

**SELKIRK & THE VALLEYS 2024 →**

**BUILT and NATURAL LOCAL ENVIRONMENT:**

**Preamble: (SETTING THE SCENE USING QR CODE!)**

The Royal and Ancient Burgh of Selkirk is a town which has a long and distinguished history, supported by a strong and friendly population.

The adjoining valleys are home to smaller settlements who are each committed to their individual heritage and character – and all networked into the modern/larger Eildon community of the Scottish Borders.

Selkirk's environmental and architectural character is very much that of a typical Borders town. It has been mainly established by its historic town centre, strong heritage and its countryside setting.

These days however, the town centre is split by a busy trunk road which forces its way through the Conservation Area and dominates the Market Place and Sir Walter Scott's Courthouse with traffic, noise and pollution. The town streets are lined with buildings chiefly of stone with slate roofs and contain a range of interesting architectural details. All building elements contribute to the distinctiveness of the town centre and should be respected when development or alterations are proposed. The town centre Conservation Area includes all the High Street and the historic core.

This sets a challenge for both residents and businesses in the town. As well as combating the wider economic downturn, local businesses and traders now have to exist in an environment which has become poor and uninviting – with increasingly shoddy building frontages, uneven footpaths, poor disabled access and limited convenient parking.

Yet despite this, the town can dress itself up and put on a great show for celebrations such as the Common Riding or organised events such as Scott's Selkirk!

Settlements - where people choose to live - are influenced by many things including climate, geographical features, historical events, culture, type of economy and technology. In the Scottish Borders, we may grumble about weather patterns and potholes in the roads but overall, we enjoy our local area. In many respects, we may regard ourselves as fortunate to live in the (peaceful) Scottish Borders at this time. The countryside is varied and provides a great source of both outdoor adventure and tranquillity. The built environment represents the heritage of the area and reflects the often-tempestuous times that the Borderlands have endured! Those of us who live in the Borders wish to protect our heritage, safeguard our way of life and create better opportunities for ourselves and families both now and in the foreseeable future. We must look after our built and natural heritage and thereby provide an appropriate platform, suitable for the exciting vision held by the joint communities of the Valleys and Selkirk area. This is our challenge – to build a fitting stage upon which we can look forward to the next phase of our tenure in the Scottish Borders.

In the context of preparing this forward-looking plan, we should

- make the most of our environment, through improvement, review and repurposing where necessary
- help create a healthy quality of life which is safe and resilient.

Which is

- accessible, affordable reliable and sustainable
- flexible / versatile with mixed uses, and
- is a creative and socially productive use of land and property

**The finalised Plan/ Vision will cover a number of themes and there will be inevitable cross overs between:**

**BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT:**

- Identifying premises needing a new life and ownership.
- Identifying brownfield sites which when redeveloped, would create economic and employment opportunities
- boosting the town's businesses, promoting better connections and enabling new business/ employment

**ARTS, CULTURE AND HERITAGE:**

- creating creative platforms to unite people, through sharing our arts, history and heritage
- making use of the town's existing portfolio of buildings to revitalise their purpose and identity

**TOURISM:**

- highlighting the unique history and geography of our area to increase awareness, both inside and outside Scotland
- making use of the town's existing portfolio of buildings to house the artifacts of local history and encourage visitors and locals alike to share in our heritage

With the natural outcome of all that being ....

**PEOPLE AND WELLBEING:**

- working towards creating a healthy, happy and rewarding place for individuals and families to grow up and live

The following list identifies several of the challenges which currently face the local communities. These should be broken down into a programme of research and consolidation – short – medium - and long term - which would help encourage Selkirk and the Valleys to contribute and respond positively in maximising future opportunities for the Scottish Borders.

**CHALLENGES/ OUTCOMES:**

**Built:**

- Auld Kirk and graveyard: stabilise wallheads of structure – consider potential for providing roof cover? With future potential for wedding venue/ occasional historical locus?
- repair and maintain benches/ gates/ railings
- cut back/ remove invasive ivy growth



- Sir Walter Scott's Sherriff Court /former Cross Keys site: urgently consider disabled access and maintenance of building.
- Revue options for extension of Court House into adjoining (former Cross Keys) space.
- Consider options for use of space for audio/ projected visual presentations (open air or under cover)



- Haying: ongoing restoration to House and estate. Liaise with Trust re future events / wedding venue etc.
- Improve quality of access (via driveway) and proposed development of Chicken Acre.
- Consider footpath link from House to A7 and Selkirk Hill to create a circular town walk.



- Former Council offices/ Fire Station: identify future uses (repurpose – Heritage Museum?) and maintain property appropriately
- Encourage other local groups to pursue potential and plans for suitable project and agree programme of work.
- Town statues: review condition and prepare schedule of repair/ refurbishment – including the War Memorial?



- Pant Well: review condition and prepare schedule of repair/ refurbishment/ cleaning as required
- Properties within Selkirk Common Good ownership: obtain a schedule of condition and need for repair for each. Investigate potential for introducing sustainable energy sources
- Sites: identify brownfield opportunities for local needs

- Chapel Street, former Burgh school site. Encourage redevelopment
- Riverside Industrial Estate: review brownfield sites and identify all buildings at risk (including ownerships and discuss possible compulsory purchase with SBC or?)



- Sites/ land within Selkirk Common Good ownership: Investigate potential for introducing sustainable energy sources, eg solar arrays – and potential for linking with end users/ community

**Environment:**

- Victoria Park: work with local community group to agree and prepare Master Plan for the area.
- Make Victoria Park/ Swimming Pool/ Caravan site more welcoming/ visitor friendly and improve signage (both on site and road approach.) with better entrance board and information along riverside. Repaint perimeter railings
- Pringle Park: investigate potential for extending park uses into adjoining landscape areas and local path network and repaint perimeter railings
- Riverside corridor: integrate with adjoining uses (Victoria Park/ Industrial and residential areas) to improve town and visitor resource with interpretation/ mapping etc.



- Selkirk Hill: promote community use, walks and other (seasonal) events (eg Haggis Hunt etc)





- The Toll: provide a better gateway into Selkirk and improve landscape character
- Footpath links: consolidate links between settlements with clear signage and visitor information at key points (eg at laybys on town approaches)
- Signage/ ESTABLISH SELKIRK'S IMAGE and IDENTITY!: set up a maintenance programme to clean signs (information and road identification) and ensure clear visibility, on a regular basis



- Community Notice Boards: plan for centrally located digital noticeboards (either end of Central Area)
- Parking: consider o/a plan for remodelling Police station area/ adjoining car park to provide visitor-coach drop off or short-term parking - RETAIN PUBLIC TOILETS!
- Improve boundaries of Halliwell's car park – to in keeping with main town arrival point!



- Trees/ street furniture: identify key trees within the built landscape of settlements, prepare a register and ensure protection. Similarly, ensure that public seats/ benches and other items of street furniture are reviewed and scheduled for repair as required



- Closes: reintroduce Town Trail (Ring o'the Toun) including derivation of named closes



- work with Selkirk and Valleys tourism group in identifying needs and thereby help promote/ develop more visitor awareness through website and social media channels - to direct visitors towards the benefits of the Valleys (from Selkirk)
- develop programme of festivals and events to be held in appropriate settings

### Short term outcomes:

- compile an audit of properties within the central area of Selkirk (with maps)
  - showing current uses (and highlighting trends)
  - owned by Common Good
  - currently vacant
  - highlight derelict/ brownfield or undeveloped land – make notes
  - Buildings at Risk Register – Selkirk concerns
- Knowledge of PLACE:  
Find a short-term budget (aimed at local groups) to employ a researcher to interview senior members of the local community to capture their memories and local knowledge. All of which is now dangerously fragile!
- Visitor Information and inclusivity:  
The Group identified an urgent need to ensure that local leaflets are always available in every settlement - via shops, hotel and BB accommodation, libraries and/ or garages – to maximise the spread of local information and encourage visitor interest (ideally find a local source at strategic locations to hold or distribute leaflets as required – and include this information on the local CC websites and newsletter).  
Where possible, produce an A4 foldable pocket size key map for the area – cheap to produce and easy to carry in pocket.

### Long term outcomes:

- **Traffic – a Selkirk By-Pass is needed**



- Work through A7 Action Group and Selkirk Community Council to review and update previous report and keep lobbying for designation of route and future commitment. This

will relieve traffic issues within the town and thereby release development land for future business/ employment and residential use.

Ensure no discrimination against residents/ businesses living and working in The Valleys

- Create a new social enterprise, through growth and vibrancy of the local creative industries sector.
- Resulting in significant uplift of the physical environment, engagement with people from diverse backgrounds in the future of the town and improved wellbeing outcomes for people personally and as groups by growing connections, confidence, and skills.
- Solar arrays: work with local groups to achieve viable/ sustainable energy projects for the benefit of the local communities in Selkirk and The Valleys. Help sustain clean energy projects to provide inter settlement links and with BGH



IKing  
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Agreed by Barbra Harvie/ Elaine Dunipace/ Ian King  
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