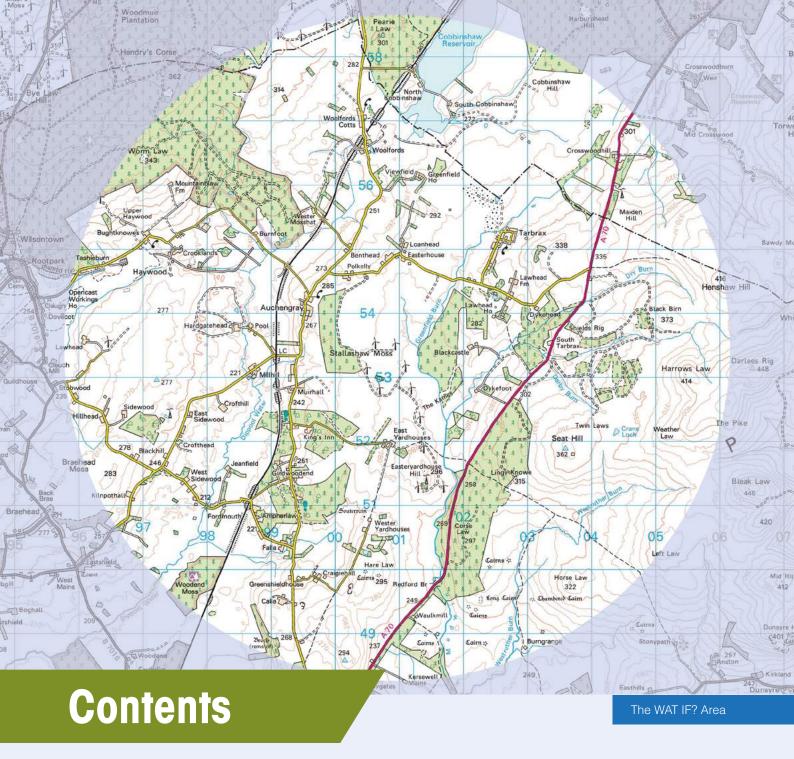
WAT IF?

Woolfords, Auchengray and Tarbrax Improvement Foundation

A Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation SC043606

community

ACTION PLAN 2018 - 2023



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Introduction

This Community Action Plan (CAP) is our second action plan and represents the views and aspirations of local residents within a 5km radius of Stallashaw Moss. It sets out what we, as a community, will try to make happen over the next 5 years.

THERE ARE FOUR SECTIONS:

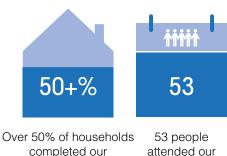


Our progress on the previous Community Action Plan (2013-2018)

Our community as it is now

What issues matter to us and what change we would like to see

What projects we will prioritise and the actions we will take over the next 5 years



completed our community survey attended our Open Day



27 local groups, businesses and service providers took part in workshops and interviews

THANKS TO EVERYONE WHO TOOK PART

How this plan has been developed

This second action plan has been informed by extensive community engagement carried out over a two-month period in early 2018. The process involved:

- A community survey delivered door to door which drew 176 responses covering 415 residents from all areas within the boundary
- An Open Day event in early February in Tarbrax Village Hall
- A series of interviews and a workshop event with 27 local organisations. businesses and interest groups
- Interviews with public sector representatives and service providers
- The preparation of a community profile detailing facts and figures about our community

WAT IF?

This CAP was developed by WAT IF? (Woolfords, Auchengray and Tarbrax Improvement Foundation). Set up by local people in 2011, WAT IF? is a with the key purpose of improving the quality of life for everyone in the area. It acts as a vehicle for community development and funding.

WAT IF? is a membership led organisation – members being residents, groups and businesses in the local area – and is a registered charity. WAT IF? has a small staff team working on projects set out in the elected local people living in the WAT IF? area.

Progress so far

You wanted community transport	 We ran a minibus trial, with a timetabled service to West Calder and Livingston, on Thursdays and Saturdays between September and December 2015. We extended the trial to June 2016, with two journeys on Saturdays only. We started an on-demand taxibus trial, running to West Calder using a local taxi company.
You wanted to celebrate local heritage	 We hosted two Heritage Festivals, each with a week-long exhibition and guided walks. We organised two Fun Days which included bing races, games and musical entertainment.
You asked us to support and upgrade the village halls	 We re-opened Woolfords Village Hall after extensive refurbishment. We resurfaced and landscaped Woolfords Village Hall Car Park. We awarded £2,000 to Tarbrax Village Hall Association to host community events. We provided administrative support to Tarbrax Village Hall
You wanted more activities for young people	 We employed a Youth Worker. We started a Parent and Toddlers group. We ran Easter, Summer and October holiday clubs. We worked with South Lanarkshire Leisure to run after-school sports clubs.
You said broadband was a top priority	 We surveyed residents to prove demand for a better service and gauge current provision. We undertook a Technical Survey, funded by Community Broadband Scotland, to investigate options for broadband in the area. We met with BT along with the local MP and MSP, South Lanarkshire Council officials and councillors, to determine what work was planned throughout the WAT IF? area. We requested quotations from BT for a 'Community Fibre Partnership'. We signed a Community Fibre Broadband Partnership with BT to extend fast fibre broadband to the Auchengray area.



Challenges:



Maintenance, repair and winter clearing of roads are all tasks which fall under the statutory remit of the local authorities (South Lanarkshire Council and West Lothian Council) and so WAT IF? cannot spend any funding on these statutory responsibilities. We can report issues, and campaign for road repairs and upgrades, but cannot directly invest any money into making it happen. The Trust continues to work with the local authorities and other groups in the area, such as Tarbrax Community Council, to ensure that road issues in the area are known and addressed.

Pathways

There are difficulties when promoting and developing paths due to liability and responsibility for maintenance and access. Some of these issues included vicinity to private property, lack of landowner agreement for installation of infrastructure and unknown landownership. This does not stop people accessing these pathways as individuals but would prevent WAT IF? from publicly promoting these routes. The Trust has made progress with engaging landowners, and training volunteers and hopes to be able to create routes and areas for safe recreation within the next few years.

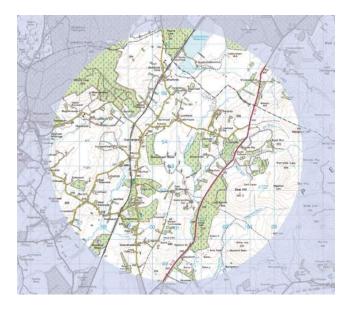


Broadband

Like many communities right across Scotland, we are waiting for BT to inform us of their plans through the Digital Scotland Superfast Broadband project and Reaching 100 promise. WAT IF? has previously not felt comfortable to invest in a community solution, without having a clear picture of what BT have planned in the area, as it would be an irresponsible use of community funds to invest in infrastructure that may have been installed through government funding anyway.

Our Community Now

The following section summarises the main facts and figures from the community profile research and gives a snapshot of our community today.





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Location

Our community straddles the border of South Lanarkshire and West Lothian and takes in the 3 villages of Woolfords, Auchengray and Tarbrax as well as a number of small settlements, within a 5km radius of Stallashaw Moss. This location, pictured above, is referred to as the "WAT IF? Area".

Lying almost 1,000 feet above sea level on the edge of the Pentland Hills, the area is mostly farmland and open moorland with some commercial forestry.

The nearest towns are Lanark, 11 miles to the south west, and West Calder and Livingston (8 and 13 miles to the north respectively). Location is a key draw for many incomers, being remote and rural but within easy reach of towns and cities.



History

The area has a long and fascinating history stretching back hundreds of years.

Predominantly a farming community, the villages experienced rapid growth through mining activity from the early nineteenth century and boomed during the Shale Rush with a huge rise in the work force pushing population levels to over 3,000. Housing, public inns and train stations were built to accommodate them and there was at one point over 12 mines feeding shale into the Tarbrax Oil Works. This heyday came to an end with the later closure of the mines and a gradual erosion of services followed despite a brief boom in population during World War II when American airmen and women stationed in Kirknewton purchased houses in Tarbrax which they resided in only for the length of their deployment.

Today, the population is far smaller but evidence of an industrial past still exists not only in the miners' rows, but in the shale bings and other industrial remains that can be found across the area.







Population

Today, the WAT IF? Area has a population of around 780 people with 69% being of working age (16-64yrs), 17% are older people (65 and over) and 14% are young people (aged 0-15).

Compared to the Scottish average, we have a higher proportion of working-aged people. Compared to other rural areas in particular, we have a slightly lower proportion of over 65s.



Households and Housing

There are in the region of 325 households, roughly two-thirds of which are working-aged couples and families, the remainder being pensioner households (50), and single person under 65 households (50).

Most dwellings are detached properties (47%) followed by terraced dwellings (36%). 84% of houses are owner-occupied which is significantly higher than the Scottish average of 62%. Council and social housing comprises less than 10% and is significantly lower than the national average. Demand for housing is high with a need for more affordable and more familysized housing. The turnover of property is low with people tending to remain in the area long-term.



Local Employment

We have an economically active population – 75% of people are employed compared to the Scottish average of 69%, meaning we have lower than average levels of unemployment.

About 44% are in full-time employment (higher than the Scottish average), 10% are in part-time employment and around 14% are self-employed. Levels of self-employment locally are significantly higher than the Scottish average which is a positive indicator of a confident and self-reliant workforce. Analysis of employment by occupation shows a skilled, diverse and capable workforce, with many working in managerial and professional occupations as well as skilled trades occupations, which tend to be more highly paid.



Transport

Transport is a major challenge in our area, particularly for those who don't have access to private transport. This especially affects young adults and older people.

Around 6% of households do not own a car and whilst this is considerably lower than the Scottish average, it is significant considering there is only one limited local bus service to Lanark for which you must pre-register and pre-book. The area is in the top 5% most 'access deprived' communities in Scotland. A local taxibus service funded by WAT IF? provides a life line for some local residents.





Health

General levels of health in the local population are positive with a higher than average life expectancy for both men and women.

About 55% of residents describe their health as 'very good' – again slightly higher than the Scottish average. However, there are higher rates of coronary heart disease and cancer, and proportionally, there is a higher concentration of people providing unpaid care, which is significant from a community planning perspective. Obtaining access to health care services can be problematic, partly due to a lack of public transport, but also because the WAT IF? area spans two different NHS boards. Records show that there are a higher than average number of emergency hospital admissions given our population size, particularly for the over 65s.

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Assets

The WAT IF? Area is relatively active with around 17 local clubs and interest groups catering to a wide range of interests from fishing to badminton. There are four community-owned facilities:

- Tarbrax Village Hall was rebuilt in 2003, comprising a sports/ recreation hall, meeting room, catering kitchen and an office
- Woolfords Village Hall, recently refurbished, comprising a small meeting room and kitchen area
- Auchengray Church Centre comprising a hall, catering kitchen, chapel and gardens
- Tarbrax Bowling Club with a bowling green and a club house which is in need of some improvement

In addition, Auchengray Primary School is a key resource, offering a Multi Use Games Area. The school currently serves 18 pupils from P1 to P7. There are a number of outdoor recreation spaces including several local play parks in good condition and a community-owned common at Tarbrax.

There are some existing paths and trails locally although these are in need of repair, reinstatement and extending to provide better links between settlements and to improve access to wider green space including Cobbinshaw Reservoir, Cobbinshaw Moss and the Pentland Hills.

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69% working aged 16-64 yrs14% young people 0-15 yrs17% older people 65+

55% rate their health as `very good'

Houses owner occupied:

in our area: **84%** Scotland: **62%** Persons self employed: Higher than average emergency hospital admissions in over 65s

in our area: **13.6%** Scotland: **7.5%**



6% have no car



 limited local bus service to Lanark, 3 days a week High numbers of unpaid carers

Our Voices

WHAT WE LIKE

- Beautiful scenery, peaceful and quiet
- Friendly, helpful community
- Great location remote but commutable
- Fantastic green space all around
- Good recreational activity and strong local groups
- Local amenities school, village halls and play parks
- Low levels of crime/ sense of safety



74% of local people rated the area as 'excellent' or 'good'



72% see themselves still living here in 10 years' time

WHAT WE SAID

Auchengray School is a friendly thriving rural school with strong community links.

Good neighbours, quiet place to raise children and country pleasures on the doorstep. Community spirit, beautiful setting, peaceful, within easy reach of major towns and cities. People do really care, about being good neighbours, about helping each other.

A nice place to live for your health and wellbeing.

I like playing in the park.

This is a place that I feel safe in. People are very friendly and helpful. There is a 'community' for those who want to engage and space for those who don't.

What's good

In summary, people are generally very positive about living in the area, are highly invested in it, supportive of community development initiatives and have the skills and capacity to make change happen.

What could be better

The gradual erosion of services and amenities in our area and the lack of investment in key infrastructure has made day to day life more difficult. As a community, we can feel cut off and overlooked.

Rated in the

WHAT WE DON'T LIKE

- Poor transport links
- Lack of local amenities
- The look of our neighbourhoods
- The state of our paths and trails
- Our roads the condition and speed of traffic
- Broadband speed and mobile phone coverage
- · People not working together as well as they could
- Lack of housing which is affordable and diverse
- Not enough for children to do

top 5% most in our area: 2.27 Mb/s 'access deprived' **Average** communities broadband Scotland: 34.65 Mb/s speed: in Scotland WHAT WE SAID There's no after-school club I don't like that the It's hard to run a which is an issue business here. villages look neglected. for working parents. There's not enough social things for kids Mobile signal and You're stuck if your to do out of school. broadband are awful. car breaks down.

Roads are dangerous for walking, and cycling is out of the question, particularly for children. They don't get gritted or cleared in the bad weather. There is a real gap in the local housing. With a real lack of medium/ large sized family homes (3-4 bedroom) that are affordable.

Woodlands with proper walkways for all year-round use - too wet in the winter and too overgrown in the summer! People have lost their pride in our community and we need to get that back.

Our Vision

Taking the views of those involved in this consultation, the following statement summarises our aspirations for the future as expressed by local people and organisations. We want:

A beautiful, safe and vibrant place with a resilient, well-connected and resourceful community, offering a great quality of life for all local people

Improving

Building on and making the

most of natural, built and people

assets in the community to build

resilience and resourcefulness

TO ACHIEVE THIS, WE WILL FOCUS ON:

Connecting

Linking people up within our area and beyond so people feel part of community life and have good support networks

The priorities and actions on the following pages set out what our community will work on over the next 5 years. As the local development body, WAT IF? will work with individuals, volunteers, local organisations and businesses,

Supporting

Enabling the community to grow its capacity to overcome adversity and make the most of opportunities

public agencies and potential funders to ensure the best outcomes for this plan. This, in large part, will depend on the spirit and enthusiasm of local people to get involved.

OUR MAIN PRIORITIES:





One of our major challenges as a rural community is our isolation.

We are in the top 5% most 'access deprived' communities in Scotland. Whilst many of us choose to live in the area for its remoteness and tranquillity, we recognise that getting around and being connected are vitally important for a sustainable population and a buoyant local economy. Specifically, the condition of our roads and paths and lack of public transport contribute to a feeling of being 'cut off,' particularly for elderly and young residents. More could be done to improve our roads through a combination of road repairs, traffic calming and by creating more off-road routes for other users. Our paths are generally in a poor condition and inaccessible for much of the year: creation and maintenance of a planned network of paths between settlements will contribute to both active travel, walking and cycling, and leisure. Extending local transport provision and providing Driving Lesson Grants will counter the lack of public transport and support those without cars.

There is some local frustration over people getting lost in our area: local area mapping and improvements to signage will help emergency services, visitors, couriers and other mobile services to find us more easily.

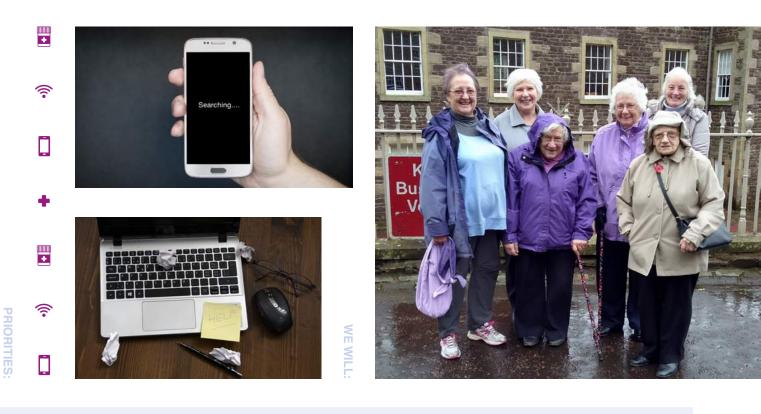






The increasing demand for better services and facilities in our area is a positive sign of a growing and active community.

We want to be better connected and have access to resources: poor broadband and mobile phone coverage are major concerns and affect everyone in our community, from young to old and impact on our leisure, business and learning opportunities. We need to find solutions quickly and take action. A prescription delivery service was identified as important but also points to a wider need for better health and social care as a key factor in helping our older residents to live independently for longer and to support carers in their caring responsibilities.



1	(((Improve broadband	 Harness volunteer expertise and create a Communications Group to work on both broadband and mobile phone coverage Explore options for alternative broadband provision including a community-led solution. Review case studies from other areas about effective approaches Seek support from sector experts and explore potential funding packages
2		Improve mobile phone coverage	 Research gaps in provision and explore options for improved coverage, including what has worked well elsewhere Tap into expertise for implementation and funding
3	•	Increase support for older people	 Develop a community-wide prescription delivery service Continue to consult with older residents about services of interest and develop links with specialist providers and local networks. This could include social trips for vulnerable residents and sports opportunities for our more active seniors



Theme 3: **Our Environment**

There is rightly a lot of local pride in our green and built spaces.

We live in an area of natural beauty and of rich historic interest but there is concern that our built and green landscapes are not as attractive, well-maintained or well-planned as they could be and that more could be made of these assets.

Investing in our landscape will enhance the quality of life for local people, increase local pride, encourage people to stay and attract new residents into the area. In particular, people want villages and settlements to look better kept, with less derelict and unkempt

spaces, better lighting and off-road parking: more soft landscaping to make areas more attractive and defined, a better path network for walkers and cyclists making our countryside and settlements more accessible, and more promotion of our industrial and natural heritage.





Neighbourhood

improvements



- Establish Neighbourhood Improvement Groups of local landowners and homeowners to identify priority projects to take forward, explore liability and responsibility issues and prepare work and cost schedules
- Seek funding and investment for improvements where required. Share plans regularly with local residents and invite feedback
- Mobilise neighbours and local volunteers to undertake works where appropriate or contract to local trades people
- Work with local Councils to improve refuse collection and for reuse/recycle groups to collect unwanted items. Work with Councils to tackle fly tipping
- Showcase improvements in the local press
- Organise annual litter picks by local volunteers with support from Councils to provide necessary equipment and other resources
- As part of the area improvement plans, consider soft and hard landscaping around settlements to improve the look and feel, including the planting of new hedgerows and screening
- Continue to audit existing routes and identifying gaps through the Paths and Trails Working Group
 - Establish volunteer work groups to restore existing paths
- Link up with the Local Authority Access Forums to develop a wider core path plan to link places within our community as well as places beyond
- Explore the potential to combine paths development with other positive outcomes, e.g. heritage, intergenerational connectivity, formal and informal learning and create new paths and recreation trails
- Promote the path network through signage, events and other local information channels

PRIORITIES



Network of paths and trails

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15



Village hall improvements and a new school building have had a positive impact on the area.

The hall and new school are seen as important local resources in need of continued support. Residents have said they want more local amenities: there is an appetite for a permanent local café as a social meeting space, more sports facilities for health, wellbeing and sporting excellence and a demand for a communityoperated industrial unit providing space for equipment for hire, a fuel and grit store and a workshop. There needs to be careful consideration about how we make the best use of facilities that are already available and the need to develop new facilities to accommodate the demand for new services. Facility developments will, of course, be subject to land and building availability.



1	٥	Develop existing facilities	 Support the Village and Church Halls to develop plans for increased community use (e.g. improved heating, better sports facilities, pop-up shop/ market/ car boot sale, after-school facility, heritage exhibitions) Support Tarbrax Bowling Club to improve existing facilities Install flood lights at Auchengray Primary School games area to increase evening usage
2		Develop new facilities	 Commission a feasibility study into setting up a community depot and light industrial space to provide a fuel purchase scheme, grit and fuel store, equipment hire and workshop space Explore the potential to develop a permanent community café in existing facilities or new facilities as demand and space allow



Theme 5: Our Community Activities

At the heart of this plan is the need for a strong and resilient community.

We have a good level of community-based activity locally with a diverse range of interest groups, making an important contribution to local life. Despite this, there is a sense that the community is not as unified as it could be and that some groups in particular are not well served. Our sense of community can enrich the kind of place we want this to be and some of the developments that are already underway from our first Community Action Plan are driving important changes locally. There is an appetite for more of this. People want more opportunities for sport and exercise, indoor and out. People also feel there are not enough social development opportunities for children and young people and there needs to be more on offer outside of school and term time. Continuing to build on local volunteering and supporting local voluntary groups will act as a springboard for many of the projects identified in this plan.











Theme 6: Our Enterprise and Housing

Our great location and the rural nature of the area are what attract people to live here.

This needs to be protected, but we also need to ensure we don't stagnate: attracting new families and new business to the area is important for a sustainable and resilient community. This growth needs to be managed to make sure we strike the right balance. Local housing has been highlighted as an area of concern with not enough housing to support pensioners, growing families or first time buyers. Some sensitive housing developments are well supported by the community as long as these are attractive and on a small scale.

We have a resilient working-age population and a relatively high rate of employment. Our work force has valuable skills and capabilities and given the high number of self-employed people, good entrepreneurial spirit too. However, starting and sustaining a business in a rural area can be tough. Our community wants to make sure local businesses are supported to thrive, bringing benefits back into the community. Focus on enterprise needs to include a focus on communitybased ventures too. Wind farm developments will bring an annual income into our area for a number of years, but we need to think beyond this and invest for a time when these funds no longer exist. Investing in community-owned businesses will bring money back into our local area and create long-term social impact.



1		Promoting local business	 Convene a meeting of local business owners to explore business improvement options, including how businesses could be working with each other Create a bank of resources to support local businesses to grow
2		Creating storage and workspaces	Explore the feasibility and options for creating affordable storage and workspace for local businesses and residents
3		Target housing development	 Review the development potential of existing derelict buildings and options for new small-scale developments. Keep up to date with Community Right To Buy legislation changes Consider the need for alternative housing options for older residents, purchase schemes for first-time buyers and creating an affordable rental market. Explore successful models elsewhere
4	•	Community based enterprise	 Explore opportunities for local groups and organisations to become more self-sustaining through Community-based enterprise Tap into regional and government programmes/ networks and changes in legislation in relation to community empowerment and asset ownership to support enterprising third sector organisations to grow

Making it happen

This Community Action Plan is for the whole community and we hope it will be of benefit to any individual, group or organisation working to make our community a great place to be.

TO HELP US BE SUCCESSFUL, WE WILL BE:



Finding people to work with us.

If you are interested in getting involved in a big way or a small way, please get in touch. We need people with skills, but most of all, we need people with enthusiasm.



Continuing to gain the support of public, private and third-sector partners.

Over the last 5 years, we have made good progress in building relationships but to achieve our goals, we need to widen and deepen working relationships with local businesses, local landowners and national voluntary and charitable organisations.



Identifying and securing funding.

Whilst we have an annual income from Windfarm Community Benefit Funds, some of the larger projects will need feasibility studies, business plans and significant funding. This will be a key task over the next 5 years.



Engaging and listening.

This Community Action Plan was developed as a result of wide consultation but we won't stop there. Continued dialogue with local residents is important to keep us on track and to make sure we continue to be informed and responsive. There will be regular opportunities for people to come together and review this plan.

What you can do to help

Become a member of WAT IF?

Membership is **FREE** and being a member makes it easier for you to keep in touch as things progress and to influence decisions that will need to be made.

Join online at **www.watif.scot/join-the-trust.html** or pick up a paper form at Tarbrax Village Hall. The more members there are, the more we will be able to demonstrate to funding bodies that the community is fully supportive of the actions set out in this Community Action Plan. Are you passionate about improving our local path network? Does the state of our roads frustrate you? Would you like your kids to be more active? Be part of the solution! There are many projects to get involved with and you can give your time and skills to suit you.

Email contact@watif.scot to register your interest, call 01501 785194 or drop into the WAT IF? office at Tarbrax Village Hall.

Further Information

Many thanks to all those who gave their time to share their views and ideas which has made this Community Action Plan possible.

A special thanks to the WAT IF? CAP steering group for their time and dedication and to the volunteers who collected surveys door to door in the snow.

Email: contact@watif.scot Phone: 01501 785194

 Tarbrax Village Hall Crosswood Terrace Tarbrax West Calder EH55 8XE Opening Hours: Mon-Thur 8.30am – 5.00pm Friday 8.30am – 2.00pm

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Scottish Rural Development Programme









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