



WAT IF?

Woolfords, Auchengray and Tarbrax Improvement Foundation

Community Action Plan
2013 - 2018

A Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation
Charity Number SC043606

May 2013



This Community Action Plan, and the work of WAT IF?, covers the villages of Woolfords, Auchengray and Tarbrax and the settlements within a 3-mile radius of Stallashaw Moss.

Ongoing review of the Community Action Plan 2013 to 2018

WAT IF? will be reviewing this Community Action Plan on an annual basis, and in the meantime the community will be regularly updated on the progress of the priorities and actions highlighted in this report. However, the priorities and actions will be progressed more quickly as members of the community become involved in setting up working groups. We look forward to hearing from you!

WOOLFORDS, AUCHENGRAY AND TARBRAX IMPROVEMENT FOUNDATION

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**COMMUNITY
VISION
FUTURE**

This Community Action Plan covers the villages of **Woolfords**, **Auchengray** and **Tarbrax** and the settlements within a 3-mile radius of **Stallashaw Moss**, as designated on the map (page 2). The area comes within the scope of two Local Authorities: South Lanarkshire Council and West Lothian Council.



WAT IF? Background

In February 2011, a group of local residents formed the WAT Improvement Group as a formally constituted, "not for profit" organisation without charitable status. The objectives of the group are to carry out small scale projects and:

- Improve the conditions of life for the community;
- Promote the advancement of civic responsibility and community development;
- Investigate the formation of a community Development Trust to attract funding for sustainable community projects.

Current legal status

The Steering Group was set up in September 2011 and the Woolfords, Auchengray and Tarbrax Improvement Foundation (known as WAT IF?), was established as a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO) on 28 November 2012.

Objects of WAT IF?

To engage in activities which benefit and support the rural community principally by:

- Attracting funding to resource local projects and activities;
- Administering those funds in accordance with criteria set out by Trustees.

Projects supported or undertaken by WAT IF? must be charitable and relevant to the Trust's purposes, which are:

- Advancement of rural regeneration and community development, so that the Auchengray area can be a sustainable, inclusive community for all who live or work in the area;
- Promotion of the conservation, protection and improvement of the physical and natural environment;
- Encouraging access to open spaces and enhancement of recreational opportunities;
- Advancement of heritage, culture, history, arts, science and education, including lifelong learning;
- Other similar schemes and projects of a charitable nature for the benefit of the community.

**IMPROVE
PROMOTE
ATTRACT**

1.1 INVOLVEMENT PROCESS

WAT IF? received funding from South Lanarkshire's Leader+ Programme and South Lanarkshire Rural Communities Trust (SLRCT) to commission an independent community consultation. This consultation was conducted by Development Trusts Association Scotland (DTAS).

Community feedback came predominantly from a questionnaire which was distributed by hand between 18 and 28 January 2013 to households and farms within the Trust's catchment area (see map on page 2). This included the communities of Woolfords, Auchengray, Tarbrax, Mosshat, Cobbinshaw, Polkelly, Haywood, Falla and Ampherlaw. A further 43 questionnaires were distributed to pupils at Biggar High School who are resident in the area and responses were received during a telephone survey of local businesses. The wider consultation process included 11 public meetings between October 2011 and March 2013.

The response rate was approximately 30%, with a total of 205 individuals, eight farms and nine representatives of community groups returning completed questionnaires. The results provide a representative sample of views from the population and different interest groups in the area and:

- An evidence base and mandate to WAT IF? for development work;
- Priorities that the community wants to action; and
- A feasible plan of work to tackle within the next five years.

This Community Action Plan is based around the community consultation results and will be revisited annually by WAT IF? in order to assess achievements and revise schedules for development work and priorities as appropriate.

A FEASIBLE PLAN OF WORK



1.2 OUR COMMUNITY



Woolfords, Auchengray and **Tarbrax** are small settlements located in a rural area in north-east Clydesdale, South Lanarkshire. The area lies at almost 1,000 feet above sea level on the edge of the Pentland Hills, and consists of farmland, open moorland and some commercial forestry. The area is rich in wildlife and local history.

In the past, this area had a thriving local economy based around the coal, lime and shale mines of Cobbinshaw, Tarbrax and nearby Baads Mill. There were train stations at Cobbinshaw, Tarbrax and Auchengray. Auchengray was the last of these to close, in 1966, and was one of the stops for the Caledonian Railway on its route between Carlisle and Edinburgh, on what is now known as the West Coast Main Line.

Today public transport is one of the biggest concerns for people living and working in the area. According to the 2012 Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation, this area is amongst the 5% most access-deprived areas of Scotland. Transport and access to services came out highly in the community consultation and while some potential projects would not be 'charitable', WAT IF? will certainly be treating transport issues as a top priority.

Auchengray Primary school caters for children from primary one to four and serves the surrounding villages and farms, including Woolfords and Tarbrax. Pupils in primary five to seven currently have to travel to Carnwath and secondary education requires travel to Biggar High School. The communities are represented on all three Parents' Councils (covering Auchengray, Carnwath and Biggar schools).

There are at least 14 active community groups in the area, many of which meet at the church hall in Auchengray or the village hall in Tarbrax. The village hall in Woolfords is currently disused and although structurally sound, it is in need of renovation.

**THRIVING
LOCAL
ECONOMY**

The Trust will work in an area centred on Stallashaw Moss, which includes the three villages featured below, as well as smaller settlements and farms. While the majority (71.3%) of questionnaires returned came from Woolfords, Auchengray and Tarbrax, almost one-third (28.7%) came from other settlements in the Trust's area. There is much history here too, such as 16th-century Ampherlaw House and the buried remains of the miners' rows at Haywood.

Woolfords

Woolfords is located 5 miles (8km) south-west of West Calder on the road to Auchengray. The first 'Woolfords' was built at the site of Woolfords coal mine in around 1840, but little remains of it. 'New Woolfords', as it was known, was built in two stages between 1907 and 1914 to house the increasing number of local mineworkers. Two new houses were built at the south end of Woolfords in the early 2000s. Nearby Cobbinshaw is much older than Woolfords, and part of Cobbinshaw is designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest.

Auchengray

Auchengray is located 7.5 miles (12 km) south-west of West Calder, and hosts the local church and primary school. Auchengray Church was designed by architect Frederick Thomas Pilkington in 1863 and has been described as an architectural gem, with characteristic stone carving and two stained glass rose windows. The building and grounds are undergoing a programme of restoration and upgrading to ensure an ongoing welcome at the heart of the community. Auchengray Primary School has regular use of the church, which stands 20 metres away, and a play-park to the rear.

Tarbrax

Tarbrax is located 8 miles (13km) south of West Calder, and is the largest of the three villages with over double the population of Auchengray. It was built in the middle of the 19th century to house miners. The Tarbrax 'bing' (spoil heap) is a local landmark and reminder of the area's industrial heritage. A new village hall opened in 2004, which hosts various groups and activities including a youth club, bowling club and an over-50s group. The Tarbrax Common Committee has raised money from various sources to improve the appearance of the common and provide a new play-park.

WOOLFORDS AUCHENGRAY TARBRAK



1.3 OUR COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

A total of 213 individual responses to the community questionnaire were received, including eight from farms, plus nine from community groups. Responses were also submitted on behalf of Auchengray Primary School and feedback was received during a telephone survey of local businesses.

1.4 HOUSEHOLD RESPONSES

As a percentage of the population in each village, 49.5% of people in Woolfords, 25% of people in Auchengray and 31.9% of people in Tarbrax returned questionnaire forms. Population data are not available for the smaller settlements in the area. As a percentage of survey forms delivered, approximately 30% were returned. Expressed as a percentage of returns per settlement, 71.3% came from Woolfords, Auchengray and Tarbrax, while 28.7% came from outwith these 3 main settlements.

1.5 FARM AND SMALL BUSINESS RESPONSES

Priorities for action mirrored those responses received from households, although the reasons given were different and business related. This indicates that whatever the means of livelihood, there is a common need to improve the infrastructure of our local area of residence or work by:

- Improving the condition and maintenance of local roads - businesses who relied upon supplier or customer visits felt financially disadvantaged particularly in the winter months when roads are blocked by snow;
- Addressing the lack of public transport and the high cost of fuel, which constrains commuting to and from work;
- Developing broadband facilities and mobile device networks - businesses and home-workers are becoming increasingly reliant upon digital communications, social media channels and e-commerce to promote their services and products.

1.6 FINDINGS OF CONSULTATION

The results have been grouped under 5 generic headings which represent overarching themes:

Theme 1: Roads and transport

Theme 2: Green spaces and heritage

Theme 3: Village enhancement and facilities

Theme 4: Community activities

Theme 5: Services and communications



2.1 OUR VISION - OUR FUTURE

- **A thriving local community, with local employment and transport links to nearby towns, such as West Calder, and improved paths within and between local settlements.**
- **A place to enjoy community activities, with improved sports facilities and more local events and activities, including growing food and plants.**
- **An historic area with a network of paths and trails for walking and cycling, and projects to involve young and old in remembering local history.**
- **An attractive place to visit, with a way-marked nature trail, well-kept villages and a heritage centre.**

2.2 A SUSTAINABLE LOCAL ECONOMY

This area is amongst the top 5% of the most access-deprived areas of Scotland. It was, therefore, no surprise to see that the top priority for people living and working here is transport. While the area is predominantly within the remit of South Lanarkshire Council, there is a clear need for closer cooperation and liaison with West Lothian Council on issues of roads and public transport.

There is no public transport service, either within South Lanarkshire or to West Lothian, where the nearest train station, bus links, post office and shops are situated. The survey results show that residents are looking to travel to West Calder and Livingston more often than to Carnwath and Lanark. Winters can be severe and the remote and elevated nature of this area means that local roads are often unsafe to drive on in winter months and pot-holes remain a persistent problem. However, the need for travel could be reduced if services were available locally, such as shops or sports facilities.

Recreation also featured highly in the responses received, from paths for walking and cycling to improved sports facilities and community activities, particularly for young people. Many of these activities are linked to the development of village or church halls and to transport, with a cycle route to West Calder.

2.3 ACHIEVING A SUSTAINABLE VISION

Priorities are ranked 1 (Highest), 2 (Medium) and 3 (Lowest). These rankings are based on the number of similar responses received which fall within the remit of WAT IF?.

As for timescales, 'short term' indicates projects which could take place within the first year; 'medium term' indicates two to three years and 'long term' indicates 5 years or more.

These are just guides as project activity requires volunteers - the more helpers we have, the more projects we can work on. In each theme below, the first stage will be to set up a working group of interested parties and funding will be sought as and where required.

SUSTAINABLE FUTURE ECONOMY



THEME 1: ROADS AND TRANSPORT

PRIORITY RANKING 1

Short Term

Improve conditions of roads, verges and ditches.
Winter snow clearance and grit buckets.
Implement speed calming and village safety measures.

Actions

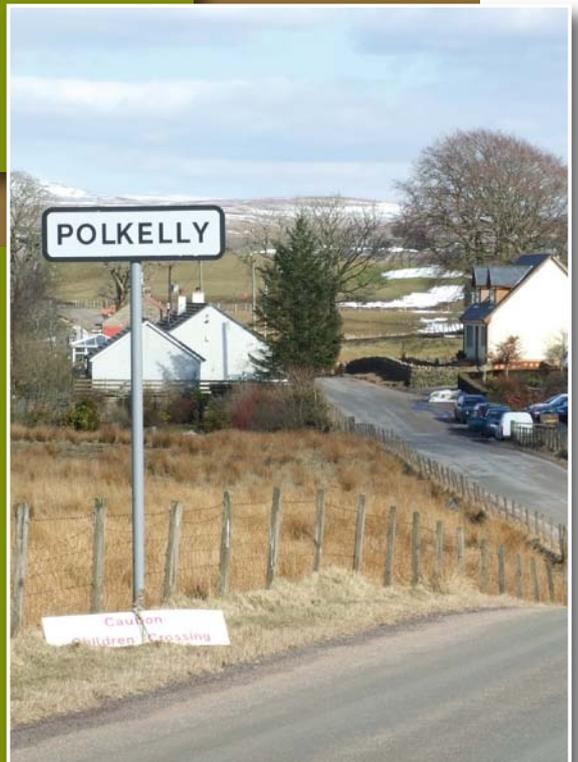
- Liaise with and lobby as required local authorities, community councils and local councillors to ensure reporting methods are streamlined and effective.
- Contact other rural areas to ascertain best practice for reporting and prioritising actions.
- Further village studies are needed to establish requirements for specific village safety measures (e.g. road safety signs at Haywood and improved street lighting and pavements in villages).
- Investigate local community action and funding options as required.

Medium Term

Develop local community transport including access for disabled.

Actions

- Contact other rural areas to learn from successful community transport projects.
- Contact South Lanarkshire's Rural Development Trust to investigate the potential for local community transport.
- Consider car sharing projects.



PRIORITY RANKING 2

Short to Medium Term

Extend outward public transport links to West Calder.

Actions

- Investigate extending subsidised taxi service to Auchengray and Woolfords from West Calder.
- Liaise and highlight issue with South Lanarkshire Rural Development Trust.
- Liaise and lobby councillors and local authorities to explore cross border public transport links.

THEME 2: GREEN SPACES AND HERITAGE

PRIORITY RANKING 1

Short to Long Term

Create way-marked local paths with off-road parking, benches and interpretation boards including heritage trail linking villages.

Actions

- Paths to be considered for different uses, such as dog walking, cycle paths, bridle paths.
- Consider wildlife protection areas.
- Establish off-road links between villages.
- Link paths to interpretation, history, flora and fauna (e.g. West Lothian Paraffin Young Heritage Trail).
- Establish contact with relevant public bodies and agencies for advice, support and potential funding.
- Gather information on existing paths, rights of way and map potential routes.
- Involve schools in local history projects.
- Liaise with local landowners where required.
- Liaise with West Calder and Harburn Development Trust for links to West Calder.

PRIORITY RANKING 2

Medium Term

Create cycle path to West Calder.

Actions

- Establish contact with relevant public bodies and agencies for advice, support and potential funding.
- Gather information on existing paths, rights of way and map potential routes.
- Liaise with local landowners where required.
- Liaise with West Calder and Harburn Development Trust for links to West Calder.



PRIORITY RANKING 3

Medium to Long Term

Consider BMX and mountain bike track in area.

Actions

- Establish demand linking to Theme 4: Community Activities.

THEME 3: VILLAGE ENHANCEMENT AND FACILITIES

PRIORITY RANKING 1

Short to Long Term

Refurbish, re-equip, re-plan or re-open village halls, as appropriate.

Actions

- Re-open Woolfords Hall as high level of demand already demonstrated through survey.
- Support continuing refurbishment of Auchengray Church Centre.
- Liaise with Auchengray Primary School to support use of Auchengray Church Centre.
- Support and develop use of Tarbrax Hall and liaise with Tarbrax Hall Committee.
- Support and help develop Tarbrax Bowling Club.
- Further studies may be necessary to consider uses of halls linked to other themes within report (e.g. community shop) as well as assessing levels of demand.
- Investigate local community action and funding options as required.
- Consider potential for workspaces for local businesses.
- Upgrading of halls and re-planning of usage and space are integrated projects, the action for any redesign of the space will follow further examination of intended usage.

PRIORITY RANKING 1

Short to Medium Term

Improve all play parks.

Actions

- Set up working groups as required dependant on level of demand.
- Liaise with local authorities to discuss improvements as necessary.
- Research other successful play park redevelopments.
- Liaise with Auchengray Primary School and Auchengray Church Centre.
- Help and support Tarbrax Commons Committee as required.



PRIORITY RANKING 1

Short Term

Appearance - tidying up and improvement schemes in all areas.

Actions

- Set up local voluntary groups in each village to develop proposals for local improvements (e.g. litter bins and flower/shrub/bulb planting).
- Liaise and lobby local authorities to discuss improvements that are their responsibility.
- Liaise with local landowners where necessary.

THEME 4: COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES

PRIORITY RANKING 1

Short Term

1. Organising and promoting activities and events including supporting existing community groups' activities.

Actions

- Further investigation required to consider what type of activities and events the community want including sports and social centres/clubs.
- Consider specific requirements of community groups.
- Set up working groups including consideration to establish community social club.

2. Provide more activities and facilities for young people.

Actions

- Set up working groups with young people.
- Carry out further study on what activities and facilities young people want and develop activities accordingly.
- Support existing youth club.
- Support Auchengray Primary School.
- Liaise with local authorities, public bodies, councillors with regard to supporting youth provision.



PRIORITY RANKING 2

Medium Term

Create allotments with links to a gardening club.

Actions

- Further study to assess demand for community allotments.
- Consider location for allotments and contact landowners as required.
- Seek funding after need and demand established from further survey.

Short to Long Term

Provide new sports equipment.

Create multi-use games area (all-weather pitch).

Actions

- Link to evidence of demand and best location.
- Further studies required to ascertain feasibility and need to improve existing and provide new facilities, such as all-weather/multi-use games area.
- Seek funding after need and demand established from further survey.



THEME 5: SERVICES AND COMMUNICATIONS

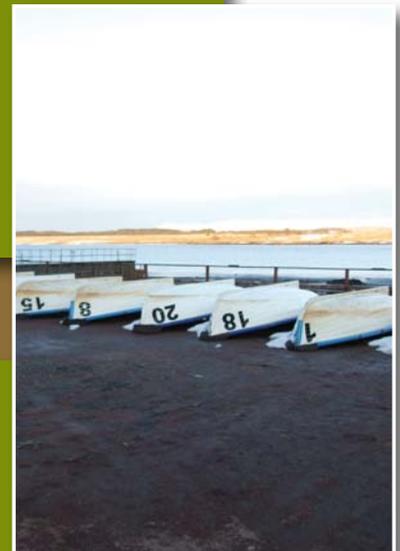
PRIORITY RANKING 1

Short Term

Improve broadband and 3G/4G coverage.
Provide more recycling facilities.

Actions

- Investigate with internet providers potential improvements already planned, such as fibre optic cable to Auchengray.
- Establish link with local authorities and other Trusts to lobby support for improved rural broadband services.
- Investigate process to provide further recycling facilities and take action as required (e.g. in Woolfords).



PRIORITY RANKING 2

Medium Term

Improve energy efficiency and increase use of renewables.
Improve access to GPs and health services.

Actions

- Raise awareness of potential support and grants available, such as the Green Deal and the Energy Savings Trust.
- Link improved access to GPs and health services to community transport and hall development as part of working group's consideration.

Medium to Long Term

Community shop / mobile provision / internet shopping distribution points.

Actions

- Further study required to establish demand and type of service required.
- Set up working groups potentially linked to Hall groups after need established.
- Research other successful community shop facilities.
- Approach existing retailers to ascertain interest (e.g. fish van, milk, general grocer).
- Involve local farmers to ascertain interest in selling their goods locally.
- Investigate improved use of internet shopping and consider halls as central distribution points.





**WOOLFORDS,
AUCHENGRAY AND
TARBRAK IMPROVEMENT
FOUNDATION**

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WAT IF?

WOOLFORDS, AUCHENGRAY AND TARBRAX IMPROVEMENT FOUNDATION

This Community Action Plan sets out the priorities for the development of the Woolfords, Auchengray and Tarbrax Improvement Foundation area over the next five years, as determined by the community through an extensive process of community engagement carried out between October 2011 and March 2013.

Thanks to all those who took the time to share their views and take part.
Particular thanks also to the volunteers who assisted with the household survey.

We are grateful to our funders, South Lanarkshire Leader Programme and South Lanarkshire Rural Communities Trust for funding our community consultation and the production of this Community Action Plan and we look forward to working with them, and others, to help turn this plan into action.



A special thanks to our consultant, Bruce Clarke, and Wendy Reid of the Development Trusts Association Scotland for much help and support in the process of setting up WAT IF?



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