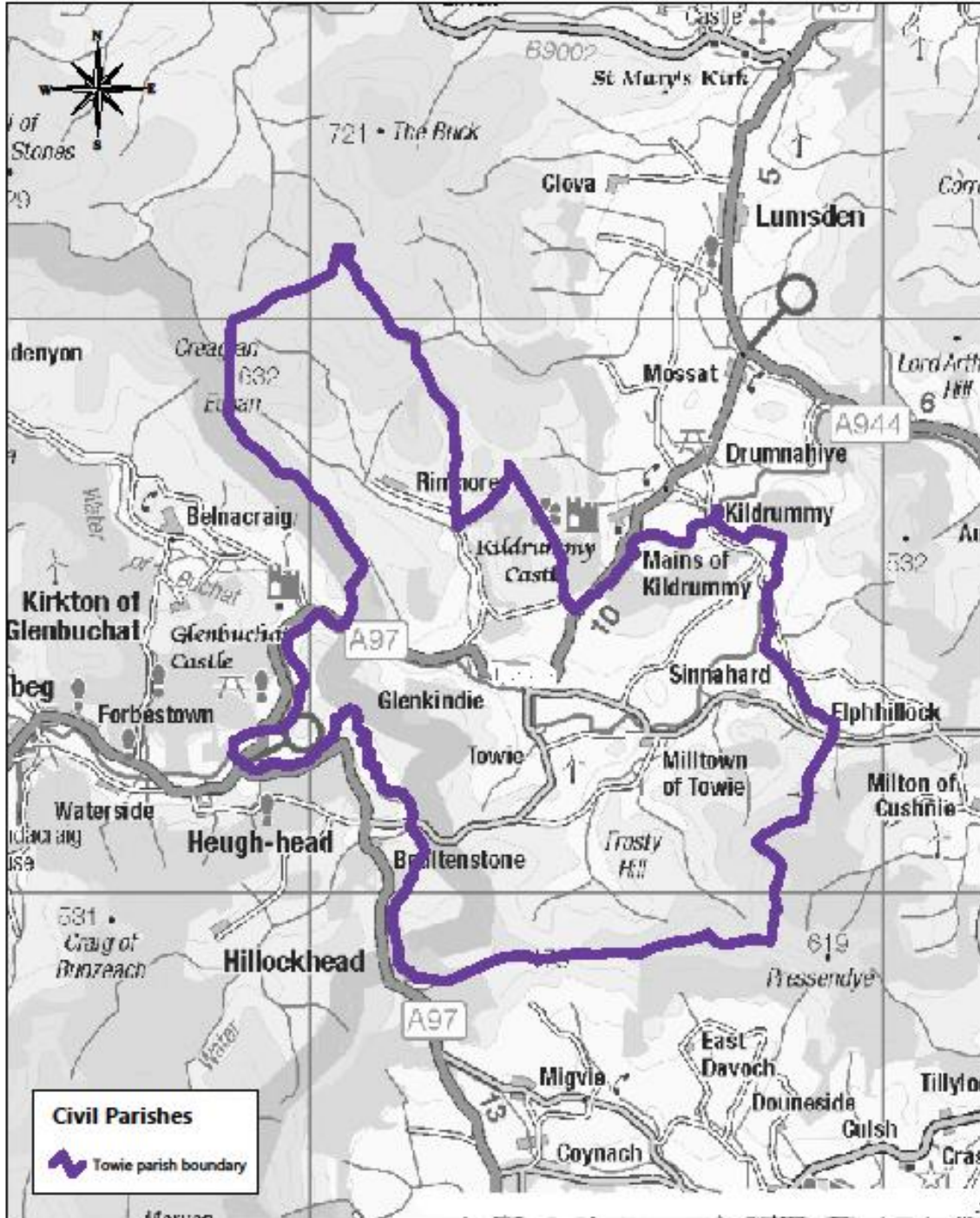




Glenkindie &  
Towie  
Community  
Action Plan  
2019



TOWIE PARISH



This Community Action Plan (CAP) has been prepared by a Steering Group with full members of the Glenkindie & Towie Community Group and addresses a series of issues which have been identified as the most pressing by Glenkindie & Towie community.

The issues were identified following a thorough and inclusive consultation programme carried out over a year. That process is outlined in more detail below. Having identified the main issues, the plan then seeks to highlight the actions and projects which, it is hoped, will assist in resolving the issues, along with key partners. A fuller understanding of the issues can perhaps be appreciated by looking at the setting and history of the area.

## **About Glenkindie and Towie Place**

An open rolling landscape surrounds the main settlements of Glenkindie and Towie; this is the Parish of Towie the boundaries of which inform the loose geographic area of this Community Action Plan. The current parish church, built in the early 19th century, is located in the heart of the small hamlet of Towie, just to the south of a large meander of the River Don: here you will find the Kirk, Primary and Nursery School, Village Hall and the site of Towie Castle. The small road through Towie follows the boundary of the church graveyard, turning almost 90 degrees through the hamlet and out over the river, across the new bridge where a winding road leads past the war memorial to the hamlet of Glenkindie. Spreading along the main road you'll find the Post Office, Shop and Garage, the very first digital telephone exchange in the whole of the British Isles, Bowling Green and the site of the currently closed Glenkindie Hotel. The beautiful landscape is shaped by the area's land industries of agricultural and sporting estates. Towie Parish in Upper Donside shares borders with Strathdon, Glenbuchat, Cabrach,

Kildrummy, Cushnie, Tarland, Migvie and Logie Coldstone. A very rural area with beautiful scenery.

## **Past**

There is evidence of a rich history through anecdotes passed on from generation to generation and in the fabric of the land itself. This includes prehistoric evidence of man's endeavours, standing stones and other officially scheduled monuments whose full meaning and purpose are still not fully understood. There was believed to be a stone circle where one standing stone can still be seen (although it had fallen over and was put up again the wrong way), whilst four of the original stones were brought up on sledges to the shoemaker's house and one is supposedly used to hold the plaque of the Upper Donside Bowling Green. Dr. Ross (now deceased) remembered when he was at school the stones being moved. Some were used as lintels.

This unassuming area was central to the history and politics of Scotland where neighbouring Kildrummy Castle, built in the 13th century, was a seat of the kings of Scotland for a time.





The latter ruin, now run by Historic Scotland, can still be visited today but unfortunately the ruins of our own Towie Castle, built in the early seventeenth century, were razed to the ground in 1968 for fears of safety. Senior pupils at Towie School had enjoyed spending lunchtimes on the castle. Not long after the demolition, the education of these pupils was moved to Alford Academy. Some former students still remember the ruins fondly as well as the weekend when a memorial cairn was built and the ex Towie pupils all camped in Towie hall. Whilst the boys built the cairn, under the supervision of Mr Brasso of the Academy, the girls did the catering using old recipes supervised by their domestic science teacher. A plaque outside Towie Hall on the old wall points to the cairn.

Glenkindie and Towie were always small hamlets but like many rural areas, they were previously much more populous. Even as the parish with the greatest decrease in population over the early 20th century it was still busier over much of the 20th century than it is today. Over that period, as they do today, estates owned much of the land. These estates rented out crofts and farms to tenant farmers and the Laird employed people directly to

manage the shooting, fishing, gardens as well as domestic staff for the "Big Hoose". Although still a bustling community, the historically larger population supported shops and services closer to home, and as such there was a variety across the area including grocers found at Nether Towie, Newton, Sinnahard, Inverden, and Bridgend. Latterly the laird moved the Bridgend shop down to Newbigging where a shoemaker could be found across the road, with a second at Jacobs Stane on the Back Burn of Towie right in the middle of a field! There was even a cycle shop where the garage is now and where the 'Monaced Mutineer', Topless, left his bicycle when he was on the run from the police. A woollen mill and a lint mill could be found at the mouth of the Kindie burn, and graveyards at Nether Towie and Belnaboth where there had been chapels. The present 19th century church likely occupies a much earlier ecclesiastical site, and indeed a carved medieval stone built into the graveyard wall attests to this. There were smithies at Burnend and near Waterside, as well as meal mills at the Mill house, Old Mains and possibly Glenkindie Arms where the 'Feein' market took place until it died out in the 1930s. The 'Feein' market



was where the agricultural workers could change jobs and farms at term times in May and November. Towie boasts to have one of the oldest horsemen, who left school at thirteen and spent the next seven years of his life as horseman on his father's farm. He had to plough the fields and if a 'yirder' (very large stone) stopped his plough, had to try and manoeuvre his way round it. The meaning of Trancie Hill is 'cultivated hill'. The estates also rented out property for a post office and general merchant: the original post office was at Inverkindie where the customers were served at a window before it moved first to Kindie Cottage, then onto the shop at Newbigging which in former years was a private girl's school, then a dressmaker. The Glenkindie estate also built Brebber House to accommodate a doctor for the parish. It was a busy bustling place.

## Present

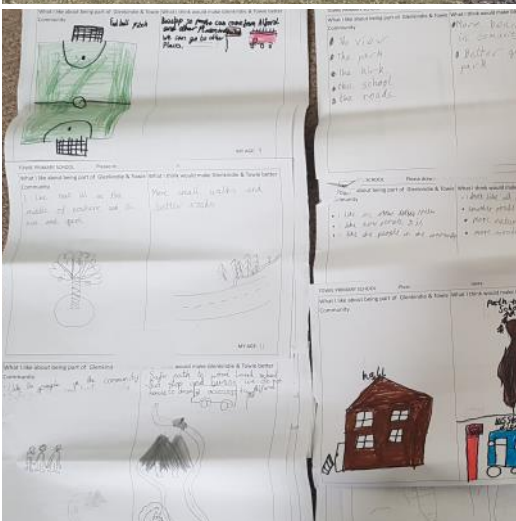
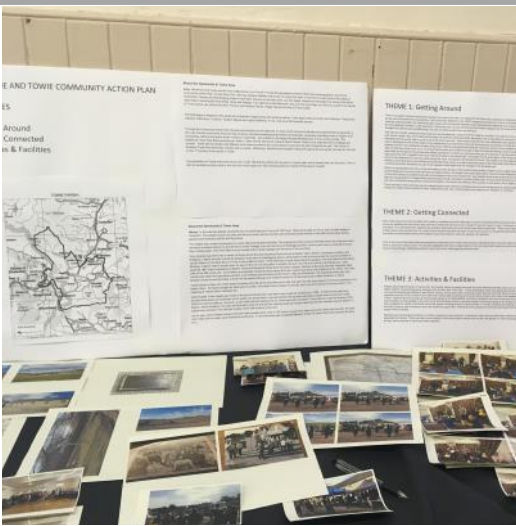
The population of Towie at the last census in 2011 was 126; the school roll has grown in recent years and at present has over 50 pupils although some pupils reside in neighbouring parishes. There is also an excellent nursery school, the only one in the Upper Don glen serving preschool children all the way

to Corgarff. The Church of Scotland Towie Kirk shares its minister with Lumsden, Kildrummy, Strathdon and Corgarff. Residents now travel for GP services in either Strathdon or Alford; senior students go to Alford Academy, and the Post Office is housed at the central garage, which also the home of the only shop in the Parish.

Through the Community Action Plan themes and priorities, we will elaborate on some of the community facilities and opportunities but generally in this very friendly community, there are lots of active volunteers keeping going facilities and activities, supporting interesting clubs or hobbies such as a Gun Club, bowling which takes place indoors during the winter months in Towie Hall, and outside on the Upper Donside Bowling green in the summer months. The traditional Towie Pipe Band practices are held in Towie Hall and the Towie & District Senior Citizens Club uses the hall for meetings and concert. Towie Hall committee hold different fundraisers as do the Glenkindie & Towie Community Group, School Parent Council and the Kirk throughout the year.

We very much hope this Community Action Plan will help us make this great place even better.





The Glenkindie & Towie Community Group was developed in 2017 with representatives of the various groups in the area including the Community Council, Bowling Club, Towie Senior Citizens Club, Towie Hall, Towie Pipe Band, the Glenkindie Gun Club and Towie Parent Council. A year on they recognised that it was a good time to undertake the process of Community Action Planning. The Association Chair and Community Council representative contacted Marr Area Partnership who then supported them throughout the process. The Steering Group endeavoured to ensure everybody, as far as possible, had the opportunity to contribute their thoughts. Some of the key activities the steering group undertook are outlined as follows:

- designed a questionnaire and made it available to a wide sample of community groups and individuals
- highlighted the survey opportunity in the Press, on community social media, through posters and with direct communication in local groups in an attempt to maximise the number of responses.

- worked with the local primary schools to seek the views of the children on their priorities
- analysed the responses to the questionnaire & primary consultation including making sure that the broad demographic was represented
- feedback display and discussions at a well-attended open public event
- collated and analysed all the information and drew up a thematic outline of the issues and potential projects which emerged from the questionnaire and Open Days
- reached out again to groups, individuals and other stakeholders to further check interpretation and detail suitable actions
- prepared a draft Plan on the basis of all previous engagement, data gathering, analysis and discussion
- presented the draft at a further open public event to check the community recognised it as a true reflection of the community's priorities
- prepared this final plan



## Areas for Action

The actions, issues, and aspirations raised, and corresponding actions proposed by the community, have been grouped into three themes and are summarised in the table at the end of this plan. The context and further information about each theme are described in more detail in the themes' narrative that follows. These reflect the current situation when the action plan was developed, but will be supplemented by further actions as these are identified over time. Community action planning is a dynamic and progressive process that will reflect the priorities of the communities as they evolve. It is also dependent on the involvement and energy of the community to enable actions to be achieved.

## Key Themes

**THEME 1:** Getting Around

**THEME 2:** Getting Connected

**THEME 3:** Activities & Facilities

## Themes Narrative

**THEME 1: Getting Around**

There is no public transport serving this remote rural community and it's understood that there will be significant challenges to fully addressing the issues around transport and connectivity. This community features on the SIMD (Scottish Indicators of Multiple Deprivation) recognised as deprived in terms of Access to Services. There is a relatively small population for traditional public buses and commercial operators and households are dispersed over a large geographic area around the two settlement clusters: Towie where the community hall, church, school and community playpark can





be found, and Glenkindie where the garage/Post Office/local shop /Bowling Club and currently closed hotel can be found.

The network of small, winding but fast roads are not considered by most to be fit for walkers or cyclists. The majority of survey respondents, along with school children, did not feel that the area has sufficient foot/cycle paths generally or as an alternative to using the roads, whilst also reporting that they would walk or cycle more if this were improved. Safe routes to link the two main settlements was agreed as the main priority, and a good starting point with a further desire to link settlements and individual homes. This would also enable access to the countryside including the River Don which runs between the two main settlement clusters, and primary children expressed

hope that the route from school to the woodland school could be made safer so that they could use it more. For those that are able and confident enough to take the informal walking routes through the area they fully appreciate accessing the countryside and feeling connected. Currently a cross community group is working on access issues and is promoting a high level route from Corgarff to the South West and Gartly to the North East. This project, known as Kingdom of the Picts, aspires to have access points to the settlements in the lower glens along the route, including to Glenkindie and Towie. This will enable and encourage access to a challenging walking route linking local communities and potentially bringing visitors to support local

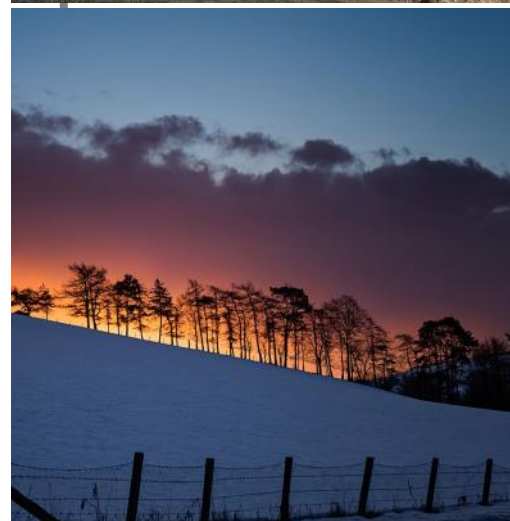


services; however the linking paths that have begun to be identified could also be further developed as part of the network of safe paths that are needed to link the local area.

Whilst it is appreciated that safe cycling and walking routes are part of the solution, there is also a need to look at viable transport options to link this remote dispersed community with services and opportunities in the larger towns particularly Alford, where the local high school, GP services and Community Campus are located, along with some transport links to the nearest city. Very specific issues arose around school bus times, and the need for young people to independently access extracurricular activities in

and out of term time. A local charity known as the Silver Circle runs a shopping bus, with user contribution taking elderly residents fortnightly in the winter, and weekly in the summer to local towns, which is highly valued.

There were also some comments about maintaining the road networks, including issues around maintenance of surfaces particularly potholes and overgrown verges obscuring field of vision. Responses were very mixed around snow clearing from 'fantastic' to 'very poor'.





**THEME 2: Getting Connected**

Most respondents don't feel satisfied with mobile or broadband services although for some households there have been improvements. Although some are satisfied with the service they receive, for others the service is poor enough to have an impact on work, including running businesses, and education. It's understood that neighbouring, similarly dispersed rural communities also have these issues. There is a new national policy for infrastructure improvements but it's unclear what this will mean for this community. It is recognised that exploring this should be the first action, to include linking with neighbouring communities to clarify the situation and address the need.

Prior to the community action planning process the Glenkindie & Towie Community Group already understood that it would be useful for the community to have a community notice board. The process highlighted that there is wider desire for this and also what locations would be the most useful with the central shop/garage and Towie Hall being the preferred sites.



## THEME 3: Activities & Facilities

People appreciate the sense of community, the friendly nature of people here and the public facilities that they have such as the shop/ garage/ Post Office, school, school playground, Bowling Club, the Kirk and Towie Hall. Those participating value and appreciate groups that regularly meet such as the Bowling Club and the Towie Senior Citizens Group, along with occasional events such as the Duck Race and one off get togethers such as a Pop Up Bar in Towie Hall. Others attend activities such as the Silver Circle Lunch Club in neighbouring Strathdon(7kms). However, the community do miss having access to a hotel/ café/bar and there is evidence from the community action planning process that some people can feel isolated in this community, and that there is both a

need and desire to see more going on for all age groups. The community have suggested a variety of activities and social events including fitness focused activities. A number of people are already volunteering to support activities, however new volunteers would be needed to support this. Positively some currently not involved expressed that they would be willing to support new activities.

Maintaining and developing facilities is critical to supporting more activities. In particular Towie Hall could be better utilised with upgraded facilities especially the kitchen. There was also some interest in improving outdoor spaces such as the 'wild garden' or improving play areas based at the primary school and aforementioned paths networks.



THEME 1: Getting Around				
Projects	Issue/Need	Short to Medium Term Actions 1-3 Years	Long Term Goal Actions 3-10 Years	Potential Key partners
Improving Road & Road Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Safety</li> <li>Verge maintenance</li> <li>Hedges (visibility issues)</li> <li>Condition of Roads (pot holes)</li> <li>Traffic Control - speeding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Make sure Aberdeenshire Council is aware of views.</li> <li>Working with Aberdeenshire Council to develop understanding of responsibilities and limitations</li> <li>Explore opportunities for the community to be involved</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Better quality/safer roads</li> <li>Multi user roads</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Donside Community Council</li> <li>Landowners</li> <li>Aberdeenshire Council</li> <li>North Marr Community Safety Group</li> </ul>
Paths Development & Maintenance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To have a sufficient paths network to safely connect the community and access facilities and the countryside.</li> <li>Paths accessible by all</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Link with recently established paths group</li> <li>Safe footpaths developed</li> <li>Glenkindie-Towie</li> <li>Towie School-Forest School (Green Bridge)</li> <li>Routes identified</li> <li>Way markers/promotion</li> <li>Maintenance schedule</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Good, broad access well maintained, well used paths network</li> <li>Further development for more widely accessible paths:</li> <li>Buggies/lower mobility users</li> <li>Socially connected healthy community.</li> <li>Accessible, well used facilities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Kingdom of the Picts Group</li> <li>SCDT Paths Group</li> <li>Sustrans</li> <li>Local landowners</li> <li>Paths for All</li> <li>Marr Area Partnership</li> <li>Aberdeenshire Council</li> <li>Marr Area Digital Paths Forum</li> </ul>



THEME 1: Getting Around				
Projects	Issue/Need	Short to Medium Term Actions 1-3 Years	Long Term Goal Actions 3-10 Years	Potential Key partners
Transport Solutions Broad Population	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Currently no public transport</li> <li>• The community should have options for transport that don't rely on accessing a private car.</li> <li>• No links to transport connections</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Link with neighbouring communities to establish an effective Transport Group</li> <li>• Explore options including:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review other rural areas' provision</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sustainable, reliable, and efficient transport options established</li> <li>• Access to education, services, health, wellbeing &amp; work opportunities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aberdeenshire Bus Forum</li> <li>• Community Transport Scotland</li> <li>• Aberdeenshire Council</li> <li>• SUSTRANS</li> <li>• Neighbouring community group</li> </ul>
Transport Solutions Young People	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Issues with timings of school transport</li> <li>• Length of journey</li> <li>• Issues accessing campus for after school activities/study.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish parent/youth group</li> <li>• Link to broader transport group as above</li> <li>• Explore safe/formal transport sharing options</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sustainable reliable, safe, efficient transport options established where all young people have access to the same opportunities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parent Council</li> <li>• Alford Campus Users Group</li> <li>• Aberdeenshire Council</li> <li>• CLD</li> <li>• Sport &amp; Leisure</li> </ul>

THEME 2: Getting Connected				
Projects	Issue/Need	Short to Medium Term Actions 1-3 Years	Long Term Goal Actions 3-10 Years	Potential Key partners
Broadband and Mobile Connectivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Patchy mobile and broadband provision throughout the area</li> <li>Impact on developing/running business and education</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish if there are planned infrastructure improvements</li> <li>Link with neighbouring communities to establish/map unmet need.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All households, public spaces and businesses have good mobile coverage and internet access</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Aberdeenshire Council</li> <li>Scottish Government</li> <li>Service Providers</li> <li>Neighbouring communities</li> </ul>
Notice Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Better local communication</li> <li>Events &amp; services etc</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Well located notice board(s)</li> <li>Determine position</li> <li>Liaise with site owners</li> <li>Design/Contract</li> <li>Fundraise</li> <li>Plan content maintenance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>People are informed</li> <li>Events/Jobs/Services</li> <li>Events are better attended</li> <li>Upkeep &amp; maintenance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>G&amp;T Community Group</li> <li>Towie Hall</li> <li>Glenkindie Central Garage/Post Office</li> <li>Aberdeenshire Council</li> </ul>
THEME 3: Activities & Facilities				
Projects	Issue/Need	Short to Medium Term Actions 1-3 Years	Long Term Goal Action 3-10 Years	Potential Key partners
Towie Hall Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Hall could be better used with upgraded facilities</li> <li>The kitchen is not fit for purpose</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Design and cost improvements</li> <li>Fundraising</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fit for purpose, sustainable, and well used hall</li> <li>More social and wellbeing activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Towie Hall Group</li> </ul>



THEME 3: Activities & Facilities				
Projects	Issue/Need	Short to Medium Term Actions 1-3 Years	Long Term Goal Action 3-10 Years	Potential Key partners
Social Opportunities & Events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tackle social isolation</li> <li>• Need more volunteers to:</li> <li>• Support current activity</li> <li>• Develop new activity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coordinated approach to support new or established groups and activities:</li> <li>• Events group</li> <li>• Regular activities</li> <li>• Organised outings e.g. theatre/film nights</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved social opportunities</li> <li>• Vibrant healthy connected communities</li> <li>• Succession for volunteers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Towie Hall</li> <li>• G&amp;T Community Group</li> <li>• Bowling Club</li> <li>• Towie School</li> <li>• Church</li> </ul>
Availability of Fitness Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Specific interest in group fitness activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fund trial block fitness class</li> <li>• Identify shared interest in potential group activities</li> <li>• Walking/running/nutrition</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Healthy active community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Private business/instructor</li> <li>• Strathdon Walking Group</li> <li>• Walks to Health</li> </ul>
Outdoor Activity Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve offer for outdoor activity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feasibility of multipurpose community sports area</li> <li>• MUGA Pitch</li> <li>• Playpark improvement</li> <li>• Design &amp; fundraise</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appropriate facility developed</li> <li>• Healthy, active community</li> <li>• Social space</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Towie School</li> <li>• G&amp;T Group</li> <li>• Aberdeenshire Council</li> </ul>

# Community Action Plan

This booklet is one of a series produced by the Local Rural Partnerships for a number of communities in Aberdeenshire.

This initiative is sponsored by Aberdeenshire Community Planning Partnership and run by Aberdeenshire Local Rural Partnerships. The aim is to provide community action plans in an attractive, easy to read, professionally printed format.

This information can now guide the community and Community Planning Partners in drawing up detailed action plans to implement the top priorities as well as addressing the other issues which have been identified.

For each priority or issue this will involve agreeing who should be involved, what resources will be needed and target dates for completion. It is hoped that this process will be driven by representatives of the community with support - moral, technical & financial - from the relevant Partners.

It is important that this booklet is seen by all concerned as an account of the community's views at the time of the latest consultation, and that it will have to be regularly updated. As some projects are completed, other issues will arise and take their place in future versions of the community plan.

It is recommended that this plan has a maximum life of five years.

Thanks are due to all of the Glenkindie & Towie Area community who submitted their views, contributed to the validation of priorities and helped finalise the actions. Thanks to all those who provided photographs. Also thanks to Marr Area Partnership and Aberdeenshire Council for supporting our Community to undertake this process.

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