

Newtonhill Muchalls & Cammachmore Locality Plan

Release 1.3, 11 November 2020

NEWTONHILL, MUCHALLS & CAMMACHMORE COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Forward

The North-East of Scotland once relied on fishing, agriculture and shipbuilding to sustain its way of life. Since the 1970s, the Oil and Gas industry has become the dominant economic powerhouse for the whole area, eclipsing that which went before. The recent marked decline of the Oil and Gas sector has inevitably resulted in a loss of income for the region and nationally. It is an income stream that must be replaced if the North-East is not to suffer the catastrophic decline that befell the steelmaking and coal communities that were so dependent on a single major industry.



Much of the world relies on and benefits from tourist income. N.E. Scotland needs tourists to come here and spend their money. Enterprising individuals will create opportunities that will employ local people and boost the local economy. For tourists to start coming and keep returning, the North-East needs to develop itself as a tourist destination with the right infrastructure in place that is constantly being maintained and improved. Locally, we have the benefit of being situated on the stunning natural rugged coastal scenery that tourists wish to explore. The local community must ensure that this valuable asset is conserved for future generations.

Aberdeenshire Council designed the growth of the area in its Local development plans and now has a responsibility to do much more to support our three communities and enable them to flourish. Until recently, it has been the strategy of Aberdeenshire Council to encourage developers to build more and more houses. A strategy that has been driven by the Scottish Government. The community has decided that Chapelton is the right place to build a new town and the community has also made it abundantly clear that there should be no further development to the east of the A92.

Under the watch of the Scottish Government, the quality of education, compared to the rest of the world, has been allowed to fall. Aberdeenshire Council is compounding the problem by allowing primary and secondary schools to operate at over-capacity. Aberdeenshire Council's Strategic and Local development plans promote house building along the route of the A92 but fail to plan for the increase in population that would inevitably result from housing developments. It is time to put a stop to all new developments. Chapelton is the one exception, as their Masterplan includes the building of new primary and secondary schools.

Michael Morgan
Chair,
Newtonhill, Muchalls & Cammachmore Community Council.

Contents

Forward	1
Introduction.....	4
How to have your say about what should be in this Locality Plan	4
Jobs and the Economy.....	4
Tourism.....	4
Housing.....	4
Education.....	5
Newtonhill Out of School Club (NOOSC)	6
Transport and Connecting People.....	6
Newtonhill Station.....	6
Bus service to and from Newtonhill	6
Park & Choose	7
Potholes and other road defects.....	7
Electric car charging points	7
Underpass between Newtonhill and Cammachmore	7
Health and Wellbeing.....	7
Portlethen Medical Centre.....	7
Community Larder in Portlethen.....	8
Healthcare	8
Community Planning	8
Core Path and other Walking routes.....	8
Environment and local amenities.....	9
Dog fouling	9
Litter	9
Parking at Newtonhill Primary School.....	9
Problems with cars parking on pavements	9
Street lighting	9
What is good about Newtonhill and should be kept:.....	9
What needs to be done to improve the local environment:.....	10
Play-park facilities.....	10
Tennis courts	10
Wildlife garden and nature reserve adjacent to the allotments.....	10
Library.....	10
Bettridge Centre	11
Skateraw Hall and Muchalls Village Hall.....	11

Muchalls Conservation Area.....	11
Postal services	11
Seasonal garden waste collection	11
Waste and Recycling.....	11
Christmas lights	11
Community organisations	11
Communications.....	12
Taking more control	12
Participatory Budgeting.....	12
Asset Transfer	12
Participation Requests.....	12

Introduction

This Locality Plan describes the needs, hopes and aspirations for the communities living within the boundary of the Newtonhill, Muchalls and Cammachmore Community Council. It should be considered to be a living document that will be updated from time-to-time as the community grows and the environment changes. The aim of this document is to give a broad outline and a background that others may work from, to design detailed solutions that fit within the context of our three distinct communities.

The Community Council would like to encourage all residents of the community council area to include their own thoughts and aspirations. It is important to consider not only what changes we would like to see, but also what should not be changed. Make sure that your views are included.

How to have your say about what should be in this Locality Plan

A copy of this document is available for download from the Community Council website at <http://www.nmccc.org.uk/>.

Comments and suggestions may be raised at Community Council meetings or with any member of the Community Council.

Jobs and the Economy

The new development at Chapelton has promised to provide shops, businesses and other employment opportunities. There is overwhelming support for more employment opportunities close to Newtonhill.

Where appropriate, the Community Council will support employment opportunities within the Community Council area.

Tourism

The decline of the Oil & Gas industry in the North-East of Scotland has resulted in an economic downturn with many people moving away from the area. There is an urgent need to develop tourism as an alternative source of employment and revenue. It is essential to preserve the natural environment and to protect those amenities that will encourage tourists to visit.

Housing

Generally, for planning applications to be successful, building land first needs to be allocated in the Local Development Plan. A key part of the process of including land allocations in the Local Development Plan is the publication of the Main Issues Report. In 2009, following the publication of the Main Issues Report residents told us that all new development should be concentrated in Chapelton. This request was fed into the Local Development Plan and now Phase 1A of the new development at Chapelton has started with the construction of 802 homes. The developers have planning permission for a total of 4045 homes to be constructed in several phases. The Community Council views it as a matter of principle that the development should be allowed to proceed without undue competition from nearby new developments, particularly those which include no improvement to local facilities

Aberdeenshire Council published a new Main Issues Report in 2019 for the 2021 Local Development Plan. The report contained bids for more than 500 houses to be built within Newtonhill, Muchalls and Cammachmore.

Residents supported the Community Council in opposing all bids in the Main Issues Report for development within Newtonhill, Muchalls and Cammachmore and we fed that back to Aberdeenshire Council.

Residents also supported the Community Council asking for all current unused land allocations within Newtonhill, Muchalls and Cammachmore to be removed from the 2021 Local Development Plan. The Community Council has submitted a response to the Main Issues Report 2019 agreeing that all local bids should be removed from the proposed Local Development Plan 2021.

The Proposed Local Development Plan 2021 has now been agreed by Aberdeenshire Councillors and has now been submitted to the Scottish Government for final approval.

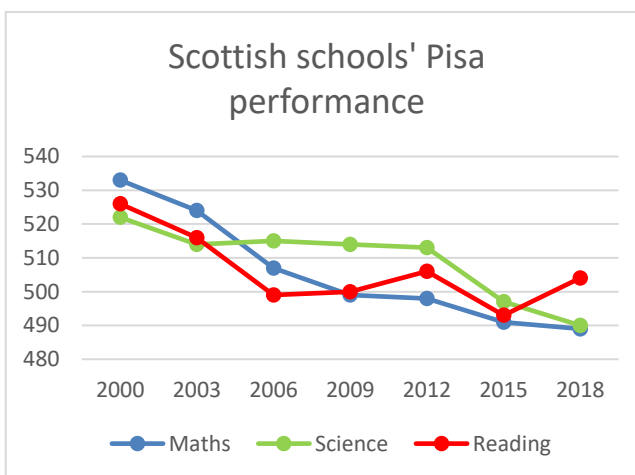
Education

Newtonhill Primary School is accepting pupils from Chapelton until a new primary school is built by the occupation of the 489th dwelling. **Aberdeenshire Council's 2019 Based School Roll Forecast** for Newtonhill Primary estimates that the school will be running at over-capacity by 2025.

All 3 and 4-year olds in Scotland and eligible 2-year olds, are currently entitled to 600 hours of funded (free) access to Early Learning and Childcare (ELC), nursery provision. The Scottish Government has announced that this will rise to 1140 hours by August 2020. The impact on Newtonhill Primary School has not been acknowledged by the local authority.

Aberdeenshire Council's 2019 Based School Roll Forecast shows Portlethen Academy to be over-capacity by 2023. The Academy has been built through a Public and Private Partnership Project and we understand that the current operators will not allow an increased capacity. An alternative option is Mackie Academy in Stonehaven, which is also very close to capacity or pupils from outside of the catchment zone may not be allowed places.

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) runs a Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). Every three years it tests 15-year-old students from all over the world in reading, mathematics and science. The tests are designed to gauge how well the students master key subjects in order to be prepared for real-life situations in the adult world. The results allow countries to be ranked by performance. In 2015, Scotland's schools recorded their worst ever performance in an international survey of pupils; recording only average in all three subjects. Scotland is falling down the world rankings. The 2018 results show an improvement in reading, but performance in maths and science continued to fall.



Primary and secondary school education provision is inextricably linked to housing development. Time and time again, Aberdeenshire Council has failed to provide adequate school provision when approving planning applications. This has led to overcrowded schools and has had a negative impact on the education of children in the Region.

Allowing a school to exceed its design capacity puts a strain on resources with more classes sharing the same physical resources: space, computers, physical education, dining, etc. The stated *design capacity* of 459 is based on Scottish Government calculations and it is recognised that the *working capacity* could be much lower, depending on the pupil demographic.

Newtonhill Out of School Club (NOOSC)

The Out of School club, based in the Bettridge Centre, is privately run and caters for around 80 children. NOOSC is a valued part of the local community and support within the local villages is very strong. At present, there is a waiting list and, with 121 houses about to be built in Newtonhill, the waiting list will get longer resulting in childcare problems for many working families. A solution needs to be found.

Transport and Connecting People

Not everybody has a car and, with climate change becoming more of a problem, fewer journeys should be made by car. To achieve the goal of fewer car journeys, we need better public transport with options of an improved bus service and also the reopening of Newtonhill Railway Station. Reopening the station may bring its own problems of parking in the roads around the station which may also include commuters from Chapelton.

Newtonhill Station

There is always a mixed feeling about the reopening of Newtonhill Station. While journey times to Aberdeen could be reduced to just a few minutes, there are real concerns about car parking. There is little opportunity for off-road parking, so roads close to the station may become blocked. It has been suggested that the football pitch could be converted into a station carpark. An alternative could be extending the car park at the Bettridge Centre as it could be used by commuters, leaving no space for users of the Bettridge Centre. There could be a possible parking area for the new Newtonhill station beside the railway beside the tracks above the "Courts". This was a railway siding, and it may be argued that Network Rail require this area for storage, however there is a strong case for alternative car parking.

NESTRANS has indicated that a feasibility study, for opening the station, may be initiated soon.

Bus service to and from Newtonhill

Public transport is referred to many times as a service in need of improvement. Newtonhill is the one major housing area in the Portlethen-Laurencekirk development corridor that has the double problem of not having a railway station and, at the same time, having a very poor bus service. With very little employment within Newtonhill, most residents need to commute elsewhere for employment.

The most frequently requested is for more buses and for more express buses. Long gaps in the timetable at the times when buses are used for school transport creates a public transport service that is not fit for purpose. There is too little provision for teenagers, the disabled and those without cars.

From time-to-time the Community Council will consult with residents of Newtonhill, Muchalls and Cammachmore about the sort of bus service that will best serve our community. Following the consultation, we will work with Stagecoach Group to improve the bus services in our area.

Park & Choose

The lighting at the Park & Choose needs to be improved so that the bus stop and shelter are illuminated during dark mornings and evenings. This could be achieved by connecting the streetlamp to the electricity grid or by putting an extra light inside the shelter, as is available opposite the Tesco supermarket.

If electricity is made available inside the shelter, then a real-time display could also be installed.

The Community Council continues to make representations to Aberdeenshire Council, the Bus Forum and to the Chapelton Liaison Group for better lighting to be installed in the bus shelter.

Potholes and other road defects

Members of the public can report road defects to Aberdeenshire Council and sometimes these faults are fixed quickly. However, over the past few years it has been noticed that several reported road defects are not being repaired. It has been observed that the use of poor-quality materials results in repairs breaking down, often after just a few months. The Community Council will continue to report road problems to Aberdeenshire Council and to Transport Scotland, where appropriate. The Community Council will also urge our Ward 17 Councillors to press for problem areas to be tackled by the Council Roads Department.

There is a problem with a sunken road in the Cairnhill area due to heavy through traffic to the area where the new houses were being developed. It was said that the builder should be required to reinstate the road back to its original condition. The Community Council has asked Aberdeenshire Council to rectify these problems but has not received a response.

Electric car charging points

We are told that petrol and diesel cars will no longer be in production after 2035. More charging points for electric cars are needed. All new housing must include dedicated charging points for electric vehicles.

Underpass between Newtonhill and Cammachmore

The Community Council is working on a project to connect Newtonhill Primary School to Cammachmore making optimal use of the underpass and to enable a 'Safe Route to School'. At present the western end of the underpass has a path turning south towards the farm steadings. We would like to create a path turning north going directly to Cammachmore, by the garage. This path would be improved if it ran inside the fence of the large field, with the large Chapelton billboard, as it would be sheltered from the A92 traffic. This route is similar to one proposed as part of the Chapelton development. The Community Council has approached the Duke of Fife with this proposal and response from Elsie Estate has been very positive.

Health and Wellbeing

Portlethen Medical Centre

Several residents thought that the Portlethen Medical Centre will have problems coping with the development at Chapelton and some said that waiting times have already increased due to the development at Hillside and are now too long. Some residents reported that access is not adequate as they do not have their own transport and that Newtonhill should have its own medical centre. It is generally thought that public transport is too unreliable and that the bus timetable is not as convenient as it used to be. Some residents reported that they had to travel very early to ensure arriving in good time for appointments.

Community Larder in Portlethen

The Community Larder at the Porty Cabin was set up during March 2020 and is open to residents of Newtonhill and the surrounding areas as well as residents of Portlethen. It is run by donations from the public, local companies, and stock food that would otherwise go to waste.

The Larder is not a food bank but does offer a similar service where you can come and collect a variety of items for no cost whatsoever. They do not take any of your details and you do not need a referral. You can choose your own items too.

They are always looking for new volunteers; this can be a hall helper or behind the scenes.

<https://www.facebook.com/TheLarderPortlethen/>

Healthcare

The Health and Social Care Partnership has developed a new Strategic Plan 2020-25 for Aberdeenshire and is preparing a new Locality Plan for Kincardine & Mearns.

Community Planning

The Local Community Planning Partnership created a Kincardine & Mearns Community Plan for 2016 – 2019, which brings together input and action from Community Planning Partners, Elected Councillors and local communities. It is a plan for the area, jointly developed and owned by all. The three priority areas have been identified as:

- Strong Communities
- Connecting People
- Wellbeing

While work is in progress on the next Community Plan, the current plan has been extended to 2022. It is anticipated that the next plan will be based on Community School Networks, allowing Kincardine & Mearns to be split into three sub-divisions, each with its own academy. Each locality can then address its own local issues.

Core Path and other Walking routes

The existing underpass offers an ideal, safe pathway under the A92 to link Newtonhill with West Cammachmore. A network of existing footpaths links the eastern end of the underpass with Newtonhill Primary School, Tesco, Skateraw, the beach, East Cammachmore and the Core Path between Portlethen and Muchalls. On the western side there is also a network of paths and tracks linking with Chapelton, the Causey Mounth, West Cammachmore and beyond. As well as enhancing the general footpath network, the underpass would become a 'Safe Route to School' between Chapelton, West Cammachmore and Newtonhill Primary School.

The path to the beach at Muchalls, washed away by violent storms, must be reinstated. Access to the beach is viewed as a core asset by those who live in Muchalls. There are a lot of walkers, climbers, geologists, as well as local residents who want access to the beach.

The community has asked for improvements to the Coastal path south of Muchalls to enable walkers / off-road cyclists to travel between Muchalls and Stonehaven following the coast.

The need for green spaces, in particular the area to the north of Newtonhill, the coastal park and the moor between Newtonhill and Muchalls, is seen as vitally important to the wellbeing of the community. These areas must not be built on.

Environment and local amenities

The Newtonhill Environmental Action Team (NEAT) has been praised by residents for performing an excellent job of clearing litter and keeping the village looking attractive by adding new features. It was also stated that many residents are actively working to keep their local area free of litter. The organised 'litter-picks' also make a very valuable contribution to keeping our villages beautiful.

Suggestions are for more litter bins, especially by the tennis courts and the football pitch.

Dog fouling

Generally, residents reported that the presence of dog fouling has increased as fewer owners are picking up after their dogs. Dog fouling is still an issue that residents are angry about and more needs to be done to encourage owners to 'pick-up'!

Many residents praised NEAT for an excellent job of clearing litter and dog mess. It was stated that the provision of poo bags in dispensers around the village had helped to improve the situation; more dispensers and bins are required.

Litter

Aberdeenshire Council is creating a strategy to reduce litter and fly-tipping. Ideally, many of the waste bins should be replaced by bins that include a recycle option. These larger bins could include advertising, sponsorship or community notices. This is a very successful and resourceful initiative in Italy, encouraging the community and visitors to recycle and bin litter. It works in Italy, so why not here!

Parking at Newtonhill Primary School

There is a concerning and serious problem with traffic at the school during the morning drop-off and afternoon collection and residents have asked for action to be taken about the parking problem. Police Scotland are monitoring the situation and taking action against offenders.

Planning applications for additional developments in Newtonhill, Muchalls and Cammachmore will exacerbate the problem.

Problems with cars parking on pavements

There are several areas around the village where parking on pavements was reported as being particularly bad, but Cairnhill figured prominently. It was claimed that vehicles would be parked on the pavement even when the driveway was empty. Some respondents reported the combined problem of vehicles parked on the pavement and overhanging hedges had effectively closed the footpath. Pedestrians with prams and pushchairs are sometimes unable to pass the parked cars.

Street lighting

The new LED streetlights have received a mixed response, but they are a welcome improvement as they are more energy efficient and should have a longer lifespan. Street lighting should not be turned off during the night due to concerns for safety.

What is good about Newtonhill and should be kept:

Many respondents said that Newtonhill is a good place to live and that the village has a strong community spirit. The primary facilities: pharmacy, TESCO, library, Bettridge Centre, Skateraw Hall, bowling club, Out of School Club, coastal park, tennis courts, football pitch and play-park are all held in high regard and are seen as an essential part of the heart of the village. The majority expressed the view that the village is large enough and that they would not like to see more house building.

What needs to be done to improve the local environment:

Aberdeenshire Council, having planned a development of this size, needs to take more responsibility for the maintenance and appearance of Newtonhill. Green spaces throughout Newtonhill need better attention; NEAT does an excellent job but cannot be expected to do the work of Aberdeenshire Council. Quite often council grass cutting leaves a mess of cuttings over the adjacent footpaths. Several trees need to be re-staked and trees & bushes should be tidied more often.

The entrance to Newtonhill was mentioned many times as an area in need of improvement to enhance the appearance and the identity of the village.

There is a call for safe cycle routes especially between Newtonhill and Portlethen and between Newtonhill and Stonehaven. There is also call for better maintenance of footpaths around Cranhill. There is also call for a cycle route or footpath under the A92 between Newtonhill Primary School and West Cammachmore.

Play-park facilities

Facilities for children to play, exercise and socialise are extremely important and bring many benefits to the community. It is essential that all play equipment is well maintained, fit for purpose and there is provision for a range of age groups.

After many false starts and much delay, an upgrade to play equipment in Newtonhill Park was completed in November 2019. The supernova roundabout was added in January 2020.

Tennis courts

This facility provides two tennis courts, a basketball court, and a netball court. All courts have the required nets that have been provided by the Newtonhill Common Good Fund. Aberdeenshire Council have agreed to kill the moss each Spring. The playing surface will need to be re-painted every few years.

Recently, problems have been reported with the wire fencing. Aberdeenshire Council has been asked to make repairs.

Wildlife garden and nature reserve adjacent to the allotments

The wildlife garden and nature reserve on Park Place has been especially managed for many years with the view of increasing biodiversity and providing a place of study for local residents. It is not a piece of waste land to enable development on the moor between Newtonhill and Muchalls.

Library

Some residents have expressed concerns, to the Library Service, about the safety and suitability of the existing library building and this has been raised with senior Council officers. Ultimately, elected members will decide whether to invest in the existing building or to move the library to other premises.

The library is a valued amenity in Newtonhill. Aberdeenshire Council and Live Life must continue to keep it open and to improve opening hours. It is seen as essential that children especially continue to have access to the written word. As education attainment levels in Scotland continue to fall, everything must be done to support and improve facilities for our children.

Libraries are much more than just books. Visit <https://www.livelifeaberdeenshire.org.uk/libraries/> to find out more. Here is one quote from their website:

The world of technology is fast paced and forever moving forward and that's exactly how we like to operate in the libraries. We love technology and are committed to delivering new hardware and

services to all our library members. We would like to show you some of the new technology to be found in your library and how you can get access to it. Remember, you don't need to be a tech wizard to be able to experience any of this new kit as we have plenty of knowledgeable, helpful staff ready and waiting to assist you.

Bettridge Centre

The Bettridge Centre is seen as being of 'crucial importance' to Newtonhill. Many of the activities held there are provided by local residents. With an increasing catchment area and population, the Bettridge Centre is seeking to provide more facilities. The Centre is currently investigation expanding the floor area by adding another room where the current garage is located. There is also the option of incorporating the library and an adjacent storeroom into an extension that could incorporate an enhanced library as well as other facilities.

Skateraw Hall and Muchalls Village Hall

Both halls are much used and essential community hubs.

Muchalls Conservation Area

The Muchalls Conservation Area status must remain in place until such time as the residents of Muchalls decide otherwise.

Postal services

The Post Office, which 'pops-up' at Newtonhill Pharmacy, should open more frequently than just one afternoon per week.

Seasonal garden waste collection

Aberdeenshire Council has confirmed that the seasonal garden waste collection will continue to be available. Aberdeenshire Council needs to reduce the amount of household waste going to landfill to meet the Scottish Government's ban on landfilling biodegradable waste from 1st January 2021. This seasonal garden waste collection is an important part of meeting that target.

Waste and Recycling

Many residents agree with the need to recycle more and send less to landfill. There is a lack of clarity about which plastics can be recycled and which cannot. Supermarkets and manufacturers need to take more responsibility and use less wasteful packaging. The household segregation of recyclable materials has gone far enough; many households just do not have enough space for all the different bins. Aberdeenshire Council needs to put more effort into persuading more households to reduce the contamination in the current suite of bins.

Christmas lights

The Christmas lights are an important feature and make a much-welcomed appearance in the run up to Christmas. The team of volunteers who maintain and install the lights is to be praised for their contribution to village life.

Community organisations

- Community Council
- Newtonhill Village Association (NVA)
- Muchalls Village Association (MVA)
- Newtonhill Environmental Action Team (NEAT)

- Newtonhill Out of School Club (NOOSC)
- Friends of Newtonhill School (FON)
- The Bettridge and Skateraw hall committees
- Churches

Communications

- Web site: <http://www.nmccc.org.uk/>
- The Newsey: seen as being an essential part of village life
- Facebook
- Public notice boards
- Tesco notice board
- Broadband speeds can vary from place to place and also be quite poor at certain times of the day.
- Terrestrial television reception is quite poor in some places as line-of-site to the Durriss transmitter is compromised by intervening buildings. An improved local signal is required.
- Mobile phone reception is quite poor in some places.

Taking more control

Participatory Budgeting

This document may be used to provide background information on Newtonhill, Muchalls and Cammachmore in future participatory budgeting exercises.

See <https://www.gov.scot/policies/community-empowerment/participatory-budgeting/> for more information.

Asset Transfer

The [Community Empowerment \(Scotland\) Act 2015](#) gives communities the right to ask for local authority assets to be transferred into community control. This may be a procedure that could be adopted to prevent assets valuable to the local community being disposed of by Aberdeenshire Council.

Assets, not held by Aberdeenshire Council, may be brought into community control through Community Right to Buy legislation, which is Part 2 of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003.

See <https://www.gov.scot/policies/community-empowerment/asset-transfer/> for more information.

Participation Requests

[Part 3 of the Community Empowerment Act 2015](#) enables communities to request to participate in decisions and processes which are aimed at improving outcomes. The Scottish Government has developed participation request guidance for both public service authorities and community bodies to use. Public service authorities are required to follow guidance issued by the Scottish Ministers in carrying out their functions in relation to participation requests.

See <https://www.gov.scot/policies/community-empowerment/participation-requests/> for more information.