

Newtonhill

Community Action Plan

At the end of 2013, the Newtonhill, Muchalls & Cammachmore Community Council surveyed residents of Newtonhill to determine what action we should take to represent residents. This document lists the areas of greatest importance and the action that we plan to take.

Community Wellbeing

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 did 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 timetable is not as good as it used to be. Some residents travelled very early to ensure arriving in good time.

Jobs and the Economy

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

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

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 you 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 by 2023. The Community Council view it is a matter of principle that the development should be allowed to proceed without undue competition from competing developments.

Aberdeenshire Council published a new Main Issues Report in 2013 for the next 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. In May 2014 Aberdeenshire Councillors voted to reject all new bids.

Residents also supported the Community Council asking in all current unused land allocations within Newtonhill, Muchalls and Cammachmore to be removed from the next Local Development Plan and we have done this. We are currently waiting to hear if this has been successful.

Transport

With further housing development in the corridor from Laurencekirk to the Bridge of Dee the A90 will become more congested and potentially more dangerous. One way to alleviate this problem may be 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 include commuters from Chapelton.

Over 70% of respondents stated clearly that they are happy or, at least, reasonably happy with the condition of the roads. Many stated that defects are fixed quickly if you contact the Council Roads Department. Exceptions are the reinstatement of white lines in some parts of the village.

There is a problem with a sunken road in the Cairnhill area due to heavy through traffic to the area where the new houses are being developed. It was said that the builder should be required to reinstate the road back to its original condition.

Residents in the Skateraw area have complained about the condition of the roads between the railway and the cliff.

There is concern over potholes on the A90, especially in the Portlethen area.

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.

Newtonhill Station

Online respondents were 66% in favour of reopening the station, but this lead was reduced to 52% when adding in the responses returned on paper. Several respondents explicitly asked that the station remains closed citing potential problems with parking.

The Community Council will continue to press for an appropriate solution to the re-opening of Newtonhill Station.

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.

There are problems with the X7 service that often does not stop at Newtonhill because it is already full and the next bus is not due for another hour. The express services between Aberdeen and other Aberdeenshire towns appear to be more frequent than for the service to Newtonhill.

The most frequently request is for more buses and for more express buses. It is felt that congestion in Aberdeen led to problems keeping to the timetable. If the normal and the express services were more frequent, then problems keeping to the timetable would have a reduced impact.

Many would like more buses to via St. Michael's Road since those with limited mobility currently have to walk over half a mile to get to a bus stop. There is too little provision for those without cars, teenagers and the disabled.

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.

Environment

The Newtonhill Environmental Action Team (NEAT) has been praised by many residents for performing an excellent job of clearing litter and keeping the village looking attractive. It was also stated that some residents are actively working to keep their local area free of litter.

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 had diminished and this is mainly due to more dog owners picking up after their dogs. There are still problem areas in Newtonhill Park, the park near the Courts and near the school. Dog fouling is still an issue that residents are angry about.

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.

Problems with cars parking on pavements

There is a particular bad problem at the school during the morning drop-off and afternoon collection and residents have asked for action to be taken about the parking problem.

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

Street lighting should not be turned off during the night due to concerns for safety.

What, if anything, 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 leave 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. TESCO need to make more effort to enhance the appearance of their property as it is in such a prominent position.

There is a call for safe cycle routes especially between Newtonhill and Portlethen and between Newtonhill and Stonehaven. There is also a call for better maintenance of footpaths around Cranhill. There is also call for a cycle route or footpath under the A90 between Newtonhill Primary School and Cammachmore.

Tell us what is good about Newtonhill and should be kept:

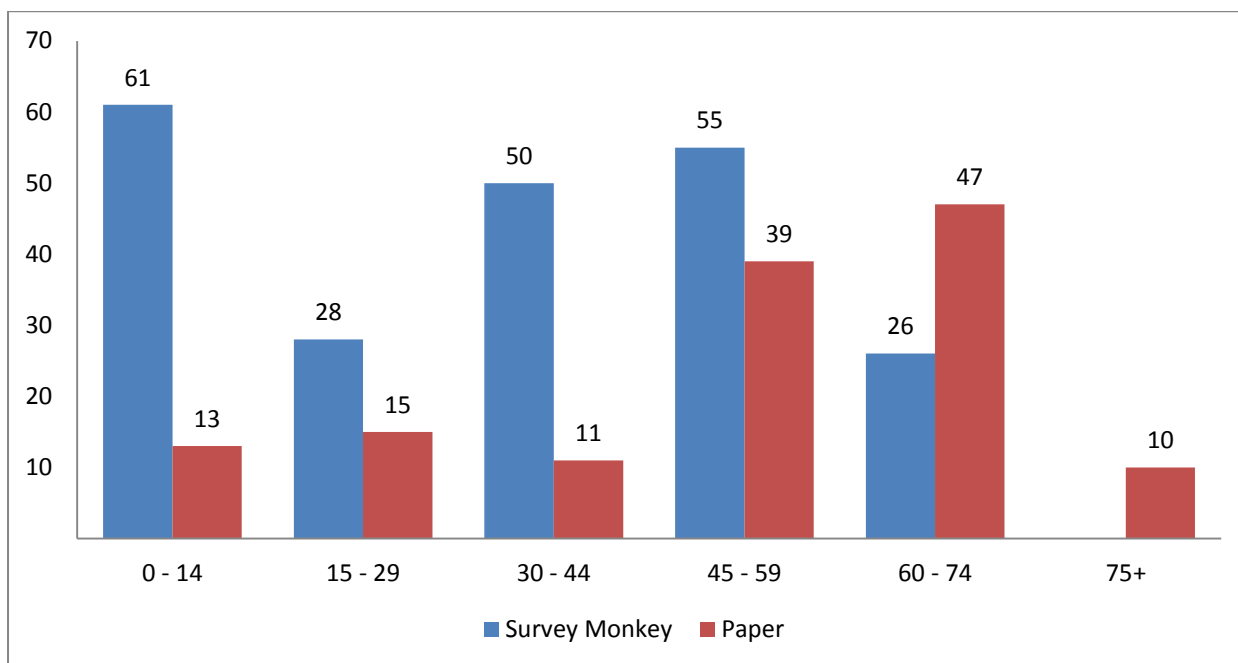
Many respondents felt that Newtonhill is a good place to live and that the village has a strong community spirit. The primary facilities: pharmacy, convenience store, TESCO, library, Bettridge Centre, Skateraw Hall, bowling club, Out of School Club, coastal park, tennis courts, football pitch and play-park 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.

The Newtonhill Village Association (NVA) and NEAT received a lot of praise for the work that they do for the community. The NEWSEY was also praised and is seen as being an essential part of village life. The Bettridge Centre is seen as being of 'crucial importance' to Newtonhill. Most of the activities held there are provided, free, by local residents; this does not absolve Aberdeenshire Council from maintaining leisure and recreation provision.

Tell us what needs to be changed or improved in Newtonhill:

- Several respondents said that more volunteers are needed
- The Post Office should open more frequently than just one afternoon per week
- A post box should be provided at the TESCO supermarket
- More facilities are required for teenagers, possibly a youth club.

Demographic



The demographic has been created by counting the number of individuals represented by the survey responses. Each response represents one or more individuals. The number of responses received was 82 online and 68 on paper, giving a total of 150. Values given below are based on the number of completed responses.

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