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Introduction:

This Community Action Plan for Alford was put together by a working group of the Donside Community Council (DCC) and the Alford and Area Community Development Group (CDG), with support from the Marr Area Partnership (MAP) and Community Learning and Development (CLD).

This Plan describes the priorities of local people to improve their community and how these will be progressed, with the help and support of statutory services where needed.

Alford has an active Community and some issues and suggestions have already been actioned by people/groups. These are acknowledged and highlighted as Actual Project Leads.

The Plan was developed from information collected at a public meeting “Hae Yer Say” in April 2009, when over 150 local residents attended, a follow up meeting in July 2009, plus other inputs to the Donside Community Council and the Alford and Area Development Group.

This Plan will also be considered by the Marr Local Community Planning Group to contribute to the review of the Marr Local Community Plan 2010- 2014.

See website,

www.ouraberdeenshire.org.uk

Oor Alford

The Alford Community Action Plan also reflects the most frequent issues raised by residents, highlighting the challenges faced at present followed by the proposed action and who the proposed Lead Group/Organisation is for carrying out this action. In addition people identified a diverse range of potential projects and opportunities, from celebrating local historical events and entertainment to addressing pollution.

There is obviously a wealth of interest and skills among the folk of Alford. The Donside Community Council are keen to support any project that will benefit the people of Alford and welcome contact from any individual or group willing to progress them.

Contact John Lewis: Chairman; Email:

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ALFORD - PAST - PRESENT - FUTURE...

The Community Action Plan is the opportunity to influence the future development of Alford and ensure it is a place where we, and our children and grandchildren, would want to live.

Alford in the Past 40's, 50's & 60's (Our thanks to Liz Law Secretary, The Alford Local History Group):

The railway came to the village in 1859 and although small, Alford had around 30 houses and was the centre of the fertile and prosperous district known as 'The Howe of Alford', with the River Don running through it and dominated by that lovely feature, Bennachie. The Vale of Alford had always been a farming area, with its cattle market, held every Tuesday and some times on a Saturday for Special Sales – farmers came to buy and sell cattle and sheep, also their wives and families came to shop, and shop they could, in the wide variety of businesses. The Railway Station would have been a very busy place, with goods leaving the village by rail, such as cattle, grain and timber, and arriving – cattle feed, fertilisers, coal and other farm related goods. From the 1940s to early 60s Alford Secondary School had around 250 pupils, with children coming from the outlying small schools. There were 3 Churches– The Auld Kirk (West Church), East Church and St. Andrews Episcopal Church – until West and East Churches became one. After the war years, there was still a good number of working 'small crofts' within the village boundaries with one serving as a Slaughterhouse. Houses began to be built from 1947 onwards, making Alford as it is today. Giving work to many in the community were the trade businesses, based within the village – Stonemason, Plumber, Electrician, Joiners, Undertakers, Slater, Painter/Decorators as well as 2 haulage contractors and a smithy, where Lonenwell Garage is today, and probably the biggest employer was The Don Valley Egg Packing Station and Buying Group. There were 3 surgeries in the village, which were attached to where the Doctors' lived – Rosemount, Rose bank and Correen. Alford Cattle Show, held in July, was a great day for the village folk and the farming community, the last show being in 1968. As for entertainment, dances were held in the Public Hall (a rather cold, dreich place at that time), the TA Hall, which was across from the Public Hall, or in the hall at the Forbes Arms (The Brig) and in the summer the SAI Hanger (which was opposite the golf club entrance) hosted some big bands from the South.

Alford Present:

Alford is a small country town, nestled in the vale of Alford, skirted by the picturesque River Don and surrounded by the hills of Bennachie and Coreen. Alford has many amenities including, Transport Museum, Heritage Centre, Railway Museum and Station, Dry Ski Slope, Swimming Pool, Bowling Green and Golf Course. Alford serves a large rural area including Corgarff, Craigievar, Cushnie, Dunecht, Echt, Glenkindie, Keig, Kildrummy, Lumsden, Midmar, Millbank, Montagarrie, Monymusk, Mossat, Muir of Fowlis, Sauchen, Strathdon, Tillfourie, Tough, Towie, Tullynessle and Whitehouse. The Alford School campus includes the Primary School, the Academy, the Community Centre, the Library and the Area Office. The Academy and Community hosts 13 Primary Schools geographically spread across the area of approximately 600 square miles and stretches from the Lecht in the West to the villages of Echt and Dunecht in the East. Alford has a rising population of **2,208** and is in commuting distance from Aberdeen with 37.4% of residents working in the City. For further statistics please refer to Alford Community Profile.

Alford - Our Vision for the Future:

A community which provides:-

- Safety and respect for all;
- Access to education for all ages;
- Health care and readily available, appropriate medication;
- Clean, safe, affordable housing, designed with care and developed in sympathy with the environment;
- Infrastructure sufficient to support the needs of the Community;
- Reliable, convenient and reasonably priced public transport;
- Fulfilling and rewarding employment;
- Respect for the environment and recycling needs.
- Opportunities for recreation;
- A thriving community spirit which cherishes its past whilst embracing its future.



Identified Community Priorities:

Community Facilities:

Scout Hut:-

The Scout Hut is no longer suitable for purpose.

Proposed Action - A replacement facility that meets the needs of the Scouts and other uniformed groups to be Developed.

Actual Lead - Scouts and Others.

Youth Facility:

Young People need their own dedicated meeting space.

Proposed Action - To develop a youth facility that enables young people to meet in a safe environment in which to socialise and access a range of support.

Actual Lead - Alford and Area Community Development Group, YARD Steering Group, Community Learning & Development.

Haughton Park :

A valuable asset for the Community and visitors that is underused.

Proposed Action - Establish a Stakeholders Group with Aberdeenshire Council to explore potential opportunities e.g. Adventure play area and Shop.

Proposed Lead - Donside Community Council.

(Present Scout Hut)



Public Transport:

The cost, duration and time tabling of service buses to Aberdeen and outlying districts.

Proposed Action - To make representation to transport providers to better meet the needs of the Local Community.

Proposed Lead - Alford Area Youth Forum and Donside Community Council.



(Haughton Park House)



(Present Youth Facility)





Health and Well being:

Local NHS Services:

A need to enhance Local NHS services:

Proposed Action - Make representation to increase local NHS Dental services and to promote the availability of the well man/well women clinics.

Proposed Lead - DCC and **Actual Lead** Local Health Centre.

Nursing Home Facilities:

Absence of local residential care and GP Community beds.

Proposed Action - To encourage and facilitate the development of a local nursing home including G. P. community beds.

Proposed Lead - DCC, local G. P's and NHS.

Befriending service for the Elderly:

Lack of social support for older people.

Proposed Action - Investigate the potential for setting up a Befriending service.

Proposed Lead - DCC to contact CVS and Befriending Services.

Environment Issues:

Recycling Amenities:-

Inadequate Re-cycling & access facilities

Proposed Action - Make representation to Aberdeenshire Council for the provision of more comprehensive recycling amenities.

Proposed Lead - DCC

Litter Bins :

Insufficient litter bins, particularly on school routes.

Proposed Action - Continue dialogue with Alford Schools to establish preferred locations.

Proposed Lead - DCC, Schools.

Learning and Leisure:

Lack of adult classes during day/evening and affordable costs.

Proposed Action - Representation needs to go through the CDG to Council Services (CLD, Leisure, Sports, & Arts Development), & Other Learning Organisations.

Project Lead - CDG

More local historical events about Alford and its more famous people/events.

Proposed Action - Work with Aberdeenshire Arts & Development.

Proposed Lead - Bob Henderson, Alford Heritage Centre, Alford Schools and DCC.





Infrastructure and Safety:

Difficulty in contacting Police when required.

Proposed Action - Discuss with police.

Proposed Lead - DCC

No parking at Hall :

Proposed Action - Make representation for a Car park at the rear of the Heritage Centre

Proposed Lead - Community Safety Group & DCC.

Jobs and The Economy:

Lack of business opportunities and Employment.

Proposed Action - Support a new nursing home and the development of new business units.

Proposed Lead - DCC, Aberdeenshire Council and Developers.

Accommodation:

There is a lack of Bed & Breakfast accommodation and it has been suggested that a new hotel could be built.

Proposed Action - Make representation to coach Companies, discuss ways forward with Enterprise North and Scottish Tourism.

Proposed Lead - DCC and Alford Area Community Development Group.

Miscellaneous comments:

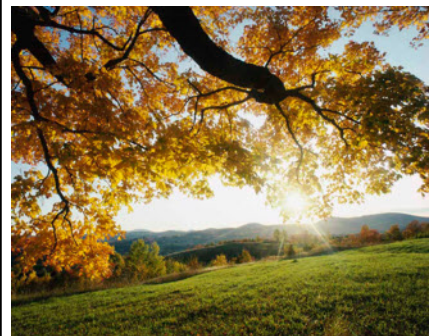
Sense of Community needs to be revitalised.

More events that bring people together such as a Gala, musical or theatre shows, celebrations and events.

More trees in and around Alford and new Developments.

Proposed Action - Encourage Community to play its part.

Proposed Lead - DCC, Alford Community, School, Grampian Transport Museum, Heritage Centre and Church's etc.





Walking in and around Alford:

A very frequent request has been for more, and better, footpaths and walking routes in and around Alford.

People would like to be able to get from one end of Alford to the other without walking beside the main road, and in particular they would like to be able to walk from the outlying settlements into Alford.

For example: from Montgarrie Bridge to Alford, and Haughton Park.



Aberdeenshire Council, through its Environment Team, has already been looking at development of the Shire's core path system see: (www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/outdooraccess).

The **Donside Community Council** has already responded to consultation on this document, asking for more routes in and around Alford.

The **DCC** would also be keen to support anyone wishing to form a local group that could work with the Shire's core path initiative, continuing to develop a footpath system for Alford.

Alford has an active Community and some other suggestions have already been actioned and some still in the progress of being actioned such as:-

Health Centre improvements.

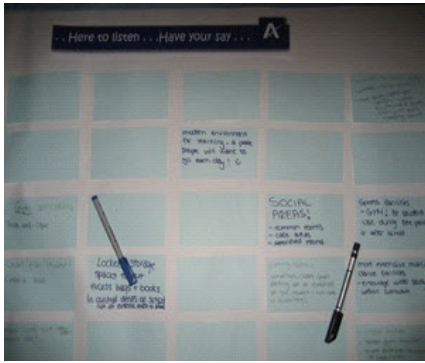
Eco friendly lighting - street lights planned for replacement in approximately 2 years time, to be addressed then.

Alford also has a lot going for it already with many facilities available such as:

- Green Rural Area with pleasant views.

- Haughton Park and Murray Park
- Grampian Transport Museum.
- Miniature Railway.
- Heritage Centre
- Dry Ski Slope.
- Swimming Pool.
- Golf Course and Club.
- Library.
- Respite Centre.
- Curling Pond.
- New Church Hall.
- Youth Cafe.
- Scout Hut.
- Commercial Units.
- Variety of Shops.
- Doctors Surgery.
- Dial a Bus Service.
- Public Transport Links.
- Aberdeen Angus Bull at entrance to Village.
- Large Car park near centre of village.





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Alford's New Community Campus:

Alford has embarked upon the process of designing and developing a new 'Education, Learning and Leisure (E, L&L) all through Campus' for the Community.

This is planned for opening in 2014 and as one way of gauging the views of local people and future users of this facility, 'Aberdeenshire's E, L&L team participated in the Oor Alford event.

This was a major success from which the views were fed into the Alford Campus Stakeholders Group and progressed by Lighthouse who identified five key areas.:-

Building should be appropriate for the site and look and feel like it belongs uniquely to Alford.

Cafe culture - more relaxed eating and meeting to add to Community spirit.

Eco-friendly.

Create a Hub - meeting areas.

Make it a Community Campus -

Aberdeenshire Council is very excited about this opportunity which will include a twenty-first century learning environment for 3-18 pupils and is the first of its kind since the implementation of Curriculum for Excellence.

Other suggestion made were:

- More classes outside.
- Healthy school meals with more variety.
- More play things in the playground.
- New tennis courts, astro-turf areas for football and other sporting activities.
- Gym facilities and gym activities accessible outside school times as well.
- Wireless Internet access and better computers.
- More space and resources for Senior study.
- Common rooms for the younger years and more lockers.
- More extensive music/dance facilities.
- Modern environment for learning – a place people will want to go each day.
- Cafe open in evenings for all as well as during the day at breaks with -

Internet access.

- Better school parking and bus access.
- Bigger and better swimming pool.
- Multi purpose halls/rooms for cross age activities – pre-school to senior citizens and disabled.
- New premises for community education crèche – more child friendly, scope for wider range of equipment & activities.
- More classes for the over 50s and more adult learning opportunities.
- More recreation and Art classes at a reasonable cost.
- Theatre/Cinema open to all- generate income?
- Alford day care, after school clubs.
- Accommodation for fitness for kids such as a Kindergym (Families currently travel to Westhill) with storage space.
- Health club/ Leisure centre with gym facilities – for teenagers and all age groups.
- A well stocked library open to all.



OPPORTUNITIES to be considered:

- Car Park on land behind Heritage Centre.
- Improve parking on Main Street (possibly waiting times).
- Provision of a Nursing Home with Community beds for G.P's.
- Expand Doctors Surgery and NHS Dentist.
- More recycling facilities.
- Possible Garden Centre and other Commercial Opportunities.
- Improve Walks and Cycle paths/areas.
- Walking for Health.
- Plant trees around village where possible and in new Developments.
- Farmers Market to include Local Fruit and Vegetables (now progressing monthly). Provide bad weather cover.
- Annual Gala/Historical Events.
- Encourage Bed and Breakfast opportunities.
- Transport links to rural areas.
- New Community Campus (Lots of opportunities for new & Improved facilities).
- Planning Gains (Put Community views forward First).
- Working with Council to improve Park Facilities.
- Picnic area at Alford Railway Station.



- Improve facilities to attract tourism and work with Tourist Board to attract more Tourists.
- Make more use of the abundance of talented local artists.
- Support Local Projects.
- Create a dedicated dog walking path with plenty of dog waste bins along walk at regular intervals.
- Restore Fountain in front of Haughton Arms Hotel.
- Expand Christmas Street lighting and events.
- Improve Disabled access around Town.
- Encourage Art /Sculpture exhibitions.
- Local Talent performances (music/theatre etc)
- Make Alford a Fair Trade Community.



There will be many other opportunities to improve our Community and by working together, we will achieve a better life and an exciting future for ALL.

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