall is in a prominent position in the centre of the High Street and is a natural central point for the town. The Town Hall facilitates many varied events and functions within the town. Trust members are involved in operating important clubs and services for the community. The building is also available for booking weddings, parties, and business events. This inspired the Town Team to look at working with other organisations in the town to establish a Development Trust to support the delivery of our Place Plan.

All of this has helped to shape our community's local place plan.



# Strategic Alignment

06



The selection of Wigtown and Bladnoch as one of five Place Plan towns within Dumfries & Galloway was based on an extensive process which assessed eighteen towns on their relative need across thirty-eight indicators. The analysis demonstrated that Wigtown and Bladnoch was a priority.

Wigtown and Bladnoch did not have a community action plan like other communities upon which to base our place plan. We are however a proactive community taking on opportunities and addressing challenges as they arise. The opportunity to develop a local place plan through the Borderlands Place Programme was therefore exciting.

As well as being founded upon research and local engagement, this plan was developed within the framework of key national and regional strategies and policies (See Appendix 2) to help ensure it fits within a wider framework and contributes to other plans and strategies covering the town.

It was important to address the Strategic Objectives of the Borderlands Growth Deal Place Programme which are:

- SO1: Empower local communities to imagine and then build a long-term future for the towns they live in.
- SO2: Safeguard existing businesses and attract new businesses to our towns and town centres.
- SO3: Maintain and increase the number of visitors spending money in our towns and town centres, increasing spend per visit and extending the visitor season.
- SO4: Safeguard existing employment and deliver new jobs and opportunities for economic and social participation, including education and training opportunities.
- SO5: Maintain and increase the number of people living in our towns and town centres.
- SO6: Retain and increase the working age population in towns.
- SO7: Maintain and raise the quality of the physical environment in our towns and town centres.



The following table identifies how each of the investment themes developed ties back to these objectives.

| Wigtown & Bladnoch Place Plan Themes | Borderlands Place Programme Investment Objectives that will be met |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|
| A Revitalised Town Centre            | SO1, SO2, SO3, SO4, SO7                                            |
| Better Connected Transport           | SO1, SO2, SO3, SO4, SO7                                            |
| Better Homes for All                 | SO1, SO2, SO4, SO5, SO6                                            |
| A Green and Natural Place            | SO2, SO3, SO4, SO6                                                 |
| A Growing Economy.                   | SO1, SO2, SO3, SO4, SO7                                            |

We aim to have our local place plan registered by Dumfries and Galloway Council so that it will be taken into consideration during the preparation of Local Development Plan 3. The preparation of our plan has been in the context of Local Development Plan 2 (Adopted) and reflects current planning objectives. Our plan aims to consolidate Wigtown's role as a district centre and as Scotland's National Book Town.

A key community concern is the need for housing to grow our population and to meet local needs. The current housing allocations are in private sector ownership and have not progressed during the current plan period. We would like to see sites available for affordable housing and are undertaking a Housing Needs and Demands Assessment, to establish what is needed.

Our ambition is to develop affordable community and social housing to address local needs. The Dumfries and Galloway Local Housing Strategy identifies the benefits of using the skills and experience of third sector partners such as South of Scotland Community Housing, and registered social landlords to develop new affordable housing.

Just transition to net zero is a cross cutting theme that will be fully considered as part of the development of each of the priority projects. The Dumfries and Galloway Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy sets out the route to Net Zero identifying many of the challenges we have in Wigtown and Bladnoch. The Climate Emergency Team at Dumfries and Galloway Council have agreed to advise us on carbon reduction regarding each of our priority projects.

The priority themes in our place plan closely relate to the framework set out in the South of Scotland Regional Economic Development Strategy Delivery Plan 2022-2025 which seeks to promote inclusive economic growth across the region.

The Dumfries and Galloway Active Travel Strategy 2 and delivery plan 2022 –2032 identifies the Wigtown Corridor as one of 5 strategic functional corridors across the region. The strategy looks to develop connections between Wigtown and

adjacent key settlements of Newton Stewart and Whithorn. It will do this by providing better cycle paths and integrating walking, wheeling and cycling with public transport, and mobility hubs to facilitate functional trips. Similarly, it is looking to enhance core paths along with other major routes and projects that foster local leisure, outdoors activities, active tourism and sustainable lifestyles. This reflects our community's ambitions in regard to walking, wheeling and cycling.

Public transport in Wigtown is limited to one bus service which is unable to meet all the public transport needs of those living in Wigtown and Bladnoch. The SWestrans Regional Transport Strategy notes that there was a decline in bus usage pre pandemic and that commercially run services can only remain viable if passenger numbers are maintained. As such, the bus network across the region is very fragile and even minor changes which have the potential to impact on costs, available funding or affect patronage, can have major consequences for the viability of services. We aim to work with SWestrans to help retain our current bus provision and enhance it through the development of green community transport.



# Complementary Initiatives

07



In developing our investment themes and priority projects we have recognised that to achieve our vision for Wigtown and Bladnoch it is necessary to align with and build upon successful initiatives that are underway. We are therefore looking to collaborate with the range of key stakeholders and partners delivering these important initiatives.

To achieve better connected travel, we are working with SWestrans and Dumfries and Galloway Council's Active Travel Team. This will help to ensure that our ambitions to develop a good network of local paths and cycle routes are linked to the Active Travel Plan and the development of National and Regional footpaths and cycle networks. Dumfries and Galloway received £13.8 million in UK Levelling Up funding to improve transport connectivity including new EV charging for cars, electric buses and charging infrastructure, cycle route improvements, and new transport hubs in five towns in the region.

We are looking to work with South of Scotland Community Housing who are involved in projects across the South of Scotland and can guide us through the process of securing funding from sources such as the Rural Housing Fund. We are also keen to retain links with the Nith Valley Leaf Trust who have successfully developed homes to Passivhaus standards in Closeburn.

**Wigtown is in the Galloway and South Ayrshire Biosphere and Wigtown and Bladnoch is looking to become a biosphere community. This will open opportunities to promote Wigtown to a new international audience highlighting our heritage, culture and natural resources and help support the local economy. Whithorn and Glentrool are already Biosphere Communities with Newton Stewart looking to become one too which will help to raise the profile of the area.**

SCAMP (the Solway Coast and Marine Project) is a 10–15-year project covering the Solway Coast from Stranraer to Gretna. The benefits of the project will include protecting and expanding habitats and wildlife, improving water quality, climate action in terms of flood prevention and CO2 storage, skills, training and work opportunities, and health and wellbeing. We are looking to collaborate with this project to help realise our aspirations around Wigtown Bay.

There is a submission for the next National Park to be a Galloway National Park and if successful this will have profound implications for our future.



# Measuring Success

08

## Theme 1: A Revitalised Town Centre

**Strategic Objective:** Maintain and raise the standard of the physical environment of our unique town centre and make a place for events and activities that attract more visitors to spend time and money in the area.

| Output                                                                   | Outcome                                                                                                | Measurements                                          |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|
| No. of feasibility studies completed.                                    | Increased visitor numbers to town.                                                                     | Visitor/ Resident survey work.                        |
| No. of public realm schemes completed.                                   | Increased visitors spend in town (£m).                                                                 | Visitor attraction footfall, profile and survey data. |
| No. (and sqm) of commercial properties improved / brought back into use. | Increased footfall in town centre.                                                                     | Scottish Household survey.                            |
| Hectares of land improved / brought back into use.                       | No. of improvements to physical fabric of town centre.                                                 |                                                       |
| No. of tourism, cultural or heritage facilities developed.               | Increase resident / visitor satisfaction with tourism, cultural or heritage facilities and programmes. |                                                       |
| No. of visitor berths created.                                           | Increase resident satisfaction with town centre, public realm and built environment.                   |                                                       |
| No. of tourism, cultural or heritage events/ programmes supported.       |                                                                                                        |                                                       |





## Theme 2: Better Connected Transport

**Strategic Objective:** Improve transport provision and create active travel routes to provide better access to services, jobs, and training as well as to make it easier for visitors to get here.

| Output                                             | Outcome                                                              | Measurements                                                                         |
|----------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| No. of feasibility studies completed.              | Increase in local people walking and cycling.                        | Visitor number survey.                                                               |
| No. of paths, trails or routes improved.           | Improvement in mental and physical wellbeing.                        | Photo/video evidence of increased numbers.                                           |
| No. of electric vehicle charging points installed. | Improve access to jobs, training, leisure and hospital appointments. | Annual resident survey.                                                              |
| No. of electric bike charging points installed.    | Increase in visitors using public transport.                         | Scottish Household survey / Transport Scotland data on green space, travel patterns. |
| No. of accessible transport measures supported.    | Reduction in carbon.                                                 | No. people using cycleways, paths and trails.                                        |
| No. of public transport routes.                    | Increase safe bike storage.                                          |                                                                                      |
|                                                    | Established active travel hub.                                       |                                                                                      |
|                                                    | Increase no. of public transport options.                            |                                                                                      |



**Strategic Objective:** Maintain and increase the number of people living in Wigtown and Bladnoch by addressing local housing needs, creating warm, efficient homes and encouraging people to raise their families here.

| Output                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Outcome                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Measurements                                                                                                                                                              |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>Housing Needs and Demand Assessment.</p> <p>No. of affordable homes built.</p> <p>No. of affordable housing solutions for young people.</p> <p>No. of affordable houses built for older people.</p> <p>No. of community-led homes let.</p> <p>No. of inter-generational assisted living homes built.</p> | <p>Increase the number of people living in Wigtown and Bladnoch.</p> <p>Increase number of warm, efficient homes.</p> <p>Increase the number of families living in Wigtown and Bladnoch.</p> <p>Increase the no. of affordable houses.</p> <p>Increase the number of private sector houses.</p> <p>Reduce fuel poverty.</p> | <p>Local authority housing statistics.</p> <p>Annual town survey.</p> <p>Energy efficiency rating.</p> <p>Number of working population as a percentage of population.</p> |





**Strategic Objective:** Value and safeguard our natural environment and green spaces, create growing spaces in the town, build resistance to climate change, and improve access to the countryside.

| Output                                                                                                                                                                                                | Outcome                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Measurements                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| No. of paths, trails or routes.<br><br>No. of allotments and growing spaces.<br><br>No. of new facilities for young people.<br><br>No. of jobs created.<br><br>No. of Training Opportunities created. | The natural environment will be better conserved, enhanced, protected and used.<br><br>Creation of new growing spaces.<br><br>Meeting spaces for young people.<br><br>Increased health and wellbeing.<br><br>Mental health of local people, particularly young people will improve.<br><br>Diversification of the economy by increasing green jobs which can be exported beyond Wigtown. | Carbon audit.<br><br>Independent evaluation from a nature specialist.<br><br>Town wide survey.<br><br>NHS health statistics over time.<br><br>Transport Scotland data on green space, travel patterns.<br><br>Number using cycleways, paths and trails. |





## Theme 5: A Growing Economy

**Strategic Objective:** Build a strong, sustainable, and growing economy that supports local businesses to grow, creates new jobs, learning and training opportunities, increasing economic participation and benefits across the community.

| Output                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Outcome                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Measurements                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>No of people undertaking training or learning.</p> <p>No of people receiving employment support.</p> <p>Sqm of education / training facilities created.</p> <p>Sqm of enterprise / community space developed.</p> <p>No of businesses supported (new and existing).</p> <p>No of new business start-ups.</p> <p>No. of tourism, cultural or heritage facilities developed.</p> <p>No. of visitor berths created.</p> <p>No. of tourism, cultural or heritage events/ programmes supported.</p> | <p>Increase of people improving skills/ achieving a qualification (up to L2,L3, L4+).</p> <p>Increase of people Full Time equivalent (FTE) securing a job (of which secure/ permanent jobs).</p> <p>Increase of people starting an apprenticeship.</p> <p>Increase of people progressing into education or training.</p> <p>Increase in wages/income.</p> <p>Business achieving growth (Increase in turnover/ employment) over 3, 5 and 10 years.</p> <p>New jobs created (FTE).</p> <p>Jobs safeguarded (FTE).</p> <p>Increased visitor numbers to town.</p> <p>Increased visitors spend in town (£m).</p> <p>Increased footfall in town centre .</p> <p>No. of improvements to physical fabric of town centre.</p> <p>Increase resident / visitor satisfaction with tourism, cultural or heritage facilities and programmes.</p> <p>Increase resident satisfaction with town centre, public realm and built environment.</p> | <p>SIMD/Census data on population, economic activity, education &amp; Income.</p> <p>Training records and monitoring forms.</p> <p>Employment/ training statistics.</p> <p>Further Education statistics.</p> <p>Business records.</p> <p>Scottish Government business data.</p> <p>Physical project data, plans and photographs.</p> <p>Business snapshot survey.</p> <p>Length of visitor stay.</p> |



# Management and Governance

09

Our local Place Plan has been driven by the Wigtown and Bladnoch Town Team. The Town Team has wide ranging representation from local residents, community organisations, and local businesses - supported by officers from Dumfries and Galloway Council and South of Scotland Enterprise. The Team have worked with Community Enterprise Ltd who co-ordinated and directed the community and stakeholder consultations and produced the Place Plan.

The Town Team will continue to have the oversight role and to monitor progress as the Borderlands Town Investment Plans (BTIPs) are developed and projects begin to be delivered. Town Team meetings and activities will continue to be facilitated by Dumfries and Galloway Council Officers. The production of Town Investment Plans will also be facilitated by Dumfries and Galloway Council Officers, with external specialist and technical assistance sought as and when required.

The intention is to establish a new Development Trust in consultation with existing groups in Wigtown and Bladnoch. The Trust will take the lead on some of the Borderlands priority projects for example the County Buildings and will play a key role in the development of the BTIPs. Other organisations and businesses within the community will deliver key individual priority projects identified in the Local Place Plan but which are not necessarily eligible for Borderlands funding.

Delivery of the Place Plan priorities is complex and challenging which means that local resources, skills and capacity will need to be bolstered and enhanced. Funding will be required to secure capacity building training, external technical and consultancy support, and staffing to scope out and accelerate the development and delivery of projects across the Plan. Without access to this specialist support, the Plan will be limited in what will truly be able to be delivered. Funding for this specialist support must come from those invested in the Plan's successful delivery, i.e. the Borderlands programme, South of Scotland Enterprise and Dumfries & Galloway Council.





# Monitoring and Performance Management

10

# The Borderlands Growth Deal has an overarching approach to ensuring that the contributions made towards deal wide objectives are effectively measured and captured

As a result, at project level, robust monitoring arrangements will be incorporated into the grant funding agreements which will be put in place between the Accountable Body (Dumfries and Galloway Council) and individual project sponsors leading on the delivery of Wigtown and Bladnoch's priority projects. This will include:

Establishment of a baseline which sets out the starting position from where progression and changes resulting from the project can be evidenced and assessed.

Identification of the outputs which the project will deliver through the Borderlands funding awards and the subsequent outcomes for the community which will follow.

Provision of quarterly project progress reports to the Project Management Office to capture both spend and outputs - with outcome reporting at less frequent intervals.

Progress reporting, to include capture of the contributions made by projects to underpinning Borderlands themes such as Inclusive Growth, Community Wealth Building and Environmental Sustainability

Wider and longer-term local impacts, less directly linked to Borderlands investment, will be assessed by the PMO through broader programme level evaluation work.

Dumfries and Galloway Council Officers will support the Town Team to maintain an overview of progress by providing updates on the development and delivery of Borderlands Place programme funded projects, as well as those being funded from other sources beyond the Place programme.

**This information will also be of value to help inform any future mid-term and full-term evaluations which are required to be commissioned by the Borderlands PMO.**



# Appendices



# Appendix 1: Our History

## Our History

Wigtown has a long and proud history.

On the northeast of the Machars peninsula near Wigtown are several prehistoric sites, most notably the Torhousekie Standing Stones, a Neolithic stone circle. There are ancient tales of a prehistoric settlement on the shoreline to the east of the town but later because rising tides encroached on them, its people moved to the hill where the present town still stands.

There was an early church site founded by 6th century St. Machutus, a neighbouring Dominican friary, established around 1267 by Devorgilla, daughter of the Lord of Galloway and wife of John Baliol. At that time Wigtown was part of the famed pilgrim route to Whithorn. Wigtown Castle, in existence by 1291, was one of those designated as Guardians of Scotland, playing a part in the history of the medieval War of Independence.

In 1292 Wigtown became a Royal Burgh, a status formally recognised by a royal charter in 1457, the County Town of Wigtownshire with the Agnew family as hereditary sheriffs.

Following the union of the crowns, the 17th century was a time of conflict between the Covenanters in Scotland and the monarchy. There were many persecutions throughout the country but Wigtown's involvement in 'The Killing Times' remains well known because of the courage of the two women known as The Wigtown Martyrs who were executed by drowning in 1685.

A curve in the course of the tidal waters of the River Bladnoch which flowed below the church provided a natural harbour for Wigtown noted in records from the 1400's. However, the silting of the channel interfered with increasingly larger ships sailing to Wigtown from as early as the 1600's. Following a shift in the course of the river, work on a new harbour to the south of the town was begun in 1817 enabling the town to become a centre for trade and commerce with shipping links to Liverpool and the wider world.

Wigtown, still retaining important features of its original medieval layout, began to develop more during a period of growth and increased prosperity in the late 17th and 18th century. Its present appearance is due to changes from the 19th century by which time it had become a prosperous town due to coastal trade, fairs, markets, and its role as a service centre for the farming communities of the Machars. There was therefore money to invest in new buildings in the town, one of which was the large and impressive County Buildings, built in the 1860s to replace the earlier tollbooth and town house structures, and a railway station near the old castle site serving a branch line to Whithorn opened in 1875.

The arrival of main rail and road networks which had developed through Galloway some miles to the north of the

town, however, did not favour Wigtown and the town was now on the periphery, resulting in diminished trade and prosperity.

In the 1990's Wigtown was designated Scotland's national Book Town and held its first book festival in 1999. This enabled the town to regenerate after the main employers at the time, the creamery, and the distillery in Bladnoch, had closed. Many of the empty shop premises in the town have reopened as Book Shops, 17 at the last count, and the book festival, now an annual event attracts an audience of 15,000 benefiting the economy of Wigtown and the wider Machars.

Bladnoch was originally a small village at a crossing point on the River Bladnoch just outside the county town of Wigtown. In 1798 it was little more than 10 or 12 thatched cottages and a public house. Over the 19th century a variety of industries including the distillery, coach building, boat building, an iron foundry, and nearby farina/potato mill at Fordbank, were established. The opening of the creamery on the other side of the River Bladnoch later created a further major stable employment source for Wigtown and the area.

**Today the Bladnoch Distillery (which closed in 1990's but reopened in 2000) is a vital tourist attraction as it is the most southerly whisky distillery in Scotland. The other businesses established in the 1800's have now gone but the village retains a pub, and a variety of businesses on the former creamery site at Bladnoch Bridge Industrial Estate.**





## What We Found

### The Community

- Unique civic space in the town centre
- Strong community spirit
- Safe and friendly
- Heritage and a sense of place

### Assets

- McGuffie Gardens
- County Buildings
- The park
- Book Festival
- Martyrs stake
- UNESCO biosphere

### Challenges

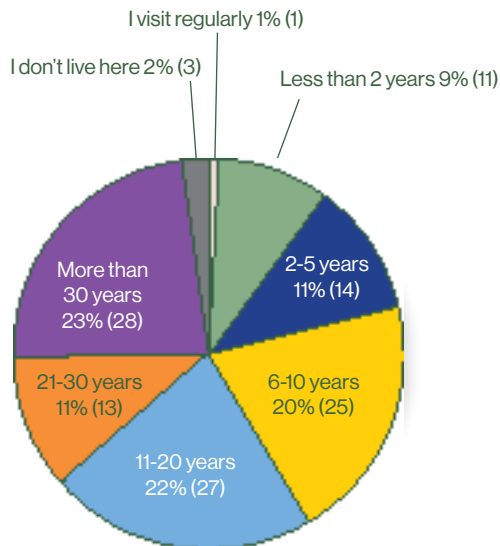
- Decline in population. 14% in 20 years.
- Not much to do
- Needs more to keep visitors here
- Disparity in the population with high number of older people and low numbers of working age.
- Vulnerable economy
- Loss of the bank and post office
- Poor transport and connectivity
- Lack of affordable housing

### Opportunities

- County Buildings modernisation
- Town centre vision
- Upgrade of the Lightlands Park
- Housing
- Increased tourism
- Evening meal offering and nighttime economy
- New national park application







A large portion of respondents have lived in the area for more than 20 years (34%). 22% of respondents have lived in the area 11-20 years, 20% 6-10 years, and 20% 5 years or less.

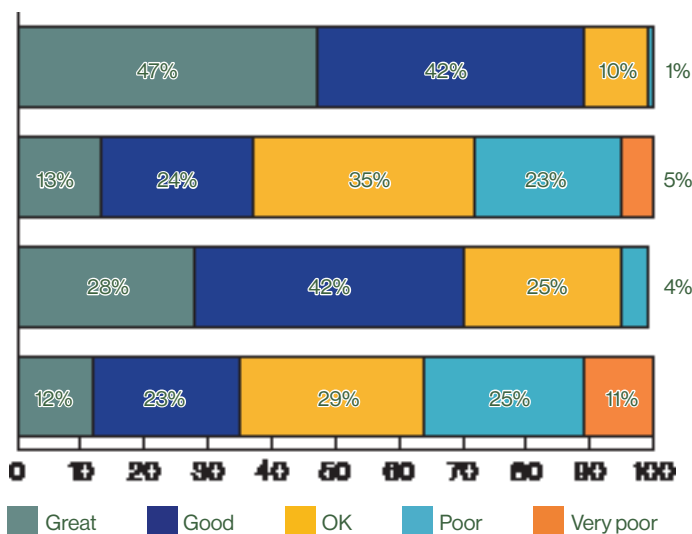
Of those respondents who are local residents, 83% (94 individuals) expect to be living in the area in ten years' time. 11% were not sure and 6% do not expect to be living in the area in ten years' time.

## About Wigtown and Bladnoch

Community members were asked to rank Wigtown and Bladnoch as a place to live, work, play or visit. The options given were great, good, ok, poor, and awful. Numerical values of 5-1 were assigned to the different rankings, with 5 being great and 1 being very poor.

Below is the average of how survey respondents scored Wigtown and Bladnoch in these 4 categories, as well as the graph depicting the answers.

|       |     |            |
|-------|-----|------------|
| Live  | 4.3 | Good/Great |
| Work  | 3.2 | OK         |
| Play  | 3.9 | OK/Good    |
| Visit | 3   | OK         |



Respondents were then asked to reflect on two things they like most about the Wigtown and Bladnoch area. Individuals responded listing 215 things. The following is a summary, with examples of the various themes that came up within survey responses.

- People and Community – This theme represents 29% of responses.
  - » Generally comments include how friendly the people are and how strong the community spirit is.
- Nature/Environment and location – This theme represents 28% of responses.
  - » Generally, these comments include how beautiful the scenery and countryside is, ease of access to nature, access to walks and being in an idyllic rural setting.
- Shops, Buildings, the Bowling Club and the Town Centre – This theme represents 19% of responses.
  - » Generally, these comments include a list of shops and mention the Town Centre specifically. The Bowling Club/Green/Pavilion were mentioned specifically as well.
- Quiet, Peaceful and Safe – This theme represents 12% of responses
- The Book Shop and Book Festival – This theme represents 8% of responses.
- Local Services – This theme represents 4% of responses.

Respondents were then asked to list two things that needed to be put right in the Wigtown and Bladnoch area; long-term improvements. Individuals responded listing 208 things. The following is a summary, with examples, of the various themes that came up within survey responses.

- The need for improved local services, as well as more shopping options. This theme represents 19% of responses
- Issues around public transportation, cars on the road and parking in the community. This theme represents 13% of responses
- The need for more restaurant/eating options, reopening the pub and tourist facilities/resources. This theme represents 14% of responses.
- A desire for more economic investment in the community and local jobs. This theme represents 12% of responses.
- Issues around housing and second homes. This theme represents 12% of responses.
- Improving the town centre, paths and other locations, like the bowling club. This theme represents 11% of responses.
- Services and activities for young people. This theme represents 9% of responses. More in depth engagement was undertaken directly with young people.
- Other issues covered, but were each less than 5% of the total responses, are the need for more activities, issues with anti-social behaviour, the need for better wifi, support for the arts and crafts and more services for the elderly.

Respondents were asked about elements of Wigtown and Bladnoch. They were encouraged to consider ease of access, quality and affordability, among other things. Below is the average of how survey respondents scored Wigtown and Bladnoch in these 17 areas.

|                                   |     |         |
|-----------------------------------|-----|---------|
| Schools and education             | 3.4 | OK/Good |
| Footpaths, walks and green spaces | 3.4 | OK/Good |
| Tourism                           | 3.3 | OK      |
| History                           | 3.3 | OK      |
| Arts and crafts                   | 3.3 | OK      |
| Music, theatre and festivals      | 3.1 | OK      |
| Community facilities              | 2.9 | OK      |
| Recreation and leisure            | 2.7 | Poor/OK |
| Services for older people         | 2.7 | Poor/OK |
| Retail                            | 2.6 | Poor/OK |
| Food and drink                    | 2.6 | Poor/OK |
| Health and wellbeing services     | 2.4 | Poor    |
| Housing                           | 2.4 | Poor    |
| Services for families             | 2.4 | Poor    |
| Local economy and jobs            | 2.3 | Poor    |
| Services for young people         | 2.1 | Poor    |
| Transport                         | 2   | Poor    |



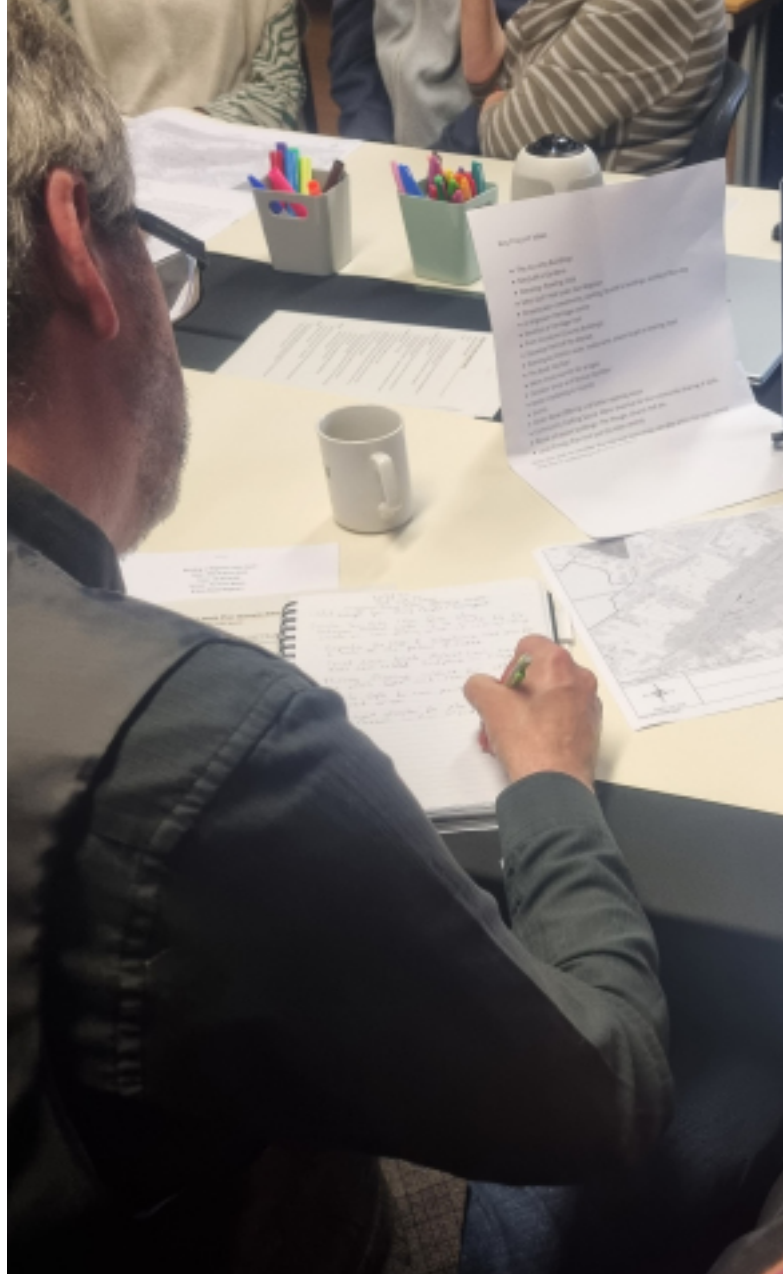
## Future of Wigtown and Bladnoch

Respondents were also asked to list up to 3 projects or initiatives they would like to see happen in the Wigtown and Bladnoch area over the next 10 years. Individuals left roughly 300 ideas. The following is a summary, with examples, of the various themes that came up within survey responses. On some occasions, an idea will cut across multiple themes.

- The need for accessible community spaces/public facilities, better use of county and other unused buildings for the benefit of the community, repurposing of the show field and more shops/other amenities for the local community made up **19% of the project ideas**.
- Improved green spaces, town square, and paths, and an outdoor event space made up **14% of project ideas**.
- Project ideas related to the needs of young people made up **11% of ideas**.
- A café/restaurant and better tourism infrastructure made up **10% of project ideas**.
- General economic investment, jobs and support for arts and crafts made up **10% of project ideas**.
- Ideas related to housing (**9%**) and ideas in support of better transportation and transportation infrastructure (**9%**) were the next most frequent responses.
- Project ideas within the following themes made up a smaller proportion of answers:
  - » More events (6%)
  - » Ideas specific to the bowling club (5%)
  - » Health provision ideas (3%)
  - » In support of the older population (2%)

Respondents were asked what other support or services they felt that Wigtown and Bladnoch should be providing to the local community. The majority of responses echo ideas which came up under project ideas.

- A large proportion of comments were about issues related to health care provision (specifically the GP, hospital access and dentistry) and issues related to transportation (public transportation); each making up about 20% of the comments.
- 16% of comments covered the need for more shops, community amenities and a café or restaurant.
- 15% of comments reflected the need for more facilities and activities for young people.
- 10% of comments were about the need for more or better tourism infrastructure.
- 6% of comments were about the need for affordable housing and 5% were about the need for more and affordable community spaces.
- Further comments covered issues related to the town needing to be about more than books, the need for more jobs/economic investment and support for the elderly.



Respondents were asked, using a few words or a sentence, how they would like to describe the Wigtown and Bladnoch community in 10 years' time?

The following word cloud depicts which words were used most frequently within the responses given:





## Engagement With Young People

Engagement was undertaken directly with young people as they were under-represented in the Community Survey. Young people want to be part of the delivery of the Local Place Plan. Here are the headlines from that engagement.

Wigtown remains a place where young people would want to raise their families. In the future, young people who stay in Wigtown will do it because they are surrounded by a strong, nurturing and supportive community where they can flourish and achieve - not because they 'haven't made it' and went somewhere else for a better life. Here is their priorities for the town

### A Revitalised Town Centre

- Places for people to hang out & enjoy being in the town centre including a youth café and more evening activities.
- More shops and retention of services e.g Doctors open longer, keep Post Office
- Having more community events like fairs/galas.
- Better public toilet facilities.
- Street Art / Quirky Statues that represent Wigtown.
- Free WiFi

### Better Connected Transport

- Improved public transport including better bus times and retention of free bus passes for under 25's
- A place to 'link' in to college courses in Dumfries or take part in things locally without needing to travel so much.
- Projects that encourage people to walk / cycle / scoot instead of driving.
- Community bus trips for shopping / travel – one vehicle travelling is better than
- Electric car hire, bike hire.
- Walking groups.
- Driving schemes for learners
- Better maintenance of paths in and around town.
- Trips to places where there are better activities.

## Better Homes for All

Affordable housing to meet local needs including:

- flats for young people,
- bigger homes for families
- accommodation for older people
- schemes to help first time buyers.

## A Green and Natural Place

### Natural and Green Spaces

- Climate change, protecting the environment, keeping Wigtown beautiful
- Maintain public gardens, the natural landscape, and parks

### Growing Places

- An eco garden/plant trees and plants
- Allotments.

### Recreational Spaces

- Making sure things like the fitba club and golf is supported and continues.
- More stuff for younger children
- Repair/upgrade MUGA
- Better parks and pitches

### Health and Wellbeing

- Community gym
- Better health facilities including access to mental health support.
- More investment into leisure for all ages and interests.
- Leisure centre (gym, swimming pool, sports hall)

## A Growing Economy

- Support for small businesses and for young people to get into business.
- Mentoring
- Encourage businesses to locate in Wigtown
- Keeping the weekly market
- Apprenticeships and opportunities to learn trades and careers in Wigtown from existing businesses.
- Volunteering opportunities for young people including Timebanking. This helps young people build skills, get involved in their community, foster civic pride and develop their CVs

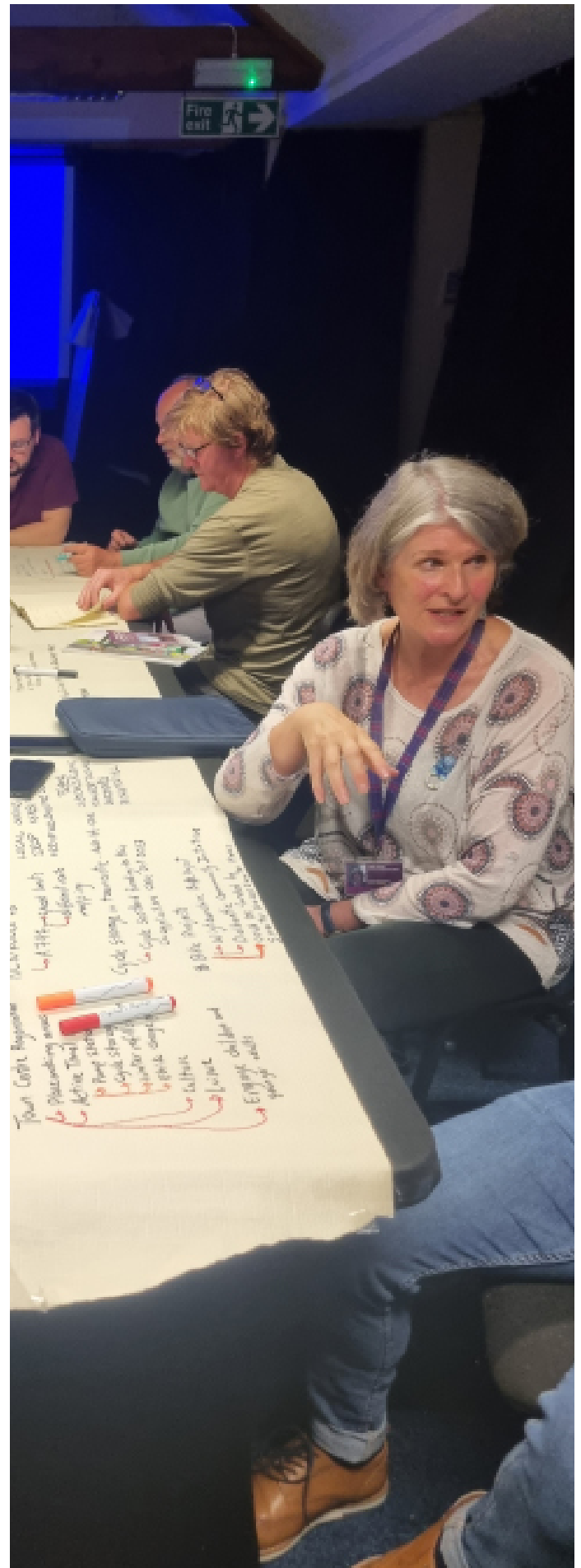
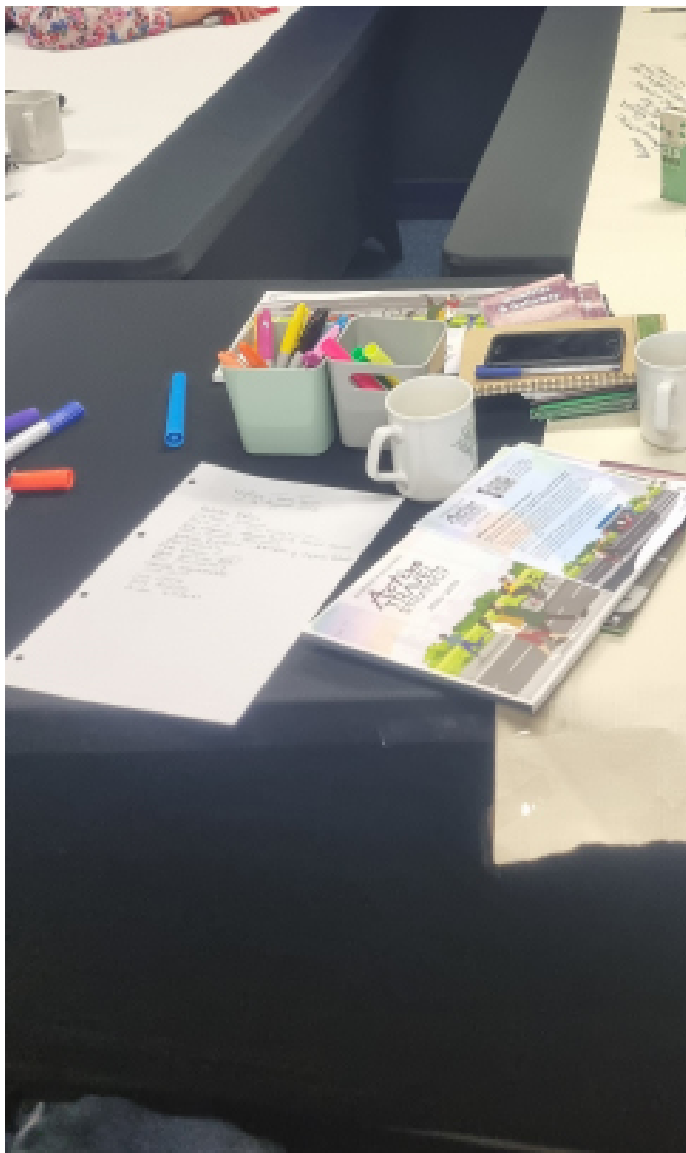
The goal for Wigtown's future is to create more life and activity in this place and to make some movement in the people of Wigtown.



## Appendix 3: Policy and Strategy Summary

The list below details the local, regional and national strategies, policies and plans that were used to inform the development of the Place Plan.

- Dumfries and Galloway Local Development Plan 2 October 2019
- National Planning Framework 4
- Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal – Investment Themes
- Borderlands Deal Wide Priorities
- Borderlands Place Programme Objectives
- Dumfries and Galloway Council Plan 2023-2028
- Dumfries and Galloway Housing Strategy
- South of Scotland Regional Economic Strategy Delivery Plan 2022-2025
- D&G Tourism Strategy
- SWestrans Regional Transport Strategy 2023-2042
- 10,000 voices
- Dumfries and Galloway Active Travel Strategy 2 and Delivery Plan 2022-2032
- Dumfries and Galloway Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy



## Appendix 4: Thematic Action Plan

| <b>Theme 1: A Revitalised Town Centre</b><br><b>Strategic Objective: Maintain and raise the standard of the physical environment of our unique town centre and make a place for events and activities that attract more visitors to spend time and money in the area.</b> |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |                                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Priority 1: Repurposing the County Buildings                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Priority 2: Physical Regeneration of the Town Centre |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Description                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Reimagine the County Buildings upgrading them so they meet modern day standards in terms of technology and renewable energy provision and maximise their use for the benefit of local people and visitors.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Description                                          | To maintain and raise the physical quality of the town centre focussing particularly on the public realm which comprises the McGuffie Gardens, the market square and Bowling Green.                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| Stage of Development                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Initial Concept                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Stage of Development                                 | Initial Concept                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Evidence of Need                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | <p>From our Community engagement:</p> <p>More use of the County Building- more of a hub for activities.</p> <p>Investment in the County Buildings- main hall for events.</p> <p>The County Buildings utilised more fully.</p> <p>The County Building is an impressive asset which is underused. There needs to be more regular activities (e.g keep fit, arts and craft) to make use of a good space. This building needs to be maintained and developed.</p> | Evidence of Need                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Physical deterioration of the McGuffie Gardens.</li> <li>Market constrained by current arrangements.</li> <li>Need for renewable energy solutions for events</li> </ul> <p>From our community engagement:</p> <p>Wall &amp; town gardens need urgent attention.</p> <p>The town square is a vital green space for the community and gives the town its character.</p> |
| Difference it will make                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | It will transform the County Buildings, making them more sustainable, maximising their use for residents and tourists and act as a catalyst for economic growth.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | Difference it will make                              | Repairing and developing the gardens will make them suitable for events and develop the market, increasing the time and spent in the town by tourists and local residents.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Lead and Delivery Partners                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Town Team/New Development Trust, Dumfries and Galloway Council, SOSE                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Lead and Delivery Partners                           | Town Team/New Development Trust, Dumfries and Galloway Council, SOSE.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| Potential Funding Sources                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Borderlands, Historic Environment Scotland, National Lottery and funds supporting renewable energy projects                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Potential Funding Sources                            | Borderlands, Historic Environment Scotland, National Lottery and funds supporting renewable energy projects.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Next Step                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Commission a study                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Next Step                                            | Commission a study.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |



## Theme 2: Better Connected Transport

**Strategic Objective: Improve transport provision and create active travel routes to provide better access to services, jobs, and training as well as to make it easier for visitors to get here.**

| Priority 1: <b>Community Transport</b> |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Priority 2: <b>Walking, Wheeling, and Cycling</b> |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|----------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Description                            | To explore and develop green community transport solutions aimed at improving access to neighbouring communities, larger towns like Newton Stewart, Stranraer and Dumfries and access from these locations to Wigtown.                                                            | Description                                       | <p>Develop good infrastructure including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• accessible, reliable, and safe routes that connect our local communities,</li> <li>• facilities such as an active travel hub and safe bike storage.</li> </ul> <p>This will help make walking, wheeling, and cycling more attractive. This will be complementary to the development of community transport.</p> |
| Stage of Development                   | Initial concept/idea                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | Stage of Development                              | Initial Concept/idea                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Evidence of Need                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• only one form of public transport (buses).</li> <li>• 22.6% of households do not have a car.</li> <li>• 78% of those responding to survey saw current provision as poor or very poor.</li> </ul>                                         | Evidence of Need                                  | <p>Dumfries and Galloway Active Travel Plan</p> <p>From our community engagement:</p> <p>Wigtown has wonderful walks- there needs to be better information, walk guides and signposting.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Difference it will make                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide opportunities for people to access work and training.</li> <li>• Provide opportunities for people to access shops, services and hospital appointments.</li> <li>• Provide better links with neighbouring communities.</li> </ul> | Difference it will make                           | <p>Encourage people to take up walking and cycling.</p> <p>Increase Health and Wellbeing</p> <p>Provide an alternative form of transport between neighbouring communities.</p> <p>Improves provision for residents and tourists.</p>                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Lead and Delivery Partners             | Town Team/New Development Trust, Dumfries and Galloway Council, SWestrans, SOSE.                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Lead and Delivery Partners                        | Town Team/New Development Trust, Dumfries and Galloway Council, SWestrans, SOSE.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Potential Funding Sources              | Funds that support active travel and net zero projects.                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Potential Funding Sources                         | SWestrans, Active Travel Funds.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| Next Step                              | Explore best practice elsewhere and feasibility study.                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Next Step                                         | Start to develop projects with SWestrans and Dumfries and Galloway Council.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |

### Theme 3: Better Homes for All

**Strategic Objective: Maintain and increase the number of people living in Wigtown and Bladnoch by addressing local housing needs, creating warm, efficient homes, and encouraging people to raise their families here.**

| Priority 1: <b>Housing</b> |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Priority 2: <b>Warm Homes, Training and Jobs</b> |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Description                | <p>To create affordable, warm, and efficient homes. New housing stock will be built to high energy standards with an aspiration for Passivhaus standards if possible.</p> <p>Increasing housing will increase our population. This will help to grow and retain facilities and services, and some local businesses said that it could help them with recruitment.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Description                                      | <p>Enabling access to green training and jobs for young people and our local trades, to enable us to improve the energy efficiency of our homes.</p>                                                                                                        |
| Stage of Development       | Housing Needs Assessment has been commissioned                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Stage of Development                             | Concept/Idea                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| Evidence of Need           | <p>From our community engagement:</p> <p>Housing is a major issue in terms of the ability for young people, families, and older people to access affordable housing.</p> <p>A high proportion of the population (33%) are over 65 years of age, so it is important that the future needs for Assisted Housing and Sheltered Housing in Wigtown and Bladnoch is considered</p> <p>The overall average price of houses in Wigtown and Bladnoch in 2023 is £192,138 and is higher than the average price for Dumfries and Galloway (£156,000) and in Scotland (£190,341).</p> <p>In 2021 the median household income for Wigtown was £23,754 compared to £27,111 for Dumfries and Galloway.</p> <p>The high price of housing linked to low incomes means that affordable housing is an issue for Wigtown and Bladnoch.</p> | Evidence of Need                                 | <p>The Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLES) estimates that retrofitting homes in the South of Scotland could sustain up to 2,239 direct jobs within Dumfries and Galloway and the Scottish Borders by 2030, rising to 6,690 direct jobs by 2045.</p> |
| Difference it will make    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide warm affordable homes.</li> <li>• Increase in working age population.</li> <li>• Improvement to health and wellbeing.</li> <li>• Reduction in child poverty.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Difference it will make                          | <p>Provision of high quality jobs for local people.</p> <p>Build up a workforce to respond to need to make homes energy efficient.</p> <p>Contributes to tackling fuel poverty.</p>                                                                         |
| Lead and Delivery Partners | Town Team/New Development Trust, Dumfries and Galloway Council, SOSE, South of Scotland Community Housing (SOSCH).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Lead and Delivery Partners                       | Town Team/New Development Trust, Dumfries and Galloway Council, SOSE, Members of the Dumfries and Galloway Local Employability and Skills Partnership.                                                                                                      |
| Potential Funding Sources  | Rural Housing Fund, Borderlands (infrastructure).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | Potential Funding Sources                        | To be explored further.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Next Step                  | Completion of the Housing Needs and Demand Survey.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Next Step                                        | Bring all of stakeholders together to develop the project.                                                                                                                                                                                                  |

## Theme 4: A Green and Natural Place

**Strategic Objective: Value and safeguard our natural environment and green spaces, create growing spaces in the town, build resistance to climate change, and improve access to the countryside.**

### Priority 1: Natural and Green Spaces

|                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Description                | <p>To work collaboratively with SCAMP and other partners to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve the core path network.</li> <li>• landscape enhancement around Wigtown Bay and the River Bladnoch.</li> </ul> <p>Increase environmental education for all to learn more about our unique environment, the impacts of climate change and how we can protect it.</p> <p>Young people would like to see a better awareness of climate change and a community pledge to work towards Net Zero.</p>                                                                                                                                                         |
| Stage of Development       | Connections with SCAMP and Biosphere already underway.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Evidence of Need           | <p>The amount of green space in Wigtown is 11.76% compared to a Scottish average of 0.58%.</p> <p>A particular concern is the need to protect, enhance and maintain our core paths networks, including the provision of interpretation boards to highlight our history, nature and wildlife.</p> <p>From the community engagement:</p> <p>Wigtown Bay Local Nature Reserve- estuary, salt marsh, river flooded plain are all important for wintering geese and wildfowl. Wigtown bird-hide is a very popular and well used but tired.</p>                                                                                                                                |
| Difference it will make    | <p>Working with SCAMP will help to: Environmental education will help local people and visitors develop a better understanding how we can protect and expand habitats and wildlife in and around Wigtown Bay.</p> <p>Improve the core path network.</p> <p>Improve water quality, climate action in terms of flood prevention and CO2 storage.</p> <p>Develop skills, training and work opportunities.</p> <p>Promote positive health and wellbeing.</p> <p>Increase visitors - Working with the Biosphere as part of this will enable us to promote the natural assets of our town to those with an interest in nature, astronomy, outdoor and cultural activities.</p> |
| Lead and Delivery Partners | Town Team/New Development Trust, Dumfries and Galloway Council, SOSE, SCAMP, Biosphere.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Potential Funding Sources  | Various funds including Windfarms, Coastal Communities.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Next Step                  | Initial contact has already been made, so next step to bring stakeholders together to agree an action plan.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |



## Theme 4: A Green and Natural Place

**Strategic Objective: Value and safeguard our natural environment and green spaces, create growing spaces in the town, build resistance to climate change, and improve access to the countryside.**

| Priority 2: Growing places |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Priority 3: Recreational Spaces |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Description                | To become a growing place and for those interested to come forward and volunteer to make this happen. Working together we will identify specific projects and locations for community growing spaces. Part of this can be supporting Wigtown in Bloom with the McGuffie Gardens.                                                                                                                       | Description                     | Renovation of Lightlands Playpark to accommodate an inclusive play area, a MUGA and a shelter for young people. There are also aspirations to replace the bowling pavilion, improve golf club facilities, upgrade the football pitches and the continued renovation to the buildings at the rugby club.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| Stage of Development       | Initial Concept/Idea                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Stage of Development            | Match funding is being secured for Lightlands Playpark Phase 1                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Evidence of Need           | <p>From the engagement sessions:</p> <p>A community garden where people can learn to grow veggies/ be self-sufficient.</p> <p>Community allotments and orchards.</p> <p>More trees in the townscape.</p> <p>Dumfries and Galloway has the lowest median household incomes for Scotland. In 2021 the median household income for Wigtown was £23,754 compared to £27,111 for Dumfries and Galloway.</p> | Evidence of Need                | <p>From the engagement sessions:</p> <p>36% of survey respondents felt that Wigtown was a poor or very poor place in relation to leisure.</p> <p>Noted the following as poor in the town – community facilities, recreation and leisure.</p> <p>35% say it is a good or great place to have leisure time.</p> <p>With heritage, and access to the natural environment, there could be more to keep visitors here and more for people to do.</p> <p>Lack of inclusive parks for children and young people.</p> <p>Activities to keep fit for leisure across all ages is needed.</p> |
| Difference it will make    | More locally sourced healthy food, activities that improve health and wellbeing, increased sense of community.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Difference it will make         | <p>Creates inclusive play facility.</p> <p>Improves recreation space for young people.</p> <p>Provides facilities for children and young people living in and visiting the area.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| Lead and Delivery Partners | Town Team/New Development Trust, Wigtown in Bloom.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Lead and Delivery Partners      | Lightlands Playpark Initiative Dumfries and Galloway Council.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Potential Funding Sources  | To be explored further.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Potential Funding Sources       | Coastal Benefit Fund, Lottery, SUEZ fund.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| Next Step                  | Bring stakeholders together.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Next Step                       | Secure all match funding.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |

## Theme 5: A Growing Economy

**Strategic Objective: Build a strong, sustainable, and growing economy that supports local businesses to grow, creates new jobs, learning and training opportunities, increasing economic participation and benefits across the community.**

### Priority 1: Transforming Tourism

|                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Description                | Building upon the Wigtown Book Festival and the town's Book Town Status to transform tourism across Wigtown and Bladnoch by working together to develop and improve the current tourism offering. The aim is that by doing this we can increase the number of visitors, the amount of time they stay and how much they spend for the benefit of the community. There is a need to find a permanent home for the Book Festival to enable it to develop and ensure its sustainability.                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| Stage of Development       | Initial concept                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Evidence of Need           | <p>Gross Value Added (GVA) in Wigtown in 2021 in Wigtown was £5.8 million, having declined by 15.6% in real terms from 2019 compared to a 7.1% decline in real GVA for Dumfries and Galloway</p> <p>Employment in Wigtown has also declined significantly over this period from 285 people employed in Wigtown in 2019 to 215 employed working in Wigtown in 2022.</p> <p>Wigtown Book Festival has proved successful at turning around Wigtown's fortunes. It generates £4.3 million for the local economy each year; that is £23 generated for every £1 of public funding received. Needs a permanent home to be able to develop.</p> <p>The SIMD status, currently in the 40% most deprived.</p> |
| Difference it will make    | <p>Increase the number of visitors to Wigtown and Bladnoch</p> <p>Increase visitor spend in Wigtown and Bladnoch</p> <p>Increase length of visitor stay.</p> <p>Help to extend the tourist season</p> <p>Help to develop an evening economy</p> <p>Enable the Book Festival to develop and ensure its sustainability.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Lead and Delivery Partners | Town Team/New Development Trust, Dumfries and Galloway Council, South of Scotland Biosphere, Wigtown Festival Company                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| Potential Funding Sources  | To be identified                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Next Step                  | To bring local tourism related businesses and agencies together to agree approach and develop a tourism action plan.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |

## Theme 5: A Growing Economy

**Strategic Objective: Build a strong, sustainable, and growing economy that supports local businesses to grow, creates new jobs, learning and training opportunities, increasing economic participation and benefits across the community.**

### Priority 2: Grow Businesses, Jobs and Training Opportunities

|                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|----------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Description                | Grow our economy will be afforded through the widening of our tourism offer, the expansion of The Market and access to green training and jobs, and through the priority projects we have identified.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| Stage of Development       | Initial concept/idea                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Evidence of Need           | <p>Gross Value Added (GVA) in Wigtown in 2021 in Wigtown was £5.8 million, having declined by 15.6% in real terms from 2019 compared to a 7.1% decline in real GVA for Dumfries and Galloway</p> <p>Dumfries and Galloway has the lowest median household incomes for Scotland. In 2021 the median household income for Wigtown was £23,754 compared to £27,111 for Dumfries and Galloway.</p> <p>Employment in Wigtown has also declined significantly over this period from 285 people employed in Wigtown in 2019 to 215 employed working in Wigtown in 2022.</p> |
| Difference it will make    | Increase in number and diversity of jobs                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Lead and Delivery Partners | Town Team/New Development Trust, Dumfries and Galloway Council, SOSE, Members of the Dumfries and Galloway Local Employability and Skills Partnership                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| Potential Funding Sources  | To be identified                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Next Step                  | To bring together key businesses, and agencies to develop a clear action plan.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |

