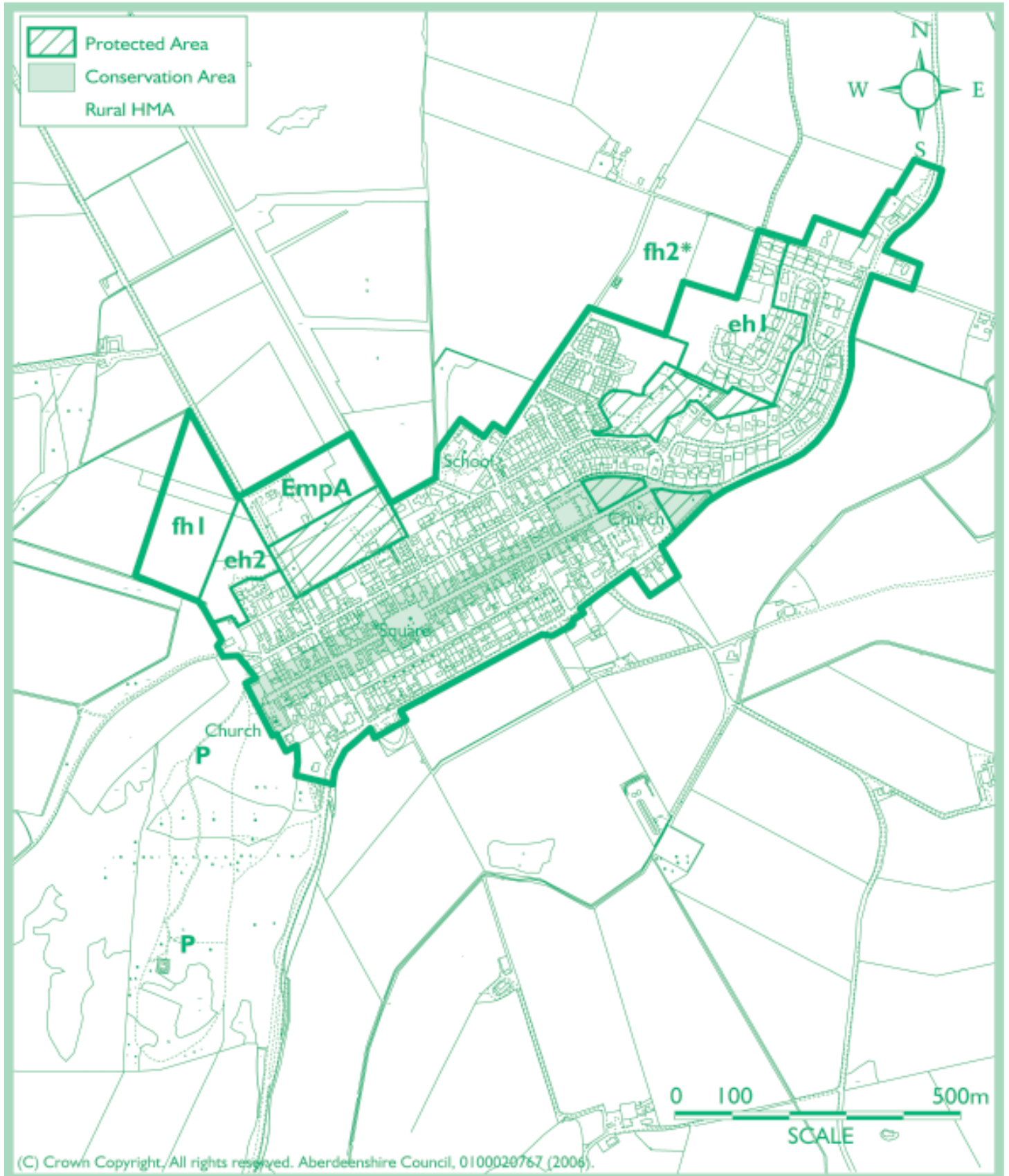




# Aberchirder Community Action Plan



**Origins & Development**  
Aberchirder (population 1100) is a classic planned village founded in 1764 and widely known as Foggieloa. As in other small rural settlements, the motor car and supermarkets have brought dramatic changes in services. Fifty years ago there were 22 shops, and now there are just six, while the bank and Rose Innes care home closed recently. However there is still a good selection of tradesmen, and Aberchirder has enough facilities - including a medical centre, three hotels, a post office, primary school and bowling club - to make it a pleasant place to live, even if the majority of people have to travel to work. As in most of the rural North-east public transport provision is sketchy.

**Community Activity**  
Aberchirder has a long tradition of volunteer activity, including an Amenities Association set up in 1930. Today the Community Council works in tandem with the Community Association it set up in 1996 to run projects based on a community plan. St Marnans Sports Club runs a well supported youth football programme and the 5-a-side at the annual Association Gala, and hopes to build an all-weather sports facility. Volunteers provide a range of other activities for young and old age groups. A committee has been reformed to consider whether to replace the Memorial Hall demolished in

2003, and a large committee runs the Foggie Flower Show each August.

## The Community Plan So Far

In the past ten years, thanks to external funding now well into six figures, the community has achieved a lot, either by itself or in partnership with other agencies, in particular Aberdeenshire Council:

## Community Facilities & Activities

- Community Pavilion with gym
- Community website ([www.foggieloa.co.uk](http://www.foggieloa.co.uk))
- Signage based on coat of arms
- Festive lights

## Recording Local History

- Virtual museum on website
- Video and books recording local history and culture

## Local Environment

- Cleanhill - paths, signage, booklet, tree management
- Bronchal Well area done up and maintained
- Flower beds and hanging baskets



Working out in gym in Community Pavilion.



Signage based on coat of arms.



Aerial view of the village.



Community Pavilion at McRobert Park.



Eastern entrance to the village.

### Aberchirder: Banff & Buchan Area Local Plan 2006-2009

The Area Plan lays out under five headings Aberdeenshire Council's intentions for developments for the forthcoming three years. It is based on consultation with local communities and discussions

with council officials and councillors, updated on a four monthly basis and approved annually by the Area Committee.

The latest version includes a number of actions specifically for Aberchirder and other general intentions which might affect Aberchirder and Marnoch.

#### Specific Actions

Heading/Lead Service	Action/Project
<b>Community Wellbeing</b>	
Education & Recreation	Extension to pavilion and All-weather sports area at McRobert Park (both community-led, no direct Council involvement)

#### General Intentions

Heading/Lead Service	Action/Project
<b>Community Wellbeing</b>	
Roads	Various traffic management/calming schemes, including Safer Routes to School
Housing	Provide more and better quality accommodation for temporary homeless Support for vulnerable, sheltered housing and disabled tenants Work with social landlords/voluntary associations Develop tenant participation groups
<b>Sustainable Environment</b>	
Housing	Upgrade energy efficiency and quality of council houses
Waste Management	Kerbside recycling Maximise public awareness, provide more plastic bottle/Cardboard containers
<b>Quality Services</b>	Various actions to maximise quality of service

See map on page 2 for Local Plan land use proposals.

Although the Headings in the Area Local Plan differ from the Themes in the Community Plan,

it is easy to relate them to each other.

The community was keen to see the recently closed Rose Innes Home put to a new use as a community space. However Aberdeenshire Council has now put the property on the market, which ends the possibility - albeit it remote - of community use.

The remaining four top priorities to emerge from the consultation are outlined below:

Projects which would involve the community in partnership

### **Improve appearance of The Square (Theme : Local Environment)**

This has been a priority since the original community plan was drawn up ten years ago. Although a great challenge is posed by the derelict appearance of some (private) properties in The Square, the community in partnership with Aberdeenshire Council could achieve some improvement by creating a more attractive 'island' either side of the Jubilee Fountain, which is currently being renovated using funds from Awards For All, Aberdeenshire Council and the Community Council. [P&ES, T&I]

Issues which would require action by an outside agency

### **Traffic calming in residential streets/near school (Theme : Traffic & Transport)**

Measures to reduce traffic speed in residential areas and to

improve safety for pedestrians near the school formed the third top priority. This is the responsibility of Aberdeenshire Council Roads, for which road safety measures form one of its ongoing programmes (see page 4). [T&I, E&R, GP]

### **Housing criminals and drug users in Aberchirder/More police action (Theme : Crime)**

There is considerable concern among local people at the number of antisocial tenants housed in the town by Aberdeenshire Council, although its hands are to a large extent tied under housing legislation. Drugs use is also a concern, with tackling drug dealers being another priority near the top of the list. There is a belief that the Police should have a greater presence and take more action against antisocial behaviour. These related issues provide an opportunity for action by various Community Planning partners. [H&SW, NHS, GP]

### **Expand the Library (Theme : Community Facilities & Activity)**

Several proposals combined to make this a top priority. The Librarian is highly regarded but limited in what she can achieve within the present premises. There is a wish to see expanded space and opening hours and the Library developed as a community space for such things as displays, adult education and outreach programmes. [E&R]



The Square.



The Library.



Aberchirder Primary School.



Boyndie Wind Farm.



Memorial Hall prior to demolition.

### Other issues raised

Many other suggestions received support, and these are listed on pages 6 - 9. A summarised Action Plan can be found on pages 10 - 11. Partner and agency codes are also listed on page 11.

### Two controversial issues

- **Wind farm**

A projected wind farm development at Blacklaw was unveiled in autumn 2005 and there is a sharp division of opinion between supporters of the idea (including community ownership as at Boyndie) and opponents. When the next stage of development of the project is reached, there will have to be thorough involvement of the community in deciding whether it should be supported.

- **Memorial (or other) Hall**

The Memorial Hall was closed on safety grounds in 2002 and demolished in 2003. The Hall Committee has undertaken a fundraising programme to pay for a feasibility study and hopes to build a replacement hall on the same site. There are also those who believe a new hall should be built elsewhere, and those who believe there is no need for a new hall. These splits in opinion suggest a need for careful consultation with the whole community before a project is undertaken.

### Community Facilities & Activity

This theme produced by far the largest number of suggestions, including two of the priorities (see page 5). Others receiving significant support were:

Projects which could be undertaken by the community independently

- One suggestion from previous versions of the community plan was for a market in the Square, where local producers could sell their wares. (See also the idea of a community shop below.)

Projects which would involve the community in partnership

- Another recurrent demand is for more activities for young people, such as a youth club. This would tie in with another proposal whereby local tradesmen could pass on their skills to young people in the course of a practical project of some sort. [E&R]
- The idea of a community shop was first put forward in 1996 and is still popular. Various uses have been suggested, including as an outlet for local producers, a café for different age groups through the day, and an information centre. [T&I, H&SW]

## Jobs & The Economy

The decline in the number of shops and the recent closure of the bank led to calls for more shops and steps to encourage businesses to locate and remain here, as well as provision of banking facilities. [T&I, SEG]

## Local Environment

This theme produced the second highest number of proposals, including one of those seen as a priority (see page 5). Much has already been done in previous years (see page 3) but there is support for such activities to continue.

Projects which could be undertaken by the community independently

- Activities dating from previous versions of the community plan are ongoing, and could be expanded depending on the amount of volunteer input from members of the community. A major example is providing and maintaining flower beds and hanging baskets.

Projects which would involve the community in partnership

- These include developing a network of paths (including historic ones and cycle paths) in and around the village

(linking to Aberdeenshire Council's Core Paths Plan) and management and development of the Cleanhill woodland. [P&ES]

- There was some demand for more benches to be provided at various points round the village. [P&ES, T&I]

Projects which would require action by an outside agency

- Aberdeenshire Council has been expanding recycling facilities in Aberchirder, but there was significant support for much more to be done, in particular to have more skips and 7-day opening. [P&ES]
- As well as in the Square, there are a number of other derelict buildings which people want to see demolished or regenerated. These are privately owned and under current legislation there seems nothing that Aberdeenshire Council could do about this problem. [L&A]



A closed shop on Main Street.



Sign at Cleanhill Wood.



Skip facility.



Village pharmacy.



Council Housing.



Former Police Station.

### Health

Projects which could be undertaken by the community independently

- Reflecting the current popularity of walking as a healthy activity, the idea of a walking group gained support.

Projects which would involve the community in partnership

- A drop-in centre for mums to get advice and support was agreed to be a good idea, building on the home start group which already exists. There would certainly be no lack of premises to rent if revenue funding could be found. *[H&SW, NHS]*

Projects which would require action by an outside agency

- Two well supported proposals - one for a dental surgery, and the other for a nursing home - reflect current concerns regarding health provision in the North-east, although whether they are practicable is extremely doubtful. *[NHS]*

### Housing

The responses suggest that this is not a theme where people identify issues.

Projects which would require action by an outside agency

- There was some demand for the Council to do house repairs more quickly. *[H&SW]*

## Traffic & Transportation

This theme produced one priority (see page 5) in addition to the proposals below.

Projects which would require action by an outside agency

- There were a number of suggestions for improving bus connections to surrounding towns and with trains at Huntly and also for better Sunday services. [T&I]
- Despite flashing speed signs being installed, there is still concern about speeding on South Street, and speed cameras were seen as likely to be more effective. [T&I, GP]

## Crime & Community Safety

Crime figures for Aberchirder are low compared with many other settlements in the North-east, but there is enough concern for this theme to provide one of the top five priorities (see page 5) and several other proposals were well supported:

Project which would involve the community in partnership

- A neighbourhood watch scheme is seen as a means by which the community could help the police to maintain law and order by providing information and being willing to testify.
- The same applies to two other issues, namely tackling drug dealers and discouraging vandalism. [GP]

Project which would require action by an outside agency

- As in most small communities, there is a perception that policing by patrol car is not as visible or effective as foot patrols in deterring minor crime. At the same time there is a realisation that police resources are limited and that pressure should be put on central government to increase funding for Grampian Police. [GP]
- There is also support for CCTV to be installed in the main hotspots for drug abuse and other antisocial behaviour. [CSP, GP]



Public transport.



Traffic on South Street.



Vandalism to picnic site at Cleanhill Wood.

	Independent	Partnership	Outside Agency
1. Community Facilities & Activity	Market in the Square	<p>More activities for young people [E&amp;R]</p> <p>Local tradesmen could pass on their skills to young people [E&amp;R]</p> <p>Community shop for local producers/ café for different age groups through the day/information centre [T&amp;I, H&amp;SW]</p> <p>New Memorial Hall (? – opinion divided)</p>	Expand the Library space & opening hours [E&R]
2. Jobs & The Economy			<p>More shops [T&amp;I, SEG]</p> <p>Steps to encourage businesses to locate and remain here [T&amp;I, SEG]</p> <p>Banking facilities [T&amp;I, SEG]</p>
3. Local Environment	Expand flower beds and hanging baskets	<p>Improve appearance of The Square [P&amp;ES, T&amp;I]</p> <p>Develop a network of paths (including cycle paths) in and around the village: McRobert Park, A97 to Quarryhill link, Auchintoul, Moss Rd [P&amp;ES]</p> <p>Management and development of Cleanhill woodland [T&amp;I]</p> <p>More benches round town [T&amp;I]</p>	<p>More recycling skips and 7–day opening [P&amp;ES]</p> <p>Demolish or regenerate derelict buildings [L&amp;A]</p>
4. Health	Walking group	Drop-in centre for mums [H&SW, NHS]	<p>Dental surgery [NHS]</p> <p>Nursing home [NHS]</p>

5. Housing			Council to do house repairs more quickly [H&SW]
6. Traffic & Transportation			Traffic calming in residential streets/near school [T&I, E&R, CSP, GP]  Improving bus connections to surrounding towns [T&I]  Stop speeding on South Street [T&I, GP]
7. Crime & Community Safety		Stop housing criminals and drug users in Aberchirder/More police action [H&SW, NHS, GP]  Neighbourhood watch scheme [CSP]  Tackle drug dealing/vandalism [CSP, GP]	Foot patrols [GP]  CCTV [CSP, GP]

### Partner codes

#### Aberdeenshire Council services:

E&R Education & Recreation  
H&SW Housing & Social Work  
L&A Law & Administration  
P&ES Planning & Environmental Services  
T&I Transportation & Infrastructure

#### Other agencies:

CSP Community Safety Partnership  
GP Grampian Police  
GFR Grampian Fire & Rescue Service  
NHS NHS Grampian  
SEG Scottish Enterprise Grampian

This booklet is one of a series produced by Local Rural Partnerships under the banner Making It Real for a number of communities in Aberdeenshire.

The initiative is sponsored by Aberdeenshire Community Planning Partnership and Shell, and run by Aberdeenshire Community Economic Development Co-ordinators Forum. The aim is to provide community action plans in an attractive, easy to read, professionally printed format.

The content of each community plan comes from a variety of

previous ones drawn up since 1996 together with update sessions held to gather the latest snapshot of public views on what needs to be done and who could achieve it.

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 and 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 reviewed and updated. As some projects are completed, other issues will arise and take their place in future versions of the community plan.

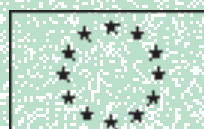
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