

Community Action Plan
2015 - 2020

SANQUHAR
& DISTRICT

Foreword

The Royal Burgh of Sanquhar is situated amidst spectacular upland scenery on the banks of the River Nith some twenty six miles from the county town of Dumfries. It is also approximately thirty miles from the population centres of Ayr and Kilmarnock. The Town can boast a remarkable history, and with Sanquhar Castle dating from the 14th C, the Town has enjoyed a unique place in the history of Scotland. The Town was elevated to the status of a Royal Burgh in 1598, by King James VI, and this sense of history remains within the town and surrounding area, and even today, the residents still exhibit a remarkable sense of civic pride.

Coal has been mined in the area since the earliest times, and traces of coal can be found in the mortar of Sanquhar Castle where it was burned with lime to produce cement. Large quantities of coal were also exported around the south of Scotland in the 16th and 17th Centuries, before the Burgh opened its own mines on the Burgh Muir in the 18th Century. Deep mining moved to nearby Kirkconnel in the 19th Century, though many Sanquhar inhabitants were among the thousand plus men employed in the coal mines there. This coal industry in turn supported smaller local industries and there were three forges operating in the Sanquhar area, but they too suffered when the mines closed in the 1960s, and, in common with other small businesses, simply could not be maintained profitably when the coal mines closed.

Following closure of the coal mines, great efforts were made to attract other light industries, and the

old Town Council was fairly successful in bringing in industries with good jobs. Sadly, many of these new factories were unable to trade independently and some of them have moved elsewhere. However, several of the original factories are still located within the Town, and offer good jobs without the need to travel. Local employment opportunities, are, however, limited in choice and number, and many find a need to travel either to Dumfries or north to Ayrshire for work. Of particular concern is the lack of job opportunities for our younger people who have to leave the Town to find work, and these youngsters either have to add hours to their working day, through essential travel, or leave the Town and live and work elsewhere. They seldom return to their home town. In recent years, public transport has been greatly reduced making it ever more difficult to travel to work.



Sanquhar is a great place to live and work. The Town has many leisure organisations and almost every sport or hobby can be enjoyed within our scenic and peaceful area. The people are friendly, caring, and cooperative, and it is anticipated that this survey will properly reflect their aspirations and wishes, as we all seek to take Sanquhar forward in prosperity and full employment.

We are extremely grateful to the Coalfields Regeneration Trust for their assistance in producing this Action Plan.

Duncan Close. Provost.

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Introduction

In January 2015 Sanquhar Community Council recognised the need to develop a 5 year Community Action Plan for Sanquhar and District which would identify community needs and concerns and set out the way forward for the area.

The process, carried out by Sanquhar and District Community Council and supported by the Coalfields Regeneration Trust, began by bringing together volunteers and representatives from a wide range of local groups,



117 completed Community Views surveys were received

150 people attended a Community open event

Stakeholder interviews were carried out by pupils of Sanquhar Academy

To complete the Plan, a series of consultations were carried out through the community views survey, workshops held with school children in both the Primary and High Schools, interviews with local residents and community groups and a drop in Open Day held on 28th March 2015.

The Community Council are grateful to all the work that has led to such a fantastic response from the community in creating this Community Action Plan for Sanquhar.

The Sanquhar and District Open Day event was held in the Sanquhar Town Hall where 100 people took part in the voting on the day.

Members of Sanquhar Primary School Choir as well as the Upper Nithsdale Youth Pipe Band entertained the participants as well as the groups and organisations that put on displays in the hall.

These included; Sanquhar and District Horticultural Society, A' the Airts, Mennock Women's Institute, Sanquhar Boys Brigade, Royal Burgh of Sanquhar and District Community Council, Royal Burgh of Sanquhar Heritage Society, Upper Nithsdale Youth Pipe Band, Riding of the Marches Association, St Brides Church, Brighten up Sanquhar and Dumfries and Galloway Community Learning and Development Team.

Our Community Now

We have summarised below the main facts and figures drawn from the full community profile of the area report produced with the assistance of Sanquhar Community Council.

Population

The population of Sanquhar is 2741 based on 3 SIMD Datazones covering the Sanquhar area. This population has increased at a slower rate than the national and local rate and while the overall number of children as a percentage of the total population of Sanquhar is falling the number of persons of pensionable age is increasing.

Housing

There is a high percentage of social housing rental properties in Sanquhar and less house ownership than locally and nationally and a much higher percentage of social rented housing (37%) than the local and national average of 11%. A lower percentage of housing in Sanquhar is detached (at 13.4%) compared to Dumfries and Galloway as a whole at 35.6%. This is also reflected in the fact that the number of semi-detached houses is double the Scottish average

Education

Sanquhar Primary School is a modern semi-open plan building situated in the middle of the town just behind the High Street, with current school roll is 213. The school roll at Sanquhar Academy is 309. There is also a volunteer parent run playgroup in Sanquhar There is one registered child-minder in the area. Sanquhar is equidistant (around 30 miles) from Ayr College and Dumfries and Galloway College.

Healthcare

In terms of health services, the Upper Nithsdale Group Practice is in



Sanquhar Health Centre with a Health Centre also in neighbouring Kelloholm (5.5km). Midwifery and Health Visitor services operate from the Health Centre There is a Dental Practice in Sanquhar Health Centre and a part-time Optician service in Sanquhar bookable via the chemist shop. The local convalescent hospital is Thornhill Hospital. Minor Injuries Clinic and Accident and Emergency is available at Dumfries Royal Infirmary. The nearest Day Care Centre is the Nith Valley Day Care Centre in Kirkconnel There is an Elderly Persons Care Home in Sanquhar.

Environment

Sanquhar is situated within a designated natural heritage site and a scenic environment with Lowther Hills, the Nith River and access to Walking on the Southern Uplands. There are a number of parks and open spaces.

Transport

Sanquhar is on the main train line between Carlisle and Kilmarnock.

The 2 main bus services through Sanquhar are the 221 between Wanlockhead and Kirkconnel and the 236 Dumfries-Kirkton-Auldgirth and Thornhill. Coalfield Community Transport based in Cumnock also covers the area

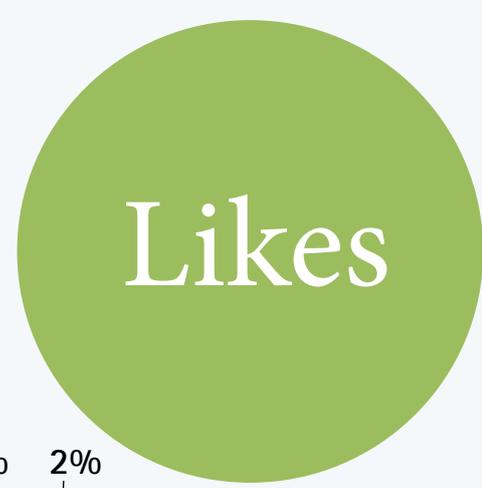


Putting Sanquhar on the map

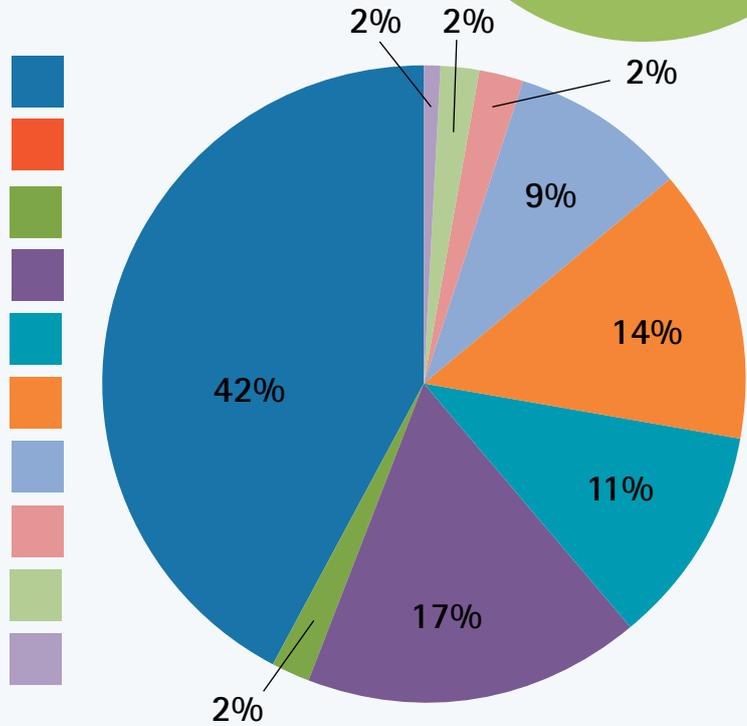


Our Community Now

"It is a great town to live in, very friendly people"



- Community
- Economy
- Education
- Environment
- Heritage
- Leisure
- Services
- Tourism
- Young People
- Uncategorised



"Our history, strong community spirit, oldest working post office in the world, Riding of the Marches, lovely looking during summer due to brighten up Sanquhar group, Annual flower show and vintage car rally."

"Community spirit. Friendliness. Scenery. Traditions and history."

"Beautiful location small town where people mostly know each other low crime incidence good schools, swimming pool and services (health centre, nursing home etc) golf course"

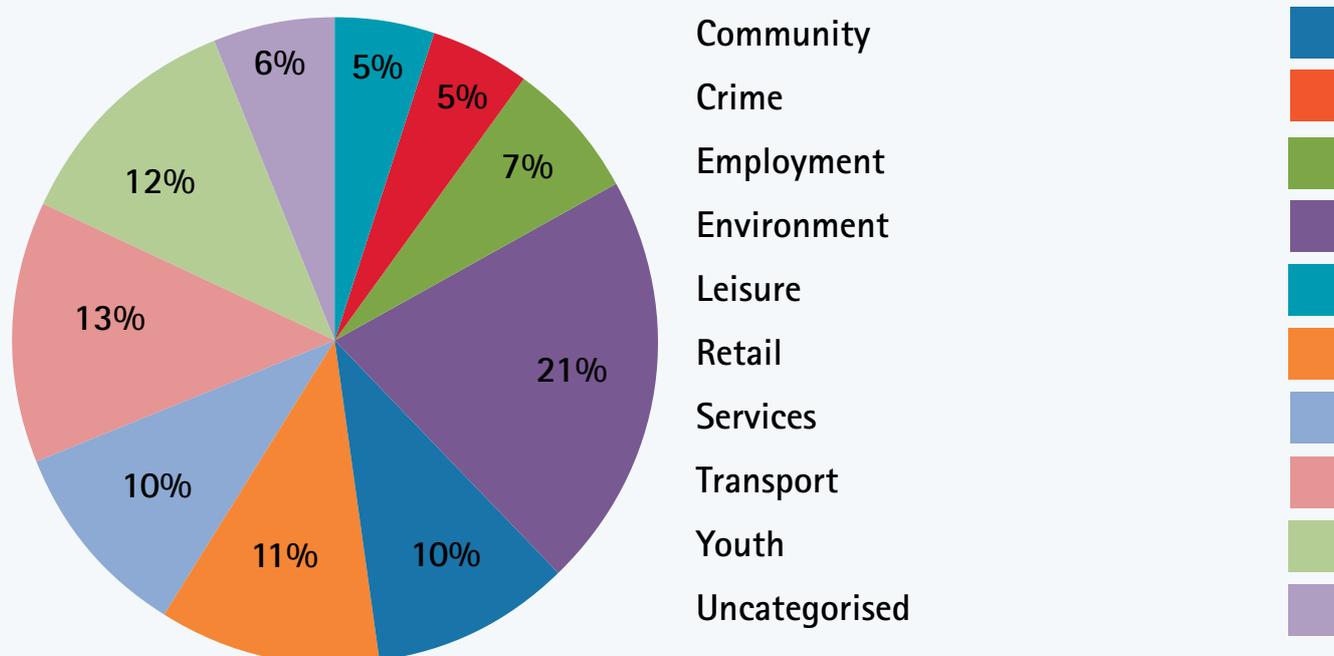
"Friendly, good rail connections, good location for Glasgow/Edinburgh, good health care, relatively cheap housing, scenery"

"Bowling Green, Golf Course, good walking routes, Southern Upland Way. It's quiet not much crime"

Our Community Now

Dislikes

"Lack of opportunities for the school leavers, many have to travel for further education and work"



"Lorries thundering through Main Street. Rabbits in cemetery demolishing flower tributes, tombstones / headstones fallen over and insecure in cemetery. Use of weedkillers around headstones erodes their foundations."

"Lack of public transport."

"Diminishing job prospects for young people Century aluminium factory deteriorating and becoming an eyesore. Who owns it? Old school too, can it be removed as a listed building? Little use made of Lorimer Park - running track and warm up area not much for teenagers to do after school hours"

"Too many closed premises in the High Street, old school premises still not redeveloped, Queensberry Close / High Street Building an eyesore"

"Dog dirt and litter on pavements"



Our Vision for the Future

“We want to see a Sanquhar and District which has good employment opportunities, particularly for young people with a strong local economy based around good facilities, services, retail and tourism opportunities.

Sanquhar thrives on its people and its heritage. It should be a safe place to live with an attractive, pleasant and well-kept environment. It will have good transport links, ICT and a housing base which encourages people to settle here. It will be noted for a strong, flourishing, caring, sustainable community able to withstand the challenges ahead.”



Main Priorities identified by the Community, and a Strategy for Community Action

THEME 1 – Sustainable Sanquhar

Summary: We are working hard to create a sustainable and resilient community. Our plan is to set up a Development Trust that will give us the vehicle we need to take forward social, economic and environmental initiatives.

A more Enterprising Sanquhar and District

- Set up an organisation like a Development Trust to become a vehicle for taking local enterprise initiatives forward.
- Carry out a feasibility study / business plan into creating small business units in the nearby vacant factory as well as the idea of a "pop up" shop for people to try out their ideas and / or share risk
- Work with local retailers to help sustain their business

Improve Employment Opportunities, especially for young people

- Encourage apprenticeship and rural skills.
- Investigate creating a "cottage industry" model to develop job opportunities around Sanquhar Knitting.
- Investigate job opportunities for local people within the new tourist attraction at the newly opened Crawick Multiverse
- Investigate opportunities for green energy turbine repair and maintenance apprenticeships

More social housing for the elderly

- Engage with local house developers / Social Landlords with possible links to the redevelopment of Queensberry Square.

Make Sanquhar an attractive business destination

- Investigate grants for social enterprise start-ups
- Work with Business Gateway to explore opportunities for new business start ups.

Key partners:

Dumfries and Galloway Council
Sanquhar and District Community Council
Business Gateway
Creative Scotland
DTAS
A' the Airts
Sanquhar & District Development Trust
Wind farm developers



Main Priorities identified by the Community, and a Strategy for Community Action

THEME 2 – Cultural Heritage

One of our greatest strengths is our cultural heritage and over the timeframe of this action plan we will be working to improve and promote our built heritage, improve signage and develop annual cultural events so that we can put Sanquhar and District firmly on the map!

Better branding and promotion of local history and cultural heritage

- Link this priority to the development of a tourism strategy in Theme 5.
- Create a local community map promoting walks, historical, cultural and industrial heritage. Could be an Awards for All or similar funded project. Distribute to local people as well as to outlying areas through libraries etc.

Improved Town Signage and Interpretation

- Carry out a mapping exercise to establish what exists and make recommendations to Dumfries and Galloway Council for improvements.
- Large signs (brown tourist type) North and South of town and A76

Improve built Cultural Heritage in Sanquhar and District

- Develop Sanquhar Castle as a tourist attraction
- Proper refurbishment of historic Queensberry Inn (Whigams)
- Support the Post Office
- Commission a new war memorial and improve the environment surrounding it

Celebrate our historical and cultural heritage through annual events

- Continue to support and develop festivals such as The Riding of the Marches
- Ensure continuation of annual vintage car show
- Support annual walking festival
- Continue the tradition of the annual flower show
- Continue to support local bands

Key partners
Dumfries and Galloway Council
Sanquhar and District Community Council
Windfarm developers
Sanquhar & District Development Trust
Marquis of Bute
Solway Heritage
Heritage Lottery Fund
Historic Scotland



Main Priorities identified by the Community, and a Strategy for Community Action

THEME 3 – Local Facilities and Activities

We need to develop activities and events to suit all age groups. Working together with local community groups, organisations and support agencies we will engage local people to identify what activities would meet their need. There will be improved communications including a new local newspaper.

Improve communication between local groups

- Create networking opportunities
- Re-establish a local newspaper. Agree a social media / internet strategy to improve communication.
- Support A' the Airts with its plans for a touch screen information point that could be used by all community groups

Affordable Family Activities

- Work with Dumfries and Galloway CLD services to investigate opportunities for family activities
- Carry out feasibility study for outdoor activities locally such as pony trekking, bike trails for off road cycling
- Work with A' The Airts to create family activities.
- Improve play parks

All weather sports pitch

- Work with Dumfries and Galloway Council and other agencies to establish an all weather sports pitch to allow more access to outside practice areas and playing pitches locally.

Promote Sanquhar as a walking place

- Create a comprehensive walking map identifying local historical and cultural sites. Grading different levels of walks from easy to difficult to encourage people of all abilities to get out and enjoy what their local area has to offer. The map could also include information on local groups, activities and services.

Promote Community Arts and Crafts projects

- Support A' the Airts to continue to deliver arts and craft activities locally.



Key Partners
Dumfries and Galloway Council
Sanquhar and District Community Council
Sanquhar & District Development Trust
A' the Airts

Main priorities identified by the Community, and a Strategy for Community Action

THEME 4 – Town Environment

We are proud of our Royal Burgh status, this document outlines our plans for improving the High Street, supporting enterprise and creating a clean and attractive environment with first class accommodation for visitors to our area.

Development of Queensberry Square

- Work with Dumfries and Galloway Council to create a development plan for making best use of this key area and green space.

Make the most of the High Street

- Work with Dumfries and Galloway Council to create a development strategy for improving the High Street including ideas on what could be done with the derelict buildings.
- Work to secure and develop business / tourist opportunities for the Sanquhar Post Office with its historical recognition as being the oldest working Post Office in the world.

Keep pavements and streets clean of dog fouling and litter

- Work with Dumfries and Galloway Council to make sure there is an effective response time to dealing with the dumping of rubbish and litter
- Identify need for more litter bins and their maintenance and work with Dumfries and Galloway Council to ensure needs are met
- Organise regular litter picks on an area by area basis involving local volunteers including uniformed groups.
- Work with Council to enforce dog fouling fines. Encourage regular visits from Community Wardens

Gain recognition for good quality local hotels and B&B's

- Encourage local hotels and B&B's to attain quality standard and include this in the Tourism Strategy



Key Partners
Dumfries and Galloway Council
Sanquhar and District Community Council
Sanquhar & District Development Trust

Main Priorities identified by the Community, and a Strategy for Community Action

THEME 5 – Natural Environment

Sanquhar and District is set in a beautiful natural environment, we plan to improve access for locals and visitors alike through the development of a quality path network, and by taking remedial action on sites such as the abandoned quarry.

Improve outdoor spaces

- Continue to support Brighten Up Sanquhar
- Work with Greenspace Scotland to carry out a greenspace strategy and design for improved links for people to local greenspace.
- Redevelopment of abandoned quarry

Form new Core paths to encourage walking

- Work with Dumfries and Galloway Council Access Officer to identify the need for additional core paths to be added to the existing core path plan.

Focus on tourism

- Develop a tourism strategy that focuses on Sanquhar and District.
- Promote connection to Southern Upland Way
- Dedicated worker for Development Trust to help take this and other priorities forward



Key Partners

Dumfries and Galloway Council
Sanquhar and District Community Council
Sanquhar & District Development Trust
Brighten Up Sanquhar



Main Priorities identified by the Community, and a Strategy for Community Action

THEME 6 – Roads & Transport

Access to and from the area whether by road or rail requires good infrastructure and reliable public transport services. Over the next five years we will work with the appropriate agencies to take action to achieve that goal.

Better Bus services

- Improve public transport specifically between Kirkconnel and Kelloholm, plus Sanquhar and Dumfries

Improve roads and pavements

- Carry out a mapping exercise to identify pot holes and road repair sites. Liaise with Dumfries and Galloway Council to have priority repairs made

Reduce Car parking on High Street

- Carry out a mapping exercise to identify additional parking areas
- Improve signage to existing car parks

Improve Rail service

- Encourage new rail company (Abellio) for improved and extended services to other areas for work, shopping and leisure.

Safer Driving

- Promote a young drivers initiative



Key Partners

Dumfries and Galloway Council
Sanquhar and District Community Council
Sanquhar & District Development Trust
Abellio (Scotrail)
Bus companies

Your Community

Some people may not be aware of what groups there are locally so here are a list of some of those we know of:

Royal Burgh of Sanquhar Community Council
Tel: 07725065502
Email: sanquhar.cc@btinternet.com

Royal Burgh of Sanquhar Heritage Society
Tel: 01659 50596

Sanquhar Community Centre
Tel: 01659 50426

Sanquhar Fun Pool
Tel: 01659 58018

Sanquhar Library
Tel: 01659 50626

A' the Airts Project
Tel: 01659 50514

Sanquhar Golf Club
Tel: 01659 58167

Sanquhar Bowling Club
Tel: 01659 50708

Royal Caledonian Curling Club
Tel: 01659 50241

Riding of the Marches
www.sanquharridingofthemarches.com

Regular Community Activities include:

Friends and Neighbours Club (50 plus)

Art and Craft Classes

Community Cinema

Mother & Toddlers Group

Dancing

Boy's Brigade

Girl Guides

Karate Club

Football & Youth
Football

Executive summary

This Community Action Plan sets out the priorities for the development of Sanquhar and District over the next 5 years as identified by the community through an extensive process of community engagement carried out over a period of 7 months from November 2014 to May 2015

The Plan contains:

A summary of the Sanquhar and District Community Profile. The main Likes and Dislikes expressed in the community survey. Our Vision Statement for Sanquhar and District. The main themes and priorities for taking action. Information on how to get involved or just be kept informed!

The Community Action Plan is not just for the few but for everyone, we hope you will read it, consider its content and help toward making it work by taking action where you are, in whatever way you can. If everyone did something positive for their community every day, then what a difference that would make!

Many thanks go to all those who took their time to share their views, to the volunteers and participants who made the Open Day a great success and to the local schools that enabled our young people to have their say.

Thanks go to the photographers who contributed the images for this Action Plan.

Special thanks go to Dumfries and Galloway Council for funding the creation of the Action Plan and to Coalfields Regeneration Trust for their support, advice and facilitation services.



the coalfields
regeneration trust



Dumfries
& Galloway
COUNCIL



“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.”

Margaret Mead

