

# **Lesmahagow, Brocketsbrae and Hawksland A Community Led Action Plan 2019-2024**





# LESMAHAGOW BROCKETSBRAE AND HAWKSLAND A COMMUNITY LED ACTION PLAN

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# LESMAHAGOW BROCKETSBRAE AND HAWKSLAND A COMMUNITY LED ACTION PLAN

## FOREWORD

Lesmahagow, Brocketsbrae and Hawksland are great places to live. All the comments and feedback we've had while we produced this plan have shown that people like where they live, and they like the people that live in their communities.

It's been heartening to learn just how positive everyone feels about their communities. It means that we all have a common starting point for working together to keep the things that we like, and to do something about the things that can be improved.

This plan is about the things we can achieve by working together. First and foremost, it's about the things that we can do for ourselves as active communities. If the last few years have taught us anything, it's that we can't rely on the old institutions to do things for us. If we want our community to be the best it can be, we have to take responsibility for that.

There are things that are not in our power however, and we need to make sure that we work with those organisations that have the power, and the responsibility, to do things we can't. We need to make sure that they know our views and that we can influence them and can hold them to account when we need to.

Doing that well requires us to speak with clarity, with consensus and with confidence. That's what this plan is about. It's about setting out what we, as a community, think is important. It's only a plan though. The proof of our strength as a community is in what we do together.

We recommend this plan to you, and we look forward to all that we achieve together.

**Lesmahagow, Brocketsbrae and  
Hawksland Community Led Action Plan  
Steering Group**

# INTRODUCTION

This plan has been produced by a steering group drawn from members of the Lesmahagow, Brocketsbrae and Hawksland communities. The group included representatives from local community groups, businesses and schools. The process was supported by Community Action Lanarkshire, a project of the Rural Community Development Trust, and much of the work was undertaken by Community Links (South Lanarkshire).

It's intended as a starting point, a means of enabling more local people to get more involved in making things happen to improve life in our communities. All of the ideas in here were produced through dialogue with local people. All of the ideas in here have the potential to make things better. All of the ideas in here are achievable.

That doesn't mean there's no room or no scope for new ideas, or for these ideas to be developed and for detail to be added that makes sure they as right as they can be. In fact, that's what they all need. Inevitably, any plan like this will deal with the big themes and with broad brush outlines of ideas for action. For example, there were lots and lots of thoughts and ideas raised about the presentation of Lesmahagow town centre and about paths in and around our villages. It's only if we get into the nitty gritty of taking action on these ideas that we can start to make good, evidence based decisions on what needs to be done, and what needs to be done first.

That means that for this plan to be successful, for it to have a real impact on you and on others in our communities, you and others in your community need to step forward and help make the things that you feel are important actually happen. As one comment put it...

***"This is a good start, but we don't need too much talking, we need action!"***

We can wait around on someone else taking action. We can complain if they don't. We can complain if they do something we don't agree with. Or we can play our part in taking action.

Let's do it for Lesmahagow.

## HOW THIS PLAN WAS PRODUCED

This plan was produced as part of a programme of support to Lanarkshire communities delivered by Community Action Lanarkshire, a project of the Rural Development Trust. It was funded through a grant from Kype Muir Community Fund which was held by Lesmahagow Community Council. The process of developing the plan was managed by a steering group drawn from local community organisations, businesses and individuals. Following a competitive tendering process, the steering group commissioned Community Links (South Lanarkshire) to undertake the work of producing the plan.

Thoughts about the things that are good and bad about Lesmahagow, Brocketsbrae and Hawkshill and ideas about how to make things better were gathered from the steering group and from local people and community groups.

Local people were consulted using a range of methods. A key method was a survey using the Place Standard, a tool produced by Architecture and Design Scotland to structure conversations and consultations with communities about the places they live. This was published online and promoted through social media, communications with community groups and local schools and featured in the Carlisle Gazette. In addition, 200 hard copies of the survey were distributed in public places. This produced more than 350 individual responses and more than 1200 comments.

An open day in The Fountain on a Saturday at the mid-point of the process attracted visits from around 30 people and presented the interim findings and invited further comment. Community Links (South Lanarkshire) staff attended Lesmahagow Highland Games and spoke with around 100 people at bus stops, The Fountain Café and around the event.

Children's views were gathered through fun sessions with Woodpark and Milton Primary Schools which were facilitated by schools' staff along with staff from Community Action Lanarkshire and Community Links (South Lanarkshire). In addition, Community Action Lanarkshire and Community Links (South Lanarkshire) staff held conversations with a variety of local organisations and local people throughout the process.

## ABOUT LESMAHAGOW, BROCKETSBRAE AND HAWKSLAND

Lesmahagow, Brocketsbrae and Hawksland are in the Scottish Parliamentary constituency of East Kilbride, Strathaven and Lesmahagow, the South Lanarkshire Council electoral ward of Clydesdale South, and are served by South Lanarkshire Health and Social Care Partnership.

Community infrastructure is supported by an active Community Council, the Lesmahagow Development Trust and the Lesmahagow Resource Centre. The Lesmahagow Development Trust is an independent, not-for-profit charitable company with the objective of funding and implementing projects to enhance the facilities and environment of the village. The Lesmahagow Resource Centre offers advice and information on benefits, money and debt, care, disability, employment and local services. It also offers access to computers, telephone, photocopying and internet, onward referral to specialist service and houses various surgeries including local councillors.

An audit of community assets<sup>1</sup> undertaken as part of this plan identified a range of public sector services delivered in Lesmahagow covering health, education, and social activities. It also found 33 voluntary and community sector groups covering faith, youth, older people, children, local history and heritage and other social and recreational activities. A search of the Yell.com database identified 250 private sector companies delivering services in Lesmahagow and 27 with a physical presence in and around Abbeygreen. These cover a range of retail offers, hospitality and other services. Notably, Lesmahagow, unlike some comparable towns, has managed to retain banking and Post Office services.

Figures from South Lanarkshire Council's Central Research Unit report a total population of 8,137 for Lesmahagow and surrounding settlements. The population for the area covered by this is likely to be significantly lower. The proportion of people aged 65 and over is higher than the South Lanarkshire and Scottish averages. This is likely to be a result of the inclusion of Auchlochan Garden Village, a 50 acre estate providing retirement homes for over 200 people.

The Scottish Government 6-fold Rural/Urban classification system describes Lesmahagow as an accessible small town, i.e. a settlement of 3,000 to 9,999 people within 30 minute's drive of a settlement of 10,000 or more. Brocketsbrae and Hawksland are both described as accessible rural, i.e. areas with a population of less than 3,000 people, and within a 30 minute drive time of a settlement of 10,000 or more. Proximity to junction 10 of the M74 motorway means that the larger towns of Hamilton, Motherwell, East Kilbride and the City of Glasgow may all be reached by car in under 30 minutes.

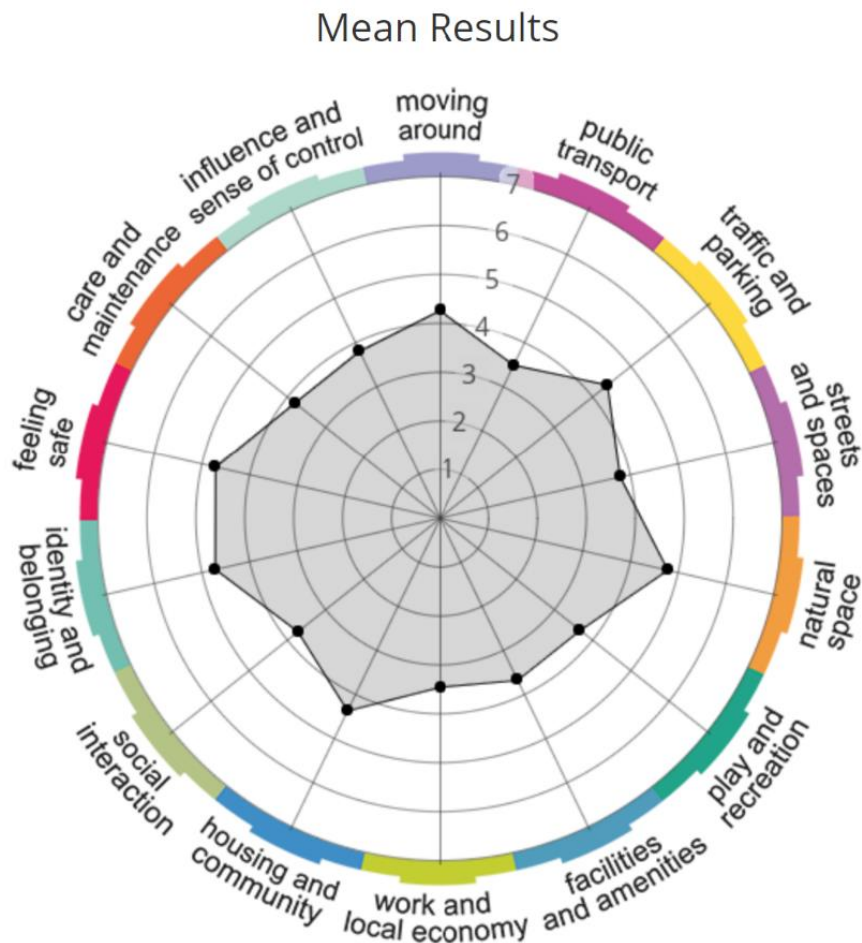
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<sup>1</sup> Full audit available from Lesmahagow Community Council.



# THE PLACE STANDARD

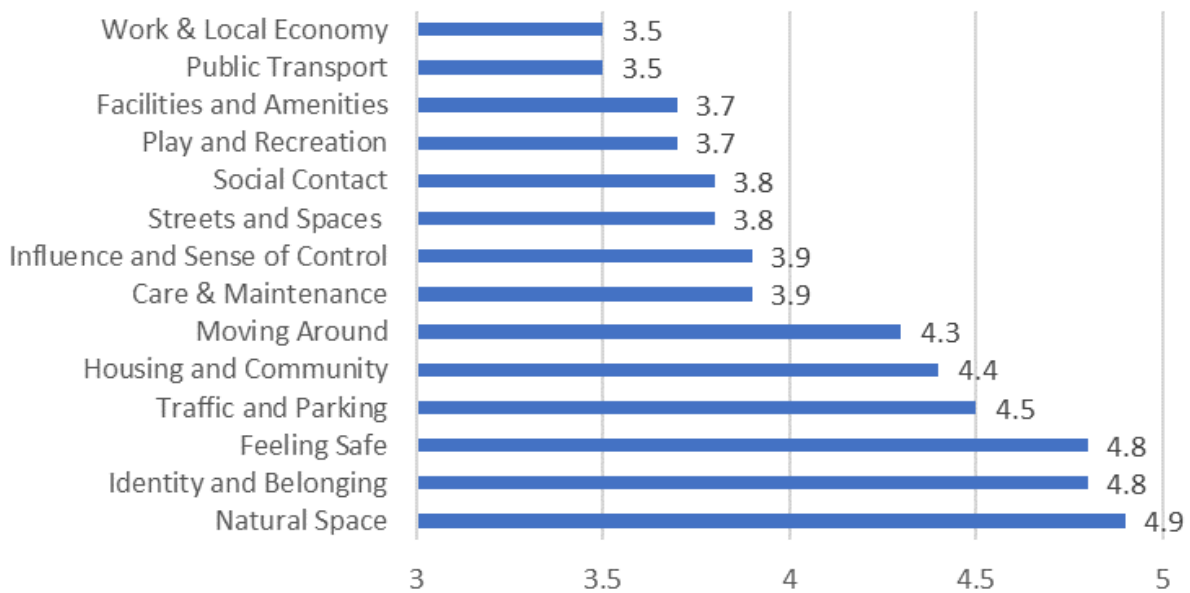
The Place Standard tool allows people to score 14 different aspects of their communities on a 7 point scale where 1 means there is a lot of room for improvement and 7 means there is very little room for improvement. The web graph below shows how each of the aspects were scored.



As can be seen, once the results are averaged out, people in Lesmahagow feel fairly satisfied, but not delighted with almost all aspects of life. That means that things are not bad, but that there is room for improvement – in everything!

The range of scores runs from 3.5 at the lowest – right in the middle of the 7-point scale - to 4.9 at the highest.

## Place Standard Aspects in Order of Satisfaction



The scores don't tell the whole story though. Comments on the survey and discussion with local people add detail of why people feel the way they do, and the solutions they propose. In many cases, the same issues and ideas come up again and again in different headings. This convergence of issues and ideas has allowed this plan to coalesce around one major project with three themes. Many of the actions in the plan contribute to multiple themes.

In the next chapter, we present proposals which draw together all the comments into three community led action themes, and one overall project - New Life for Lesmahagow, Brocketsbrae and Hawksland.



*“This is a good start, but we don’t need too much talking, we need action!”*

In this chapter we outline proposals for community led action for change in Lesmahagow, Brocketsbrae and Hawsland. Normally a plan like this would discuss the evidence drawn from the community before presenting the conclusions, but in the spirit of the quote above, we felt that readers would want to know what was being proposed first. You can go on to read the evidence that led to these conclusions in the next chapter.



## LOOKING GOOD

The presentation of the village is a major concern for people. Abbeygreen is regarded as shabby and run-down, and unoccupied retail units exacerbate this. Streets and parks face problems with litter, fly-tipping and vandalism. Other elements of the built heritage are in poor repair and unavailable for community benefit. This poor presentation creates an apathy and unhappiness about the town and can contribute to fear of crime for some people.

A community-led initiative, drawing on the support of the public sector and local business, could turn the physical presentation of the town around and refresh and rejuvenate positive attitudes to Lesmahagow, Brocketsbrae and Hawksland through both the process – people working together – and the product – a better looking Lesmahagow.

## GOING OUT

A better looking Lesmahagow won't have the biggest impact unless local people can actually get there to enjoy it. Walking and cycling routes within the village can be dangerous, poorly kept and unsuitable for people with buggies/prams or mobility challenges. Public transport around the village is almost non-existent since the withdrawal of the "wee community bus", and there is the potential for public transport to and from the village to better suit the needs of users. The natural space around the village is a fantastic asset, but paths to it and through it are poorly kept, poorly known and poorly promoted. Car users are generally well served by roads and parking, but irresponsible parking on Abbeygreen can be problematic.

A community-led initiative to improve routes around the town, by public transport and active travel, could enable local people to more easily get around and to access the retail offer in the High Street, thus helping support and retain local shops and businesses.

## MEETING PEOPLE

Lesmahagow has a strong sense of community identity but there aren't enough chances for people in Lesmahagow, Brocketsbrae and Hawksland to meet and enjoy each other's company. The streetscape and parks offer few natural meeting points. and the pubs and cafes available are not attractive to all sections of the community. This produces social isolation, with older people in outlying areas at greater risk, and negatively affects the opportunities for community, i.e. for people to meet, talk and do things together. There are also concerns about limited opportunities for people who have more recently moved into private housing to engage in community life.

Improvements to the look of the town, to the retail and hospitality offer and to transport within the town may facilitate improved social contact, but without places to meet and things to do, this won't impact on social isolation and sense of community. Lesmahagow is fortunate to have a few highly successful annual events. This may be built on to form a programme of events that bring people together. The installation of street furniture and picnic/barbeque tables on parks may encourage people to informally congregate.

Addressing the attractiveness of the hospitality offer may require a longer-term plan to demonstrate that there is a real market for a different type of offer and to find ways to make this happen. The better sense of community that improved opportunities to meet each other will create is a strong platform to explore longer term plans.



## LIFE IN LESMAHAGOW

This chapter provides the background evidence – the things that you said that led to the development of the proposals in the previous chapter. It's arranged using the Place Standard theme to make sure that we covered everything. You'll see that many of the same issues and ideas are raised under multiple themes. That's why we clustered many of the ideas together into a one project with three themes.

## WORK AND LOCAL ECONOMY

*“Both myself and my husband travel to work. Easy access to the M74 has made that possible.”*

*“Job creation in the local community is key to creating a more vibrant and wealthier town.”*

The national decline of the mining and textile industry and the closure of Birkwood Hospital has meant that there are few large employers in Lesmahagow. Although there are many small businesses, many of these are family owned or have a low turnover of staff. Consequently, there are few local employment opportunities and many people commute to work elsewhere. Good access to major roads means that commuting is easy and attractive for people with access to a vehicle. The Tesco supermarket offered new jobs after it opened, but there is a belief competition from Tesco has contributed to the loss of other local jobs.

There is a view that there are numerous smaller enterprises taking place under the radar – in homes and garages and other private spaces - and a suggestion that if the empty units on the main street could be made available, that these businesses could expand into the units, thus improving the main street and the local economy at the same time.

The employment rate for men and women aged 16 to 74 in Lesmahagow is 61%, slightly lower than the rate for South Lanarkshire Council (64.3%) and for Scotland (63.4%). Slightly fewer women are in employment (56.6%) compared to men (66.1%). More people are in self-employment in Lesmahagow (7.6%) than in South Lanarkshire Council (7.0%) or Scotland (7.5%). Nearly three times as many men (11.6%) are self-employed compared to women (3.9%).

The total number of people unemployed is 6.0%, higher than South Lanarkshire Council (5.1%) and Scotland as a whole (4.8%). Unemployment is particularly high for people aged 16 to 24 at 15.2%. Again this compares unfavourably to South Lanarkshire Council (11.2%) and Scotland (9.0%). 4.3% of people are economically inactive due to caring responsibilities, again higher than the South Lanarkshire Council (3.3%) and Scottish figures (3.6%). The same is true for those who are economically inactive through long term sickness or disability – 6.3% in Lesmahagow compared to 5.6% in South Lanarkshire Council and 5.1% across Scotland.

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#### WHAT TO DO?

- Investigate the ownership of vacant units, with a view to establishing opportunities and incentives for local entrepreneurs and craftspeople to occupy them, build on their business, and offer some local employment.
- Work with public transport providers to explore the possibility of testing new routes and schedules to suit working people.

## PUBLIC TRANSPORT

*“Could be doing with more variety in bus routes”*

*“Local services going into out of the way streets do not exist, therefore locals who have mobility problems cannot access bus routes.”*

There are mixed views on public transport – some people feel it is very good, others feel it is quite inadequate. The difference in views may be a result of the different things that people want from public transport. The convergence of the limitations of public transport and local employment opportunities may be a factor in the higher rate of unemployment for people aged 16 to 24. Key points raised in relation to public transport included;

- Few late-night buses, leading to difficulties in accessing the nighttime economy offer in Glasgow or early morning/late night employment opportunities.
- Potential for bus timetable to tie in with train timetable at Larkhall station.
- Location of bus stops, and bus routing, can mean long walks for people in Brocketsbrae and Hawkshill.

The potential impact on the local economy of an extended railway line to was raised several times. There is a suggestion that it would allow people to more easily commute to employment opportunities elsewhere but could also attract employers to Lesmahagow.

The withdrawal of the “wee community bus” service that had taken a route around the villages is keenly felt as a loss which had impacted on local business and contributed to a greater isolation for older people. Auchlochan Garden Village run two buses to Lesmahagow a day. Getting Better Together Ltd, a community enterprise based in nearby Shotts, offers a community transport minibus and driver hire service and a volunteer driver project – for hospital visits.

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#### WHAT TO DO?

- Make representation to transport providers seeking specific changes to provision. This may be on a pilot basis to establish if there is a genuine level of demand for the changes.
- Establish the costs and other implications of reinstating the “wee community bus” as a locally provided service.
- Consider working with other neighbouring settlements on the development of a broader rural community transport initiative. This may produce a project which has lower costs per participant and delivers benefits to a greater number of people, thus being more attractive to funders.

## TRAFFIC AND PARKING

*“For the size of the village there is inadequate parking.”*

*“Enough car parks but Abbeygreen can get noisy and congested.”*

Traffic and parking is one of the most contentious issues. For the most part, people felt that there is enough parking in and around the town except for when the Highland Games, football at McKirdy park or other big events are on. A very small number of people stated that a lack of parking in town prevents people from using local shops. There is insufficient parking near the schools, particularly at drop-off and pick-up times. On Sundays, parking near the Presbyterian Church is limited, and the bend in the road makes moving off risky.

Many people raised the fact that Abbeygreen is poorly designed for on street parking and that illegal and irresponsible parking is commonplace with the effect that the road becomes difficult to navigate. Others accepted that it is commonplace but questioned whether there are any real negative effects arising from it. Both sides of the debate noted that some of this is caused by people not using existing car parks, but parking on street. It is accepted that if this is to change, then it is likely to require a change in attitude and behaviour from drivers. It is not clear how this would be achieved, without an increase in the frequency and effectiveness of enforcement action to facilitate this change in attitude and behaviour. A few people challenged the need for existing levels of enforcement action, taking the view that if there is no problem, then there should be no enforcement.



More parking near the walking routes around the towns may improve access to these walking routes, particularly for people with small children, including those in prams and buggies.

Strathaven Road and Trows Road are regarded as particularly hazardous.

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#### WHAT TO DO?

- Investigate the possibility of a new car park on the old putting green at Bereholm, and on the site of the old Lesmahagow High School.
- Action to reduce the risks created by excessive parking on Strathaven Road and Trows Road.
- Lobby for increased enforcement action for problematic on-street parking and promote parking in the existing car parks.

## MOVING AROUND

*“Beautiful walks and cycle paths to suit all ages and abilities.”*

*“The main cycle route from Lesmahagow to Kirkmuirhill is fine but getting around Lesmahagow is not so easy.”*

Although relatively small, Lesmahagow, Brocketsbrae and Hawksland are spread out over a deceptively large area and the roads and paths around the villages are hilly, often poorly maintained and can be difficult for people with mobility challenges. In poor weather, getting around can be near impossible for pedestrians.

Drivers are well served in Lesmahagow, and by easy access to the M74. However there is some conflict between drivers and pedestrians and cyclists, partly caused by sections of road where bends, overhanging foliage and poorly maintained or absent foot and cycle paths create hazards.

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#### WHAT TO DO?

- Conduct a formal audit of hazard points on roads around Lesmahagow. Work with South Lanarkshire Council to establish a plan to minimise risk.
- Investigate the options for reinstatement of the ‘wee community bus’ or other method of safer community transport.

## STREETS AND SPACES

*“Abbeygreen is run down. Even open shops have shabby fronts.”*

*“Good accessibility, but more public spaces needed, and too much litter.”*

There is a strongly held view that empty retail units and shabbily presented occupied units created a poor overall impression of the village. Streets are regarded as generally easy to get around on foot, although the design of some streets creates hazards for people with buggies and prams or with limited mobility. There are some places where there are no pavements and pedestrians have to walk on grass verges or on the roads. There is some potential to improve the streets for local people to use as common space.

Lesmahagow is blessed with several good quality parks which local people are proud of, but the general condition of these parks is marred by litter, broken glass and dog fouling. The facilities at the parks are also in need of some upgrade and improvement to ensure that they offer the best possible benefit to local people.

The empty land where Lesmahagow High School used to be is regarded as an eyesore, and an unexploited opportunity for something which benefits the whole community. There are several buildings – Birkwood, Jubilee Hall, The Priory - which appear to be in decay and not used for any community benefit.

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### WHAT TO DO?

- Identify funding for an initiative which enables occupiers of retail units to improve shop fronts.
- Introduce new street furniture – benches, picnic tables, etc – in parks and on street, e.g. in the space across from Abbeygreen café.
- Improve park facilities, including play and green gym equipment, natural history interpretation boards and a grandstand or other covered area in Glebe Park. This may be achieved through community action, and/or through working with South Lanarkshire Council.
- Maintain grass verges to improve them for pedestrians.
- Consider how to attract new tenants to the unoccupied retail units on Abbeygreen.
- Clarify the ownership of and plans for disused buildings. Consider what, if any, community benefit these could offer if deployed differently.
- Work with South Lanarkshire Council to establish a programme of activity to address litter and dog fouling.

## NATURAL SPACE

*"A map with walking routes around Lesmahagow would be great."*

*"Better use of the surrounding woodlands by developing trails, walks, etc."*

Easy access to good quality natural space and to the River Nethan is one of the things that people in Lesmahagow, Brocketsbrae and Hawksland value most about where they live. However, there is a feeling that access could be improved if paths were better planned and kept and if there were more easily available information on the paths. Some paths have been closed off and there is no evidence of upkeep or efforts to re-open them to the public. Specific areas where paths can be improved include the Kerse, the Black Joke Path, and the Turfholm Bridge.

In common with streets and spaces, litter and dog fouling can spoil enjoyment of natural space. Littering is particularly bad at the off ramp near the M74 and under the old railway bridge near Abbot's Way.

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### WHAT TO DO?

- Signage to existing paths, and publication of information on local walks and trails.
- Work with South Lanarkshire Council to establish a programme of activity to address litter and dog fouling.
- Maintain grass verges to improve them for pedestrians.

## PLAY AND RECREATION

*"Good enough swing park but in need of some exciting additions!"*

*"Parks are often hazardous due to broken glass, litter and dog mess."*

As noted earlier in this plan, play facilities in parks could be increased and improved. The Coalburn Leisure Complex, Sports facility at Lesmahagow High School and Lunar Gymnastic Club offer good quality indoor physical recreation opportunities and are largely regarded as being easily accessible although costs can be prohibitive for some, particularly if transport costs are factored in.

Football can be played at the School or at the Glebe park. Young people noted that there is nowhere suitable for rugby, basketball or other outdoor team sports, and many of them travelled elsewhere to access these.

There are several youth clubs and uniformed youth organisations, but there is evidence of young people congregating in street spaces, indicating that existing youth provision may not be suitable for all.

There is limited awareness of recreational and social activities for adults and a sense that if there are things happening, then there is little publicity to attract people who would not otherwise know. Lesmahagow Bowling Club is considered an asset to the community, but their hall and the Masonic Hall could be more effectively promoted.

Questions were raised about the programme at The Fountain, the costs of hire and a perception that security arrangements were unnecessarily tight and put people off from using it.

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#### WHAT TO DO?

- Engage with young people to establish what sort of provision they would like and support them to take action to achieve this.
- Consider fencing off play areas in parks to limit litter and dog fouling.

## FACILITIES AND AMENITIES

*“Living in rural areas is a way of life. I wouldn’t expect to have endless facilities or amenities on my door step.”*

*“There isn’t one place in the area where a couple can go to relax and socialise.”*

Facilities are almost wholly located in Lesmahagow, with fewer or none available in Brocketsbrae or Lesmahagow. There is an acceptance that facilities in a more remote and less densely populated location will always be fewer, but there is some dissatisfaction with the range and quality of local facilities, although this is not shared by everyone. The local public houses are felt to cater well to the groups they serve but are perceived to be unwelcoming to non-regulars and unsuitable for families. There is a desire for a more upmarket dining option and a view that the existing cafes are unsuitable for people with prams/buggies or mobility challenges. Auchloch Garden Village restaurant is open to the public but this is not well known.

The range of shops have been fairly resilient compared to other similar villages but there has been a decline in recent years and there is a fear that further decline will produce a ‘tipping point’ where people stop visiting the village to shop.

The fact that Lesmahagow has retained a Post Office, Bank, Pharmacy and Library is considered to be evidence that there is still some potential to turn the trend around and renew Abbeygreen as a shopping destination. There are some ideas around community use of the vacant units for a local charity shop or swap shop, with a particular call for a school uniform and toy exchange.

The Tesco superstore is popular but is considered to have been a factor in the decline of the high street. Despite this, there is a view that another small supermarket would be an asset.

The schools are regarded as good, but some greater nursery provision at Milton would be welcomed.

There is significant dissatisfaction with the time taken to get an appointment with a GP services and with the quality of customer service from practice staff. The fact that there is only one practice in Lesmahagow has led to a perception that there is no choice but to accept an unsatisfactory service. The NHS Scotland HEAT<sup>2</sup> standard for GP Access seeks to provide 48 hour access or advance booking to an appropriate member of the GP Practice Team. Doubts were expressed about the extent to which this is commonly achieved.

Library hours are regarded as unsuitable for people who work during the day, and the hours for community access to school leisure facilities are regarded as unsuitable for people who do not work during the day.

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#### WHAT TO DO?

- Conduct local research on the time taken to get a GP appointment. If this significantly varies from the HEAT standard raise this with the practice and with NHS Lanarkshire and seek commitments to action for improvement.
- Investigate ownership of vacant units and the options and implications of community and small business use.

## HOUSING

There is little consensus on the adequacy of the available housing, or any changes required. There is a perception that there is limited social housing for rent, and that this means that people are required to access housing from the private sector which is more expensive and can be of poorer quality.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www2.gov.scot/About/Performance/scotPerforms/NHSScotlandperformance/GP-LDP>

The limited availability of affordable housing means that young people were forced to stay with parents or to move to other towns closer to their employment.

Although there have been recent developments of new private housing, there have also been proposed developments which have not been constructed. Although some people feel that there is a need for more housing, particularly for families, there is also a fear that the town infrastructure – roads, schools, GP services – could not cope with significantly higher numbers of people.

As noted earlier, the majority of people in Lesmahagow work elsewhere. There is a perception that many people who have moved to newer private housing have a limited commitment to community life, and a risk of Lesmahagow becoming a dormitory town – where people reside, but do not live.

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#### WHAT TO DO?

- Establish a Community Council policy on support for housing development.
- Consider methods of engaging people in newer private housing in community life.

## SOCIAL CONTACT

*“Older people used to meet on the wee community bus and then do their shopping together in the town, and then maybe get a cup of coffee. The wee bus is gone and you don’t see those people now.”*

*“There seems to be lots of clubs, but I don’t think there’s many opportunities for people to meet just informally.”*

The Highland Games and Agricultural Show are a source of great pride and seen as an opportunity to meet new people and renew acquaintances. The decline of the High Street and the limited hospitality sector options mean that, with the exception of bigger community events, there are few opportunities for informal and unplanned social contact with others in the community. Several people remarked that public transport is one of the few opportunities they had to meet their neighbours, and that the loss of the ‘wee community bus’ had further limited that, particularly for older people.

The work of organisations like the Lesmahagow Development Trust and Hawksland Community Events Group is highlighted as a valuable intervention enabling more and better social contact, but the number of people their work could reach is limited. The programme of activities offered by local clubs and community groups is regarded as valuable but often niche, catering for particular groups or people with particular interests. There are perceptions of excessive security at facilities which does not invite casual attendance.

There is significant concern about the isolation of older people, particularly those in Brocketsbrae and Hawksland, the risk of which has been exacerbated by the loss of the 'wee community bus'.

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#### WHAT TO DO?

- Introduce new street furniture – benches, picnic tables, etc – in parks and on street, e.g. in the space across from Abbeygreen café.
- Work with older people's organisations to establish increased and improved opportunities for social contact.

## IDENTITY AND BELONGING

*“There's a strong sense of belonging and it's always felt like a friendly and safe place to be.”*

*“The root problem is disconnection. There's no place to just bump into your neighbours and have a chat.”*

People in Lesmahagow, Brocketsbrae and Hawksland like the places where they live and feel a strong sense of identity and belonging and a pride in local institutions like Lesmahagow Football Club. People who are not originally from Lesmahagow note that there is an inclusive and welcoming atmosphere in the town – observable in the welcome offered to people from the Krishna Temple and Eco Farm on the outskirts of the town. On the other hand, there is a perception that the strong sense of belonging that local people have can occasionally create a sense of exclusive cliques and in-groups.

There is a sense that leading on community activity is left to too few people, and there is some negativity about this and about perceptions that Lesmahagow has not been well served by the local authority. Conversely, there is a perception that community organisations are not always welcoming to new people with new ideas, and that it is difficult to 'get involved.'

There is considerable pride in local history and in local built heritage assets, but a strong sense that Lesmahagow has failed to capitalise on this in the same way that neighbouring towns like Biggar and Lanark have. The deterioration of The Priory and Birkwood is highlighted as visible evidence of how Lesmahagow has not actively valued its heritage and history.

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#### WHAT TO DO?

- Increase the number and frequency of village events, e.g. 'In Bloom' events, summer fayres, etc.
- Consider the establishment of a sculpture, floral display or other icon at the entrances to the village to better create and maintain identity.
- Consider how local history and heritage could be used to generate benefit for the community.

## FEELING SAFE

*“Two years ago I would have scored ‘feeling safe’ a 7 but after a few incidents of theft I feel less safe. I rarely feel my personal safety is at risk though.”*

*“No, I do not feel safe. Not enough Police. Knife crime and drugs are at an all time high yet gets swept under the carpet. Needs back to basics and a full-time manned police station.”*

With few exceptions, people feel remarkably safe in Lesmahagow. A few recent thefts and burglaries have dented some people's confidence in their safety and increased fear of crime, but overall there is little observable crime and less fear of it. Young people reported very few incidences of bullying, intimidation or conflict with other young people.

There are a few locations in the village and surrounding woodland where poor or no lighting, coupled with litter and vandalism mean that people can feel uneasy, but this is not common.

There are a few people who disagree with the general consensus around safety and calls for an increased police presence to detect and deter crime.

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### WHAT TO DO?

- Work with Police Scotland to establish evidence on the level of reported crime and promote messages about the relative safety of Lesmahagow.
- Improve lighting in relevant locations.

## CARE AND MAINTENANCE

*“A lot of litter and poor upkeep of roads and paths”*

*“It’s a shame that so many buildings are in such a dilapidated state. If opened/renovated these could be used as community spaces to develop things of benefit to the community.”*

There are issues with litter, poor presentation of the shops on Abbeygreen, maintenance of built heritage assets, parks and paths. Overall, there is a sense that the town is in physical decline and that everyone believes it is someone else's job to do something about it.

The withdrawal of public recycling facilities has contributed to problems with litter.



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## WHAT TO DO?

- Initiate a partnership between community, local business and South Lanarkshire Council to rejuvenate the town centre.
- Establish local leadership for action on litter, including litter-picks and education for behaviour change.
- Investigate the possibility of reinstatement of the recycling facilities through either South Lanarkshire Council or through a community or local business initiative.

## INFLUENCE AND SENSE OF CONTROL

*“All you ever hear from Parliament down – “we are having a meeting to discuss this” – but nothing ever seems to get done.”*

*“Things like this are a great start but can’t be the end. We need to just **DO IT!**”*

The majority of people feel that they have little influence or control over local developments and that they are not listened to by the local authority and others in positions of power. Many people feel disillusioned and disempowered by experiences of participation in earlier consultation and planning exercises, without having heard anything or observed any change as a result.

There is a perception that public sector planning and service provision is made for larger settlements and that the distinct needs of smaller towns like Lesmahagow are overlooked.

The work of local institutions like the Community Council and Development Trust in speaking up for Lesmahagow and creating opportunities for local people to speak up were noted, and the fact that local people can organise to deliver services and large scale events like The Highland Games are considered evidence that influence and control is possible. It is accepted that people had the opportunity to join these groups or to form new groups of their own, but people recognised that their own time commitments and competing priorities meant that they were unlikely to do so.

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## WHAT TO DO?

- Ensure that the results of this consultation exercise are widely distributed.
- Ensure that opportunities for local people to get involved in taking action on the priorities in this plan are widely promoted.
- Ensure that, when things change, people know about it and know that it happened because of community action.

## PLANS INTO ACTION

The best plans are only any use if they are acted on, and action requires actors – someone to do something. The steering group which worked on the production of this plan will continue to meet and will start to prioritise the actions described here so that they can be taken forward as efficiently as possible. We'll also organise annual reviews of the plan, where we see what has been done, what difference has been made, and what needs to be done over the coming 12 months. We'll have some form of public meeting for each review, possibly doubling up with some other event of community interest to maximise attendance.

The steering group is drawn from community organisations and business, but we are all human and all have other demands on our time, and there is only so much capacity available. If you feel strongly about any of the issues in this plan, or about any of the ideas in here, why not do something about it? The steering group is open to anyone with an interest in making things happen, but you don't have to participate in this to do something. If you want to take the lead, or just help, with any particular theme or action, we'll be pleased to hear from you. You might even have other good ideas that you need other people to help make reality.

If you want to do something, you can email the Community Council at [lesmahagowcc@outlook.com](mailto:lesmahagowcc@outlook.com). Alternatively, if you contact anyone at Lesmahagow Development Trust ([info@lesmahagowdevtrust.com](mailto:info@lesmahagowdevtrust.com)) or in Lesmahagow Resource Centre, they will be able to help you.

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The steering group that made this plan come together so far are

- Lesmahagow Community Council
- Lesmahagow Development Trust
- Milton Primary School
- Woodpark Primary School
- Davie Rollo, Local businessman.
- Co-Operative Funeral Services

## APPENDIX I - THEMES TO ACTION

<b>New Life for Lesmahagow, Brocketsbrae and Hawksland – An Action Summary</b>			
<b>Work and Local Economy</b>	Looking good	Going out	Meeting people
Investigate the ownership of vacant units, with a view to establishing opportunities and incentives for local entrepreneurs and craftspeople to occupy them, build on their business, and offer some local employment.			
Work with public transport providers to explore the possibility of testing new routes and schedules to suit working people.			
<b>Public Transport</b>	Looking good	Going out	Meeting people
Make representation to transport providers seeking specific changes to provision. This may be on a pilot basis to establish if there is a genuine level of demand for the changes.			
Establish the costs and other implications of reinstating the “wee community bus” as a locally provided service.			
Consider working with other neighbouring settlements on the development of a broader rural community transport initiative. This may produce a project which has lower costs per participant and delivers benefits to a greater number of people, thus being more attractive to funders.			
<b>Traffic and Parking</b>	Looking good	Going out	Meeting people
Investigate the possibility of a new car park on the old putting green at Bereholm, and on the site of the old Lesmahagow High School.			
Action to reduce the risks created by excessive parking on Strathaven Road and Trows Road.			
Lobby for increased enforcement action for problematic on-street parking and promote parking in the existing car parks.			
<b>Moving Around</b>	Looking good	Going out	Meeting people
Conduct a formal audit of hazard points on roads around Lesmahagow. Work with South Lanarkshire Council to establish a plan to minimise risk.			
Investigate the options for reinstatement of the ‘wee community bus’ or other method of safer community transport.			
<b>Streets and Spaces</b>	Looking good	Going out	Meeting people

<b>New Life for Lesmahagow, Brocketsbrae and Hawksland – An Action Summary</b>			
Identify funding for an initiative which enables occupiers of retail units to improve shop fronts.			
Introduce new street furniture - benches, picnic tables, etc - in parks and on street, e.g. in the space across from Abbeygreen café.			
Improve park facilities, including play and green gym equipment, natural history interpretation boards and a grandstand or other covered area in Glebe Park. This may be achieved through community action, and/or through working with South Lanarkshire Council.			
Work with South Lanarkshire Council to establish a programme of activity to address litter and dog fouling.			
Maintain grass verges to improve them for pedestrians.			
Consider how to attract new tenants to the unoccupied retail units on Abbeygreen.			
Clarify the ownership of and plans for disused buildings. Consider what, if any, community benefit these could offer if deployed differently.			
<b>Natural Space</b>	<b>Looking good</b>	<b>Going out</b>	<b>Meeting people</b>
Signage to existing paths, and publication of information on local walks and trails.			
Maintain grass verges to improve them for pedestrians.			
Work with South Lanarkshire Council to establish a programme of activity to address litter and dog fouling.			
<b>Play and Recreation</b>	<b>Looking good</b>	<b>Going out</b>	<b>Meeting people</b>
Engage with young people to establish what sort of provision they would like and support them to take action to achieve this.			
Consider fencing off play areas in parks to limit litter and dog fouling.			
<b>Facilities and Amenities</b>	<b>Looking good</b>	<b>Going out</b>	<b>Meeting people</b>
Conduct local research on the time taken to get a GP appointment. If this significantly varies from the HEAT standard raise this with the practice and with NHS Lanarkshire and seek commitments to action for improvement.			
Investigate ownership of vacant units and the options and implications of community and small business use.			

<b>New Life for Lesmahagow, Brocketsbrae and Hawksland – An Action Summary</b>			
<b>Housing</b>	Looking good	Going out	Meeting people
Establish a Community Council policy on support for housing development.			
Consider methods of engaging people in newer private housing in community life.			
<b>Social Contact</b>	Looking good	Going out	Meeting people
Introduce new street furniture - benches, picnic tables, etc - in parks and on street, e.g. in the space across from Abbeygreen café.			
Work with older people's organisations to establish increased and improved opportunities for social contact.			
<b>Identity and Belonging</b>	Looking good	Going out	Meeting people
Increase the number and frequency of village events, e.g. 'In Bloom' events, summer fayres, etc.			
Consider the establishment of a sculpture, floral display or other icon at the entrances to the village to better create and maintain identity.			
Consider how local history and heritage could be used to generate benefit for the community.			
<b>Feeling Safe</b>	Looking good	Going out	Meeting people
Work with Police Scotland to establish evidence on the level of reported crime and promote messages about the relative safety of Lesmahagow.			
Improve lighting in relevant locations.			
<b>Care and Maintenance</b>	Looking good	Going out	Meeting people
Initiate a partnership between community, local business and South Lanarkshire Council to rejuvenate the town centre.			
Establish local leadership for action on litter, including litter-picks and education for behaviour change.			
Investigate the possibility of reinstatement of the recycling facilities through either South Lanarkshire Council or through a community or local business initiative.			
<b>Influence and Sense of Control</b>	Looking good	Going out	Meeting people

## New Life for Lesmahagow, Brocketsbrae and Hawksland – An Action Summary

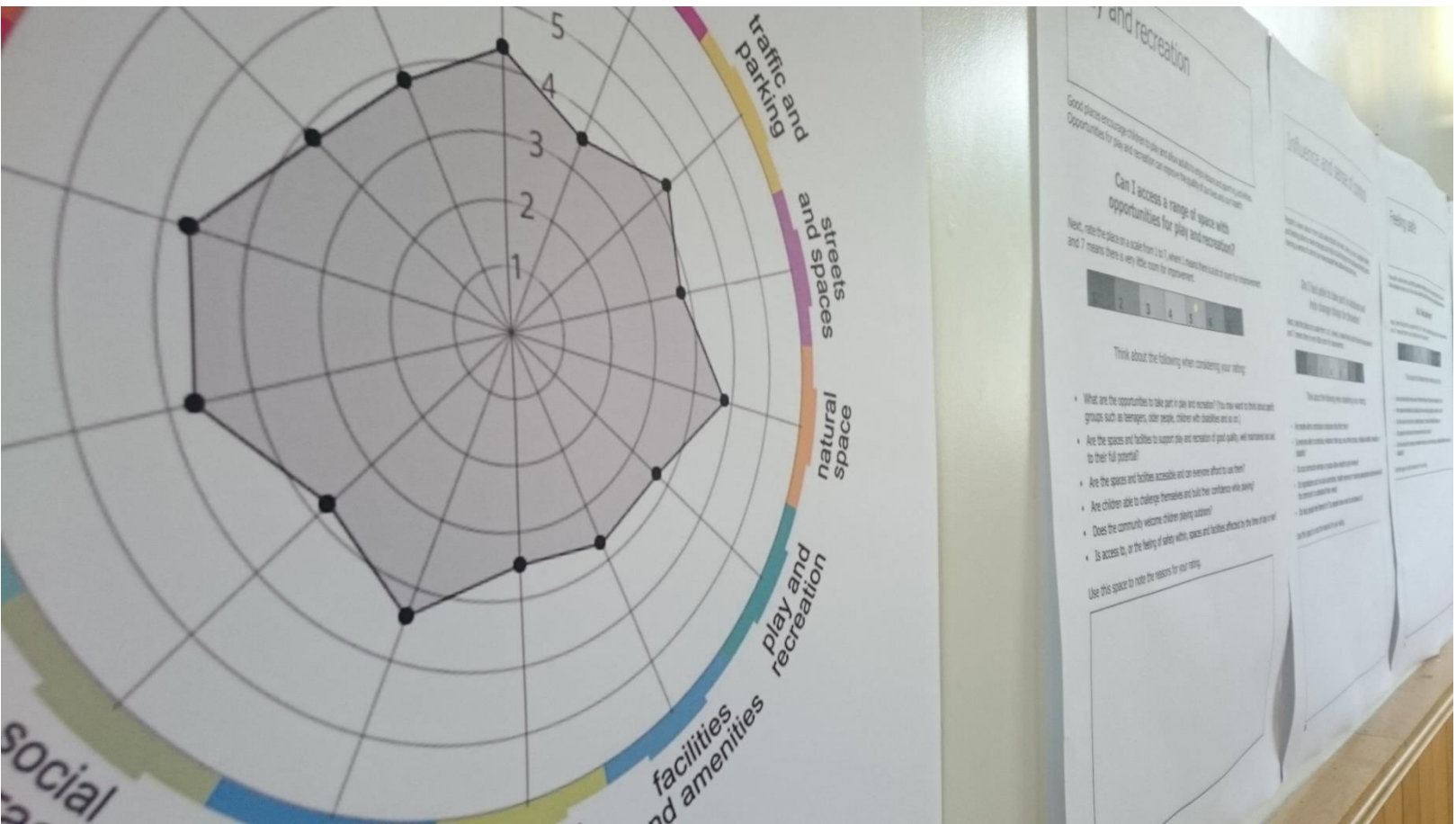
Ensure that the results of this consultation exercise are widely distributed.

Ensure that opportunities for local people to get involved in taking action on the priorities in this plan are widely promoted.

Ensure that, when things change, people know about it and know that it happened because of community action.







COMMUNITY ACTION  
LANARKSHIRE

