

# Community Action Plan for Kirkcowan

Report for Kirkcowan Community Development Trust (KCDT)

 *Social Research*

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 *Service Design & Innovation*

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 *Strategy & Collaboration*

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 *Evaluation Support*

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 *Social Impact Measurement*

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January 2026



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# 1. Introduction

## Requirement

Community Action Plans are participatory tools designed to strengthen a community's capacity to take action based on its identified issues, needs, potential, and supporting evidence. They outline what the community aims to achieve in the short, medium, and long term through collective and partnership activity, ensuring that priorities are informed by both local insight and reliable data.

By setting out our community's aspirations and the evidence behind them, the Kirkcowan Community Action Plan will help the Kirkcowan Community Development Trust, Kirkcowan Community Council, Dumfries & Galloway Council, other community planning partners, and funding organisations gain a clearer understanding of local priorities and allocate resources more effectively.

Kirkcowan Community Development Trust (KCDT) previously carried out a Community Action Plan in 2019, which guided local investment and activity over the past several years. This new round of engagement builds on that earlier work, providing an opportunity to review what has been achieved, understand how community needs have evolved, and identify the priorities that should shape the next five years. Through refreshed evidence and community input, the updated plan will ensure that future actions remain relevant, targeted, and aligned with the aspirations of Kirkcowan residents.

## Method

Social Value Lab (SVL) delivered this project in partnership with associate Niall Mackay.

Our approach consisted of:

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- Desk review

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  - Stakeholder Interviews - 7

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  - Survey – 109 individual responses, representing the views of 190 people

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  - Community Engagement Event – 25 attendees

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The community engagement process began with an initial scoping phase designed to build contextual understanding and identify key issues. This included a series of stakeholder telephone interviews with individuals both within and beyond the village. Participants included two local councillors, the constituency MSP, representatives from local organisations, and other relevant external stakeholders. In parallel, desk-based research was conducted to review existing evidence, including the previous Community Action Plan (2019), publicly available census data, and other socio-demographic information to inform the design of the engagement tools.

The primary data collection activity was a community-wide survey, which was made available in both online and paper formats to maximise accessibility. The online version could be accessed using a web link or a QR code. Posters containing the QR code and survey link were displayed at prominent locations throughout the village, including the village shop/Post Office, the village hall, the Autumn Club, and on public noticeboards at the park and the school.

The survey was formally launched at the community playpark opening event, where a researcher was present to promote participation and build familiarity within the community. Attending this event provided an early opportunity to raise awareness of the engagement process, answer residents' questions, and encourage immediate involvement. As part of the launch activity, residents were invited to write brief suggestions on Post-its describing improvements or ideas they would like to see in the village. This interactive element not only helped generate early qualitative insights but also created a welcoming, informal space for people of all ages to contribute their views. The event-based promotion complemented the wider survey distribution strategy and helped to establish early momentum for the engagement process.

To ensure comprehensive coverage, a researcher undertook a door-to-door distribution process. Every household in the Community Council boundary area, was approached in person. Where contact was made, a member of the household received either a paper copy of the survey or an information leaflet describing the survey and how to complete it online. Households were also offered the option of completing the survey through a face-to-face interview if they preferred that method or required support.

During this phase, the researcher engaged in numerous informal conversations with residents primarily to explain the purpose of the survey and to answer any questions. These discussions, however, also provided valuable qualitative insights and helped build a broader understanding of the issues, priorities, and sentiments present within the community. While not formally recorded as survey responses, these interactions contributed to a richer contextual picture of the challenges and opportunities facing the village.

When no direct contact could be made, a paper survey, with a QR code on the front, was delivered through the letterbox. Each household received multiple contact attempts over several weeks to help achieve a high response rate. Toward the end of the fieldwork period, reminder visits were carried out, and reminder leaflets were posted to encourage participation from non-responding households.

This multi-modal, repeated-contact approach aimed to ensure that all residents, regardless of age; digital access, or preferred mode of engagement had a fair and convenient opportunity to contribute to the survey.

Following analysis of the survey and engagement, initial interventions were presented to the KCDT Board and they had the opportunity to review them to see what would be within the scope of the Trust. This helped shape the Community Engagement Event held on 4<sup>th</sup> December 2025. This event offered an opportunity for researchers to share, and reflect, initial survey findings and for residents to offer feedback on suggested interventions and share their priorities.

# 2. Local Context

## Community Profile

Kirkcowan, located in Wigtownshire, southwest Scotland, is a small village of approximately 500 people. It is part of the Dumfries and Galloway region, an area known for its dispersed settlements, scenic environment, and strong local identity. While the village benefits from close-knit community ties and active institutions like KCDT, it also faces challenges common to rural areas.

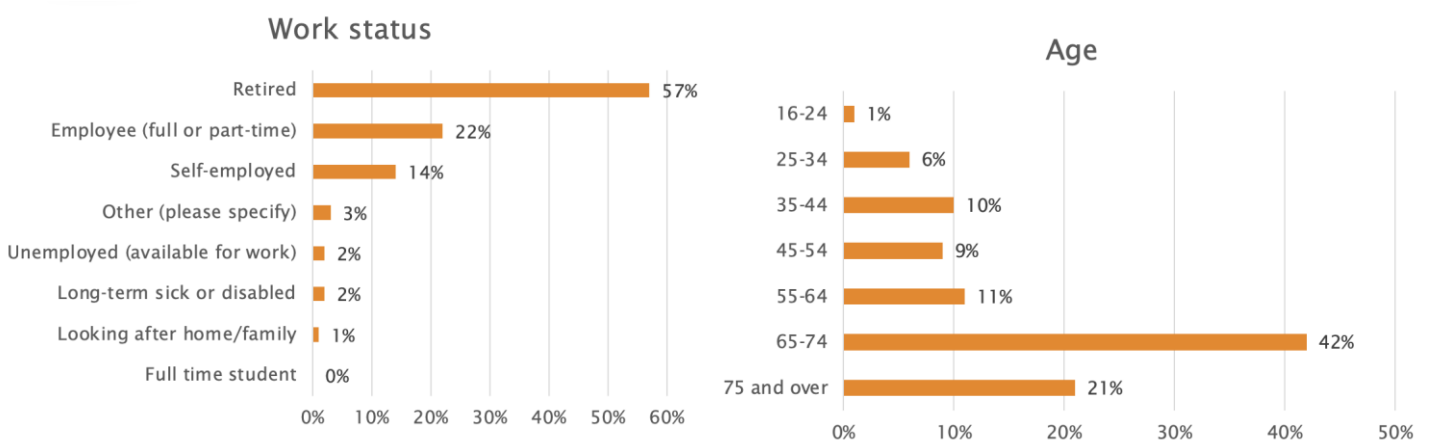
These include an ageing population, the outmigration of young people, limited local employment, and reliance on declining sectors such as agriculture, forestry, and tourism. Digital exclusion and weak public transport further isolate many residents, restricting access to services and opportunities.

## Survey Sample

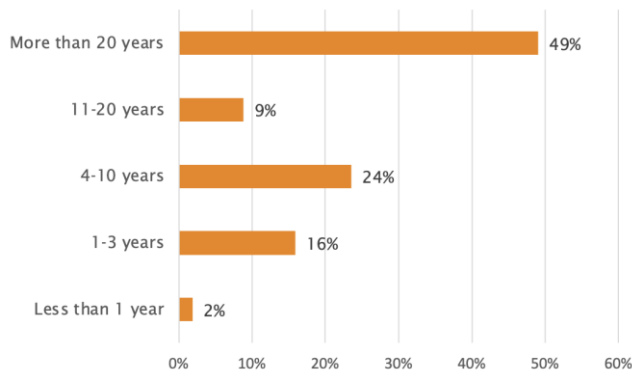
Overall, the survey sample was reflective of the census population in terms of sex. The age profile was broadly comparable, although those aged 55-64 were slightly underrepresented, while those aged 65-74 and 75+ were overrepresented in the survey. Therefore, compared to census data the survey sample contained a larger proportion of retired respondents. The household composition of the survey closely matched census data, although households with dependents were slightly under-represented.

## Respondents

At the time of reporting, a total of 109 individual responses were recorded across both paper and online surveys. A significant number of these represented family groups rather than individuals and altogether, the engagement represented the views of 190 people including children.



Respondents were 57% female and 43% male. The majority of respondents were over 65 (63%) and retired (57%). This is relatively consistent with the population of Kirkcowan.

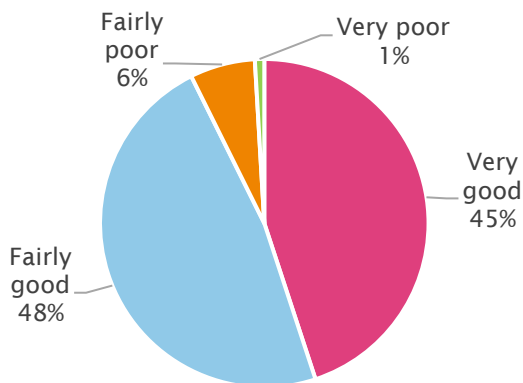


Most respondents have lived in the village for more than 10 years (58%). Another 24% have been part of the community for 4–10 years, while only 19% have lived in the village for fewer than three years.

35% percent of respondents reported living in a single-adult household, while a further 46% lived in a household with more than one adult but no dependents (under 16s). Only 16% of respondents indicated that they lived in a household with children.

Many respondents have also lived in the region before moving to the Kirkcowan community. The majority of most age groups have lived in the community for more than 10 years except 45 – 54 age group (66%) and encouragingly the 25 – 34 age group (67%)

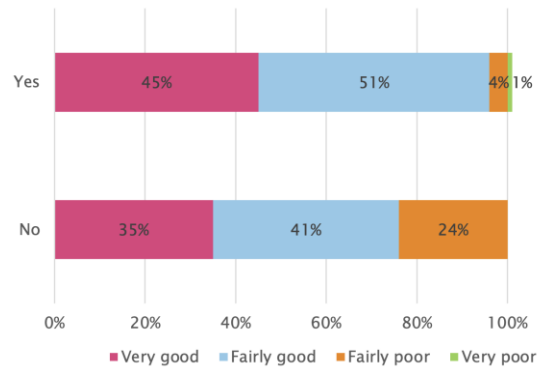
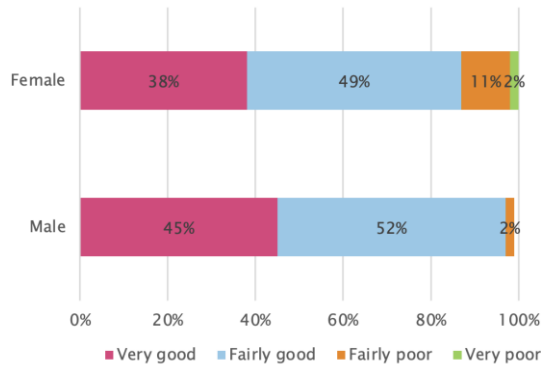
**Q1 - How would you rate Kirkcowan as a place to live?**



The vast majority (93%) of respondents rated Kirkcowan as a Very Good (45%) or Fairly Good (48%) place to live. This was consistent between male and female respondents. Female respondents rated the village slightly less positively with 87% compared with 98% of male respondents rating Kirkcowan as Very or Fairly Good.

Across all age groups over 80% of respondents rated the village as Very or Fairly Good. Respondents within the 55-64 age group gave the lowest rating, with 9% rating the village as Very Poor, despite this the majority of those in this age group (82%) rated the village as Fairly or Very Good. 100% of 45-54 respondents rated the village as Very or Fairly Good.

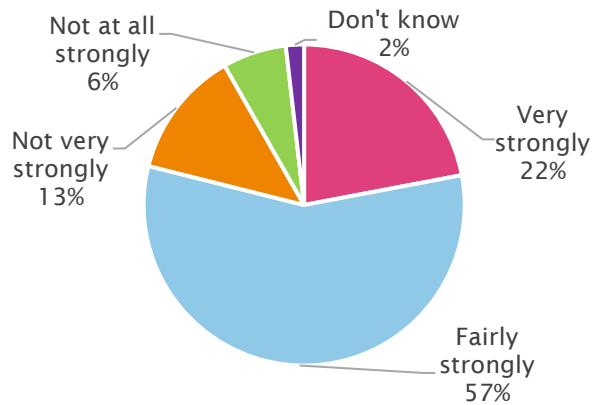
The factor that seemed to have the biggest effect was access to a car. 96% of respondents who have access to a car rated Kirkcowan as Good or Fairly Good, while 24% of those who do not have access to a car rated Kirkcowan as Fairly Poor.



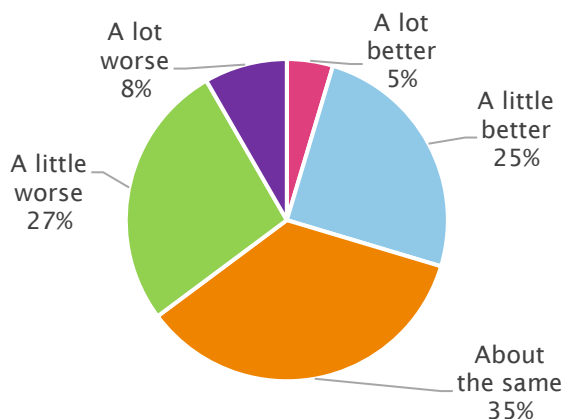
**Q2 - How strongly do you feel you belong to your neighbourhood?**

The majority (79%) said that they felt that they belonged to the village either Very or Fairly Strongly. This was consistent across both male (85%) and female (75%) respondents.

Across all age groups most felt that they Very or Fairly Strongly belonged to the village. The age group with the lowest was 45 – 54 (60%) and the highest age groups were 25 –34 (84%) and 75+ (85%).



**Q3 – To what extent do you think things in Kirkcowan have gotten better or worse in the past 5 years?**



Most respondents answered that Kirkcowan has stayed about the same over the past 3–5 years (35%). A further 30% felt that life in the community had improved, while the remaining 35% believed that life in Kirkcowan had become a little or a lot worse. Most male respondents responded that the village has stayed the same (40%) compared to 29% for female respondents. If “about the same” responses are removed male and female respondents have similar views.

Age had the biggest impact on response to this question. None of the respondents aged 55 - 64 said that Kirkcowan had improved compared to 50% of respondents in both the 25 - 34 and 35 - 44

age groups. In contrast, 64% of those aged 55-64 said that Kirkcowan had become worse, amongst other age groups between 31% - 40% felt that way. Meanwhile 56% of respondents aged 45 – 54 shared that Kirkcowan had stayed the same, compared to just 10% of those within the 35 – 44 age group.

## Life in Kirkcowan

In our Kirkcowan Community Engagement Survey, we asked respondents about 12 themes which covered both the physical and social environment for safety, wellbeing and quality of life using the Place Standard framework. This is a Scottish Government tool which allows places to be assessed by their assets, strengths and weaknesses. Respondents were asked to rate their place on a scale from 1 to 7, where 1 meant there was a lot of room for improvement and 7 meant there was very little room for improvement. In addition, an open comment box allowed specific issues to be identified.

Aspect	Average Score
Feeling safe	6.1
Natural space	6.0
Moving around Kirkcowan	5.6
Play and recreation	5.5
Streets and spaces	5.1
Identity and belonging	5
Traffic and parking	4.7
Social interaction	4.6
Housing	4.5
Public transport	4.1
Facilities and amenities	3.9
Opportunities to work locally	2.9

The highest-rated aspects were Feeling Safe (6.1), Natural Space (6.0), Moving Around Kirkcowan (5.6), and Play and Recreation (5.5). These results indicate that residents generally feel safe & secure within the village and place a high value on their local environment.

The lowest scoring aspect, by a clear margin, was Opportunities to Work Locally (2.9). Although most respondents were retired, they nonetheless recognised the limited availability of employment opportunities within or near the village. Other areas receiving comparatively low scores included

Facilities and Amenities (3.9) and Public Transport (4.1). These concerns were further reinforced by responses to the open-ended questions.

Public transport, in particular, emerged as a recurring issue; despite high levels of car ownership, many respondents highlighted the challenges posed by infrequent or limited services. The lack of local facilities and amenities was also noted, with residents reporting an increasing need to travel outside the village for essential services such as medical appointments and shopping.

These results provide a valuable baseline against which the impact of future plans and initiatives can be measured.

## **Assets**

The sense of community within Kirkcowan is highly valued by respondents. They appreciated the friendliness of neighbours and felt reassured that they had someone close by looking out for them. Familiarity with the area was also important, whether this be through long-standing friendships, being born in Kirkcowan or having family close by.

It was also noted that the variety of recreational activities and clubs available in Kirkcowan help facilitate a sense of belonging as well as creating opportunity to socialise.

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*“Can make friends with people easily – ‘nice wee village’.”*

*“Friendly people to talk with in the street.”*

*“Neighbours look out for each other, kind of like family, or being nosey but it’s always nice to know that people are looking out for you.”*

*“Being part of a community I was born into and knowing a large amount of locals.”*

*“In general it seems to be a friendly and supportive community, where people look out for each other.”*

*“The friendly people and eagerness to help each other.”*

*“People help each other in emergencies. Lots of clubs to join if required.”*

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Respondents also shared that they strongly appreciated the feeling of safety provided by living in Kirkcowan.

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*“Feeling safe and secure in the village”*

*“Peace and quiet and low crime”*

*“Kirkcowan is a peaceful, safe and quiet place to live.”*

*“It’s a safe place for my kinds to hang out and now they have the excellent park to enjoy time together in.”*

*“The safety of living in a small community where neighbourliness is common and the size of the population allows for familiarity at just the right level.”*

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The peaceful and quiet environment that Kirkcowan provides was another important benefit of living in the area. Respondents valued the village's location, which offers easy access to the surrounding countryside and makes it convenient to take part in outdoor activities.

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*"Tranquillity of the village and its open spaces."*

*"A quiet place to live"*

*"Easy to get into open space for a walk."*

*"I love the paths through the Dickie and Jenna Morra woods to walk my dogs."*

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Some respondents noted that Kirkcowan's location is convenient for reaching nearby communities, such as Newton Stewart. However, they pointed out that this is only practical when travelling by car.

### **Challenges**

The survey also invited respondents to share their thoughts about the current challenges that Kirkcowan faces.

#### *Aging population*

The aging population of Kirkcowan was repeatedly flagged as an ongoing, multi-faceted challenge. Generally, it was recognised that these residents may need more support across a variety of areas, including accessing necessary services such as hospital outpatient services, physiotherapy, podiatry and dental services, which are currently not easily accessible, or at risk, in the village. It was also suggested there is little support for care or respite carers.

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*"I get the sense that the older population of the village may face more challenges than most, so any support that could be provided to assist them in going about their daily routines I think would be useful. For example, assistance with transport, shopping or care."*

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Whilst some respondents, as outlined above, felt there are opportunities to socialise, others highlighted social isolation in the village. Although this is an issue that can affect anyone, it is a particular challenge for older people and those without a car.

#### *Lack of younger families*

Some survey respondents also noted that there are fewer families with children living in Kirkcowan. Concern was expressed that if this trend were to continue, it could affect the future of the school in the village and its viability to remain open, which in turn may push families to move away from the area and could discourage any additional families moving into the community.

For those young people and children who do live in and around Kirkcowan, some respondents shared that there is a lack of provision for them, particularly in terms of activities and clubs.

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*"Lack of children's groups, no youth group."*

*"Things to do for younger ones so they don't decide to cause trouble."*

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### *Cost of living / Unemployment*

The rising cost of living and the linked issue of rural poverty were also highlighted as challenges. Respondents were concerned about the cost of essentials, such as being able to heat their homes and the limited availability of affordable housing in Kirkcowan.

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*“Increasing costs of being a sole homeowner in the village. Large mortgage and increasing council and utility rates are starting to become difficult.”*

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As introduced above, respondents also highlighted the lack of employment opportunities in Kirkcowan and the surrounding area. Some respondents expressed particular concern over the lack of employment opportunities for young people, which may contribute to younger people leaving the community.

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*“Lack of jobs locally for young people.”*

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### *Community cohesion*

Some respondents were concerned about a decline in community spirit in Kirkcowan. While many valued the strong sense of community, as expressed in the above section, others felt that fewer people are willing to get involved in local activities. A few also mentioned that where there had been some newcomers to the area, they felt the familiarity amongst residents which they valued, had reduced.

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*“Little or no community spirit anymore.”*

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### *Businesses and infrastructure*

Declining numbers of businesses was raised as a challenge for the village. Many felt that Kirkcowan would benefit from an increased number of shops and amenities, not only in terms of having greater access to products but also having a café, pub or eatery that could offer an additional space to meet up and socialise. Despite previous attempts to introduce these measures, the community has expressed a continued desire for them.

Kirkcowan currently has one shop, but there were concerns about ensuring that this provision would remain available long-term. Past closures, such as that of the service station, have already impacted residents who now need to travel to Newton Stewart or Wigtown for these needs.

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*“Losing facilities and amenities with the decline of previous shops and pubs with only one Post Office/Shop left.”*

*“Keeping any businesses alive.”*

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Access to healthcare was a concern raised multiple times when respondents were asked about the biggest challenges facing Kirkcowan. In particular, the availability of appointments to see doctors at the village surgery. Although residents can travel to nearby towns for appointments, limited public transport can make this challenging.

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*“Doctors seem to be unable to be seen in the village! Patients having to travel 6 miles to Newton Stewart.”*

*“Surgery hours are getting short and meaning travel to main surgery in Newton Stewart, exacerbated by the lack of public transport.”*

*“Can only see a doctor one day a week.”*

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Beyond this, an issue repeatedly highlighted was the poor mobile phone signal and internet coverage in Kirkcowan.

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*“There’s a lack of 4G mobile phone signal at the bottom of the village. As a result we are dependent on Wi-Fi for communications and that stops if there is a power cut.”*

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A further challenge was raised by respondents regarding the lack of infrastructure available to support all residents during power cuts particularly outside the village.

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*“Power cuts are a big problem. Last year we were without power for 4 days in very cold conditions.”*

*“Being rural the village experiences regular power cuts.”*

*“In times of no power the people outwith the village are ignored.”*

*“Something is needed for all the constant power cuts that happen in the village.”*

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### **Traffic and transport**

Concern was raised by respondents about the increasing volume of traffic and greater number of large vehicles using small roads as well as speeding and the danger this may present. Increased closures of the A75 were also mentioned as well as issues regarding safety. Alongside this, the condition of the roads in and around Kirkcowan was also highlighted as an issue.

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*“The road is becoming very dangerous. I used to cycle but gave up because of fear of being hit by traffic.”*

*“Pot holes on the road which I use daily which connects those of us living on farms. These are reported frequently and currently they have not been repaired.”*

*“Pot holes are not sorted for a long time after being reported.”*

*“The roads and pavements are in a terrible state, they need repaired now.”*

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Poor public transport provision was raised as a challenge for the community, making it difficult to access both necessary appointments and amenities in nearby areas. This issue also exacerbates other concerns, such as social isolation and creates further difficulties in accessing employment opportunities outside of Kirkcowan.

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*“Poor buses – not frequent enough to Newton Stewart. Difficult to get anywhere else, especially Dumfries for appointments (medical).”*

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### Village environment

Concern was raised amongst some respondents about the general upkeep of Kirkcowan. This included the overall appearance of the village and maintenance of existing facilities, such as the village hall.

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*“The village as a whole, especially Main Street, looks shabby and uncared for.”*

*“The roads and pavements are in a terrible state of disrepair, potholes, pavements are falling apart and gaps that you can trip over or fall down.”*

*“The maintenance of the village is disgusting. The hall outer wall is cracked and falling apart – slates are coming off the roof – danger.”*

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### Recent progress

KCDT had previously commissioned a Community Development Officer to consult with the community about their priorities for the area. The evidence collated was presented in both in a Community Action Plan and more detailed report that laid out priorities for 2020-2025, published in 2019.

Of the priorities that were identified, KCDT have delivered on the play park, which was officially opened on the 30<sup>th</sup> August 2025. In our survey, some respondents shared that they were satisfied with the new play park and an improved space for children in the village to play.

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*“New play park is an excellent asset to the village.”*

*“Some things have been improved e.g. children’s play park.”*

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The Jenna Morra Wood was listed as another priority in the previous Community Action Plan. KCDT have since purchased the woodland with work ongoing to maintain and improve it for the benefit of the community.

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*“The Jenna Morra wood is lovely to walk through and work still going on.”*

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One respondent noted that improvements to the Jenna Morra Wood was one of the reasons they felt that Kirkcowan had improved over the past five years:

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*“The improvements to the Jenna Morra wood including the new riverside path.”*

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KCDT have also met their priority regarding paths and walks. This included identifying different options for paths, construction and marking as well as maintenance of the various walks.

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*“Walks around the village have improved with core paths...old railway path is a great improvement too.”*

*“We’ve gained good outdoor walks.”*

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Another priority highlighted was winter fuel and energy efficiency. KCDT established the Winter Fuel Allowance Scheme and from December 2019, those permanently resident within the Kirkcowan Community Council area have been eligible for support. In our survey, respondents valued the Winter Fuel Allowance and hoped it would continue.

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*“Keep the winter fuel allowance.”*

*“Thankful for the winter fuel allowance.”*

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# 3. Community Connection

Responses to the survey show a mixed picture of community connectedness in Kirkcowan. Many residents feel there are already good opportunities to meet others, while others report limited or unwelcoming experiences.

A strong theme is the desire for more informal social spaces, such as a pub, café, or community hub, and regular events at the village hall that cater to all ages. Communication about what is available in the village is widely seen as inconsistent, with calls for a central point of information ideally combining noticeboards, newsletters, and online updates to ensure everyone, including older residents are kept informed.

Some respondents note that negativity in community meetings and “cliquish” attitudes discourage involvement, while others highlight mobility as a barrier. Overall, residents value community life but see clear potential to further strengthen inclusion, coordination, and opportunities for everyday social connection.

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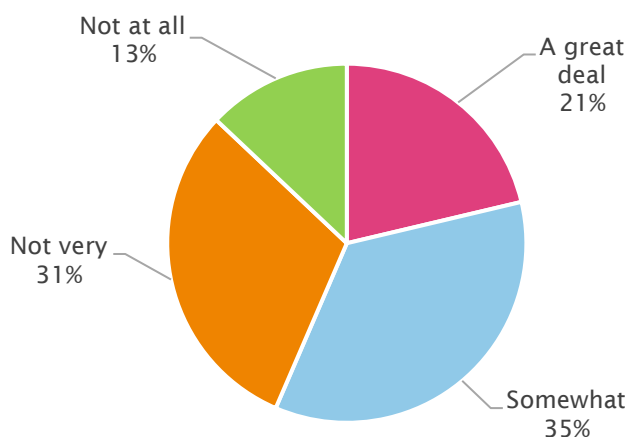
*“There are lots of activities for those that are mobile. Not everyone can physically attend.”*

*“There are several locations, groups and activities available, but no overall point of information about all of them.”*

*“More for the able bodied retired. There seems to be a lot for the very elderly. Many groups we feel we are not quite “old enough” for yet.”*

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## Awareness/understanding of KCDT



As shown on the left, 35% of respondents reported being somewhat aware of KCDT, and 21% said they were aware a great deal. However, 44% of respondents indicated they were not very aware or not at all aware of KCDT. These proportions were similar for both male and female respondents.

Across most age groups, a majority of respondents were either somewhat aware or very aware of KCDT. However, in the 25–34 and 55–64 age groups, 67% and 64% of respondents respectively said they were not very aware or not at all aware of KCDT.

Most respondents associate KCDT with managing and distributing money received from wind farms for the benefit of the community. Many believe, correctly, that the Trust’s main purpose is to

fund local projects, support community groups, and improve village facilities. A notable portion of respondents admit they don't know or are unsure what KCDT actually does, suggesting a communication gap between the Trust and the wider community.

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*“They hold meetings to discuss how to distribute the benefit funds made available from the wind farms.”*

*“They give their time to future plans for the good of the village.”*

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A large majority of responses that were entered mention that KCDT administers or distributes wind farm money to local causes, projects, or groups. They assess applications for grants, allocate funds for community improvements, and oversee finances to ensure alignment with community needs and donor criteria.

Many respondents recognise KCDT's role in improving village life through support for projects (e.g. play park, paths, hall improvements), providing winter heating or electricity grants, and encouraging initiatives that make the village a better place to live and visit. Some note that the Trust helps connect the community and provide opportunities for residents. A smaller number of people highlight KCDT's administrative and leadership role, including liaising with the community council, and making strategic decisions for the village.

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*“They provide funding to projects and activities that meet the benefit fund donors criteria, to enhance the lives, present and future of everyone in the community.”*

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Several respondents expressed dissatisfaction or mistrust, citing a lack of transparency and limited involvement of residents in decision-making. Some feel that decisions are made by a small group without wider input and that more consultation and openness are needed.

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*“Absolutely nothing worth of note – not enough engagement or change to push initiatives.”*

*“Seems to be very secretive decided by the few.”*

*“Rubberstamps initiatives that have been submitted through their over complicated and official procedures offering little to no help or support to the applicants.”*

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In short, KCDT is widely recognised for managing community funds effectively but would benefit from greater transparency and engagement. Many residents would appreciate clearer communication about KCDT's activities, decisions, and achievements.

## 4. Vision and Principles

### Community priorities

We also wanted to understand which issues mattered most to residents in Kirkcowan. When asked about local challenges that matter most to their household, responses included a variety of issues, as outlined below. These issues are listed in order of how frequently they appeared in responses, starting with the most common.

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- Facilities and amenities in the village (e.g. shop, school, church)

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  - Transport

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  - Cost of living (inc. heating)

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  - Healthcare

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  - Traffic

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  - Community (getting people involved, inclusion of everyone – those living in the village and outside the village)

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  - Phone signal and broadband

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  - Social isolation

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  - Poor road conditions

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  - Kids (lack of things for kids and less young people in the village)

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  - Security and safety

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  - Power cuts

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  - Litter

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  - Population decline

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  - Employment opportunities

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  - Wind farms and battery storage
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The most common issue raised was regarding **community hubs**, for example retaining and safeguarding the shop/post office, as well as village hall, GP surgery and school. Alongside preserving these facilities, reference was also made to upkeep and renovating the village hall and generally maintaining a clean and pleasant village environment.

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*“We need to maintain the village post office.”*

*“Availability of the post office/shop.”*

*“Maintaining a littler free environment.”*

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This was followed by issues surrounding **transport**. In particular, the lack of public transport allowing for travel to nearby towns like Newton Stewart. From the survey responses it is clear that having a car is essential for travel and some respondents expressed concern about what they would do when driving was no longer a viable option for them.

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*“If I had to give up my car getting to Newton Stewart for appointments would be difficult - poor public transport.”*

*“I tried to be as self-sufficient as possible however living alone with no near relatives, hospital stays pose challenging when I am no longer able to drive. I expect I will have to leave the village.”*

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The third most common concern raised related to the **rising cost of living** and worry about being able to keep homes warm during the colder winter months.

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*“Trying to keep my home warm in the winter is a challenge.”*

*“Keeping warm and dry in winter. Improving energy efficiency and installing renewable energy system affordably.”*

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**Access to quality healthcare** was another commonly reported priority. Importance was placed on keeping the GP surgery open for residents to be able to easily access healthcare in Kirkcowan as well as better availability of appointments.

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*“Difficult to see the doctor at the GP practice.”*

*“Doctors surgery to stay open with a doctor for face to face consultation.”*

*“Not being able to get a doctor’s appointment in the village.”*

*“Lack of access to doctors is a problem that has just occurred to me and will become more important as we get older but at least we still have some sort of surgery in the village.”*

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## Priority areas

### Short-term changes and improvements

We asked respondents about small changes and improvements that could be implemented by the Community Council in the next year. The ideas for short-term changes can be split into the following broad themes:

#### *Appearance of the village*

A large number of respondents proposed short-term improvements focused on enhancing the appearance and overall environment of Kirkcowan. Common suggestions included increasing efforts to reduce litter and dog fouling, maintaining and repairing planters in the village and carrying out weeding. Additional suggestions included repairing and decorating properties on Main Street, as well as repainting the Church and landscaping in the park.

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*“Be stricter about litter dropped in Dickie Woods and dog mess on the pavements.”*

*“Improving the appearance of village through volunteering”*

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Respondents also suggested that they would like to see Christmas decorations in the village, including additional lights and decorations.

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*“More Christmas lights around the village”*

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### *Opportunities for socialisation and activities*

The second most common theme amongst respondents was increasing opportunities for residents to socialise. There is clearly an appetite for more social events to take place at more regular intervals throughout the year, to help bring people together and foster community spirit. In addition, there was suggestion to increase the provision of activities in Kirkcowan, in particular for children (such as a youth club). It was also suggested that there could be further support put in place to support existing activities and groups in the village.

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*“Arranging of social events e.g. in the village hall once per month, this would assist in giving continuity of social interactions.”*

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Other individual suggestions when it came to activities to offer in Kirkcowan included; outdoor exercise equipment in the park, a pump track in the park, a map of local walks, more circular walks, a group to bring people together to encourage tidying up the village and childcare.

### *Facilities*

It is clear that for many respondents the village hall could offer a central hub for the village, with the suggestion that a decision needs to be made about the future of the hall and upgrades should begin, to enable it to be used to its full potential. In reference to the points made about appearance of the village above, it was also proposed that the exterior of the hall should be tidied up. Improvements to other existing facilities in Kirkcowan included providing portaloos in the park, even if this were on a trial basis to begin with as well as increasing the shops opening hours.

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*“A decent hall and hub area for meeting and hobbies, for young and old.”*

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Individual suggestions for facilities that could enhance life in Kirkcowan included a village library and a pub/café. Alongside this it was also suggested that changes could be made to improve disabled access to the park.

### *Traffic*

Respondents were also keen for efforts to be made to bring in traffic calming measures and enforce speed limits, to improve safety in the village and promote a more peaceful environment. Alongside this, specific suggestions were raised to take action to reduce the number of heavy goods vehicles going through Kirkcowan.

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*“Reduce speed of traffic especially around the kids play park area.”*

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### *Transport*

Emphasis was also placed on making improvements to transport within Kirkcowan and to surrounding areas. Pavement conditions were raised as an area to be addressed, alongside potholes. In terms of improving the transport links to other surrounding areas, suggestions included improving the bus service alongside providing better bus shelters. Another respondent suggested implementing a taxi service.

### *Environmental initiatives*

Although mentioned infrequently, a couple of responses suggested environmental initiatives that could be undertaken by the Community Council, including introducing measures to protect biodiversity in Kirkcowan and the installation of electric vehicle charging points.

### *Community Council*

This survey question prompted many respondents to suggest changes they would like to see implemented at the Community Council. Feedback mainly consisted of maintaining good communication and transparency with Kirkcowan residents so they can understand decisions being made and be involved in the decision-making process. Some also suggested that it would be good to see new faces on the Council to help bring fresh perspectives and ideas.

## **Long-term changes and improvements**

Respondents were also asked to consider long-term improvements by considering their ‘ideal’ village in the next 10 years and how this would differ from the present.

### *A community hub*

Respondents expressed a strong interest in establishing an active, central community hub in Kirkcowan. This was most often imagined through renovating and modernising the existing village hall to serve as a base for a range of activities and social events that bring the community together. There was a clear emphasis from respondents that activities should be offered to engage with a wide variety of ages. Many respondents recognised that the hall could serve a wider purpose beyond meetings and activities, suggesting it could also accommodate essential services such as physiotherapy or podiatry.

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*“Renewed village hall as the hub of the community, hosting village shop/post office, youth space, modern and visually appealing building, eco-friendly design with lots of light coming into it. Something to be proud of!”*

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### *A vibrant community*

Going hand in hand with creating a strong community hub, respondents placed a strong emphasis on improving community spirit. They envisioned a future Kirkcowan that had a vibrant and resilient community, with a mix of age ranges calling the village home. Inclusion of everyone within the community was also noted, ensuring that those who live outside the village itself are also involved.

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*“An active and friendly village with people coming together more.”*

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### **Improved infrastructure**

There was also a focus on improving infrastructure within Kirkcowan amongst respondents. The creation of more accessible and affordable housing was emphasised and seen by respondents as an essential step in attracting younger families to move and stay in Kirkcowan, which in turn would help ensure the village school stays open.

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*“More affordable housing for young local families, to keep our school open.”*

---

Respondents also hoped for better infrastructure in terms of broadband and phone signal, helping individuals to stay connected.

In addition, respondents envisioned a Kirkcowan with good transport links, whether this be through public transport or other means, to allow residents to easily travel to and from nearby areas. Whilst as discussed above this is a change that could be made in the short-term, it was clear that respondents hoped in the long-term there would be a well-established transport network.

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*“There would be a good public transport provision making public transport, the natural choice for movement.”*

*“Better public transport or different ways of getting into Newton Stewart for appointments and shopping.”*

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One response suggested it would be beneficial to install brighter streetlights in Kirkcowan.

### **Better facilities**

Improved facilities within Kirkcowan were also a core focus for respondents. As mentioned above a major focus was on the renovation of the village hall, creating a focal point for the Kirkcowan community.

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*“A modernised village hall hosting a variety of activities for all ages and abilities.”*

*“A lively and inviting, multi-purpose community centre with a range of facilities for all ages.”*

*“A well attended community facility, offering communal spaces, like a café, which would be open each day, free for entry and use of for activities.”*

*“Café as a meeting place and to attract people to visit.”*

*“Would like to see the pub reopen and place to eat out, it would mean not having to travel far.”*

*“A shop that’s open after I finish my 12 hour shift every day.”*

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Other individual suggestions in terms of facilities included; a 3G pitch and outdoor gym equipment in the park.

## Findings from Community Engagement Event

Following the conclusion of the community engagement survey, a feedback event was held in the village hall to share the findings with residents and reflect the key themes that emerged. The event had several aims:

- 
- To close the loop on the new survey process by showing how contributions had been heard, understood and taken seriously.
- 
- To confirm these findings and themes resonated with residents.
- 
- To understand support for proposed interventions and how they should be prioritised.
- 

Around 25 people attended the event, representing a cross-section of the village. In addition to discussing the survey findings, attendees raised strong feelings over several broader issues, including concerns about housing and its connection to the possible closure of the local school. Whilst such issues extend beyond the direct scope of the survey and KCDT's immediate remit, they were acknowledged as significant factors in shaping how people experience life in the village and their sense of its future. As such several members of the community have been put in contact with an organisation that specialises in housing support in the Region.

At the event, Researchers presented an overview of the survey responses, including participation levels and the main issues raised by the community. These findings were grouped into a small number of clear themes, helping to illustrate the shared priorities, concerns, and aspirations expressed by residents. Attendees were invited to discuss and reflect on these themes, confirming where they felt the summary accurately reflected their views and adding further context where needed.

A key focus was to identify practical actions that could be taken forward. A list of interventions suggested through the survey and subsequent analysis, highlighting those that fall within the Trust's remit and capacity to deliver. It was also emphasised that, as part of the wider consultation, the long-term resilience of the village will depend on it becoming more active either through the Community Council, informal groups, or individual residents coming forward with ideas and initiatives that the Development Trust can financially support.

Of the interventions suggested the most popular were the:

- 
- Broadband and Phone signal improvements
- 
- Bike "pump" track
- 
- Temporary toilets in the park (with outlook for more permanent solution)
- 

It was highlighted that the role of the Development Trust is not as the sole deliverer of services or projects, but as a facilitator and enabler of such projects. Such facilitation support includes:

- 
- Financially supporting community-led ideas

- Helping groups develop proposals
  - Providing or helping secure additional financial support where appropriate
- 

Residents were encouraged to bring forward projects that matter to them, with the Trust offering to work alongside the community to help turn these ideas into viable initiatives.

Overall, the event highlighted both the value of community input and the challenges that remain. While the discussion helped create greater clarity around shared priorities, it also became clear that several major issues raised fall outside the Development Trust's remit. Attendance was limited, with only around 25 people taking part from a community of approximately 500, which restricts how representative the outcomes can be. If the community wishes to have a stronger collective voice and a greater influence over how funds are spent, broader involvement will be essential. The feedback gathered will nonetheless be used to refine priorities and inform future planning and delivery within the Trust's scope.

## 5. Proposed Actions and Ideas

The following section outlines key themes, actions developed as a result of researchers engagement with Kirkcowan residents. Actions have been grouped into those that can be delivered directly by the Trust over the five-year Action Plan period, and those that would require either community groups or individuals to come forward to take the lead, or involvement from regional bodies such as Dumfries & Galloway Council or NHS Dumfries & Galloway.

All suggested actions have been organised into the following four themes:

### **Transport and Road Safety**

This theme emerged from a high volume of comments expressing concern about speeding, heavy goods vehicles, poor road conditions, unreliable transport options. Residents repeatedly raised issues such as potholes, unsafe pavements, HGV diversions, and the need for better bus services & shelters, and ways of getting to appointments and shopping outside the village. These types of comments appeared frequently and consistently throughout the responses, therefore they formed a clear and distinct theme.

### **Community Facilities**

The theme of Community Facilities was chosen because of the strong and repeated focus on the village hall, the park, local amenities, and general physical infrastructure. Many respondents mentioned the need to refurbish or modernise the hall, create better recreational spaces, add toilets and seating in the park, enhance planting, and improve or replace planters and bus shelters. These comments were grouped together because they relate to the physical assets and spaces that support community life and daily living.

### **Social Connection & Community Spirit**

This theme was identified from comments that emphasised the need for more events, clubs, social spaces, and inclusive activities for all ages. Residents expressed a desire for a greater sense of togetherness, more regular gatherings, youth activities, outreach to elderly residents, and support during emergencies. These statements pointed clearly toward community cohesion, wellbeing, and opportunities for people to interact and form stronger community bonds.

### **Governance & Transparency**

Governance & Transparency emerged as a dedicated theme because a large number of comments related directly to how the Community Council and Development Trust operate. Many respondents called for clearer communication, more transparency in decision-making, better cooperation between organisations, and improved trust between leadership and residents. Because these responses focused on behaviour, processes, and communication rather than physical improvements, they naturally formed an independent governance-focused theme.

## Timeline

The four themes naturally align with a phased approach across short, medium, and long-term timelines.

<b>Short-term actions (3-12 months)</b>	Typically involve activities that can be implemented quickly, rely on existing resources, and focus on immediate improvements or foundational steps often centred on communication, organisation, and smaller-scale enhancements.
<b>Medium-term actions (1-2 years)</b>	Allow time for planning, coordination, and modest investment, supporting developments that require consultation, detailed preparation, or staged implementation.
<b>Long-term actions (3-5 years)</b>	Encompass more ambitious, strategic, or structural changes that depend on substantial planning, funding, partnership working, or physical development.

Taken together, these time frames provide a practical structure for progressing from swift, achievable changes to larger, transformative developments across all four themes.

## Actions to be taken forward by the Trust

Following community consultation, the following interventions were presented to the community at the Community Engagement Event:

### Transport and Road Safety

#### *Short-term (3-12 months)*

- Path booklet for Kirkcowan and improved waymarking, organise village group walking afternoons

### Community Facilities

#### *Short-term (3-12 months)*

- Temporary toilets in the park with the outlook to get more permanent toilets sited and built

#### *Medium-term (1-2 years)*

- Work to support village hall committee with next steps for the hall renovation
- Add more seating, at the park area

#### *Long-term (3-5 years)*

- Broadband and phone signal improvements

- Landscaping in the park with consideration to encourage biodiversity
  - Bike “pump” track at the bottom of the play park or at old football pitch
- 

## **Governance & Transparency**

### *Short-term (3-12 months)*

- Improve transparency
  - Establish more regular and open engagement with the community e.g. organise drop-in sessions at regular intervals e.g. quarterly/2 monthly
  - Better use of the notice boards
  - Better signposting of the website
  - Have a youth representative (16-25) on the board
- 

### *Medium-term (1-2 years)*

- Explore a part-time/full-time development worker which could be a job share between the hall committee and KCDD
  - Establish a better way of communicating successes and projects to the community, highlighting what has already been achieved as well as what is in the pipeline
- 

## **Outside the Trust’s Role**

A number of ideas and actions were suggested but were considered beyond what the Trust can realistically deliver itself. In most cases, these sit more naturally with regional or national organisations, or would require a level of ongoing work that is not practical for a volunteer run group. Some will be passed on to the Community Council and local Councillors such as issues with the HGV vehicle traffic that have already been raised at Council meetings.

There were also several actions that the Trust could help to support or coordinate, if other local groups or individuals were willing to take the lead. This aligns with the Trust’s wider role as a facilitator and enabler, helping others to take ideas forward rather than delivering services directly, as bodies such as the council or larger charities do.

## **Transport and Road Safety**

### *Medium-term (1-2 years)*

- Promote/encourage some kind of car sharing scheme
-

- Have clearer measures in place to avoid HGV vehicles using village as a diversion, document complaints from residents
  - Establish relationship with bus providers to open discussions about the demand for services and explore route and timetable adjustments to better serve the community
  - Establish better ties with the Council to highlight issues such as potholes, pavement conditions of bus shelters
- 

*Long-term (3-5 years)*

- Additional parking opposite the Bowling Club
  - Install an EV charger
- 

**Community Facilities**

*Short-term (3-12 months)*

- Creation of a volunteer group to help maintain the village appearance (e.g. existing planters, installation of new planters, general upkeep)
  - Christmas lights and decorations upgraded or expanded
- 

*Medium-term (1-2 years)*

- Village library/book exchange
  - Explore and rent/purchase building for a pop-up shop. This could be used by local businesses to rent space for a week/month. This would not compete with the village shop, different products
  - Repainting buildings (hall, church, houses especially on the High Street)
- 

*Long-term (3-5 years)*

- Affordable, accessible housing provision for families – establish what the need is for housing in Kirkcowan, identify any appropriate buildings and assess what financing model to adopt
  - Resilience review for homes outside village. Explore subsidising battery storage for homes instead of Diesel generators – search for match funding from resilience budgets or other funding sources. KCDTs role could be more facilitation than direct funding
-

## **Social Connection & Community Spirit**

### *Short-term (3-12 months)*

- 
- Bring together and collate all activities running in Kirkcowan, published in a community calendar, to inform residents what is running and highlight where there are gaps in provision (i.e. a youth group)
- 

### *Medium-term (1-2 years)*

- 
- Establish a pop-up café/pub, somewhere else to socialise that isn't a 'group', people can just come and go 2/3 days a week
-

## 6. Actions and Strategy

The interventions outlined in the previous section were presented to the KCDT Board to confirm which actions fall within the Trust's remit. The interventions set out below reflect the needs and priorities identified through engagement and consultation with residents of Kirkcowan and are considered reasonable for KCDT to take forward.

### Transport and Road Safety

Action	Path booklet for Kirkcowan and improved waymarking
Lead	KCDT
Potential Partners	Landowners, Kirkcowan Community Council
Timescale	Medium Term (1 – 2 years)
Comments/Challenges	<p>Many residents referred positively to the natural surroundings of the village. Capitalising on this and the recently improved paths a booklet that can be printed or shared digitally will let residents know about what routes are available and foster more ownership of these.</p> <p>There are still some sections of the path that suffered delay of completion due to weather. Final wording and consultation with Landowners is taking place.</p>

### Community Facilities

Action	Temporary toilets in the park
Lead	KCDT
Potential Partners	Kirkcowan Community Council, D&G Council
Timescale	Short-term (3-12 months)
Comments/Challenges	<p>Following requests from residents that both residents that use the park themselves and from those that live on the park's periphery. This was one of the most popular suggestions at the community hall event.</p> <p>These would be to quickly address the need for toilet facilities in the park. This will be with the long-term outlook of siting and constructing a more permanent solution.</p>

Action	Support for the Village Hall in its renovation journey
Lead	KCDT
Potential Partners	Village Hall committee
Timescale	Medium-term (1-2 years) & Long term (3-5 years)
Comments/Challenges	As the renovation of Kirkcowan Village Hall progresses, the Trust will be available to provide support in response to requests from the Village Hall Committee.

Action	Additional seating and landscaping in the play park
Lead	KCDT
Potential Partners	Kirkcowan Community Council, D&G Council
Timescale	Medium-term (1-2 years) / Long-term (3-5 years)
Comments/Challenges	Multiple requests were made for additional seating in and around the park. Combined with improved landscaping and greater biodiversity, these changes are intended to create a more inclusive, welcoming space for all ages, shifting the focus from primarily serving young people to benefiting the wider community.

Action	Broadband and phone signal improvements
Lead	KCDT
Potential Partners	Kirkcowan Community Council, D&G Council
Timescale	Long-term (3-5 years)
Comments/Challenges	<p>Phone signal and poor broadband were highlighted by many residents in the survey and at the community event in the village hall.</p> <p>This affects all ages but will have an impact on families the most. Improving these facilities will also make the community more appealing to younger families.</p>

Action	Bike “pump” track in the playpark
Lead	KCDT
Potential Partners	Kirccowan Community Council, D&G Council
Timescale	Long-term (3-5 years)
Comments/Challenges	<p>This was one of the most popular suggestions at the Village Hall meeting.</p> <p>As there are many children with bikes in the village this allows them a specific site to use them.</p>

### Governance & Transparency

Action	Improved communication by KCDT
Lead	KCDT
Potential Partners	Website developer, What's on Kirkcowan, Community Council, Kirkcowan Community Council
Timescale	Short-term (3-12 months)
Comments/Challenges	<p>This will start with improvements to and better signposting of the KCDT website.</p> <p>Additionally communication will be coordinated with other websites serving the village. The village noticeboards run by the community council and school will contain more regular updates and communication.</p> <p>As always newsletters and communication will also be made available in the village shop.</p>

Action	Recruiting a youth representative
Lead	KCDT
Potential Partners	
Timescale	Short-term (3-12 months)

Comments/Challenges	Although the trust is open for anyone to come forward to join, additional effort will be made to recruit a member of the village's youth. This will ensure that the perspectives being brought to meetings and decisions will have a broader outlook.
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Action	Hiring a project officer
Lead	KCDT
Potential Partners	
Timescale	Medium Term (1-2 years)
Comments/Challenges	As the workload of the trust increases the need for an employed member of staff has been highlighted. This member of staff will be able to act as a first point of contact for the trust. As additional projects progress an interview process will take place.

## Keeping the Community informed

Kirkcowan, like many small rural communities, faces structural challenges that are largely outside the direct control of local organisations. Many of these issues such as housing supply, school sustainability, ageing population, transport and employment were identified by residents in the engagement but are shaped by regional and national decisions rather than community effort alone. These pressures have a real impact on daily life and long-term confidence in the village. Whilst the Development Trust plays an important role locally, addressing these issues requires a broader set of actors; expecting the Trust to resolve them alone places unnecessary strain on a small group of volunteers.

### KCDT facilitates community action

The Trust's role should be grounded in a clear strategic distinction: while it cannot control many of the structural forces affecting the village, it *can help* influence how well the community is connected, informed, organised and able to act collectively. Communication is central to that influence.

The Development Trust should be positioned primarily as an **enable and facilitator of community action**, rather than a deliverer of services or the default organiser of all activity. This distinction matters.

When a small group of volunteers is seen as responsible for "making things happen", energy and ideas tend to flow *towards* that group rather than emerging across the wider community. Over time, this leads to over-reliance on a few people, reduced confidence among others to step forward, and a narrowing of participation.

By contrast, an enabling role focuses on:

- creating the conditions for others to get involved;
  - helping ideas move from informal conversations into collective action;
  - connecting people, groups and resources;
  - supporting coordination rather than ownership of projects.
- 

## **Communication**

Clear, consistent communication is the mechanism through which the role of the Trust becomes visible and understood. The purpose of the Trust's communication is not primarily to advertise activities, but to build shared understanding, confidence and momentum across the village.

It should be acknowledged that this programme will evolve over time. As such, patience and understanding from the community will be essential, particularly in the initial phases, while the Trust develops its approach.

Effective communication should:

- clarify what the Trust *is* and *is not* responsible for;
  - make decision-making more transparent;
  - highlight community-led action, not just Trust-led work;
  - recognise, highlight and celebrate contributions by others;
  - repeatedly signal that ideas, leadership and effort are welcome from across the community.
- 

Over time, this helps shift the narrative from “the Trust does things for the village” to “the village does things, with the Trust helping to enable them.”

## **Communication Strategy**

The communication plan and calendar are deliberately modest and offline-first, reflecting the village's size, demographics and volunteer capacity. Their strength lies in consistency rather than scale. Several of these interventions build on existing or earlier activity; however, they are now being implemented as part of a coordinated strategy that supports greater alignment and shared understanding between local groups. Key features include:

- A quarterly printed newsletter delivered to every household.
- A regularly updated village noticeboard as a shared point of reference.
- A light-touch Facebook presence to reinforce offline messages.
- Face-to-face presence and informal listening.

This approach recognises that trust and awareness are built through repetition, familiarity and human connection, not through volume or technical expertise, that effective communication in a small, diverse rural community cannot be achieved through a single fixed approach. Instead, the communication strategy is intentionally designed to be iterative and responsive, allowing the Trust to test what works in practice and adapt over time.

Small signals matter: seeing neighbours named in newsletters, photos of ordinary activity, or clear invitations to contribute ideas can gradually build confidence that involvement is possible and valued.

Simple mechanisms for rapid feedback such as informal conversations, response rates to newsletters, comments at events, and paper, digital or verbal feedback will be used to understand which messages and channels are reaching different parts of the community best, and where gaps remain.

This ongoing learning process enables the Trust to adjust the strategy gradually refining its approach to ensure communication is accessible, inclusive and meaningful to as wide a range of residents as possible. By embedding experimentation and reflection into routine practice, the Trust strengthens its ability to respond to changing needs while avoiding unnecessary complexity or volunteer burden. By focusing communication on what has happened, what is coming up, how people can get involved and how ideas can be taken forward the Trust helps to lower the perceived barrier to participation.

As energy and momentum grow, the Trust's role increasingly becomes one of enabling and supporting, rather than leading every initiative. This is essential for sustainability and for reducing pressure on a small pool of volunteers.

As activity increases, clearer operational boundaries between the Development Trust, the Community Council, and other committees (e.g. the Village Hall Committee) become increasingly important. Communication should reinforce that:

- 
- The Community Council focuses on representation, consultation and statutory matters.
- 
- The Development Trust focuses on enabling projects, securing resources and building capacity.
- 
- Project-specific committees (e.g. the hall committee) lead on day-to-day management of individual assets or activities.
-

Making these distinctions visible through newsletters, noticeboards and public messaging reduces confusion, avoids duplication, and helps residents understand where to take ideas or concerns. This approach accepts that progress may be incremental and that success will not always be measured in projects delivered or facilities built. Instead, success is seen in:

- Broader participation.
- Stronger relationships between groups.
- Reduced reliance on a small number of individuals.
- Improved confidence in collective action.
- Greater ability to engage external partners from a position of clarity and unity.

In this sense, communication is not an add-on to delivery, but a core piece of community infrastructure that strengthens the village's ability to respond to challenges it cannot fully control, while making the most of those it can.

## Monitoring and Evaluation

To ensure that this Community Action Plan remains relevant and useful over time, the Development Trust will be able to adopt a simple, proportionate approach to monitoring and evaluation. Given the Trust's volunteer-led structure and limited capacity, this approach will focus on **learning and accountability**, rather than complex data collection or reporting. The aim is not to measure everything, but to regularly check whether actions are making a positive difference and see if community priorities are changing.

### *Annual Community Survey Delivery*

A key element of this approach would be a **short (single page) community check-in survey**, repeated annually, using largely the same questions. Maintaining consistent survey questions, allows the Trust to track change over time without requiring specialist skills. The survey will be designed to take no more than 10 minutes to complete. It will focus on a small number of core themes aligned with this Action Plan, such as:

- 
- Feelings of connection to the community
- 
- Awareness of the Trust's role
- 
- Satisfaction with local facilities and transport
- 
- Perceptions of whether things in Kirkcowan are improving or staying the same
- 

The survey will be distributed using the same trusted, low-tech methods that proved effective during this engagement process. Paper copies and QR code leaflets will be delivered door-to-door

and made available for collection and drop off at the village shop/Post Office. Simultaneously, a digital version link will be shared by email using the contact list held for winter fuel payments, ensuring that residents who prefer online completion can take part. Adopting a mixed-method approach helps maximise participation across different age groups and levels of digital access.

The emphasis will be on identifying broad trends rather than precise statistics for example, whether more people feel informed, whether fewer people report feeling isolated, or whether awareness of the Trust has increased.

### **Reviewing and Sharing What Is Learned**

The Trust will review the survey findings and other observations, annually. A short summary highlighting what appears to be working well, what remains challenging and what may need to change will be produced. This concise summary will be shared with the community through the newsletter and noticeboards.

Over time, this light-touch approach will help the Trust demonstrate progress, identify emerging issues early, and adapt its priorities. It also highlights the continued shared ownership of Kirkcowan's future.

## 7. Conclusion

This Community Action Plan demonstrates that Kirkcowan remains a place that people value highly. Residents consistently describe the village as safe, friendly, and set within an attractive natural environment. A strong sense of belonging persists, particularly among long-standing residents, and recent investments such as the play park, woodland improvements, and walking routes show that community-led action can deliver tangible benefits.

At the same time, the engagement highlights a set of interconnected challenges that shape how people experience daily life and how confident they feel about the village's future. These include limited transport options, access to healthcare, ageing infrastructure, declining facilities, and concerns about population change. While many of these pressures are structural and extend beyond the direct control of local organisations, they nonetheless affect wellbeing, independence, and community resilience. This document provides a clear evidence base that can be used to raise these issues more effectively with regional and national organisations.

### Participation, Connection and Voice

This process has highlighted not just areas for improvement, but also the ways in which positive change is most likely to be achieved. The evidence shows that Kirkcowan does not lack ideas or care for the place; rather, participation, communication, and coordination are uneven. Some residents feel well connected and informed, while others feel excluded, unsure how decisions are made, or uncertain about how to get involved.

### Enabling Community-Led Change

In this context, the most important role for the Kirkcowan Community Development Trust is not to act as the sole deliverer of projects, but as an **enabler of community action**. For this more people in the community have to come forward with not just an idea but willingness to take on the project with support from KCDT and the Community Council. Through improving transparency, strengthening communication, and creating clearer routes for residents to bring forward ideas, the Trust can help unlock wider participation and reduce reliance on a small group of volunteers. Over time, this approach will better support sustainability, shared ownership, and resilience.

The recommendations given in the previous chapter were designed to be realistic, phased, and proportionate to local capacity. They prioritise actions that build confidence and momentum in the short term, while laying the groundwork for more ambitious change over the medium and long term.

### Looking Ahead

This Community Action Plan is not an endpoint, but a foundation. Its value lies not only in the projects it has identified, but in the shared understanding it creates about Kirkcowan's strengths, challenges, and potential. By focusing on communication, inclusion, and enabling others to act, the Trust can help ensure that progress is sustained, participation is widened, and the village remains a good place to live for people of all ages in the years ahead.

**Find out more**

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