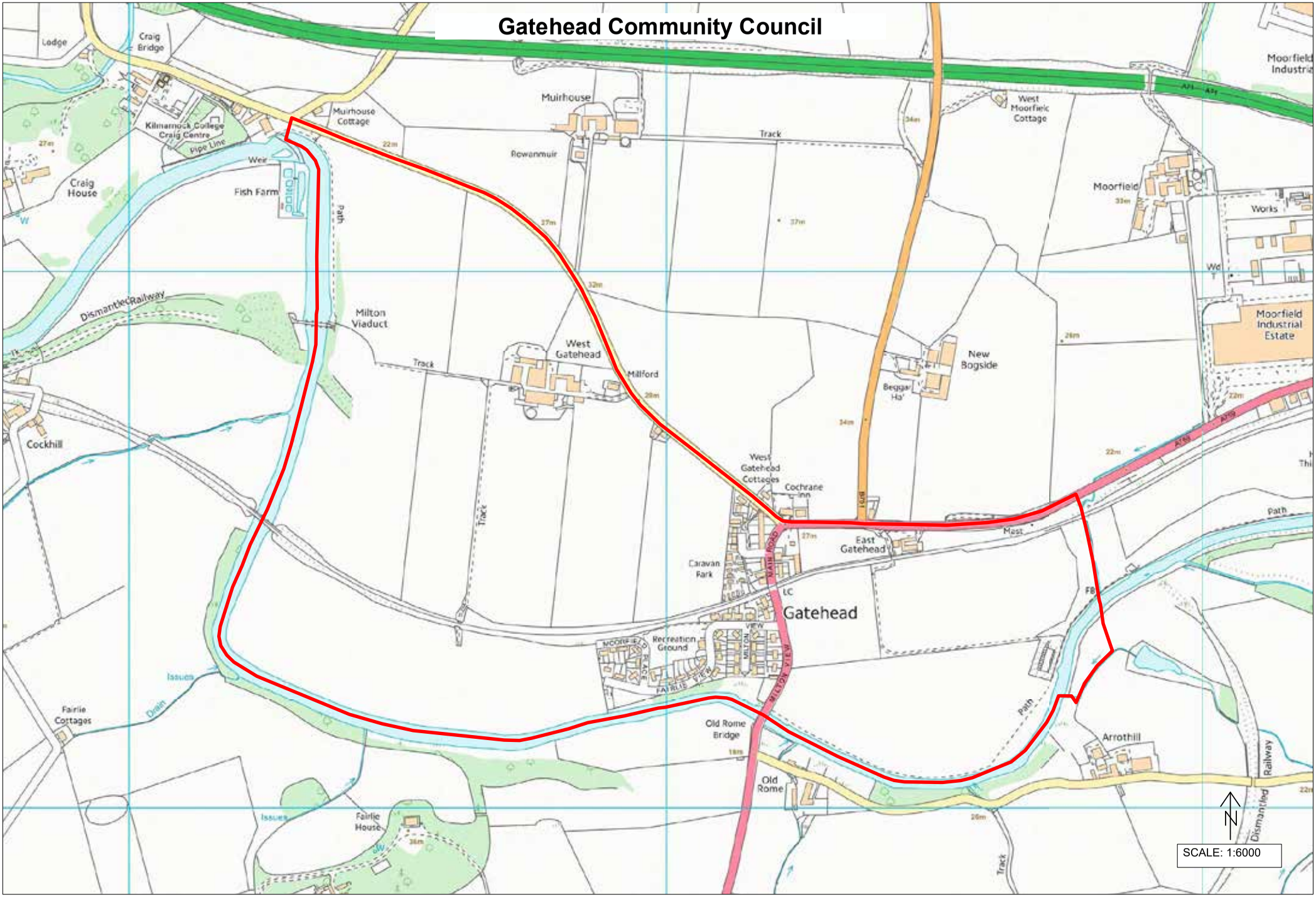
Gatehead Community Action Plan 2024 - 2029

Gatehead Community Council



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INTRODUCTION

Gatehead is one of the smallest villages in East Ayrshire with 146 dwellings falling within its boundary, including several outlying farms and rural houses. It is situated on the A759 between Kilmarnock and Dundonald with the area bounded on one side by the River Irvine neighbouring both North and South Ayrshire.

The community of Gatehead, although a fairly small village; has a strong community spirit and large ambitions to help make their community a better place to live, work and visit. Priorities on what the community would like to see happen have been gathered through the Community Action Plan engagement process. Community Action Plans (CAP) are 5 year plans which are led by communities looking to take on actions identified and voted on by their community. This then shapes actions to be taken forward in improving their community. The process is facilitated by East Ayrshire Council's Vibrant Communities, with it being led by the communities developing the plan. The Steering Group was formed off the back of interested representatives of Gatehead Bridge Project, Gatehead Community Council and individuals.

A Community Action Plan seeks to engage a community in identifying priorities for their area and to stimulate the community into making those priorities happen. The plan is not a shopping list for things we want done. This plan is a vision for how we want Gatehead to be. It's up to us as a local community, working alongside others, to get involved and make things happen.

Gatehead Community Action Plan 2024-2029 has been compiled reflecting the aspirations of the community of Gatehead through different consultation methods during 2021-2023. These methods included household surveys, online surveys and stakeholder interviews. We also held informal consultation events and group meetings in the Village Hall.

The household surveys were sent to all 146 houses within the Gatehead Community Council boundary, of which 56 responses were returned. We also engaged with the children and young people in the village through meetings in the school gathering their thoughts on what they liked, did not like and would like to see happen in Gatehead. A further 19 responses were gathered here, taking the total of 75 responses. This means there was a return rate of 51% response from the community throughout the demographic.

OUR COMMUNITY

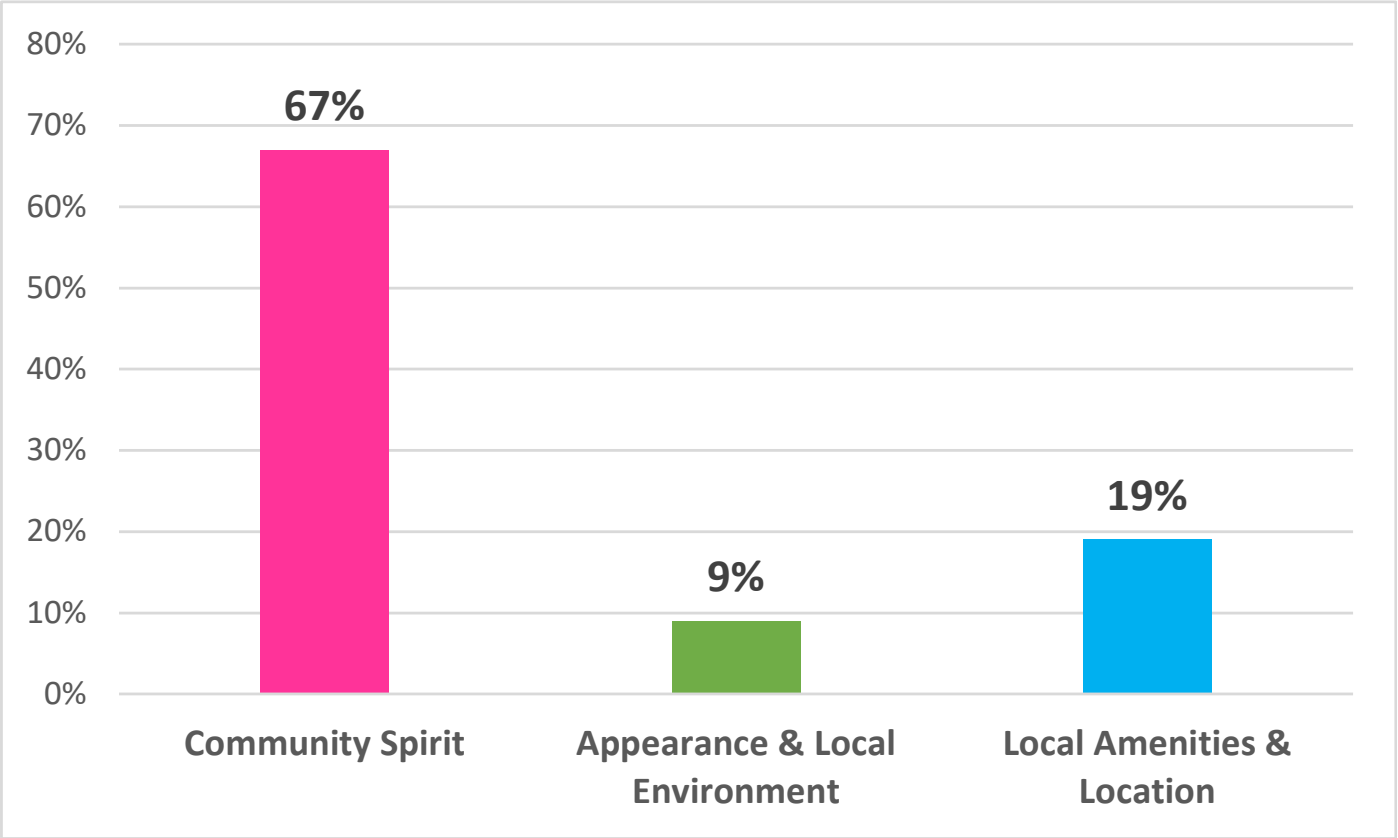
Gatehead can be traced back as far as middle to late 1700's and was likely established as a collier's village in support of the coal mines in the area. The mine heads have long since been capped and the miner's rows that existed near the Old Rome Farmhouse now demolished, but the schoolhouse is still in existence and has been converted into two private dwellings. The Cochrane Inn is likely to have been established as a coaching house to provide a service to travellers journeying through the area.

The village is split by the Kilmarnock to Troon railway line, which was opened in 1811, with the level crossing still a well-known landmark. A station also existed at this time but closed in 1967. The remains of the station platform can still be seen.

Laigh Milton viaduct lies within the boundary and was erected to allow the railway to cross the River Irvine. The viaduct is of historical significance as it is reputed to be the oldest existing railway viaduct in the world. The railway was established predominantly to move coal from Kilmarnock to the harbour at Troon, but was also carrying passengers soon after it's opening in 1811. The viaduct had fallen into a state of disrepair but has recently been refurbished at considerable expense. The railway does not cross here anymore, with a new bridge built further south along the river. However, tourist access can be gained via a riverside path starting at Laigh Milton Mill.

In regards to population, from the 2011 Scottish Census data, Gatehead's population was sitting at 338. For the 2021 census, population is expected to remain steady as there has been very little housing or opportunity development within the area. However more detail on this census is to be released in 2024.

The village of Gatehead holds a lot of heritage and history given its location within Ayrshire and its industrial links. There used to be a post office and shop within the village, however this has since closed down and has left villagers requiring to travel to neighbouring towns for amenities. There is no primary school, doctors surgery, dentist or retail opportunity. The Cochrane Inn has offered economic and tourism benefit and the community are supportive in it's re establishment following temporary closure.



OUR LIKES & DISLIKES

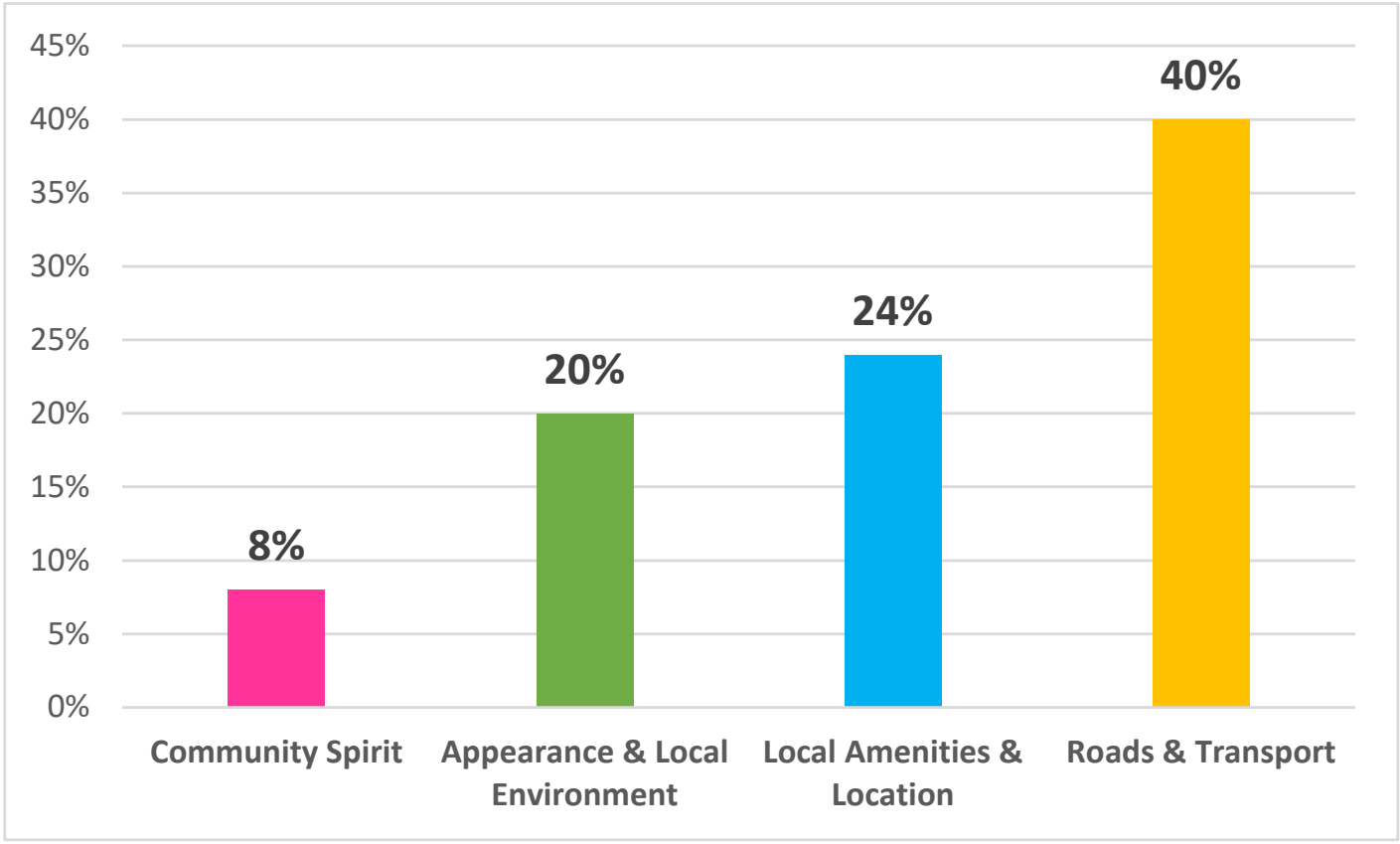
What we **like** - and some of the comments from the survey:

Quotes:

"It's small and quiet. People are polite and courteous. I feel safe."
"Friendly, quiet and rural village"
"Community spirit, nice and quiet"
"I like the history of the families here… appreciate new people in the village that are helping too"
"It has a community that comes together and work with each other"
"The volunteers do a great job in maintaining community spirit"

"The village is colourful"
"What's not to like? Lovely little hamlet. Beautiful surrounding countryside and views"
"The village is semi-rural and great for fishing"
"Plenty of places to run and walk with the dog"

"Well placed for commuters"
"Great location"
"Good houses"
"Quiet and rural"



OUR LIKES & DISLIKES

What we **dislike** - and some of the comments from the survey:

Quotes:

"Nothing for the young kids to do"
"Nothing for teenagers to do"
"Lack of communication with neighbours"

"Empty buildings and sites i.e Lang's Garages"
"We want a better park to cover all ages"
"Don't like the broken glass"
"No cycle path in village"

"Lack of amenities and facilities"
"The fact there is no gas so the price of energy bills are awful"
"Poor internet and signal"
"Don't like that we don't have a wee shop"

"Pavements in disrepair for over 12 years"
"Only 1 bus per hour so restricts me as I don't drive."
"The busy roads"
"We need traffic calming"
"HGV traffic passes me on a 2 foot gap… pavements are too small"
"There is a need to improve railway safety"

THEMES & PRIORITIES

THEME 1: COMMUNITY SPIRIT

Priority 1	Get more people involved in community events and have better communication/ promotion
Priority 2	More activities happening in the village and in the community centre
Priority 3	More children/young people activities and youth club
Priority 4	Continue dinner/breakfast clubs

How can we help move this forward?	
Captured thoughts through the voting event on how this could be achieved:	• "Better promotion of events with more leaflets posted through doors for those not on social media" • "Children's led groups to have more input on decision making" • "Look at funding opportunities for youth activities"
These actions can only be met through working in partnership with various groups. We have identified various groups and organisations that could assist with these actions. This list is not exhaustive.	They are: Gatehead Community Council, Gatehead Bridge Project, East Ayrshire Council - Vibrant Communities, Youth Work Agencies e.g. Barnardos.

THEMES & PRIORITIES

THEME 2: APPEARANCE & LOCAL ENVIRONMENT

Priority 1	Improve river, banking, walkway condition and develop cycle paths
Priority 2	Park for all ages
Priority 3	Improve football pitch
Priority 4	More trees and environmental projects
Priority 5	Utilise community garden more and develop growing allotments
Priority 6	Tackle dog poo and litter

How can we help move this forward?	
Captured thoughts through voting event on how this could be achieved:	• "Better park for older children and young adults" • "Permanent outdoor gym equipment for all ages" • "New play park needed to suit all age groups" • "River and village clean up initiative with partners" • "Would like to see a small orchard of fruit trees in the community garden" • "More litter bins on lampposts for people walking by with rubbish and dog poo bags"
These actions can only be met through working in partnership with various groups. We have identified various groups and organisations that could assist with these actions. This list is not exhaustive.	They are: Gatehead Community Council, East Ayrshire Council - Greener Communities/Environmental Health, Vibrant Communities, East Ayrshire Woodlands, Sustrans Scotland, Ayrshire Rivers Trust, SEPA

THEMES & PRIORITIES

THEME 3: LOCAL AMENITIES & LOCATION

Priority 1	Re-establish post office/bigger post box
Priority 2	Improve energy utility options and pricing/affordability
Priority 3	Improve 3G & Broadband connectivity
Priority 4	Sport facilities
Priority 5	More housing and investment from council
Priority 6	Public toilets

How can we help move this forward?	
Captured thoughts on how this could be achieved:	• "Explore Renewable Energy Schemes and Government Funding options for households" • "Engage with broadband suppliers on options and improving infrastructure"
These actions can only be met through working in partnership with various groups. We have identified various groups and organisations that could assist with these actions. This list is not exhaustive.	They are: East Ayrshire Council - Climate Change Team, Economic Development, Housing, Royal Mail/Post Office, Internet/Phone Providers.

THEMES & PRIORITIES

THEME 4: ROADS & TRANSPORT

Priority 1	Better transport links: trains and bus service
Priority 2	Improve road and pavement conditions
Priority 3	Traffic calming throughout the village to address speeding and heavy traffic
Priority 4	Improve road and railway safety
Priority 5	Improve parking

How can we help move this forward?	
Captured thoughts on how this could be achieved:	• "Manned level crossing for safety" • "Lorries go on dual carriageway" • "More vans away from corner of road to avoid near misses" • "Electric car charging port in the car park" • "Double arm barrier to ground for railway crossing • "Parabolic mirror at end of Milton View so you can see what is speeding round the corner"
These actions can only be met through working in partnership with various groups. We have identified various groups and organisations that could assist with these actions. This list is not exhaustive.	They are: Stagecoach Buses, Strathclyde Partnership for Transport (SPT), Network Rail/Scotrail, Ayrshire Roads Alliance.

THEMES & PRIORITIES

THEME 5: LOCAL ECONOMY

Priority 1	Support pub re-opening/community pub
Priority 2	Community shop/van (fish and fresh produce)
Priority 3	Community Café
Priority 4	More employment opportunities

How can we help move this forward?	
Captured thoughts on how this could be achieved:	• "It would be great to see a wee roll shop or somewhere to buy a paper" • "A community café in the village would be an asset"
These actions can only be met through working in partnership with various groups. We have identified various groups and organisations that could assist with these actions. This list is not exhaustive.	They are: East Ayrshire Council - Economic Development, Gatehead Community Council, Gatehead Bridge Project, Social Enterprise Scotland.

VISION STATEMENTS

These statements have been prepared to summarise the main aspirations for the future as expressed by local people and organisations in their replies to survey and Stakeholder Interviews.

"Always a friendly village… hope it stays that way… we were brought up here and knew everyone when I was younger"

"A very vibrant community with the hard work of Gatehead Community Council and Gatehead Bridge Project paying off"

"A recognised village by the council and not forgotten about"

"A vibrant community and each and every person who lives in it has an individual role to play"

"I like it how it is… To stay quiet and no future developments"

"Ideally I'd like to see a shop, a post office and a pub... The community centre that the whole community patronises… Better bus services"

"Remain small but not forgotten"

"To continue to be semi-rural with good community spirit and looking out for others young and old. And keeping the village tidy and growing"

"Quieter traffic wise… Better setup for kids playing outside… Improved roads and pavements… Better supported by the local council"

"Less noise on main road. The Cochrane to be used as a pub again or shop"

"More sustainable fuel source"

"More vibrant… More Social interaction and build on community spirit"

"Get a shop for the village"

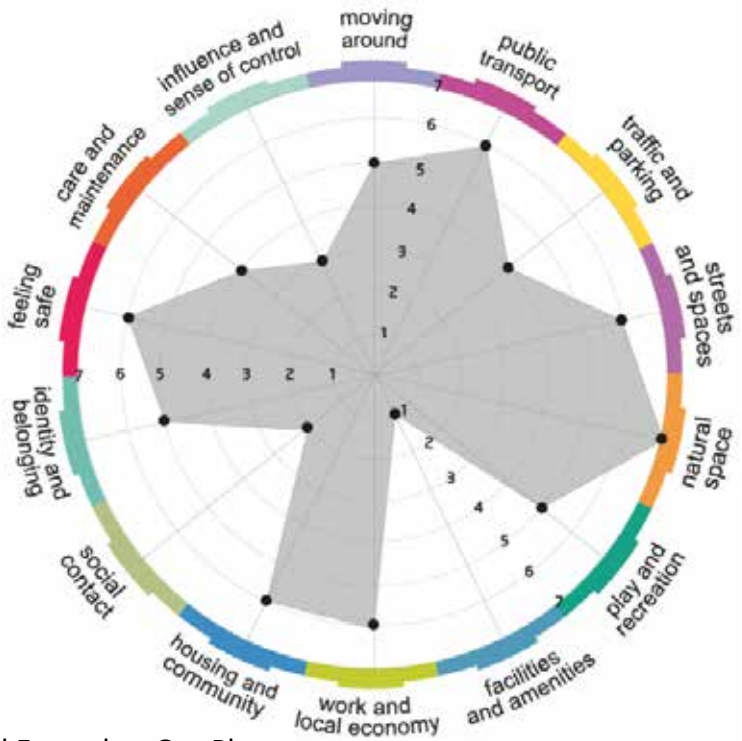
"I would like to see the river cleaned up and properly maintained. Organisations need to take responsibility for it to retain this asset to the village"

LOCAL PLACE PLAN

Local place plans are community-led proposals for land development and use in a specific area, aimed at influencing the future of the community. These plans are prepared by community bodies and include a vision, map, and action plan for the area. They should align with national and local policies and outcomes, reflecting the views and needs of the local community. The council's planning authority must consider the local place plan when preparing or reviewing the local development plan, which guides planning decisions in the area. The aim is to enhance engagement in development planning, empowering communities to play a proactive role in defining the future of their places. Local place plans are an expression of community aspirations and solutions that can influence local planning policy, setting priorities for future development and helping communities develop and deliver their own projects. They are introduced by the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019, granting communities the right to produce their own plans as part of the new Scottish planning system.

Gatehead have started the process of developing a Local Place Plan for their community. As part of the survey collation and consultation phase, data has been gathered around the community's views around Place and vision for the future for Planning matters in their area. A specific question was asked around how to make Gatehead more green, eco-friendly or sustainable community. The feedback from this will be used in progressing a Local Place Plan incorporating the Place Standard Tool for the community which will fall inline with the Local Planning Policy for East Ayrshire.

More information around Local Place Plans can be found on East Ayrshire Council's website and www.ourplace.scot/home/local-place-plans



Place Standard Tool Example—Our Place

MAKING IT HAPPEN

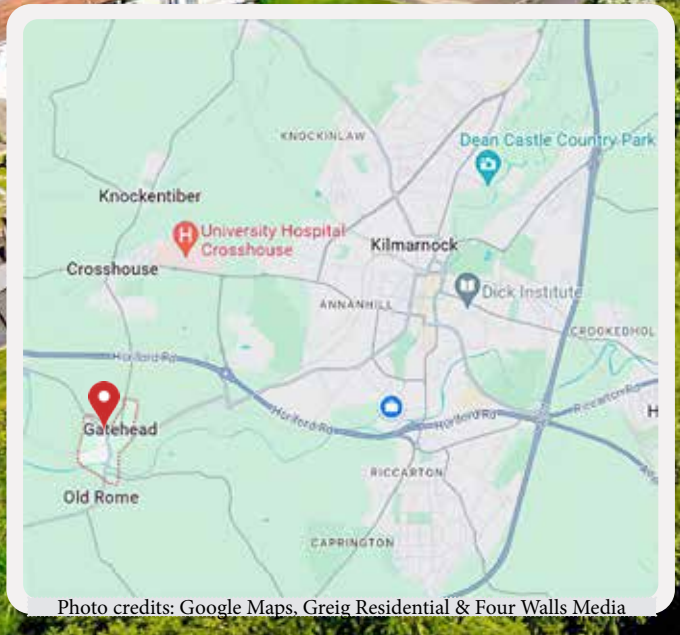
Local groups and individuals will continue to work together to take forward the priorities within the Community Action Plan. The priorities listed here will need to be progressed by the local community and its community organisations with support of a wide range of partners.

If you are interested and want to be involved in any of these priorities, please get in touch with a member of Gatehead Community Council or Community Action Plan Steering Group member.

This Community Action Plan is for the use of the whole community and is jointly owned by all organisations and individuals who have taken part in its preparation. We will be working together over the next 5 years to ensure its implementation.

The Steering Group would like to thank all those who took the time to share their views and to all involved in the CAP process. Thanks to the Vibrant Communities Team of East Ayrshire Council who supported the Steering Group in carrying out all aspects of the work involved in preparing the plan.

For more information regarding Community Action Plans in East Ayrshire, please contact:
vibrantcommunities@east-ayrshire.gov.uk



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