

# CLOSEBURN LOCAL PLACE PLAN

2026-2030



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CLOSEBURN COMMUNITY COUNCIL



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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## THEMES FOR ACTION

### **Theme 1 A community that is better connected and safer to get around**

- A better more integrated Public Bus provision
- A safe walking and cycling route to Thornhill
- Better safer routes across the A76
- Bus stop benches

### **Theme 2 Better local community facilities**

- Open and Develop the Community Shop/café/hub
- An EV ChargePoint
- Toilets at the Community Field and Community Orchard
- A small community warm hub
- More community noticeboards

### **Theme 3 Affordable homes for all**

- More affordable homes for both young people and seniors

### **Theme 4 Enhancing and protecting our environment**

- More trees planted
- Better maintenance of edges and less weeds on pathways
- Less mud on roads
- Potholes filled immediately
- A tidier and brighter Main Street in Closeburn Village

### **Theme 5 Protecting our local heritage**

- Retaining the church for the community
- 

### **Theme 6 Enhancing community communications**

- A clear understanding of who does what within the community?
- More community involvement in decisions

# FOREWORD

The Closeburn Local Place Plan covers the whole Closeburn Community Council area so it's about those living in both our small villages and in isolated farms and houses. It attempts to cover the challenges and needs of a small rural community and their wishes and aspirations.

Undertaken through 2024 and 2025 it is but a snapshot in time and should always be considered a living document that will change as circumstances and people change.

We are grateful to Dumfries and Galloway Council, Closeburn Community Council and Nith Valley LEAF Trust for working together to ascertain what our community values and wishes to see happen in the future.

The plan encompasses many issues that will be common to many Scottish rural communities. Closeburn is keen to recognise what assets it has and the environment in which people live and work and to try to maintain and enhance the lives of those who cherish it.

As a small rural community Closeburn greatly values what assets and resources it has but struggles to explain what it's like to live in an increasingly isolated but beautiful rural area lacking services and facilities when many of the strategic decisions which affect the parish are made by urban based decision makers who lack understanding of rural life.

Closeburn lacks the numbers which financial controllers favour and it is expensive to both live and work here in terms of time and money compared to urban residents. So, costs per person for services and facilities will always be higher to maintain or deliver.

The benefits of living and working in such an area are however huge and should not be measured just in financial terms. Closeburn is part of the fantastically attractive Thornhill Uplands Regional Scenic Area in Dumfriesshire and a great place to bring up a family which is greatly appreciated by its residents. Closeburn and its residents do however lack the resources to maintain and enhance the lifestyle that many, especially the young, aspire to.

This plan has tried to measure many things, some of which are very hard to put into numerical figures. We ask those that will read the plan and use it for strategic decision making try to understand that our part of rural Scotland is really about people rather than just facts and figures. We ask them to recognise that despite our small population the residents and those who visit are keen to have a real say in what happens to their part of Scotland, its environment and its society and are happy to lead the initiatives required.



Sarah Currie  
Chairperson  
Closeburn Community Council



Mike Steele  
Nith Valley LEAF Trust

# 1. INTRODUCTION

This Local Place Plan sets out the issues, needs and aspirations of those living in the Closeburn community, the strategic objectives required to deliver those aspirations and the consequent actions they wish to take forward over the 2026-2030 period.

Hopefully this LPP will be used by Dumfries and Galloway Council's planners to help them understand the wishes and aspirations of Closeburn residents to assist their work on the new local development plan. This Local Development Plan will set out the opportunities for development in the area, types of development that will or will not be permitted and in which locations.

The scope of this plan will include the ways in which our community wants to see projects developed and assets used. However, it will also include broader community aspirations concerning social, cultural and economic issues.

This Local Place Plan will offer the Closeburn Community a way of identifying and helping to deliver community projects and provide the information for other organisations and funders to adapt activities and proposals to support the delivery of Closeburn's aspirations, so a tool for collaborative working.

## WHO ARE WE?

Nith Valley Leaf Trust has worked with Closeburn Community Council to prepare this Local Place Plan. It has been funded by NVLT and Dumfries and Galloway Council.

NVLT is the community trust responsible for delivering the community projects that Closeburn Community Council and residents wish to see go ahead.

NVLT owns/manages a number of community assets on behalf of the community and organises a range of community activities in co-ordination with the Community Council.

Current assets include:

- Five affordable homes for rent including three award-winning

- PassivHaus Homes
- The Community Field (formerly the primary school playing field/Gala field)
  - A Roundhouse
  - Community Orchard (leased from Church of Scotland until 2042)
  - Village shop/café/hub
  - Five community Defibrillators
  - A fleet of ebikes
  - A bike library

## **WHAT IS A LOCAL PLACE PLAN?**

Local Place Plans are a new way for communities in Scotland to shape the future of their area. They help residents:

- Develop a vision for their community
- Identify priorities for land use, development, infrastructure and activities
- Influence planning in Dumfries and Galloway Council by informing the next Local Development Plan (LDP3)
- Strengthen community-led action and collaboration, with evidence of need for funding

## **AN ONGOING ENGAGEMENT APPROACH**

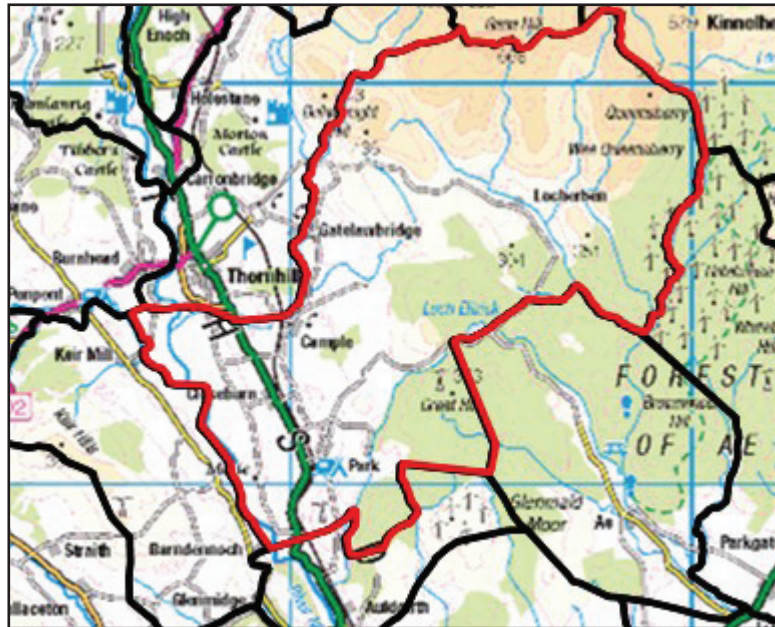
This Local Place Plan was based on the ideas, concerns and aspirations of the people of Closeburn. Over the summer of 2024 all residents were offered the opportunity to complete a comprehensive survey covering 14 themes. They were then invited to a dedicated consultation session in November 2024.

We used both a paper and online questionnaire to gain views across the age ranges and targeted a cohort from the Youth Club to ensure under 16 residents were included.

## 2. ABOUT CLOSEBURN

### THE AREA COVERED BY THE PLACE PLAN

This Local Place Plan area is defined by the map below which covers the Closeburn Community Council area.



*Fig 1 Closeburn Community Council Area*

### DEMOGRAPHICS

The Closeburn Community Council Area in Dumfries and Galloway, Southwest Scotland is relatively large, bounded by the Campel Burn to the north, Queensberry Hill to the northeast, Gawin Moor to the east, Auldgirth to the south and the River Nith to the west some 11 miles north of Dumfries.

Most of the population of 650 (D&G figures 2024) live in the Nith valley in settlements of Gatelawbridge, Campel and Park and the main settlement of Closeburn Village on the A76 where around 270 people live in 120 houses. The remaining residents live in isolated farms and houses in the rural area along the river or up on the valley sides.

## HOUSING

Closeburn village lies mostly to the west of the Dumfries-to-Kilmarnock Road (A76) and consists, apart from the older housing on the main road, mostly of housing from the 1950's to the 1980's. Housing in the other settlements is a mixture of old terrace houses, many of which have been modernised and new detached or semi-detached buildings. Closeburn village has the highest percentage of rental homes belonging to housing associations or private landlords. The proportion of owner-occupied housing in and around Closeburn village is around 60%, slightly lower than the national level, estimated to be around 62%.

There are a number of tied cottages on farms in the area which poses a particular challenge to tenants as their tenancies are linked to their employment.

## ECONOMY AND EMPLOYMENT

Closeburn Community Council area features traditional agricultural and forestry industries. The area has farming that includes large intensive dairy as well as less intensive beef and sheep with commercial woodland higher up the valley sides. There are two commercial windfarms adjacent to the community area. Closeburn has employment in a mixture of small business including the Trigony Hotel, Cample Riding school, farm building construction, car repairs, ornate metal workers, garden centre, Escape Room, Primary School & Closeburn Residential Centre and will have a community shop/café. Most other residents work away from the village in Thornhill or Dumfries. An increasing number work from home.

## TRANSPORT AND ACCESS

Closeburn lies on and by the A76, with a number of smaller minor roads leading off, providing access to the nearby rural settlements. Around 2.5 miles north of Closeburn on the main road is the larger village of Thornhill (population 1,500) which offers a range of services and amenities for Closeburn residents. Thornhill is often seen as a hub in terms of drawing people from across Mid-Nithsdale for work, leisure, healthcare and education. It is home to the majority of the more formal community facilities in the area.



*Fig 2 Closeburn Village Hall*

Closeburn, however, does have community amenities in its own right. There is limited public transport from the village to Thornhill, walking on the main road is precarious, so reliance is often with own vehicles. This means that young people in particular are not always able to access facilities in Thornhill or further afield.

## **COMMUNITY ASSETS AND INFRASTRUCTURE**

**Closeburn Village Hall** accommodates activities on a regular basis including a Youth Club, Christmas parties, a New Year's lunch and classes such as dog training. Closeburn hosts several other annual events run as part of the Gala Week, including a Children's Gala event on **the Community Field**. There is also **Closeburn Parish Church** (with a declining number of attendees below 20), an attractive building adjacent to **the Primary School** (two teachers and 36 pupils) which is 1 km east of the main village and a significant presence in the local community, attended by children from across the community council area.

**The Community Orchard** with its polytunnel, fruit trees and shed/classroom is next to the Church and the School. It and **the Community Field** (formerly the primary school playing field) is now owned and managed by the community through its Community Trust – Nith Valley Leaf Trust ([www.nithvalley.org](http://www.nithvalley.org)). It has a large outdoor shelter that is used by the Gala and Youth Club and will be

developed into an event venue. NVLT also owns **five affordable homes** that are rented to local families. It has also bought the old village shop and intends to open in late 2025 as a **community shop/café & hub**. NVLT is part of the N76 active travel group and has a fleet of **ebikes** for hire or loan and a **bike library** of ordinary bikes for all ages. It also owns and manages five community defibrillators. NVLT undertakes projects the Community Council and residents identify.



*Fig 3 Closeburn Parish Church*

## **LAND AND TOURISM**

Closeburn Parish is part of the beautiful Thornhill Uplands Regional Scenic Area as designated by D&G Council. This is a patchwork of farmland, moorland and forest, with the River Nith running from north to south on the west boundary. Games sports are important with fishing and shooting traditional. Biking is popular with the Forest of Ae Seven Stanes Mountain bike venue and a network of forest paths available. There is a small campsite in Closeburn for camper-

vans and many core paths to walk. There are Roman remains and Covenanters trails as well as Crichope Linn, Morton Castle and Drumlanrig Castle are nearby.

## POPULATION

Closeburn is part of the Nithsdale designation by Dumfries and Galloway Council where Nithsdale comprises Upper Nithsdale, and Mid-Nithsdale, although Thornhill is sometimes defined as a separate area. Closeburn falls into the Mid-Nithsdale section.

The total population of D&G was 148,790 in 2018. Between 2001 and 2023 the population of Dumfries and Galloway has decreased by 1.4%.

Closeburn Community Council area figures show an even greater decline since 2017:

2017 – 800

2022 - 683

2025 - 650

*\*D&G Council Stats Mid & Upper Nithsdale Localised Data Profile*

In D&G, the 45 - 64 age group was the largest in 2023. In contrast, the 16 - 24 age group was the smallest. In 2023, there were more females (51.6%) than males (48.4%) living in D&G, similar to National Scottish figures: females (51.4%) and males (48.6%).

In D&G between 2001 and 2023, the 25 to 44 age group saw the largest percentage decrease (-24.9%) whilst the 75 and over age group saw the largest percentage increase (+53.4%). This trend is predicted to continue and partly reflects the migration of young people leaving school and going to higher education, employment or for better access to facilities and services and moving to the Scottish Central Belt or further afield. In addition there is a continuing inward migration from outside the region of older, often retired couples seeking to move into a more scenic and less crowded environment.

The prediction is that this downward population trend will continue with figures showing that between 2018 and 2028, the population of D&G will decrease from 148,790 to 144,575 (- 2.8%), which compares to a projected increase of 1.8% for Scotland as a whole.

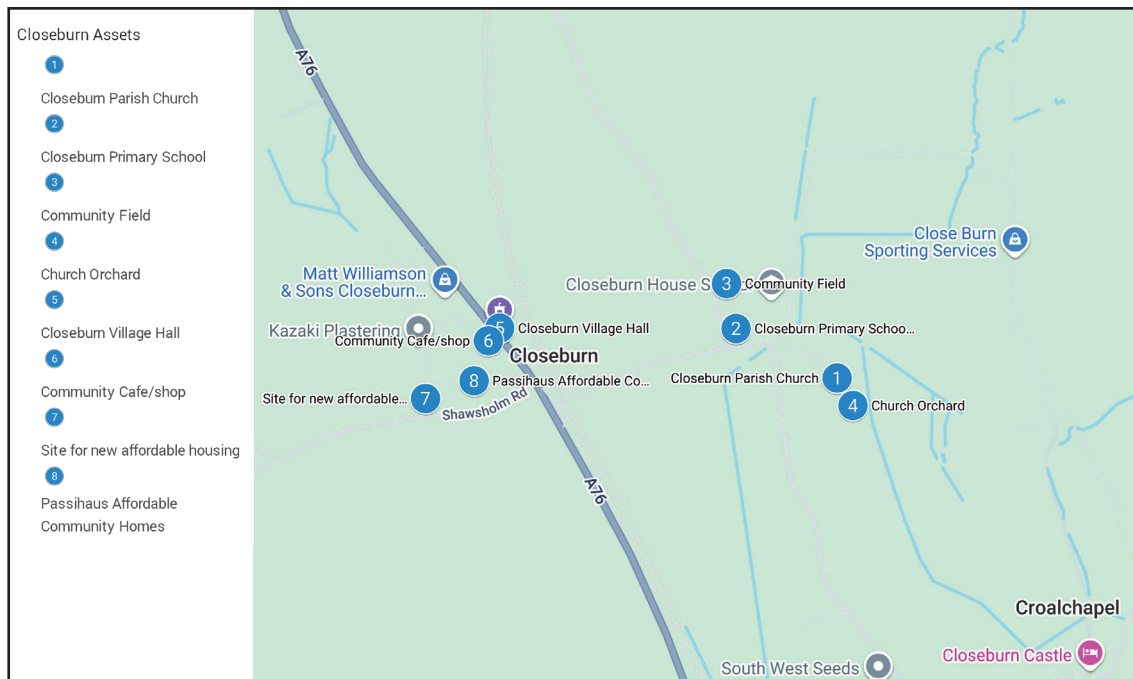
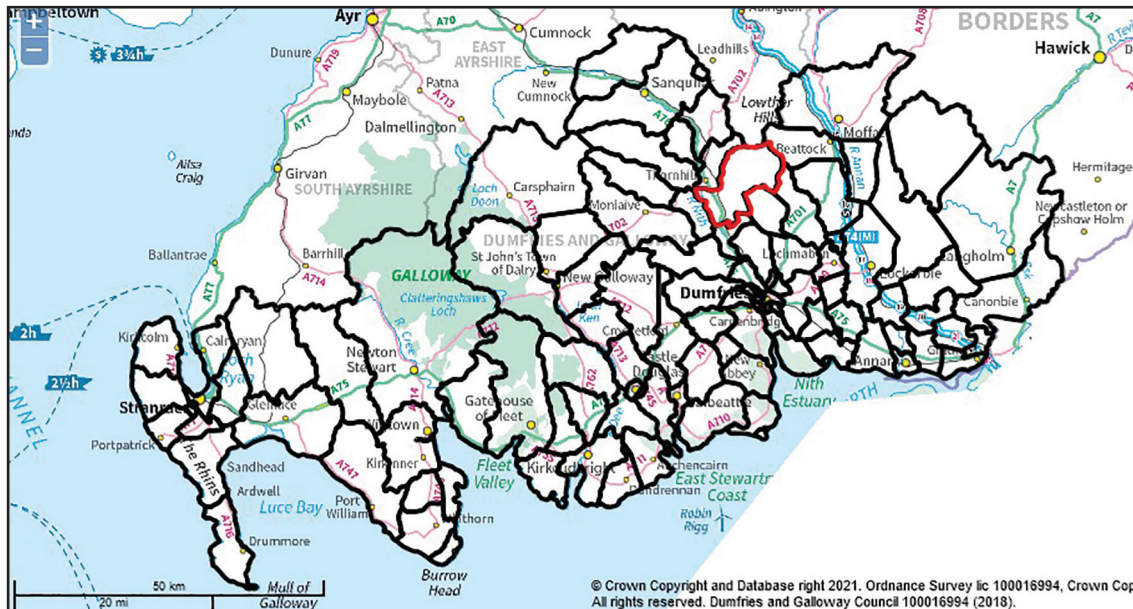


Fig 4 Closeburn Asset Map

Fig 5 Dumfries & Galloway



## 3. THE CHALLENGES FACING CLOSEBURN

Using the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD), the Scottish Government's official tool for identifying those places in Scotland suffering from deprivation, Closeburn, which is included in 3 data zones, scores highly for deprivation for housing, access to services and crime. This index score shows the need to improve activities-related facilities.

The use of Scottish Index Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) enables comparison of deprivation throughout Scotland. Closeburn Community Council **area** is covered by, but does not coincide with, three relevant data zones - S01007559, S01007566 and S01007565 - which extend beyond the Community Council boundary.

Thus, data from these three zones can be used to give some indication of deprivation but as they are not an exact match, they are an indication only.

### ACCESS AND TRANSPORT

Within the different domains of the SIMD Calculation, access is a key issue within Mid-Nithsdale and for Closeburn. It is estimated that over 50% of residents amongst the Mid and Upper Nithsdale Locality are classified as being access deprived. Thus, average travel time to access GP (General Practitioner) services by public transport in Mid-Nithsdale is above Dumfries and Galloway and Scotland mean travel time (2015). The recent withdrawal of many bus services (August 2025) in Closeburn have made this much worse.

Whilst Closeburn village is on a main road (A76) it has a limited public bus service to access Thornhill and Dumfries. Recent changes mean there are now no Sunday buses, no early morning or late evening buses and no through services to either Edinburgh or Cumnock (for Ayr). Thus getting to and from work, to visit Dumfries hospital and evening entertainment facilities in Dumfries is difficult or im-

possible. Access to the east or west of the A76 is worse with many areas not served by public transport so away from the A76 one very quickly gets into an environment that is defined as 'Remote Rural'. The recent bus provision changes mean the Closeburn Community Area has rapidly moved from Accessible Rural territory to Remote Rural.

## **HOUSING AND EDUCATION**

These domains in the SIMD rank relatively positively within the Mid and Upper Nithsdale Locality.

Affordable houses for rent through housing associations are however becoming increasingly difficult for local Closeburn youngsters to access when in competition with other potential tenants as little priority is given for local connections. This may be accelerating the trend of 25–44-year-olds leaving the area.

Closeburn Primary (two teachers , 36 pupils) has a high rating for pupils with special needs and it like all small rural schools in the region is poorly funded and poorly maintained. In contrast Wallace Hall Academy, the feeder secondary school in Thornhill is highly ranked academically and a relatively new building.

## **EMPLOYMENT**

Nine percent of residents in Mid-Nithsdale are in receipt of out-of-work benefits.

## **HEALTH**

This is in general good and average life expectancy for males in Mid Nithsdale is 80.8 years and 83.2 for females.

On the down side 18.4% of children in Dumfries and Galloway are living in poverty compared to 15% for Scotland and only 46% of babies in Mid-Nithsdale were exclusively breastfed in the 2019/20 to 2021/22.

## **CRIME AND COMMUNITY SAFETY**

In Mid-Nithsdale, the crime rate is around half that of Dumfries and Galloway as a whole. The rate of road traffic accident casualties is 60 per 100,000.

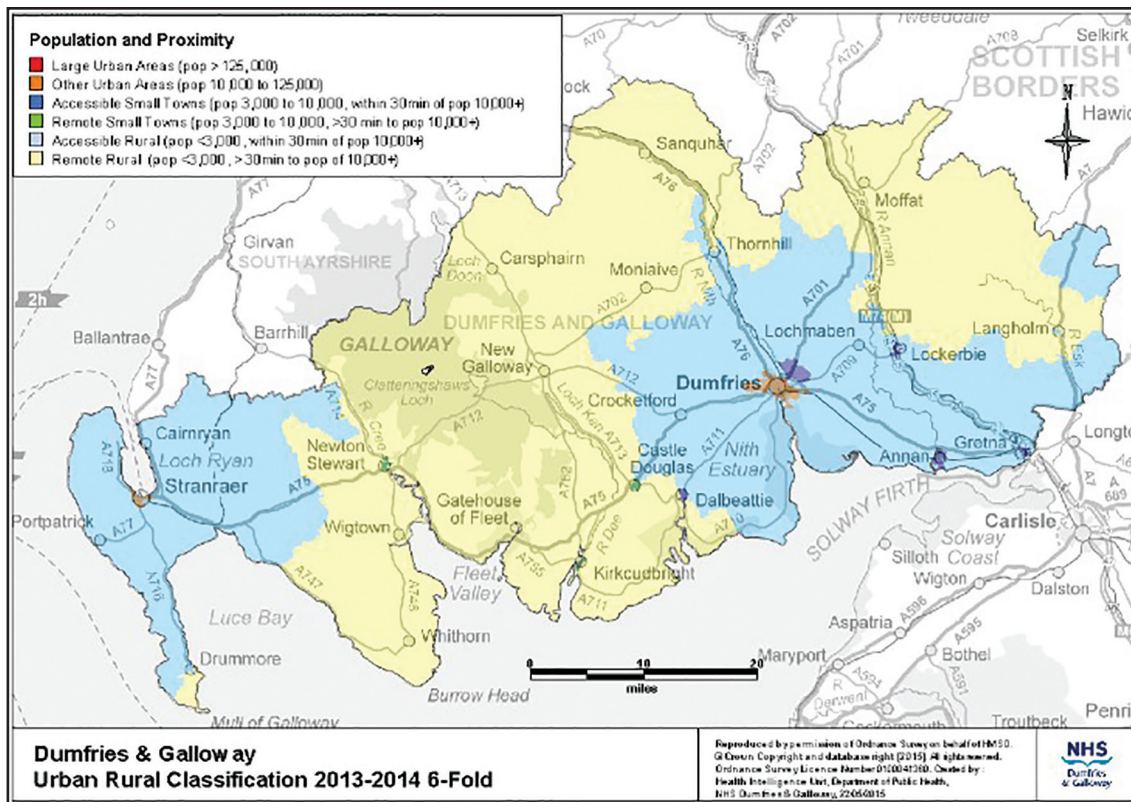


Fig 6 Dumfries and Galloway Population and Proximity

Fig 7 Closeburn Primary School



# 4. WHAT THE PEOPLE THOUGHT

## CLOSEBURN COMMUNITY SURVEY

### *Methodology*

A community survey was used with a standard set of questions based on the 14 themes of the Place Standard Tool recommended by Dumfries & Galloway Council. It was distributed as both a paper questionnaire and an online survey. There were a total of 47 questions covering 14 topic areas that are presented below.

The survey was issued over the summer period of August-September 2024 with the public consultation in mid-November 2024.

The consultation aimed to gain a wide representation of views and ideas from the Closeburn community council area. The key mechanism was to use a community survey backed up with a public consultation event for residence to discuss issues raised.

A range of communication channels was used, including:

- Social media
- Posters and leaflets
- Word-of-mouth

Seven respondents were aged under 20 as members of the Youth club were targeted to complete the survey. Ten were in the 21 - 40 age group, 23 in the 41 - 65 age group and eight 66+. This represents a fair age distribution for respondents although the majority (64%) were over 40.

Closeburn Village houses the largest population concentration in this parish with 120 houses but it was extremely useful to also

get views from those people living in the smaller or more isolated communities.

A total of 48 responses were received representing around 170-200 individuals. With a population of 650 in the community area this represents 27/30% of the population so fair representation to use as an indicator of resident's views.

Of the 48 respondents, 16 were males and 32 females. Half came from Closeburn Village and half from the surrounding areas within Closeburn Community Council boundary. So, this report has a strong bias of views from females as set out below but a reasonable age profile.

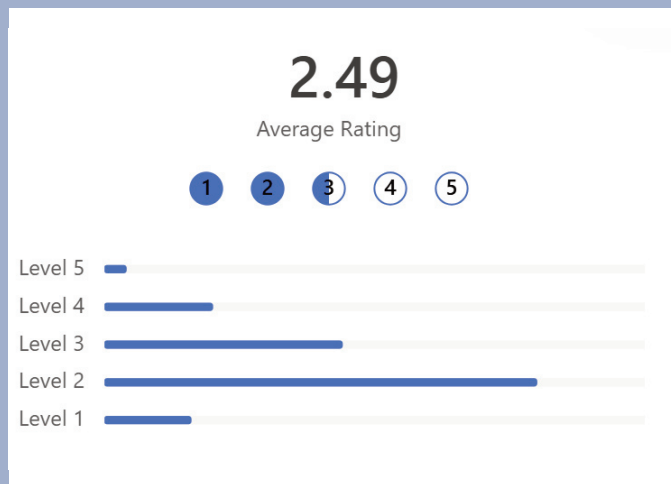


## RESPONSES

Respondents were asked to rate each of the 14 issues and then comment on specific aspects.

### TRANSPORT AND ACCESS

*Q1 - What is public transport like in my place?*



#### *What is good now?*

- Regular rural bus service on back roads reaching outreach villages (i.e. Park, Cample Gatelawbridge).
- Service is free for kids/OAP's.
- During the day, up to early evening, transport north and south is not too bad but in the later evening and cover for the nighttime economy is appalling.
- Since August 2025 this position has declined with less bus provision at night, none on Sundays and no through buses to Edinburgh or Cumnock.

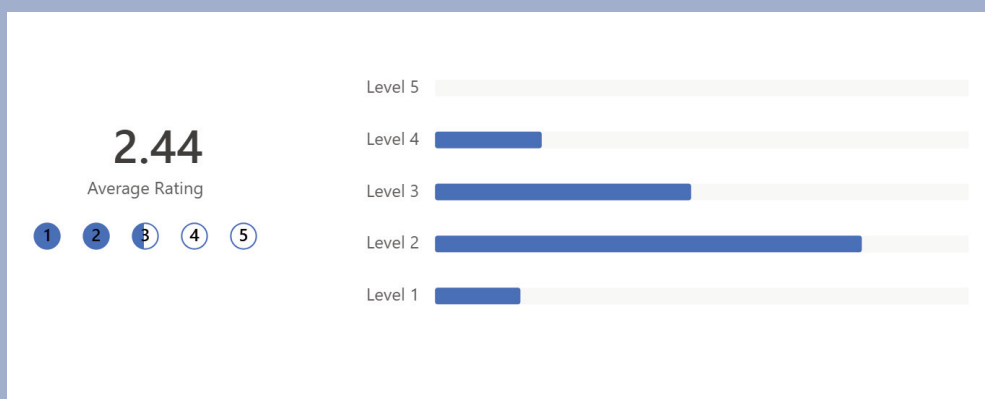
#### *How could we make it better in the future?*

- Integrated service with services linking with public transport to/from other areas and services i.e. hospital.
- Evening and weekend service introduced reducing isolation i.e. allow participation in Dumfries nightlife/activities. Would also benefit employment opportunities for those in the village that are seeking work in Dumfries especially when many jobs are in restaurants/bars/hospitality in which staff often finish later than the

time of the final bus home.

- All buses to have access for wheelchairs, prams and bikes.
- Budget efficiencies could be helped by tiny alterations to timetable to allow WHA children access to this service, saving the need for a separate contract for school bus.
- No suitable path to walk safe to bus stops, definitely dangerous for young people or people with special needs or disabilities.
- Bench in the bus stop would be good on rainy days as would shelter at Ae junction.
- Reopening the railway station would be a great improvement.

## Q2 - How easy is it to move around and get to where I want to go?



### What is good now?

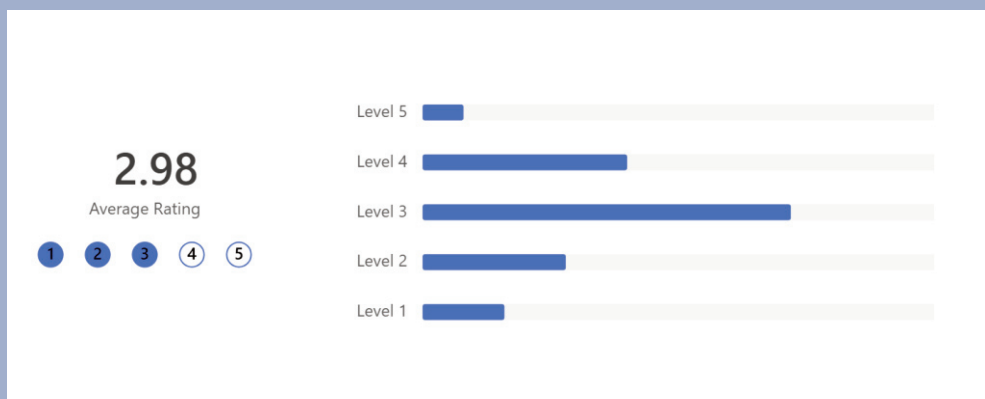
- Quiet country roads - getting around the Closeburn area is easy and fairly quiet.
- A lovely area for walking and cycling and you don't have to go far to find great views.
- Good paths within village.

### How could we make it better in the future?

- Sort the potholes, cut the roadsides and hedges back. Visibility not good if you are out walking, particularly for parents/grandparents pushing a buggy as users need to walk on the road.
- A safe path from Closeburn to Thornhill as there is no safe walking/wheeling alternative between Closeburn and Thornhill.
- Safe ways to cross A76 out with crossing patrol timings (8.30am - 9am & 3pm - 3.15pm Monday to Friday term times) - traffic light crossing control i.e. Springholm on the A75.

- 30 mile an hour limit on A76 especially at school drop off and pick up on the main road.
- Need a better access to community orchard for prams/wheel-chairs. Drop kerb at school needs a repair as can't use this in wet weather as there is a large puddle.
- There is no safe walking/wheeling alternative between Closeburn and Thornhill. The existing minor roads are not entirely without risk from vehicular traffic. There is ZERO safe route along A76 Safe active travel path is NECESSARY.
- Force farmers to clear mud off the roads and footpaths.

### Q3 - How does traffic and parking affect how I move around my place?



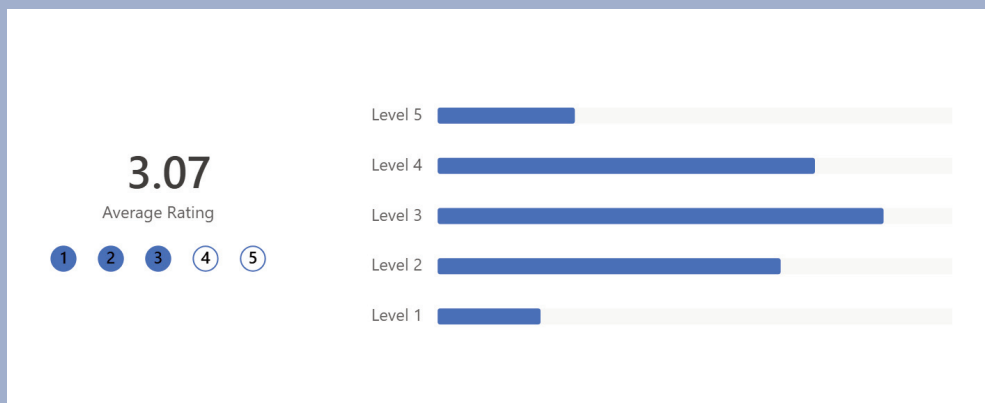
### What is good now?

- Good that we are on a main road for buses.
- Plenty parking in village and lots of houses have drives.
- As a driver the road network is fine, plenty of space around the village.
- How could we make it better in the future?
- Speed of vehicles passing through is awful. Vehicles don't slow down, especially HGV's and Tractors.
- Would be good to see traffic calming measures at each side of small villages too - particularly if there are small children/old people/animals in the villages.
- Better parking around Closeburn primary particularly at pick up time.
- A crossing over the A76 so safer for kids to go to playing field/orchard by themselves.
- There is little or no actual blue badge parking and no secure bi-

cycle parking.

- Gatelawbridge - slow the traffic down to 20 mph - bend in road make visibility poor and lots of tractors speeding through village. Kids on bikes. Accident waiting to happen.
- Add EV ChargePoint.
- Cycle and footpath between villages is needed.
- Fix the potholes.
- Introduce car sharing scheme.

#### *Q4 - What are the buildings, streets and public spaces like in my place?*



#### *What is good now?*

- A lovely wee area and most places are clean and tidy, not a huge problem with litter on most streets.
- Play Park available.
- Closeburn has lots of benches spread throughout, plenty of nice walks and green space.
- Where some pride is shown by local residents, like in some of the smaller villages, the areas are kept smart and attractive.
- Street lighting fine.

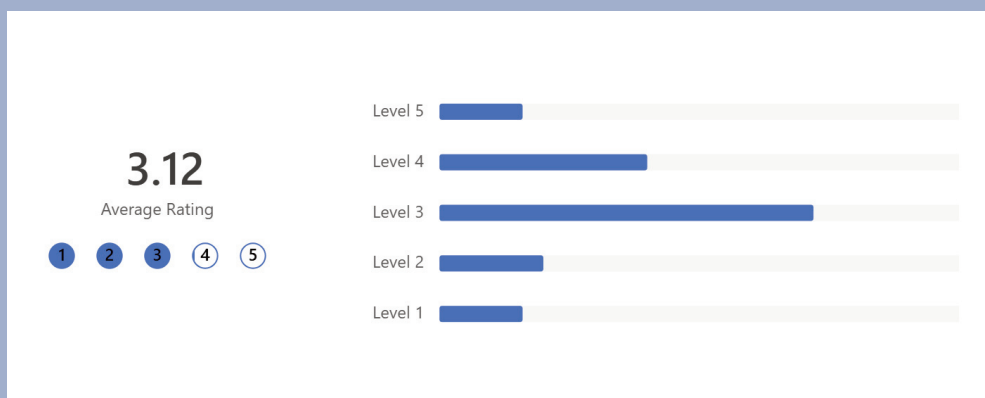
#### *How could we make it better in the future?*

- The main street is covered in weeds and not very appealing but also a trip hazard to elderly or people with vision problems, the pavement down to the school has weeds either side that overgrow it, also it has subsided in places so leans in towards the hedge and it contains brambles and nettles so not nice for wee ones that don't realise, the area next to the block of houses (Firmuir Avenue) is always covered in weeds as is the front of the

garages, and the surround of field end is becoming overgrown so difficult to walk on pavement.

- Playpark is not very accessible at Castle Crescent as gate is narrow and the ground is uneven. Widen gate and even the surface. No shade or shelter in the park. Plant some trees. Lots of litter and dog mess on road to Shawsmuir. Provide dog mess bucket?
- There are many smart buildings throughout our area but the area in Closeburn Main Street is shocking with residents apparently taking no pride and as a result, weeds are allowed to grow to knee height. Litter is shocking throughout the area, including on verges of the side roads.
- Needs more sitting areas the field by the school should really have picnic benches.
- Brighten up public areas, tree planting. Seating would encourage more people to walk. History route with points of interest?
- The orchard and roundhouse need signage showing folk where it is.

### *Q5 - How good are spaces and opportunities for play and recreation in my place?*



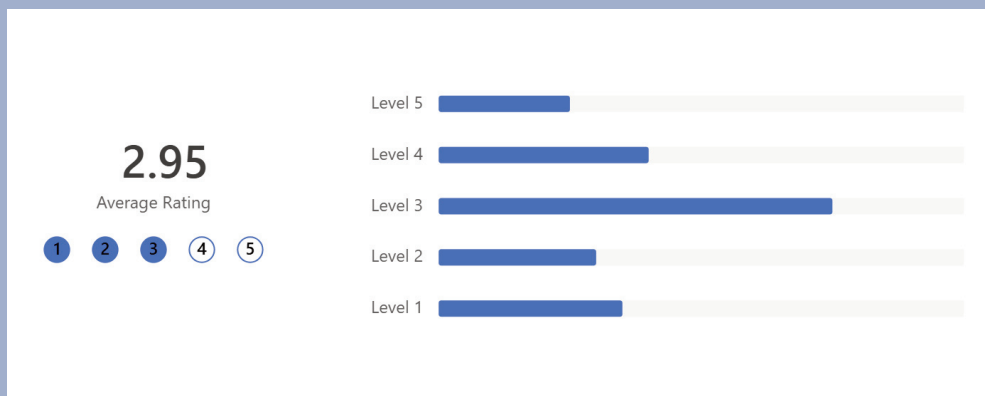
### *What is good now?*

- A lot of spaces for recreation and the school playing field is a lot better than it used to be and the community orchard has had a huge transformation and recent increase in activities is brilliant.
- Playpark is available in the village.
- The village hall is a great resource and the Roundhouse is brilliant.

### *How could we make it better in the future?*

- Community organises many things but the community hall is not safe to walk to from people up Croalchapel and The Park.
- The play park in the village is adequate but lacks a feeling of adventure – could do with revamp. It also lacks all abilities equipment.
- The bottom part of the park should be fenced off and no dogs allowed as it is in the Dock Park in town.
- Good at Community Field and garden, but toilets needed. Also, sports clubs needed to run events.
- There is very little opportunity for the older members of the community to engage.
- Make the hall rental cheaper/subsidized especially when primary use is for children. Stay and Play should have much lower rent.
- Not much to do, but that wouldn't be an issue if public transport were better.
- Tennis courts? Outdoor gym? Running Track?

### *Q6 - How well do services in my place meet my needs?*



### *What is good now?*

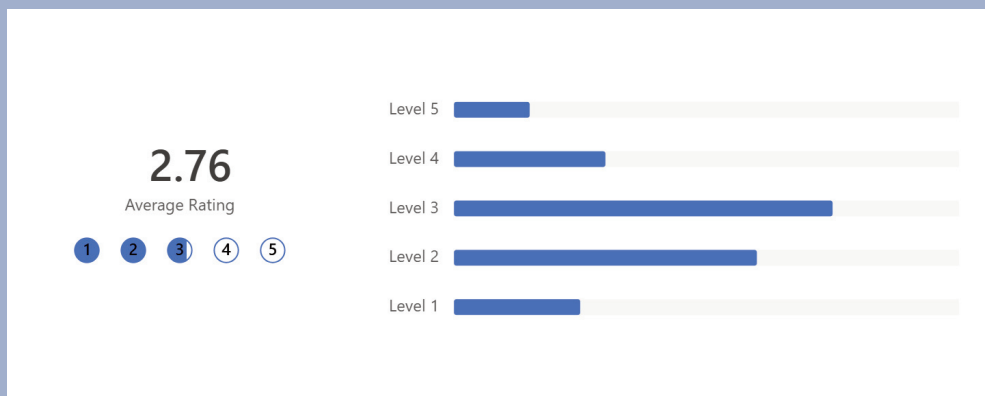
- Close to the school, easy access to Thornhill for chemist & doctors etc.
- Broadband is excellent.
- The village hall, orchard & playing fields are excellent assets.
- Church is not as much part of the wider community as it used to be.

### *How could we make it better in the future?*

- Get the shop/café up and running (delays due to red-tape)

- Services are there but only safely accessible by car
- All clubs etc are Thornhill or Dumfries based. No public transport available in the evenings/weekends to get to these.
- A museum which includes information about the local area offering tours as there is a huge opportunity to increase tourism
- Better, safer walking/wheeling route to school/playing field is REQUIRED The door/lock to the village hall is a proper fiddle to open, it would be nice if this could be repaired
- The older community have no clubs or groups for them as most events appear aimed at the younger age group.
- Some sort of community hub where people can get information and help a sort of combined community shop, cafe, tourist information, advice bureaux, meeting place etc A cash line would also be a very handy thing too.

*Q7 - How active is the local economy in my place and are there good opportunities for work, volunteering and training?*



*What is good now?*

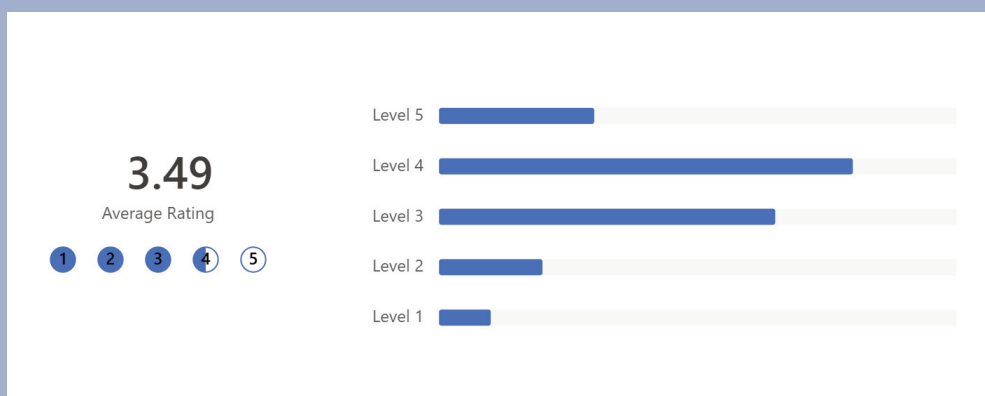
- Local garden shop is good. Potential village shop will be good. Fantastic community involvement in local events and village atmosphere (i.e. people help out, volunteer, look out for one another)
- Many opportunities to volunteer and there appears to be work available for those who want it
- Good mix of residents incl employed and retired

*How could we make it better in the future?*

- Improve broadband as still poor reception limiting local business

- More could be done to encourage employment opportunities
- Very little employment, no shop
- Improving affordable transport links would help towards getting people to work in other areas, assist folk in attending college, uni. training opportunities, but it has to be affordable and efficient.
- Create a role of Community Champion who could advise, assist in identifying available grants, liaise with the community and the other agencies, promote the village to small businesses, artisans, the self- employed who might need advice and help.
- Pay attention to the needs in the wider community i.e. not everyone lives in the village and not everyone wants what the village wants.
- Bring in things like a job fair and opportunities, cv skills and job-hunting hub.

### *Q8 - How well do the homes in my place meet the needs of my community?*



### *What is good now?*

- Loreburn houses and community housing great for keeping folk in the area instead of moving away
- A fairly good mix of homes and generally a good community. Most residences are well kept and tidy. We have a good mix of people of all ages, and the community is being becoming more culturally diverse

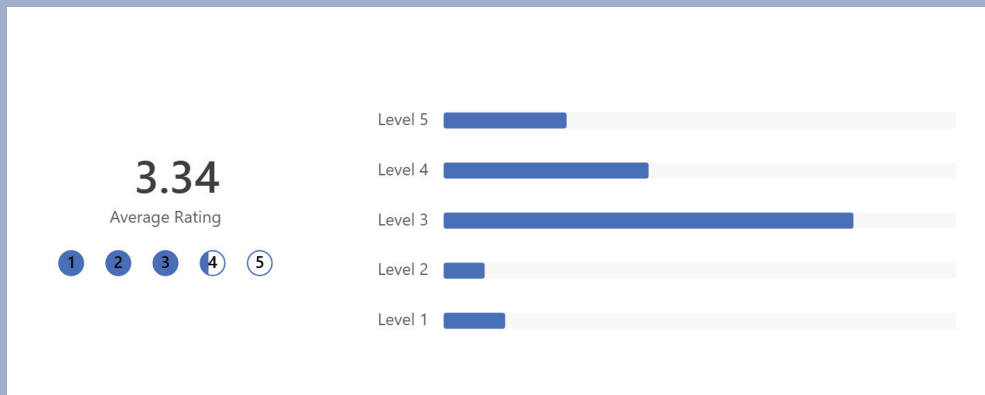
### *How could we make it better in the future?*

- If more housing was to be built then we would need an upgrade in infrastructure to cope.
- More affordable homes, from one bedroom to two and three.

Affordable rent.

- Hardly any housing opportunities, especially for young people
- Need to look at options to help with bills especially oil e.g. a buying group.

*Q9 - How good is the range of opportunities which allow me to meet and spend time with other people?*



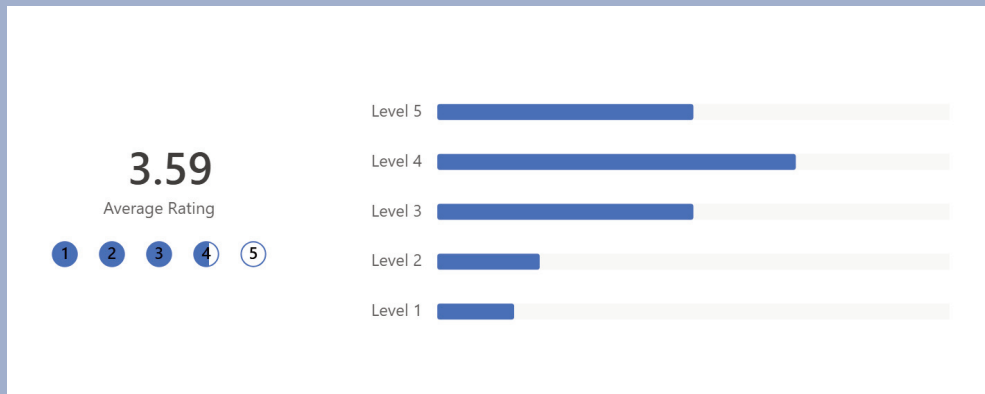
*What is good now?*

- Good peer groups from schools.
- Community put on a good variety of events and people made feel very welcome - friendly.
- The new community activities have great potential... Garden is great

*How could we make it better in the future?*

- Good events put on by community, but very few people attend, even when it's almost always free.
- Improve public transport out-with school hours.
- People generally go out of village to meet up but hopefully once shop/cafe opens that may change slightly.
- Better access to the vegetables grown in Garden.
- Remembering that many elderly people are not so computer literate so don't forget to notify them by other means.
- Use the Hall more.
- Again, the problem is to get to safety from one side to the village to the other, especially for kids.
- A community notice board would be a good addition and perhaps when the shop re opens this can be placed there.
- Need to change the hall so it can be used all the time, not just hired out for money.
- It would be good to see more for older and / or single people.

### Q10 - To what extent does my place have a positive identity that supports a strong sense of belonging?



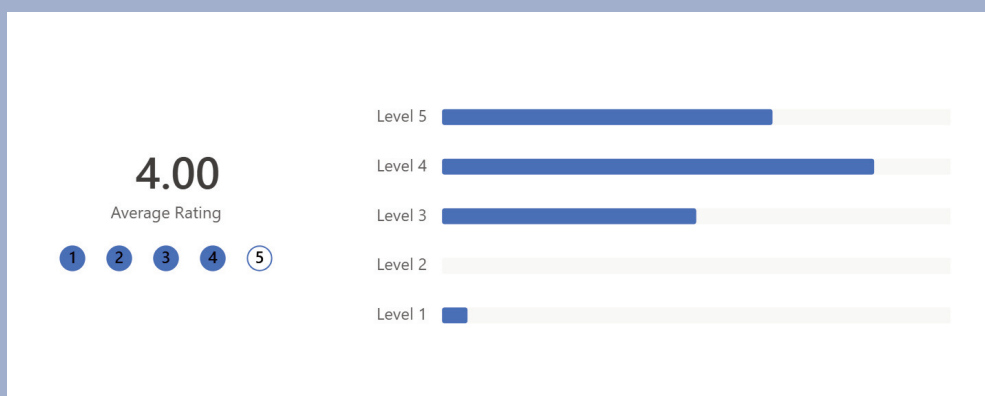
#### What is good now?

- Knowledge in communities is strong.
- Willing and active volunteers who are very invested in the local area. (A small number of people volunteer on and run most groups).
- The majority of the people here are friendly, tolerant, welcoming. I've personally not witnessed racial or cultural tension

#### How could we make it better in the future?

- Trying to engage with those who moan there is nothing but don't get involved when there are things. It is a small minority who 'do' everything while the majority sit back then enjoy the results.
- I think more of the community should have a say in what happens in the village during community events, ie Gala Day etc.
- Keep putting on events, publicize them well.

### Q11 - How safe does my place make me feel?



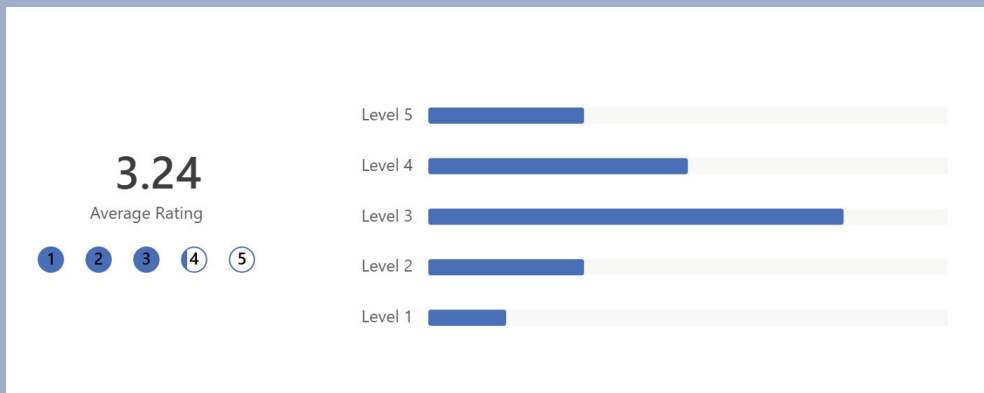
### *What is good now?*

- Good place to bring up kids.
- Very low crime rate and never usually any problems.
- Antisocial behaviour is low. Air pollution is low. The main danger is from road traffic.
- I feel very safe.

### *How could we make it better in the future?*

- Traffic dangerous so 20mph in all settlements.
- Litter is appalling. Enforcement is required.
- The speed of traffic on the A76, the 40 mile an hour limit isn't often adhered to.
- More community engagement from the police.
- Closeburn to Thornhill path needed - Make off-road routes available for cyclists/walkers.
- Neighbourhood Watch scheme?

### *Q12 - How well is my place looked after and cared for?*



### *What is good now?*

- Most people do take pride in how the place looks and feels and most people very welcoming.
- Community resilience volunteers are fantastic.
- In general, small villages are well kept. Community Council and NVLT appear to be reactive to local needs as are the Resilience Group.

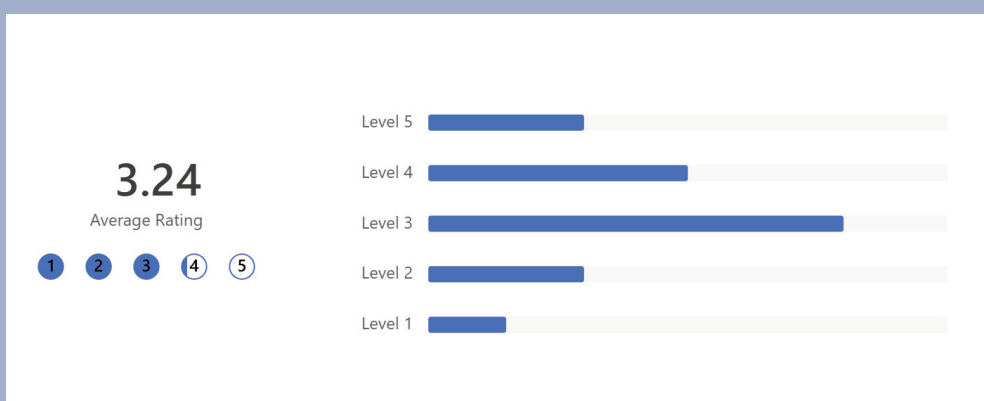
### *How could we make it better in the future?*

- Improve/repair road surfaces. (Local resilience teams to fill pot-holes with budget?)
- Regular issues with mains water pipes bursting due to age of

pipes. Need replacing.

- Pathway to primary school/nursery such as hedges and weeds along the pavement are not maintained.
- Fly tipping is an issue in more remote corners. Need access the recycling centre without appointment system.
- Pavements on Main Street A76 could do with more attention incl weeding of the main street.
- Welcome signs at the entry points with lots of flowers in them
- More litter bins would be an advantage.

### *Q13 - When things happen in my place, how well am I listened to and included in decision-making?*



### *What is good now?*

- Progress to communities controlling local facilities and issues.
- With a local council committee who regularly meet and with a strong presence through social media I fee well informed of the ongoing as within Closeburn.
- Community council and its Trust appear to listen and do all they can to have action taken as required.
- This survey is a great opportunity. The parish newsletter.
- Join in activity with neighbours.

### *How could we make it better in the future?*

- More engagement / feedback. Community notice board? More information put out, not only Facebook.
- Need some clarity regarding which local groups i.e. which community council we engage with. Thornhill or Closeburn? Gatelaw-bridge is split geographically.
- Community Council meetings are apparently held by zoom. Not really very accessible for everyone.

- This is one of the first times I have had the chance to give my opinion. Many meetings in the village hall are not at suitable times for those in work.
- The community council and NVLT have meetings and do not publish an agenda, and do not display the minutes or make them available. They then hold a meeting to discuss what they are proposing with the village to do, but do not listen to the people of the village because they have already decided and actioned their plans prior to the meeting. This leaves people feeling what is the point of attending future meetings.
- Encourage the local Councillors and Community Police to show an interest in areas out with Dumfries and Stranraer.
- Simplify the planning system so that special advantages are no longer available to wealthy developers with access to specialised professional planning fixers. Rejig the planning system so that it no longer rewards irresponsible developers who apply for planning permission retrospectively.
- Devolving budgets to local communities.

*Q14 PRIORITIES - Of the main issues and priorities for change that you have identified, what would be your TOP 3 priorities.*

Respondents were asked to identify their top three priorities of issues and future changes. These were then ranked by number of mentions received:

Better Bus service/Transport for non-drivers/ Integrated Public Transport	17
Road surfaces	11
Safe walking/Path to Thornhill/ Safe routes to travel away from vehicles	10
Open shop/community hub/café asap	8
Speed of vehicles going through the village	6
More affordable homes for rent	5
Clarity on representative bodies i.e. Community Council and NVLT	5
Litter/Weeding, particularly the main street	4
More things for young people aged 12 to 26	3

Playpark revamp/update,	3
Speed signs for Gatelawbridge	3
Safe crossings out with school hours (traffic light crossings)	2
Subsidized rental at hall incl for children's activities.	2
More inclusion in decision for the community events.	2
Road safety for the school road.	2
Revise Planning Process	2
Budgets going to local communities	1
Weeds/hedges on school/nursery route	1
Wheel chair access in the area	1
Bench in bus shelter	1
Community activities for the older generation	1
Re-open the railway station	1

Better access, transport, and road safety featured strongly in peoples priorities as well as two Community facility projects – The café/shop and affordable housing. We have thus tried to incorporate these and other aspirations in the proposed



*Fig 8 Closeburn Passivhaus Homes*

# 5. THEMES FOR THE ACTION PLAN

## THEME 1

### A COMMUNITY THAT IS BETTER CONNECTED AND SAFER TO GET AROUND

- *Better more integrated bus provision.*

Whilst this was identified as a challenge in 2024 and it has now become an acute problem following bus provisions changes in August 2025. This is now making access to facilities and services for residents very, very difficult and there is a need for sensible discussions with possible partners on new ways for residents including school students and non-drivers to get to work, medical appointments and education provision from a community that is becoming remote rural despite only being a short distance from both Thornhill and Dumfries.

Partners: D&G Council Swestrans, Thornhill Community Bus, NVLT

- *Safe route to Thornhill*

This is one option that was previously being pursued and needs to be accelerated. KPT have successfully installed a cycling/walking path from Penpont to Thornhill and Closeburn needs a similar one.

Partners: Swestrans, Amey , NVLT. Local landowners

- *Better safer routes across the A76, to Primary school, Community field and Community orchard/ Traffic calming A76*

This is a critical issue for those crossing the A76. The traffic passing through Closeburn village does not adhere to the 40mph speed limit. This could involve:

- a reduced 20mph limit in the village which is a Scottish Government's object for all urban areas including on A roads.
- A traffic light- controlled crossing

- A traffic light system similar to Springholm on the A75 that stops speeding traffic

Possible partners : D&G Council, Amey, NVLT

- *Bus stop bench*

None of the bus stops on the A76 in Closeburn have a place to sit or to securely store a bicycle

Partners: D&G Council, NVLT, Closeburn Resilience Group

## THEME 2

### BETTER LOCAL COMMUNITY FACILITIES

- *Shop/café/hub finished, opened and developed*

This community led venture is proceeding and offers opportunities for local employment & training as well as providing a local service and potential income generation.

Partners: CCC, NVLT, SOSE, SLF

- *EV charge point*

Closeburn has no Public Accessible EV charging point. Installing one in the village would give residents in properties that lack easy access to electric cables the option to use and thus contribute to net zero ambitions.

Partners: Village Hall, Swestrans, Community Council NVLT D&G Council

- *Toilets at field and orchard*

Partners: CCC, NVLT

- *A small Community warm hub*

The proposed new housing project could include a community hub with a warm space for all Closeburn residents to use for regular social interaction, a small library, a space for homework or homeworking.

Partners: CCC, NVLT,

- *More Community Notice boards*

Since engagement community notice boards have been put up in

Closeburn and Park villages. One is needed for Cample but wider consideration need to be given to better community communications as set out in Theme 6 , Enhancing Community Communications.

### **THEME 3**

#### **AFFORDABLE HOMES FOR ALL**

- *Closeburn needs more affordable homes for both young people and seniors*

Closeburn has a mixture of owner occupied and rented homes of various ages and in various state of repair. We need more good quality homes to retain and attract residents. Young people struggle be able to buy homes and to find suitable rental properties. Seniors tend to stay in larger homes after children grow up and leave. We need more modern, cheap to run and warm homes for both groups. Retaining youngsters is a vital part of ensuring a vibrant society and children for our school. Encouraging seniors to downsize will free up bigger homes for families. NVLT has a good track record here and is investigating a new innovative 5 homes project in Firmuir Avenue

Partners: NVLT CCC SLF RHF Eco of Annan SOSE D&G Council

### **THEME 4**

#### **ENHANCING AND PROTECTING OUR ENVIRONMENT**

- *More trees planted*

CCC and NVLT have a good record of planting trees to both enhance the amenity and to promote net zero. This needs to continue by growing seedlings in the community orchard and planting them around the parish or offering them to residents to plant.

Partners: CCC, NVLT D&G Council

- *Better maintenance of hedges and less weeds on pathways*

Partners: Closeburn Resilience Team, D&G Council, Residents

- *Removal of mud from Roads*

CCC educating local farmers and contractors

- *Fill in potholes*

A devolved budget to CCC ? This is really the responsibility of Amey for the A76 and D&G Council. Other councils in Scotland have devolved budgets to local communities and provided training for local resilience groups to undertake repairs of minor potholes

Partners: Closeburn Resilience Team, D&G Council, Amey

- *Tidier, brighter main street*

A project to paint all house fronts on the A76 and introduce hanging baskets

Partners: Closeburn Resilience Team, D&G Council, Amey, NVLT, Windfarm community benefit schemes.

## THEME 5

### PROTECTING OUR LOCAL HERITAGE

Closeburn has a rich history portrayed in its landscape, geography and buildings. Its community value this highly and wish to retain assets where viable business plans can be developed.

- *Retaining the church*

This is likely to be sold off as the Church of Scotland consolidates its services and congregations. Opportunities exist to investigate alternative community uses, including an active travel hub, events venue, museum or visitor accommodation.

Partners: NVLT CCC SLF RHF SOSE

## THEME 6

### ENHANCING COMMUNITY COMMUNICATIONS

- *Clearer understanding of who does what Community Council/ NVLT/D&G Council*

The CCC and NVLT work hand in glove on most community pro-

jects as Community Councillors sit on the NVLT Board. More communications/signage are however required to explain who is responsible for which project.

Partners: CCC, NVLT,

- *More community involvement in decisions*

Residents rarely attend the public regular meetings of the CCC who meet on a 2 monthly cycle, usually in person, in Closeburn Village. Better communications and messages through a dedicated newsletter of social media channel/website with a dedicated editor needs to be considered and funded however. This might go some way to letting residents and interested people engage more than they do at present. .

Partners: CCC, NVLT,

## COMMENTS: OCTOBER 2025

Since the time of the 2024 survey and engagement evening a number of issues have changed or moved on.

### ***Bus provision***

Since August 2025 public bus provision in Closeburn has dramatically declined making the parish increasingly isolated and even more severely access deprived.

### ***Affordable Housing***

Following a Housing Needs survey in 2024 a concept design for 5 affordable homes and a community guest suite was presented to the community at an engagement evening in October 2025. Thirty eight people attended and 80% of those who left comments were either neutral or positive about the proposal. The buildings would be made from innovative panels made of crushed glass with high insulation and strength characteristics. The houses would be constructed off site, flat packed and assembled quickly on site.

### ***Closeburn Church***

The Parish church will be sold in 2026 and the Community Council have discussed an interest in acquiring it for the community depending on having a viable business plan endorsed by the community and funding.



*Fig 9 Innovative Affordable Housing*

*Fig 10 Closeburn Community Shop & Café*



## 6. IMPLEMENTING THE CLOSEBURN PLACE PLAN

The information in this Local Place Plan and the subsequent Actions and Proposals for development reflect real needs, issues and aspirations that people told us about during the engagement. So, it's a snapshot in time and should thus be regarded as a living document that should be modified as circumstances and factors change.

We are grateful for the community's efforts and contributions.

We now need to identify which projects can commence and when given resources of people and money are always limited.

Closeburn does have a very proactive Community Council and Community Trust who can act as first commissioners of residents aspirations but as a small community they will need both community support and help from local regional and national organisations to bring many of these projects to fruition.

### NEXT STEPS AND REVIEW

As lead partners Closeburn Community Council and Nith Valley Leaf Trust will have a particular role in supporting the Actions and reviewing the overall Place Plan.

This will involve:

- An initial meeting of CCC, NVLT, D&G Council open to the public to agree on short, medium and long-term Actions
- Identification of proposed resources needed and outcomes, timeframes, and potential sources of funding
- Annual review of the plan by all groups and members of the public
- We will also reach out to adjoining and relevant communities outside of Closeburn to collaborate on larger cross boundary issues like transport, higher education, enterprise and business, where working together works better.

## A LIVE PLAN FOR EVERYONE

We hope that this Local Place Plan has meaning for people in Closeburn and elsewhere and is thus useful. Our hope is that it will provide evidence of need so that any groups or individuals who are thinking about setting up a new initiative have an idea about local people's priorities. It can thus provide evidence for funding applications and identify potential collaborators. We wish to underline the fact that this Plan should be regarded as a living document that should be modified and updated over time to reflect changes in circumstances, needs and aspirations.

We hope that this vision of this Local Place Plan has meaning for people in Closeburn and is thus useful. Our hope is that it will provide evidence of need so that any groups or individuals who are thinking about setting up a new initiative have an idea of what people's priorities are for Closeburn Parish. It will provide evidence for funding applications and identify potential collaborators. We wish to underline the fact that this Plan should be regarded as a living document that can be modified over time to reflect changes in circumstances, needs and aspirations.

If you have any future comments, please email them to [NVLT9@outlook.com](mailto:NVLT9@outlook.com)



*Fig 11 Closeburn Community Field*

