

CUMNOCK

WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING - WHAT WE'VE LEARNED



SNAPSHOT

The Cumnock Action Plan (CAP) continue to deliver the aims of the 5-year community plan, building upon the ambitious outdoor projects that include: The Memory Garden, Tower Street Project and Woodroad Park.

As part of the regeneration of Woodroad Park, a project to upgrade existing paths was completed earlier in the year. More accessible routes, coupled with new signage, has encouraged local people to further utilise this beautiful space. This work was delivered in conjunction with Central Scotland Green Network Trust and East Ayrshire Woodlands (EAW) and was funded by Scottish Forestry.

The Gardening Group have been incredibly proactive, planting 1,200 saplings in the park, and a further 1,300 crocuses and 10,000 daffodils around the town. This was funded through CAP, EAW and Morrison's Construction, the company behind the construction of the new [Barony Campus](#).

The Cumnock History Group, the trailblazer for the History and Heritage theme within the Community Action Plan, have been working on a number of projects, including Cumnock Connections Family which boasts over 48,000 names, and their most recent project, [Ploughing Up Our Past](#), which aims to preserve local farming heritage, by capturing old stories and pictures from the local farming community. They also continue to regularly engage their 3000 followers on Facebook.

The Cumnock Tryst ran a series of [free workshops](#) that featured Artistic Director, James MacMillan in conversation with some of the most famous and inspiring writers, photographers, naturalists and sound-recordists in the world.

CAMPS (SCIO) made the most of the lockdown and completed much of their planned internal and external refurbishment at the Barrhill Centre.



At this time, we would like to pay tribute to [Bobby Grierson](#) who died suddenly in April 2020. Bobby was a driving force behind several community groups, including CAP and the History Group and will be sorely missed.

Further respects are paid to [Nan McMurdo MBE](#), who passed away peacefully during the year. Nan received an MBE for her services to local disadvantaged and vulnerable people.

We would also like to pay tribute to [Eric Bennett](#), who's energy and leadership of Cumnock Juniors Community Enterprise inspired and supported so many people.

Resilience Groups

Following news of national lockdown in March 2020 Vibrant Communities turned much of their attention to supporting communities by setting up resilience groups and hubs across the authority. "Within Cumnock and surrounding area there were several resilience groups established who supported: emergency food supplies, collecting and delivering prescriptions, food shopping, phone calls to vulnerable / isolated residents." Emma Waugh (Vibrant Communities, East Ayrshire Council)

CJCE sits both geographically and socially at the heart of the community, where they deliver a wide range of well regarded community programmes. Their initial involvement in the East Ayrshire Council 'Resilience Program' came after a support request from the council to provide food provision for local families and individuals in Cumnock and the surrounding area. Over the last 6 months they have worked in partnership with local groups, businesses, and community members, providing approximately 3000 food parcels to over 200 families and individuals.



As well as addressing food poverty, feedback has indicated the positive emotional and psychological impact food deliveries provide, offering both reassurance and comfort to people.

"You have moved the clouds from over the sun." community member



Lochnorris Primary School
@LochnorrisPrim1

This afternoon we will be delivering food parcels to people who completed our discrete 'We Care Wednesday' Form. The support we've had from @CJCEnterprise has been outstanding! Together we can achieve wonderful things! Thanks again @CJCEnterprise 🍌🍌🍌 #TeamLochnorris 💜

"Primarily, we provide the logistical support and, through a network of volunteers, deliver food parcels to people identified by our partners. The issue has now shifted to food poverty due to unemployment, furlough and isolation which is compounded by the fact many families were struggling with these issues pre-coronavirus." David White

Due to the nature of the pandemic, restrictions, funding, and available resources, as an organisation one of the main challenges has been the need to constantly pivot and adjust support to suit an ever-changing environment. For example, as lockdown eased, support was filtered through schools.

"We provided 80 parcels per week to 4 local schools, which were broken down and distributed to 140 vulnerable children and families. In addition to this, we worked with two home link organisations who deliver to isolated individuals and provide a weekly drop in hub." "As an organisation the programme has created a stronger bond with the community as it has connected us with individuals who we may not normally engage with. Similarly, the nature of this programme is not our "normal" delivery which has meant developing relationships with local groups/organisations." David White

CJCE will look to continue to offer resources / support to the community, greatly aiding the response to food poverty in Cumnock.

Yipworld is an award winning charitable enterprise which provides a wide variety of services to children, young people and their extended family

Adapting Delivery

Yipworld has more than 4500 members on the database and is now providing second generation activities to children, young people, and their families since opening in 2000. Support is provided through several avenues, such as, employability; social prescribing for people with low level mental health issues, including the use of holistic therapies; a range of contemporary and traditional youth work, for example, the new 'bike hoose' initiative.



The Coalfields Regeneration Trust (CRT) giving a grant of £5,000 to Yipworld

Janice Hendry (CEO Yipworld)

"In April 2020 we had to think on our feet and do things differently. We quickly organised support and connection through a variety of means." For employment, we offered online meetings, telephone calls and one to one meetings with guidelines. Access to the building was limited but with the right health and safety and PPE in place, we were able to allow people access to internet or resources in the I.T. suite."

"As part of our social prescribing service, we supported 100+ people through garden visits; walk/talk sessions; telephone calls; online activities and delivered flowers to those socially isolated. "

"For children and young people, more than 400 'survival' bags were delivered, offering outdoor / family games; arts and crafts activities; sweets treats and toiletries, which helped boost confidence and provided families with the knowledge we were still there for them. We also provided shoes and clothing for families living in financial crisis."

"To further engage with our communities, we organised a range of online competitions and STEM (Science, technology, engineering and mathematics) activities to try at home. We have continued to provide led cycle rides for children and young people to encourage better health and wellbeing and for children under 12 years, we were able to open during the evenings for youth work activities. We offered further support to young people through our detached street work."



Passionate about communities

Cumnock Action Plan (CAP) has led on organising a variety of annual events and celebrations for and with the local community.

Before coronavirus, the main highlight of each year is the Christmas Festival where 2000+ people enjoy the market stalls; street entertainers; live music from school pupils and funfair rides. Community spirit is in abundance with local shops providing competitions and in-shop activities, businesses owners dressing the tree and keeping volunteers warm with teas and coffees and the local church providing warm refreshments and arts and crafts activities for families. However, Christmas 2020 looked somewhat different.



“We have a passion to provide this on an annual basis because we know the importance of bringing people together. We certainly did not want to have coronavirus stand in our way.”

“Each year we have the Young Citizen of the Year taking the lead for the big countdown and culmination of switching on the Christmas lights. However, due to the restrictions it was not possible to have an audience, so we hosted an online event featuring the young person instead.”

Building on the Christmas cheer throughout pandemic restrictions, CAP decided to focus on specific groups within the community. The idea of an ‘afternoon tea’ for older people saw volunteers deliver boxes of delicious patisseries and sandwiches to 117 members of local community groups. This gesture was well received and offered reassurance to more socially isolated members of the community.

CAP also provided young children with gifts from ‘Santa’. Volunteers delivered more than 300 presents to Lochnorris Primary, Cherry Trees Nursery and Hillside School within the Barony Campus.



Many of our members have contacted me to say just how much they enjoyed their afternoons tea. Thank you so much, this is really appreciated.

What have we learned together?

The response of the community during the pandemic has demonstrated the incredible strength and resilience of local people, groups and organisations, moreover, their sense of solidarity and ability to adapt in the face of adversity.

"Like many of my colleagues, I have felt the frustrations of supporting a community from afar. This seemed magnified, when building relationships from a virtual 'ground up'. However, the Cumnock community have been incredibly welcoming. I have engaged local groups and organisations which has enabled me to build relationships and develop a broad overview of the community. During the first few months of this role, I have mainly focused on building relationships locally and carrying out a community mapping exercise, after a period of absence on the ground. By gathering this information and learning about local priorities, I was able to identify a number of themes." Fraser Stone, Community Co-ordinator Corra Foundation

Brokering Relationships

There can be a disconnect between local groups and organisations for many reasons, often a supportive voice can be helpful in brokering/strengthening these relationships. Feedback has highlighted the important role Corra plays in this area.

Strengthening relationships in this way helps identify shared priorities and common goals. Furthermore, highlights opportunities for collaborative working and future partnerships. There is an opportunity to build better bridges between the community and the Barony Campus, ensuring local groups and organisations in the community and new campus best complement one another.

Strengthening Youth Voice

Feedback has indicated that young people could offer greater contributions with regards to decision-making in the town; feel more involved with local projects and opportunities and feel pride and encouraged to invest positively in their community.

Participation

As restrictions are lifted, there is an opportunity to support existing / develop new local groups. Feedback suggests that creating groups specifically for men, that build on their strengths and interests could increase social wellbeing and offer better support in the community. This work will begin by helping to create a Cumnock Men's Shed.



What happens next?

CAP will reflect on the journey to date and build on ideas and themes towards the next action plan. A heritage piece, designed by Bespoke Aletier, in conjunction with the community, will be created as part of 'phase one' for the Memory Garden. Work on the Tower Steet project will begin in Summer with the hope that both projects are finished by September 2021.

The Businesses Association have created new branding for the town and, in conjunction with CAP, will produce a brochure to welcome people moving to the area and highlight local amenities.



The Musical Celebration of the Coalfields, commissioned by Coalfield Communities Landscape Partnership (CCPL), will be created, and led by The Cumnock Tryst, will involve around 15 local community groups.

The Heritage Centre, created by Jim Smith, are looking forward to officially opening their doors of the 1200m2 facility, which boasts an incredible variety of restored historic exhibits and offers a wealth of possibility for community members and local groups.

Vibrant Communities will build on the great supportive work it has demonstrated since its inception and most recently in the response to the coronavirus pandemic. The Service will have a particular focus on people and place, through a place-based approach to service delivery, further strengthening its work in creating a kind, caring and Connected

East Ayrshire; tackling social isolation and loneliness, poverty, mental/physical health & wellbeing and that continued drive to strengthen further community empowerment and ensuring the most vulnerable are supported when they need it the most.

Corra will continue to champion community-led ideas, encouraging collaborative working and building bridges that better support and connect the community and encourage / strengthen community voice.



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People in Place - moving forwards

People in Place continue to work alongside nine communities in Scotland, supporting local people to connect, collaborate on ideas and take action to create positive change. The local activity and learning from each community help shape plans for the place, the wider programme and policy.

Coronavirus has brought additional challenges to communities and amplified existing inequalities. Across each community the themes of participation, voice and space continue to be evident. Similar challenges were observed across the communities because of coronavirus, including food insecurity, digital access, and financial concerns.

Within each community, individuals, groups, and organisations responded quickly, coordinating support to those that required it, through local knowledge, connections, and access to resources. The pandemic has evidenced the importance and value of communities coming together, having a say in decisions and control over resources, and opened new relationships with local government. Community Co-ordinators were able to support local responses by helping to connect community members together with groups and partner organisations through the relationships established prior to the pandemic. Adaptability in approach was also key as well as providing support with accessing available funding.

Corra will continue to support communities to connect, share learning, and use their voice to influence systems and processes. This will require creative approaches that bring communities and partners together in spaces, whether physical or digital, without barriers to participation so that everyone, including those furthest from power, can contribute towards building forward better.



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