

Glenkens & District Community Action Plan Steering Group

Update Report

June 2023

Glenkens & District Community Action Plan Goal:

The Glenkens & district will be a connected, resilient and carbon neutral place where people will want to live, to work, to bring up their families and to grow old. It will be somewhere that other places in Scotland look to for inspiration.

1. Where we are now

Since the publication of the Glenkens & District Community Action Plan (CAP) in late 2020, much has happened to support this goal, including the innovative step of creating a CAP Steering Group to provide a community voice and assurance around delivery of the CAP. This Report from the Steering Group seeks to update on what has happened as well as current and future plans, challenges and opportunities.

Working together in a coherent and supportive manner, there is now a firm and resilient foundation for future success. Community groups across the Glenkens & District have achieved great things and have the appetite and capability for more. There is a clearly demonstrable wish to work together, to complement each other rather than to compete. There are skilled and engaged people and great potential in the area. Our community has demonstrated a track record in administering large amounts of money with high standards of transparency, accountability and effective delivery.

To achieve the transformational change articulated within the CAP, further support from public and private sector bodies who share our priorities is needed.

The Glenkens & District Community Action Plan sets out a shared Goal, underpinned by clear Values and Principles and supported by evidenced and articulated Delivery plans. The governance structure that has been put in place to assure delivery and continuing relevancy demonstrates how the voices of the community can be kept at the heart of what is achieved. The Community Action Plan Steering Group (SG) is a diverse and representative group and accepts its responsibility as custodian of the CAP with a passion for effective communication and full accountability to the people it serves.

The SG's role is to articulate, against the background set out above, why regional bodies and funders should support community groups both with funds and expertise to enable them to deliver on agreed and articulated community priorities. Ensuring a good understanding of how these align

with regional and national priorities is important to support this work. This Report sets out what has been done to date and hopefully is both informative and inspiring.

We want and encourage others to join the Glenkens & District on our journey.

2. Background

2021 and 2022 were a period of transition to new ways of delivering the Glenkens & district Community Action Plan and putting in place firm foundations for the future. However, we are now benefitting from the concrete delivery of some very interesting projects. The key to success is working together to support each other - complement not compete - both within the Glenkens & district and also with our regional partners. We know that we achieve more when we work together and harness collective expertise and experience effectively.

Our Goal is supported by four Themes:

- A Connected Community - Theme 1
- An Asset Rich Community – Theme 2
- An Economically Flourishing Community – Theme 3
- A Carbon Neutral Community – Theme 4

The Community Action Plan and CAP SG Meeting Reports and Terms of Reference can be seen here : [Glenkens Hub - Community Action Plan Steering Group](#)

3. Laying foundations

We have a robust structure with clear accountability and sound governance principles to turn aspiration into action if the resources can be found to support them:

Evolution of ownership of the Community Action Plan from Glenkens & District Trust, who commissioned the CAP, to a new representative body, the CAP Steering Group. A voluntary group with members drawn from the Glenkens and District Trust and from across the area by open invitation, the CAP Steering Group (SG) supports Glenkens Community and Arts Trust Ltd (GCAT) in their mandate to lead on delivery of the CAP, as well as ensuring that the CAP remains relevant and useful. The SG is the custodian of the CAP and will maintain it and agree any updates. Such updates will be based on an evidenced understanding of the community's needs, achieved through effective communication and engagement with the wider community and by a diverse and representative membership of the Steering Group.

Governance arrangements put in place. To ensure an effective transition to these new arrangements, time was taken in the early stages to develop effective governance arrangements. It was critical that organisational roles and accountabilities were clear to all involved, addressed any potential conflicts of interest and created effective reporting routes. While these arrangements are kept under review, the SG believes that the current structure achieves this. It is farsighted for a community to have such a robust structure but is critical to get things done in a way that is

answerable to the wider community served. The **Terms of Reference** can be found here [Glenkens Hub - Community Action Plan Steering Group](#)

Recruitment of new CAP SG Members from across our communities. Six volunteers with a diversity of geography and life experiences were appointed in January 2022 after an open recruitment process. Three individuals from GDT are also Members. Fiona Smith has Chaired the CAP SG through this transitional phase, but John Paterson took over as Chair in May 2023 in order to finalise the good governance arrangements of the CAP SG and GDT respectively.

Transparency, Engagement and Reporting. Written reports are circulated after each Steering Group meeting to give key information on what is happening and published here: [Glenkens Hub - Community Action Plan Steering Group](#). Helen Keron, the Executive Manager at GCAT, has attended most of the Community Councils from Carsphairn in the north to Crossmichael in the south and all areas in between to take views and explain her role in relation to the CAP. She has felt very welcomed in these meetings and enthused by the will to work together for the benefit of our communities as a whole. Key for the SG is ensuring this focus on the wider Glenkens & district area.

4. Project Delivery: A look back at the year.

This section sets out some of key achievements and challenges relating to CAP delivery during 2022 and 2023 to date. It is not an exhaustive list - more detail on what has been delivered and what has not gone so well is included in the quarterly Reports after each SG meeting.

At each of these meetings we review a report produced by GCAT that assesses progress against each Action Area in the CAP so that we can review progress, prioritise effort and ensure that we do not overlook any identified actions.

It should be noted that a number of the current projects were catalysed by reports commissioned in 2021 and 2022 analysing the current position and desired outcomes in the CAP and then suggesting work to achieve these outcomes. These Reports formed a good evidence base of need and planning to support funding applications, and have proved very useful in that regard.

It should also be noted that a continuing theme at SG meetings is the resource constraint from a GCAT perspective and the need to prioritise the areas of focus. The SG is fully cognisant of the tight funding landscape in which GCAT operates, and very appreciative of their efforts to date to lead on delivery of the CAP. A key risk on the SG Risk Register is the impact on delivery if GCAT are unable to fund the community development activity going forward.

In that context, we would highlight the following achievements through 2022 and into 2023:

4.1. Glenkens Community Spaces Network.

Themes 1 and 2 identified the need for an effective support network for our important community assets, to ensure that they could be sustained and be complementary, working together rather than in competition. In 2022, as part of the early implementation plan, Corsock Village Hall did a comprehensive report setting out what could be done in this area. Glenkens Community & Arts Trust then secured funding for a part-time role to facilitate this Network, which held its first meeting in January 2023. Since then, regular, well attended meetings have been held with representatives of many of our community assets, where matters of common interest are discussed, experiences shared and actions taken forward. A concrete example of this has been them getting funding for the delivery of a Feasibility Study into what energy efficiency measures eleven of our public buildings could take to reduce their carbon emissions and running costs (supporting Theme 4). This work is being delivered by Natural Power, a business located in the area, and it is hoped that it will catalyse a programme of capital upgrades on our public buildings.

4.2. Glenkens Local Food Network

Theme 3 identified the need for a plan for collaborative production and distribution of local produce. Propagate carried out research and published a report on possible options. They then secured funding to launch the Glenkens Food Hub in Spring 2022, and it now makes fortnightly deliveries of local food around the Glenkens and district and beyond. Propagate have secured funding to enable them to continue into 2024.

4.3. Glenkens Hub

Theme 1 identified the need for effective online and offline communications to support good information sharing and collaboration. GCAT, who already publish the Glenkens Gazette, did a comprehensive report with widespread community engagement setting out options and then secured funding to develop a new sister website and social media channels to the Glenkens Gazette - the Glenkens Hub. The website and Facebook page was launched in March 2023 and is already being widely used across the area.

4.4. Housing

Theme 2 identified the need for affordable housing to support the long-term needs of the community. GDT commissioned a Housing Needs and Demand Assessment in 2021/22 and GCAT organised a well-attended Housing Forum in February 2023. Pamela Young Trust, a local housing charity, is now developing a plan for up to three new affordable houses in Balmaclellan and is having constructive discussions with SPEN re returning some of the houses at Glenlee into the rental market. It has secured funding to support feasibility studies for some of this work and instructed work to inform this.

4.5. Childcare

Theme 3 identified the need for more work to understand the demand for local childcare and the barriers to delivery of this important service. GDT commissioned a report to get an evidence base for future work. The Scottish Child Minding Association utilised this evidence to secure funding for a project to support individuals to set up child minding businesses in the Glenkens and this is now in progress. They hope to have created 3 new childminding businesses in the area by the end of 2023 and have funding to support a further two.

4.6. Youth Spaces

Theme 2 identified the need to create spaces for younger people controlled by them for activities initiated by them. GCAT carried out research and published a report on potential options in 2021. Local Initiatives in New Galloway (LING) then secured funding to provide a 'Glenkens Youth' service which has provided weekly drop-ins and regular holiday excursions for local P7s to S3s since May 2022 – a service much appreciated by the young people involved. Funding has now been secured by GCAT to provide this service for an additional two years. LING and GCAT worked together to create this forward plan, and it is a good example of collegiate working for the greater good.

4.7. Transport

Theme 4 (a carbon neutral community) identified a number of actions where transport could support a carbon neutral community. E bikes are now available for hire in the area and Galloway Community Transport is shortly to get its first electric bus. This will complement the electric car it already has. The Glenkens Hub website also hosts a page which records many of the commuting and leisure routes available for walkers and cyclists in the area.

The Loch Ken Trust submitted an application to the Sustrans 'Places for Everyone' fund in 2022 seeking funding for the design phase of a cycle and walking route between Parton and Castle Douglas. This was proposed as the first phase of a network of routes around Loch Ken, in line with D&G Council's Active Travel strategy. However, following discussion with Sustrans, it became clear that detailed supporting plans for the route were required for success, so it was decided to withdraw in order to give time to gather this information. The project remains a priority for the area but the additional information gathering will require support from other regional organisations.

Since then, the proposed Loch Ken route has been used as a pilot for a SOSE-funded project to develop route planning tools for rural travel routes, which will hopefully contribute towards future funding applications.

4.8. Land Use

We recognised that due the rapid changes in context since it was consulted on in 2019/2020, the CAP was light on actions relating to land use, biodiversity and environmental sustainability of the area. In parallel, the Glenkens was identified as a pilot area to develop a Land Use Vision as part of the South of Scotland pilot Regional Land Use Partnership. Much work has been carried out on this, facilitated by GCAT but supported by many individuals and groups across the area. A forum attended by representatives of Scottish Government and other national and local groups as well as local people took place in January 2023 and further local engagement is ongoing. As an outcome of this work, we expect to be publishing a Vision for Land Use in the Glenkens shortly, which will form an addendum to the CAP and will identify future action areas.

4.9. Carbon Neutral Community

As well as decarbonising local transport and commissioning research into the energy efficiency of our community buildings, the CAP sets out more ambitions for a Just Transition to Net Zero. Following consideration, it was decided not to progress with the Local Energy Plan, a very resource-intensive activity, at this time and to focus instead on more tangible deliverables.

It was disappointing that an application to the Energy Industry Voluntary Redress Scheme in summer 2022 for funding for an Energy Ranger was unsuccessful, despite the support for it from Home Energy Scotland and local groups. A further application is planned for this summer. This application will be along similar lines but address the points raised in the feedback and will also build on the evolution of thinking since last summer, plus the information gained from the Natural Power report into local energy efficiency.

Without resourcing this work explicitly and in a way that will deliver tangible results in the Glenkens & district, it will be hard to progress this theme much further. Revenue funding for technical posts and / or strategic partnerships with the private and public sectors will be required to make a meaningful difference. However, the area is a clear exemplar of a remote-rural community that will need to de-carbonise to meet national targets, and we stand ready to meet all opportunities available.

4.10. Community Wealth Building

Theme 3 identifies the need to develop a more self-sustaining local economy. Irrespective of views on the merits, there is likely to be a continuing pipeline of wind farm developments and forestry operations in the area for the next 10-15 years and it is important to retain as much of the economic benefits from this in the area as possible. Much engagement has taken place with local and national bodies to seek support for the opportunities we feel these developments may offer, in order to make this work less extractive and to support our community to be more sustainable. We are actively seeking to get warm words turned into actions and have made the case for us being a community willing to work with delivery partners around this topic. We are also keen to operate as a strategic partner with public and private sector bodies in the pursuit of a thriving local economy.

5. 2023 Priorities

At their May 2023 meeting, the SG set out the following priority areas for CAP delivery over the rest of the year:

- **Support GCAT in securing funding** from October 2023 onwards to enable them to continue in their role of leading on delivery of the CAP.
- Finalise the community engagement around the **Vision for Land Use in the Glenkens** and adopt it as an addendum to the CAP along with other considerations around biodiversity and environmental sustainability.
- **The continuation of key projects/services:**
 - Provision of more affordable housing to meet the identified need and as an underpin for provision of jobs in the area.
 - Glenkens Hub website.
 - Local food production and distribution.
 - Glenkens Youth group.
 - Glenkens Community Spaces Network
 - Child minder recruitment.
 - Progress sustainable travel through the Active Travel Forum.
- Progress the other action areas within the CAP which build on the Community Spaces Network.
- Move the findings of the Natural Power report forward and re-apply for the Energy Ranger role.
- Align the 3-year plan for the Loch Ken Ranger service with the relevant aspects of CAP delivery.
- Build relationships and develop actionable plans with developers, regional and national bodies to achieve a more self-sustaining local economy, using the principles of Community Wealth Building

6. Looking Forward - Challenges and Opportunities

Although excellent things have already been achieved by working together, there are clear challenges to the community to enable progress to continue at this rate. The SG is very focussed in supporting our local groups to build on what has been delivered and to create a positive and constructive community who works together to achieve results.

The funding context for all community groups is getting more difficult as the national funding landscape contracts and demands get higher. There is a need for national funders to understand the needs and demands of rural area better in their decision making - for example the difficulty in finding trained people to do work and the challenges of having a regular flow of work.

While there is a pipeline of wind farm developments in the Glenkens & district which is likely to result in additional community benefit payments being made locally, the timescale of these is extending and there is unlikely to be a material change in the level of local funding available in the short term (3-5 years).

It is unlikely that our ambitions can be fully achieved without assured core funding for our anchor organisations. Without the funding of the Executive Manager role in GCAT over the last 18 months, the pace of delivery would have been much slower and many of the benefits of cooperation and coordination lost. Crucial to the ability of the SG to carry out its role has been having access to that paid resource and expertise.

In addition, there is a fantastic cohort of willing and able volunteers who have already achieved much for the Glenkens & district, but if more ambitious projects are to be achieved, more paid and expert assistance is needed to support these volunteers. If more volunteers are to come forward to support community groups, there needs to be a recognition that the majority of volunteers will not have unlimited time and cannot be expected to take on tasks that should reasonably be paid roles.

The end of the Galloway Glens Scheme in September 2023 will also bring challenges across the area. Their approach of supporting groups both financially and pastorally through building effective relationships and of preferentially supporting the local economy has been a critical component in what has been achieved to date and they will be sorely missed.

There are many lessons that can be learned from the Galloway Glens approach of creating strategic, supportive and respectful partnerships with trusted local organisations and therefore enabling everyone to deliver much more effectively. There is a recognition and desire within our communities to ensure that the value of the Galloway Glens Scheme is not lost when it comes to an end. It is important that we learn what went well and what not so well. The SG will work to ensure this learning is understood and that steps are taken to build on it so that the benefit is not lost.

The more ambitious projects in Themes 3 and 4 will need good partnership working with South of Scotland Enterprise, Dumfries and Galloway Council and other regional bodies. Their support is actively being sought. There is much focus on community empowerment and groups are ready and willing to take up this challenge but do need strategic partnerships to allow them to deliver effective outcomes.

June 2023

Thank you to the many Funders and Partners who have supported delivery of the Glenkens & district Community Action Plan so far:

- The Heritage Lottery Fund through the Galloway Glens Landscape Partnership and Dumfries and Galloway Council.
- The Blackcraig Windfarm Community Fund, administered by the Glenkens and District Trust and Foundation Scotland.
- Carsphairn Renewable Energy Fund Limited.
- Creative Scotland
- The Holywood Trust
- Dumfries and Galloway Council
- The UK Government's 'Community Led Vision' fund
- The UK Government's 'Levelling up' fund
- The Scottish Government's 'Community Mental Health and Wellbeing' fund.
- South of Scotland Enterprise
- The Rural Housing Fund
- The Princes Trust
- Drax
- Sustrans
- NatureScot
- The Galloway and Southern Ayrshire UNESCO Biosphere
- CARES
- The Energy Savings Trust, through Plugged In Communities
- Glenkens Community Shop
- Community Enterprise's 'Accelerate' programme.
- Local trusts and individuals