



Kincardine O'Neil
Community
Action Plan



Village photo, 1905.



Old view of village.



The old Neil bridge.



Old view from the field.

Introduction

Kincardine O'Neil, or Kinker as it is known locally, is a village with a local community of around 500 inhabitants, situated on the A93 between Banchory and Aboyne in Aberdeenshire. It sits in the middle of 'Royal Deeside' and is ideally situated to provide facilities for passing traffic; people living locally, Aberdeen commuters, and people travelling along the valley to enjoy activities such as hill-walking and skiing, or visit one of the many local castles. Internationally many come to the area to enjoy the scenery which has attracted the royal family to the area for over a century, to enjoy the salmon fishing on the Dee and upland field sports. Its close proximity to the River Dee continues to support its popularity, with the river providing leisure, business and recreational opportunities.

Historically, Kincardine O'Neil has taken advantage of its position at the crossroads of the north-south droving route from the Moray Coast to the Mearns, and the east-west road from Aberdeen to Braemar. This made the village an important centre at one time. Many of the buildings have been preserved, with the village given conservation status in 1978 to help ensure that some of the historic character is retained.

Kincardine O'Neil In The Past

Kincardine O'Neil is the oldest village in Deeside and has a number of interesting old buildings including the ruined church of St Mary's. The original church was established late in the 5th century by St Erchard. He is now the patron saint of Kincardine O'Neil and a well exists in his honour. St Erchard's Feast Day was celebrated in the distant past on the 24th of August and this event was revived more recently in 1997.

The first bridge built across the Dee was at Kincardine O'Neil and this probably led to the first 'hospice' or hotel in Deeside built in 1233. The hospitality of the village was tested in 1296 when King Edward I and 30,000 men at arms and 5,000 mail-clad knights rested the night and "left neither maut nor ale". Other royal visitors have included King James V in disguise who so appreciated the hospitality offered to him that he granted the tenant Cochran the land. This part of the village became known as Cochran's Croft and although at one time a separate hamlet it is now part of the village.

In the 18th century the village boasted three yearly fairs with popular foot markets held in the street and the kirk yard. Kincardine O'Neil had a population of around 100 at this time; the first school had been established and thousands of cattle were being sold at the Barthol Fair each year. The well and the 'auld kirk' can still be seen today and other buildings of significance can be viewed by strolling through the village and taking a short drive around the parish. These include the Morrice School (it was an all-female school), the Gordon Arms Hotel, Kincardine House, the Tollhouse (bottom of Pitmurchie Road), the Old Smiddy and many others along the Main Street. Also worth a look in the surrounding area is Thomas Telford's bridge at Potarch (a couple of miles east of the village) and the Dinnie Stones outside the Potarch Hotel. In 1860 Donald Dinnie, local strongman, carried these stones, weighing 785lb across the width of the road and back.

Kincardine O'Neil Today

Today Kincardine O'Neil is a village with a rising school population and an increasing number of local businesses. These include a post office, general store and licensed delicatessen, petrol station, jewellery/gem shop, gift shop, hairdressers, pottery and log cabin supplier. Within a three mile radius of the village businesses include a hotel, outdoor activity centre and restaurant to name but a few.

The village has an active Community Association with a sub-committee involved in organising twinning links with a similarly sized village in the north of France. Recent Community Association initiatives have included the re-opening and maintenance of the local public toilets, and the annual planting of flower tubs throughout the village which many visitors and people passing through the village have made positive comments about. Regular litter-picking has also enhanced the look of the village.

The village has two churches, the Mid Deeside Parish Church (Church of Scotland) and Christ Church (Scottish Episcopal Church), who in addition to regular services hold social and fundraising events and have facilities available for use by the community. The Village Hall hosts a variety of social functions, concerts, band nights and weekly dog training classes. The village also has a very active and long-standing Bowling Club and Scottish Women's Rural Institute (SWRI), both attended by many from within and outwith the village. There is potential for other clubs to be formed; tennis and curling facilities are available in the village but both are in need of some maintenance and improvement.

The playing fields and play park lying on the edge of the village draw local people and tourists alike and recently added picnic tables greatly enhance this area. There are many walks around Kincardine O'Neil including that to the Falls of Dess (a local beauty spot) and the Deeside Way from Kincardine O'Neil to Potarch, on to Banchory and eventually Aberdeen. This section was completed in early 2011 and is already popular with walkers and cyclists alike. Completion of the Deeside Way to the west of Kincardine O'Neil is expected in the foreseeable future.

The village primary school plays a central role in village life. It has a current roll of 27 (2011) and a permanent head teacher has recently been appointed allowing the opportunity for further integration into the community. A new school hall has been built in the last few years providing an additional facility both during school hours and for occasional community events. In the past there have been concerns about a falling roll at the school but numbers are currently expected to increase. Although there are no childcare facilities within the village a mother and toddler group meets once a week in the school.

As with many smaller communities there was a desire for improvement in the village but at times a lack of direction or commitment. With this in mind the Community Association began in 2010 to explore the process of community action planning and how the community could engage to identify needs and aspirations in their area.



Village photo, 1997.



Community Action Planning Event.



Primary School children's model of the village.



Tree planting on Deeside Way - March 2011.



The village from Craigton.



Playing field and new picnic tables.



Kincardine O'Neil Primary School.



Re-opening of the public toilets in 2007.

The Community Action Planning Process

The purpose of the Community Action Planning process was to give members of the wider Kincardine O'Neil community the opportunity to have a say and raise their concerns, but perhaps more importantly, to identify what was valued, what needed to be protected and what could be done to improve life in the community. Emphasis was placed on taking a positive approach, encouraging community members to participate both in the planning process but also in future actions.

As a first step in the process to develop a community action plan, a Steering Group was set up comprising four members of the Community Association committee, with support from the Marr Area Partnership. A public consultation event was planned for November 2010, held in the Kincardine O'Neil Village Hall.

The centre piece for the event was a fabulous model of the village built by the children of the primary school. Participants were encouraged to submit comments on a range of topics including education and learning, sustainable environment, health and well-being, working together, jobs and the local economy. An exhibition of local history photographs generated further debate, whilst local organisations had the opportunity to advertise their activities, including an initiative to regenerate the Village Hall committee.

On the day, 102 adults and 23 children attended the event, representing the village and wider community, a much larger percentage of the community than it had been anticipated would attend. Those who were present had the opportunity to set down their desires, aspirations and suggestions for improvements in and around the village.

Over 230 comments were contributed, covering a wide range of topics. The next step for the Steering Group was to collate these comments, sort them into a number of main themes and then prioritise them on the basis of number of comments. Priority was given to suggestions that were considered realistic and achievable (some were not), and those that were supported by a number of comments. Possible actions were then identified, these being categorised into short term actions or 'quick wins', medium term (6-12 month) and long term (> 1 year) actions (see summary tables). Feedback was provided at a second community event in February 2011, when participants had a chance to consider the 'quick win' actions and start work on making things happen. Whilst the Community Association committee would take on some of the actions, the wider community were encouraged to participate in the process, getting involved and taking on their own initiatives.

The ten themes, in order of priority, are summarised in Table 2 but are here described in more detail:

Theme 1: Community Activities

There was a strong desire expressed for more social and sporting activities to be held within the village. Examples included a local history group, exercise and dance classes, and film nights. Comments relating to sporting facilities included many requests to improve the existing tennis courts, as well as suggestions for basketball hoops, a badminton club and cycling club.

A number of residents suggested a village event such as a summer fair or street party. A small group of volunteers got together at the consultation feedback event and from this a summer fair was planned and successfully held in June 2011.

A need for better communication about events was also identified. It was concluded that a new community notice board could be of value. Further development of the Kincardine O'Neil web site (www.kincardineoneil.co.uk) would allow existing groups to advertise events, but could also be used to start new groups and encourage participation in activities.

Quick Wins

- Set up special interest groups (e.g. drama, local history, dance and exercise classes).
- Village event in summer 2011 (Fair or Street party?).
- Improve communications (e.g. updates to web site, advertise community groups, create page on web site to encourage participation in actions).

Medium Term Actions

- Explore possibility of film nights (amateur club or commercial films in the village hall).
- New, larger Notice Board.

Long Term Actions

- Improve tennis courts (achievable with external funding).
- Other sports facilities?

Theme 2: Environment

Considerable interest was shown in environmental issues. Approximately half of the comments focussed on amenities such as picnic tables, dog bins and recycling facilities. These are issues that can be addressed in the short term. There were also requests for more allotment land and a composting scheme, facilities that may take a little longer to achieve.

It was evident that the flower tubs in the village are greatly appreciated, with one comment that "flowers are amazing... thanks". The flower tubs are currently located along the main road through the village. Several residents have asked for tubs in Canmore Place, something that can be achieved with a few extra volunteers to look after them.

There were many comments asking for wildlife areas to be created, and a desire for tree planting, particularly where new developments occur. Thanks to the involvement of community members in the 'It's Your Neighbourhood' scheme of Beautiful Scotland, we have been able to benefit from a scheme funded by the RHS and the Woodland Trust, who provided us with packs of 'wild food' shrub whips. These were planted by volunteers along the bank between the A93 and the Deeside Way on the eastern approach to the village in early 2011.

Quick Wins

- Review of dog bin facilities.
- Provide flower tubs for Canmore Place – will need volunteers to help with upkeep.
- Picnic area at the playing fields.

Medium Term Actions

- Set up environment work group to consider issues such as maintenance of the Wally Walk, the future of the curling rink and the creation of wildlife areas.

Long Term Actions

- Re-site recycling facilities within the village.
- Creation of village composting scheme.
- Plant more trees.



Bowling club.



Collage produced by children at the school.



Christ Church in the snow.



Planting of flower tubs.



Historical information board.



Mid-Deeside Church.



Flower tubs putting on a good display in the Main Street.



Twinning ceremony.

Theme 3: Road Safety

Many were concerned about road safety in the village, most relating to the speed of traffic travelling through the village and the need to speed calming measures. There were numerous calls for a 'zebra crossing' at the village primary school. Some success has already been achieved, with the council installing flashing speed signs at each end of the village, and also at the bends by Dess, following pressure from both the Community Association and the primary school's Pupil Council. Effort will be needed to monitor the situation and ensure that progress continues to be made.

Quick Wins

- Speed reduction on traffic through the village.

Medium Term Actions

- Liaise with Council as new issues present themselves.

Long Term Actions

- Safe crossing of the main road.

Theme 4: Young and Old

The provision of facilities and services for children, young people and the elderly was considered important by many respondents. Safe play areas and more play facilities for children were requested, with one suggestion for an adventure area in the woods. It was recognised that there were few facilities for teenagers. Whilst the provision of further sports facilities could address some of the problem, further support would be needed to set up a youth club or similar.

When considering the elderly, one self acclaimed pensioner was very happy with her lot, stating that she had everything she needed in the village. Whilst this is gratifying it does not stop us from attempting to improve life further. One respondent suggested the need for winter support for the elderly.

Quick Wins

- None.

Medium Term Actions

- Play area in the centre of the village.
- Facilities for teenagers / Youth Club.

Long Term Actions

- More support for the elderly.

Theme 5: Hall Facilities

Numerous comments focussed on the Village Hall, with some calling for more activities in the hall whilst others showed concern about the maintenance of the hall and the need for improvements to be made to the facility. A call for volunteers to help with the hall resulted in 22 offers to lend a hand. A new Village Hall committee was formed in early 2011 to address the management of the hall, whilst a small working group are to assess future strategy. Other volunteers will be called upon as projects develop.

Quick Wins

- A list of people interested in helping with the Hall was produced at the action event.
- Formation of new committee.

Medium Term Actions

- Maintenance activities?

Long Term Actions

- Improvements to facility (achievable with external funding).

Theme 6: Village Pub

Several respondents expressed a desire for the village pub, the Gordon Arms, to be re-opened, with some suggesting the option of a community pub. This idea had recently been explored by the Community Association and rejected for a number of reasons. The fact that the business was not a going concern was seen to be a major barrier. A community pub was therefore seen as an outcome that was considered unachievable under current circumstances, although the desire to have a viable pub was evident.

Quick Wins

- None.

Medium Term Actions

- None.

Long Term Actions

- None.

Theme 7: Planning Issues

Whilst housing and planning issues were not a focus of the community consultation, local residents demonstrated the desire to have a say in the development of the area; one commenting: "give people the final say in planning applications". There were some comments calling on planners to avoid allowing development of flat arable land. Several supported the view that consideration should be given to siting new housing on south facing slopes behind the village, on land with limited agricultural use and no potential flooding problems. These views were considered to be of value to the planning authorities, but not an issue that could be acted upon by the Community Association.

Quick Wins

- None.

Medium Term Actions

- Monitor planning applications.

Long Term Actions

- The community action plan will not cover planning and development - this process is led by Aberdeenshire Council.
- It should be noted that the Community Association did respond to the Local Plan on behalf of the community, based on a consultation and short questionnaire.

Theme 8: Deeside Way

The Deeside Way attracted a number of comments, most asking for completion of the route through and to the west of the village. Local walkers and cyclists are already making good use of the sections that have been completed to the east of the village, but it is recognised that a finished route could attract more visitors to the village. At this stage the Community Association are only able to monitor progress with Aberdeenshire Council. In the long-term, there will be a need to promote the path to maximise the tourist potential for the area.

Quick Wins

- None.

Medium Term Actions

- Community Association to push for completion of the path between Kincardine O'Neil and Aboyne.

Long Term Actions

- Promote the Deeside Way on the

Kincardine O'Neil website once the path is completed and officially opened.

Theme 9: Commerce

Varied comments were made loosely related to commerce, local business and services, including requests for small business units, more local job opportunities, promotion of tourism in the village, more shops, a farmer's market and the sale of local produce. Not all of these were issues the Community Association could necessarily influence. However, issues relating to tourism tied in with comments about walks to places of beauty in the area such as the Falls of Dess, and a desire to protect the historical centre of the village.

Quick Wins

- Develop website to promote tourism (need for new ideas about what to promote and how to achieve this).

Medium Term Actions

- Explore the possibilities of a farmer's market or the sale of local produce.

Long Term Actions

- Push for fast broadband.

Theme 10: Car Park

Flooding in the car park behind the Village Hall was identified as a specific issue by a number of people. This poor drainage and extensive flooding, which at times more than halves the available parking places, had previously been reported to Aberdeenshire Council by the Community Association, and efforts are continuing to find a solution to the problem.

Quick Wins

- Sort out drainage and flooding problems (ongoing action by the Community Association).

Medium Term Actions

- Sort out drainage and flooding problems!

Long Term Actions

- Continue to sort out drainage and flooding problems!



Eastern approach to the village.



St Erchard's Well and trough in front of Old School House.



Falls of Dess.



Band night at the Village Hall.



New St Erchard's Well.



Local agriculture.



Ruins of St Mary's Church.



Portarch Bridge.

Outcomes

One of the most important outcomes from the community consultation was confirmation of the fact that many residents cared about the village and how it develops in the future. The perceived quality of life in the village was exemplified by one resident who said: "Peace - got it. Scenery and open spaces - got it. Lack of vandalism - got it. Lack of any crime - got it. Good bus service - got it. People who care for me - got it. Well stocked shop and PO - got it. Now, tell me what else could an OAP want?"

Other residents shared views such as: "I don't like the road signs - remove most of the existing"; "flowers are amazing in the middle of the village, thanks"; "I love the woods and the nature"; "the historical centre of the village is important; protect it".

As a result of the community action planning process many events and improvements have already taken place or have begun to take shape. Many of the 'quick wins' have already been actioned.

- A village gala was held in June 2011, organised by a small group of residents who got together at the consultation feedback event and who managed to engage the support of several local businesses. Events included a car boot sale, dog training display and face-painting.
- As a direct result of the community action event the Village Hall Committee has been re-established, backed up by a list of volunteers who registered interest in helping with hall maintenance and events. Hall usage has increased as a result, with new groups now utilizing the Village Hall for classes and clubs. This includes a 'Choi Kwang Do' martial arts club which is now running weekly sessions for youngsters and adults.

- Many in our community and particularly the Kincardine O'Neil school children have had a growing concern about road safety. Both the Community Association and the school children wrote many letters to Aberdeenshire Council regarding the speed of traffic using the North Deeside Road, resulting in speed reduction signage being installed at each end of the village in late November 2010.
- Several residents had registered a desire to plant more trees in the village (replacements for those that will be lost due to age in future years). The involvement of some residents in Beautiful Scotland's 'It's Your Neighbourhood' scheme provided an early opportunity, taking up an offer from the RHS and the Woodland Trust to plant native trees across the UK. Almost 400 saplings were planted on a bank alongside the Deeside Way on its eastern approach to the village. A mix of 'wild food' species were planted with the hope that they would be of benefit to wildlife and people alike, whilst improving the look of the footpath.
- The desire for a picnic area was realised with the help of Marr Community Planning Group and Aberdeenshire Council. Two picnic tables were installed at the play park during August 2011.
- Many have commented on the flower tubs as they pass through the village during summer months. Additional tubs were provided by the Mid-Deeside Community Council to allow the scheme to be extended to Canmore Place and add a few more tubs near the school. Weeding, planting and maintenance are provided by members in our community.

- The sustainable Christmas tree, planted outside the primary school in 2009 is growing well and provides a place to gather for annual community carol singing.
- Work is ongoing to design and carry out a conversion of the recently purchased red telephone box situated outside the Old Smiddy. A competition was held to suggest uses for the box. As a result we hope that our book-share lending library and information point will be up and running shortly.
- Some progress has even been made with the car park as the council think that they may have found a possible solution for the drainage problem.

There are still a few things to complete from the 'quick win' list. We need to work on improving communications

through development of the website and consideration of a larger community notice board. The problem of dog waste is one affecting all communities and work is still to be done to improve the location and number of bins. Other projects such as the regeneration of the tennis court will take a little longer but are considered achievable with the support of the community and some concerted fund raising. Efforts will be made to review progress and maintain momentum.

The people of Kincardine O'Neil have shown a definite desire to work together, with a more focused approach based on the priorities identified from the community planning exercise. This will be built upon through this Community Action Plan, the regular Community Association Newsletter and increased use of the Kincardine O'Neil website www.kincardineoneil.co.uk

Summary of Comments

Theme	Number of comments	Most commented on
Community activities	61	26 More events desired
Hall facilities	13	7 Maintenance
Roads	28	12 Speed signs
Parking	6	4 Fix the car park flooding problem
Village Pub	12	10 Desire to re-open the pub
Planning	11	11 Planning policy
Environment	48	22 Facilities (e.g. dog bins, recycling, picnic tables)
Deeside Way	11	9 Completion of path
Commerce	11	1 Variety of ideas to help small businesses
Young and Old	22	14 Play area
Other	9	



Primary School with Kincardine behind.



Ford Road in the snow.



River Dee Walk



Telephone box - owned by the community.

Theme	Short Term	Medium Term	Long Term
Community Activity - a desire for more social & sporting activities in the village	Set up special interest groups (e.g. drama, local history, dance and exercise classes). Village event in summer 2011 (Fair or Street party?). Improve communications (updates to web site, advertise community groups, create page on web site to encourage participation in actions?).	Film nights (amateur club or commercial films in hall?). New, larger Notice Board.	Improve tennis courts (achievable with external funding). Other sports facilities?
Environment - considerable interest in environmental issues	Review of dog bin facilities. Flower tubs for Canmore – will need volunteers to help with upkeep. Picnic area at the playing fields.	Set up environment work group to consider issues such as maintenance of the Wally Walk, the future of the curling rink and the creation of wildlife areas.	Re-site recycling facilities within the village. Creation of village composting scheme. Plant more trees.
Roads - the need for improved road safety	Speed reduction on traffic through village (already achieved following pressure from the Community Association and the school's Pupil Council).	Liaise with Council as new issues present themselves?	Safe crossing of the main road.
Young and old - more facilities and services for children, young people and the elderly	None. Facilities for teenagers / Youth Club.	Play area in the centre of the village.	More support for the elderly.
Hall Facilities - interest in maintenance of fit-for-purpose Village Hall	A list of people interested in helping with the Hall has already been compiled.	Maintenance activities?	Improvements to facility (achievable with external funding).
Village Pub - desire to re-open pub / set up a community pub	None. - This proposal has recently been considered by the Community Association – it was considered to be unachievable.		

Planning - a desire to influence planning decisions	None.	Monitor planning applications.	The community action plan will not cover planning and development – this process is led by Aberdeenshire Council. The Community Association did respond to the Local Plan consultation on behalf of the community.
Deeside Way - support for completion of the Deeside Way	None.	Community Association to push for completion of the path between KO'N and Aboyne.	Promote the Deeside Way on the KO'N website once the path is completed and officially opened.
Commerce - the need to promote the village and surrounding area	Develop website to promote tourism. (need new ideas about what to promote and how to achieve this).	Farmer's market / local produce?	Push for fast broadband.
Parking - improve parking in the village	Sort out drainage and flooding problems (ongoing action by the Community Association).	Sort out drainage and flooding problems!	Continue to sort out drainage and flooding problems!

N.B. It should be noted that these were the actions identified immediately following the Community Action Planning event. The priorities will change with time as short term actions are carried out and as the plan is reviewed in future years.

Partners who may help to deliver the above

Aberdeenshire Council Services:-
Education Learning and Leisure
Housing and Social Work
Law and Administration
Planning and Environmental Services
Transportation and Infrastructure
Marr Area Partnership

Other Agencies:-
Grampian Police
Grampian Fire and Rescue Service
NHS Grampian
Royal Mail
NESTRANS

Private Investors
Property Developer

This booklet is one of a series produced by Local Rural Partnerships together with the community under the banner Making It Real.

The Making it Real 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.

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.

Thanks are due to the **KO'N** community for their enthusiasm and input into the consultation (not forgetting the primary school pupils for making the village model), and to our partners who supported us throughout the process.

MARR AREA PARTNERSHIP

Gellan Cottage • Coull • Aboyne • AB34 5JU

T: 013398 87577 • E: enquiry@marrareapartnership.org.uk • W: www.marrareapartnership.org.uk

