

Tongland and Ringford Community Council Local Place Plan



Tongland and Ringford Community Council Boundary Map as shown in purple and is the boundary of the area this LPP covers

Quotes in *Italic* represent consensus of opinions.
Highlighted text reflects issues and suggestions for resolution.

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Local Place Plan (LPP)

Tongland and Ringford Place Plan is produced by the Tongland and Ringford Community Council in consultation with the local community. It has been created under the Planning (Scotland Act) 2019 to support the area to have a more direct role in shaping its future over the next ten years.

The LPP survey has revealed, with considerable consistency, that the areas of most importance to those living and working in the area (not in order of priority) are

- 1. Natural spaces linked to feeling safe**
- 2. Public transport and roads, pathways and footpaths**
- 3. Housing and employment**
- 4. Ringford Village Hall development**
- 5. Care and Maintenance**
- 6. Influence and sense of control**

These priorities link to the Local Development Plan 2, 2019 of having: high quality distinctive landscapes as part of the natural spaces- more rural business to promote employment-small groups of housing to support local families-sustainable transport including better access to public transport -well maintained and developed pathways and road networks are also highlighted.

The plan also links to National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) headline statements/policies of

- 1. Improving the health and wellbeing of people**
- 2. Increasing the population of rural areas**
- 3. Meeting housing needs**
- 4. Improving equality and eliminating discrimination**
- 5. Securing positive effects for biodiversity**

The Tongland and Ringford Community Council boundary is constructed by utilising the River Dee and major road network which divides the settlements into separate community groups. It consists of a large rural area divided by various roads, A75, A711 and the A762. The River Dee is used as a main Community Council boundary having the effect of dividing Tongland in two, with one part in the Historical Parish of Tongland and the other in Kirkcudbright Community Council described as 'district.' The community area also includes the river Tarff. Adjoining the Tongland and Ringford Community is the Bridge of Dee Community which is also divided by use of the River Dee as a boundary, placing one part of the settlement in Tongland and Ringford Community Area and the other section of the settlement in the Kelton Community Council boundary.

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The rest of the area consists of Ringford and of small rural hamlets, farms and small family run businesses. Ringford has a centre left in terms of community (the village hall) whilst Tongland has no physical communal space.

Ringford Village Hall is run by a committee solely drawn from Ringford. The Hall was erected by James Beaumont Neilson of Queenshill for The Parish of Tongland in 1861. Ringford hall is deemed an important asset by respondents to the survey, especially in the light of the churches in the area no longer functioning as social meeting spaces.

At Lairdmannoch a stone circle can be found. At Kirkconnell Moor, the Martyr's Monument for covenanters was erected, massacred for their adherence to the faith.

The country-side at this stage reflects the true Galloway scenery, of rolling drumlin fields, flowing walkable hills intertwined with places designated as of special scientific significance. There are various historical sites relating to Scotland's history from the time of the Magna Carter (contributed to by Alan 4th Lord of Galloway; the only lord in Scotland involved).

James the IVth (his association to Tongland Abbey built for a Premonstratensian monastic community in C1218) and Mary Queen of Scots (with Mary's well, the previous bridge over the Dee as Mary's Bridge at Tongland and Queenshill, near Ringford, named after her with a marker to a resting point on her travels).

There is a major monument on the hills, relating to Neilson, acknowledging his impact on society and Neilson's mausoleum is in Tongland graveyard across from the family's previous rural residence). Tongland is also the home to Thomas Telford's 1808 bridge across the Dee, his earliest large span masonry arch bridge in Scotland. This is over-looked by Iron Age Hillfort believed occupied between 500BC and 500AD. Other Neolithic or Bronze Age Stones and cup-on-ring rock art examples exist in the catchment area.

(See Map of Sites of Significance as Mentioned in LPP at end of document)

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Local Place Plan Priorities

The landscape is a main asset to the area both in terms of a food source through local farms but also as an attractive place for local communities and tourists. Both being main stays in providing local employment. Other sources of employment are to be found at Tongland with a mix of what estate agents have been known to describe as 'quasi-industry'.

1. Natural Spaces and feeling safe

This priority links to a protected and enhanced natural and historic environment and more green networks providing a range of environmental, social and economic benefits, high quality distinctive landscapes and a distinctive landscape setting or sense of place (LDP2, 2019) NPF4 puts Climate and Biodiversity emergencies at the heart of its document. It places a focus on biodiversity enhancement rather than just protection.

Where they live and why was seen as highly important to respondents. It is seen as *“a peaceful, fresh area”* with many not wanting to see it changed or to quote *‘Ruined’*.

Benefits of the natural space were seen as aiding mental health and improving exercise. Providing a good place to live with views that offer a calming and relaxed atmosphere. It is also acknowledged that *“More tourists are coming to this area- let’s make them welcome”*

Open Space Strategy Document (September 2014) states on point 1.5 - *Open space can also incorporate important historic and cultural elements that provide local communities with a sense of place. Where they incorporate semi-natural elements, they provide habitats for wildlife and bring people closer to nature. Their economic importance is often overlooked but well designed and maintained open space can reduce vandalism, provide excellent locations for events, draw tourists and encourage more people to live and work in the area.*

It was also expressed that *“protection was needed for the areas of scientific interest and the ‘corridors’ that link them enabling diversity of plant and wildlife.”*

A concern was raised about the possibility of individual and absent landlords able to overcome local residents wishes regarding use of the area.

The concern was also raised *“Natural space – the area is well known for its natural appeal and space. As much of this as possible should be retained- The influx of wind and solar farms is of significant detrimental impact”.* (this again relates to point 1.5 above)

2. Public transport and roads, pathways and footpaths

This priority links to access to sustainable transport and housing developments of a scale and character appropriate to their location that incorporate features such as open space,

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green networks, SuDS and are based around sustainable transport modes, high quality accessible viewpoints, paths and green networks. (LDP2, 2019)

Public Transport:

NPF4 Reduction of emissions.

This is seen of greatest importance as the villages have no facilities in terms of local doctor, dentist, shop or social centres such as a pub. The nearest NHS hospitals are at Dumfries (25 miles) and Stranraer (49miles), with access to more complicated medical treatment is sometimes referred to Glasgow (101 miles) or Edinburgh (104 miles). Appointments made at the remaining services of Castle Douglas and Kirkcudbright; previous cottage hospitals are also reliant on car or public transport.

The nearest rail links are Dumfries and Lockerbie with no direct links to public transport from the villages. There needs to be a regular bus service that fits in with ones to Dumfries. Currently, "it is impossible to use public transport to go to hospital appointments in Edinburgh."

Without a car people struggle to *"shop, socialise, or get anywhere else"*.

The need for reliable and regular bus services and local taxi/ minibuses was acknowledged as of significance. Currently, bus services do not always link up with travel arrangements required.

Suggestions were made that regular 20-minute mini-bus shuttle routes with stops for (request pick up and drop off) for shopping would be helpful as some residents find it difficult to walk fully laden with shopping back home. Others noted that the public transport network needs to be reliable and regular, with bus stops marked and up-to-date time-tables present. It was also noted that public transport vehicles are needed that cater for prams, mobility issues and "room for shopping".

The possibility was raised as to whether a community mini-bus/taxi service could operate which had a well -advertised Telephone number on signs around villages to enable 'Phone and Go'.

Questions were raised as to whether or not there was any form of Hospital cars in the area.

Roads

Overall, there was a general feeling expressed of some displeasure over local roads.

Issues were raised around various A roads and minor roads in the area. The A762 described, in particular, *"as becoming a dirt track and requiring a full relaying"*.

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Likewise residential areas have become neglected. Comments were made on **local roads in a poor state of repair including residential side roads in villages such as Monks Way** in Tongland. The need for painting white lines on the (narrower, rural) roads, as it's difficult driving at night when you can't see where the road goes and that road sweepers could usefully clear mud and other debris including leaves. **It was also felt that there needed to be better maintenance of local roads and streets in the villages in terms of clearing drains on a more regular basis to prevent flooding.** Suggestions were made regarding litter clearance of the A75 with perhaps some signage about taking litter home. The amount of litter has increased since the bins were removed from lay-bys.

Safety was raised as a concern regarding walkers, on local roads, *"this can be a nightmare at times"*.

Regarding parking, it was felt in general there was sufficient parking in the villages. However, the point was raised that it could be useful for more mini lay-bys along rural roads for off road parking and access to core paths.

Pathways and paths

Respondents expressed that the footpaths needed to be kept clear so they can be used by all. Improvements were needed regarding weeding and signage.

Core path signage needed to be better especially when leading to sites of interest or offer safer walking routes within villages away from road. There is a need to review core path signage and also drainage as many are in a mess.

Some residential paths needed an over-haul, such as at Queens Park and along the A711, where paths/pavements have become quite difficult for walking and in some cases are not of sufficient width due to overgrowth to enable push chairs and mobility scooters to use them safely. The sloping camber of the path from Monks Way down the A711 is far too narrow.

Paths and pavements were seen as important in the maintenance of the villages as it *"Keeps our villages tidy and welcoming"*. It was felt by some that *"street lighting expansion was not wanted"*.

Suggestion was made that maybe the old railway lines could be re-purposed as long distance footpaths/active cycling routes, as these are relatively flat and with gradual gradients. Likewise, consideration of a safe crossing for the A75, planned in with any future development of this road could mean that the path beside the river could be developed and give a route between Ringford and Kirkcudbright.

In particular this links to access to a wide range of good quality sport, recreation and leisure facilities by providing active routes of sustainable transport from Bridge of Dee through to Ringford, down to Tongland terminating in Kirkcudbright (LDP2, 2019)

Given the two rivers in the area, the Dee and the Tarff, residents enquired whether the area can be part of the **'Open Space Strategy' LDP, 2014**. Also, Supplementary guidance document 'Trees and Development' February 2020. Highlighting a need to protect ancient

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woodlands pre 1860 on OS map, or protection of individual heritage trees. This could also incorporate support for pathways that currently run along riversides with support for the creation of sensitively designed and managed woodland to be developed. (See Appendix A)

3. Housing and employment

This priority links to more housing in small groups, more rural businesses, more opportunities to meet locally arising affordable housing needs, housing developments of a scale and character appropriate to their location that incorporate features such as open space, green networks, SuDS and are based around sustainable transport modes, high quality, affordable housing as laid out in the LDP2, 2019. NPF4 Intent: To encourage, promote and facilitate the delivery of more high quality, affordable and sustainable homes, in the right locations, providing choice across tenures that meet the diverse housing needs of people and communities across Scotland

There was a high degree of consistency in responses to housing with a need for some more housing of various kinds as locals wish to encourage young families into the village, as well as disabled or aging people. “A Place for All.” It was felt that the planning department should support this.

Suggestions made were that more housing of the right type was required ie for older people to free up existing family size homes for young families whilst not removing older people from their familiar village/rural environment. Affordability, was raised as an issue but not clarified regarding whether or not it was for rented or purchased housing. The point was raised that the current mixture of public and private housing should be retained. Housing was also related to a need for a better infrastructure, regarding infrastructure as it exists at the moment such as the state of the roads and sewage arrangements. No one expressed a desire for large scale housing but rather smaller elements that met the need of the local profile of population.

A way forward suggested was for more active support for emphasis on the re-use of ‘Brownfield sites and opposition to ‘greenfield’ with financial incentives for renovation of existing buildings. (See Appendix B)

There were some concerns over loss of housing to tourist accommodation, as distinct from second homes or new homes.

Work and economy

Limited comments were made on this point, with a few feeling that work and economy needing to expand if villages are to survive through to it being considered that there were plenty of work’s spaces, at least in Tongland. Some welcomed small light industry, for example, electricians, family builders and plumbers.

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4. Ringford Village Hall Development

This priority links to more recreational activity, a range of services and facilities that help serve the local community, access to a wide range of good quality sport, recreation and leisure facilities as outlined in the LDP2, 2019.

In the light of lost or no local assets ie: local café/tea room, village shop, pubs, Local hospital, church. Improvements to the village hall based at Ringford is seen as important as it is our only community asset and needs to be retained. Its income is from takings for activities/use of the hall or fundraising events. **There is a real need for the Dumfries and Galloway Council to advise and support in identifying possible grant streams to support its refurbishment and updating.** Use to be made of the area Ward Officer advice to support progress in seeking grant funding. The committee would welcome new members to help in the organisation of the activities described within the survey returns.

It is felt that it could:

- *“Help to avoid loneliness and help vulnerability” and*
- *“Could provide local a social place through further activities”.*

Views held on its usage were wide ranging with some feeling that:

- since the pandemic it was not as in use as much as before,
- that there is insufficient communication on what activities are held and how to join in,
- the Facebook page and web page was referenced here as needing to be kept up.
- *“Village Hall could help ‘Keeping our village on the map’ with use of hall for groups etc – Keep using the face-book page”*

Other comments included:

- *“Improved access to Ringford village hall ---where I lived previously --- in, village halls were a focus for community events.”-*
- *“it (the hall) could be an essential ‘warm space’ during power cuts but requires an adaptor point for a generator, to enable use of heaters and kitchen”*

Suggested activities included:

- Badminton, Pilates, children and youth workshops,
- meet and greet over a cuppa once a month, arts and crafts.
- Activities to be advertised on notice boards in both villages with times and dates and joining information as well as on face book or a web page. (this is quite important as it relates to the influence and sense of control points below).

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- *“Could the hall be licenced, with ability to hold social events, perhaps bar run by arrangement with a local pub/landlord”.*

In conclusion it was felt that the hall could offer a sense of place and identity and increase social contact as “Identity and belonging” in this area suffer from the fact it is not a natural geographical space”.

5. Care and maintenance

This priority links to high quality accessible viewpoints, paths and green networks and enhanced historic environment including an enhanced and **protected** natural and historic environment in LDP2, 2019

Many of the comments raised the same or similar points as detailed above, but also raise safety issues:

- *“Of footpaths and pavements”*
- *“Pot holes”*
- *“Drainage- road side drains keep them clear in villages, to prevent flooding”*
- *“Our street and space scene – the area is magnificent and should not be allowed to deteriorate”*
- *“Improvements to the village hall”*
- *“The appearance of the most prominent structures The old pump, The Ice house, and Tongland Church, require improvement. Tongland HEP station being a good example of an improvement,*
- *Ringford War memorial (Railing by steps for safety).*
- **Tongland Church should be monitored and made secure in case of falling stone work**. However, it would not be welcomed to see it fenced off with no admittance especially as its graveyard is a Commonwealth one and includes other graves of some significance. It is frequently visited by locals and tourists hence the church needs to be retained in the same good order as the graveyard.
- **Assessment needed of the historical bridge at Tongland, 1808 Thomas Telford Bridge. In terms of weight and amount of traffic using it since Kirkcudbright bridge is limited.** Should it have single file with traffic lights to prevent collisions, **should the approaches to it have lower speed limits than the current 60mph.”**
- **The nearest “playpark is ok but requires a serious up-date”.** There are concerns that whilst the playpark in Ringford is an asset it is becoming unsafe and requires upgrading.

6. Influence and sense of control

This links to information and communication technology infrastructure issues. And supports the LDP2 aims of ready access to higher education and opportunities for

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knowledge transfer that are increasingly reliant on online or hybrid learning models. The aim to support more businesses and people working from home including providing a range of services and facilities that help support the local community (LDP2, 2019). NPF4 Improving health and well-being and Improving equality and eliminating discrimination

Most responses were about Communications. Concerns were raised regarding internet accessibility. In particular:

- *“Important development needed – being able to receive fibre broadband up to many properties that are up tracks. As OPEN REACH will not bring it up tracks”*
- *“Improved internet access-personal experience of loss for weeks on end” were repeated issues.*

We need to acknowledge that without internet you lose:

- IT for learning and work – young and old
- Communication with Family, banks and businesses
- On-line shopping
- Access to NHS appointment letters and reminders and more recently access to the newly announced changes to Doctor’s consultations and appointments going over to IT base services.
- Access to ‘Teams’ for virtual meetings and other public information
- Booking arrangements for Holidays
- Right to work at home

Whilst this may not be something a local place plan can address; it is already highlighted as part of the local development plan 2 and therefore needs to be incorporated and actioned within the LDP3. This roll out of IT for services is in fact placing some of our community in an extremely vulnerable position, without the support of a reliable network. Too often it doesn’t meet demand in terms of speed and reliability for many in the villages and for others in more isolated parts it is minimal to non-existent. A move to smart meters has increased the demand and disadvantage of rural communities due to limited mobile signal and high-speed internet for some.

Current affairs and their Influence

These need to be taken into account as they demonstrate local opinions or future government budget changes that under pin why the opinions shared in the survey may become more significant.

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Tongland and Ringford Community Council is a member of The Stewarty Federation of Community Councils, quarterly meetings are held at which we share common local issues and success stories that support and influence the Local Place Plans in the Stewarty. Meetings are held in the months of February, May, September and November (avoiding summer tourism constraints, and winter travel concerns).

Representation In the face of a Twynholm CC no longer in place affiliation for the Glengap Community has taken place with Tongland and Ringford CC. It is envisaged that this collaborative partnership may become permanent within the 2027 review of the scheme for Community Councils.

Representatives from adjoining community and district councils such as Balmagee, Glengap, Bridge of Dee, Kirkcudbright have attended Tongland and Ringford Community Council Meetings in regard to petitions and objections of major infrastructure proposals affecting all community councils.

Also offered the opportunity to attend the Tongland and Ringford Community Council Meetings have been the ward 3 councillors during which the LPP has been on the agenda, including timeframes, updates on community surveys, consultation dates and times with the local community and feedback of the information gathered from these.

- Petitions and objections regarding wind farms, solar parks, battery storage with growing numbers of CCs objecting and a petition of over 1,000 objecting to such a proposed plan at Lairdmannoch.
- A Judicial Review into Kendoon to Tongland Pylons, supported and paid for by local residents and CCs.
- Budget proposals on rates – thus housing.
- On pay by mile for travel for cars and possibly taxis
- on public transport and types of vehicles used

These are just a few examples that may further impact on priorities.

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Local Place Plan Actions as to Inform the LDP3:

Conservation, nature and the essence of the area retaining the look of the area is highlighted as it is regarded as extremely important by residents. Retaining and protecting the areas of scientific importance, and limiting new development are important as well as identifying and maintaining historical sites This includes retaining the unique views from fields to hills and the appearance of the villages.

Consideration given to becoming part of the “Open Space Strategy” and a ‘Dark Skies’ National Designation Area

Local living any erosion of the current limited local services will result in further net migration from the area of younger and older residents. Enhancement of services especially those related to connectivity with the wider world are of high need.

To work with and on advice from Dumfries and Galloway Council in identifying and applying for Grant funding for Ringford Village Hall Upgrade and refurbishment so as to provide quality sports, leisure and community facilities. Use of Ward Officer to seek Grant Funding.

Paths

To work with Dumfries and Galloway Council on improvements to the local paths and to look at available land use such as old railway tracks and current paths to expand active routes between the villages and Kirkcudbright. Including in future plans made for the A75 the possibility of a safe crossing for pedestrians and cyclist to aid this. To provide active and sustainable safe transport options linking communities. (see appendix A)

Public Transport Given the nature of the local roads, and the distances between the villages and larger towns, a request is made that commissioning public transport the size of buses and their ability to cater for mobility and shopping issues is further considered. Retention of public transport is vital if our villages are to continue. Reducing carbon emissions by ensuring public transport links are viable and sustainable for communities.

Consideration/research to be given to ‘Phone and Go’ community transport services by Dumfries and Galloway Council in conjunction with residents identified needs.

Planning and conservation Opportunities to explore, with planning support, some smaller housing developments to meet the expressed needs of the communities, such as accommodation for the elderly near or in their villages and more affordable housing including a mix of private and public accommodation. **A possibility would be the Barncross site to be used for multi-generational living rather than holiday let or lodges previously applied for to planning. This would alleviate housing shortages for multi-generational living in the area and links to providing responsive affordable housing where needed and**

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with sustainable transport and other necessary facilities within the development, with access to main road A75 as part of the development. (See appendix B)

Connectivity The area is due to transition, as elsewhere, to Voice over Internet Protocol Technology and reliance on Smart Meters requiring sufficient mobile or internet signal. Given the unaddressed needs as mentioned above, regarding internet access, this could represent a threat to rural communities rather than progress.

We would ask that Dumfries and Galloway Council take into consideration these priorities in the development of their LDP 3 in line with more business and people working from home and ready access to higher education and opportunities for knowledge transfer.

Local Placement Plan Priority	Specific Action	Priority Level	Short, Medium, Long-Term Priority	Possible Partners
Conservation, Nature and Essence of the Area	To seek advice and membership in Dark Skies National Designation	High	Long Term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Open Space Strategy supplementary guidance reviewed. ○ Biosphere/ Dark Skies National Designation Liaison Officer <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Climate Hub ○ Scottish Government
Conservation, Nature and Essence of the Area	To seek advice and funding for conservation activities and eco-friendly development of land	High	Short term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Climate Hub ○ Scottish Government
Conservation, Nature and Essence of the Area	To make representations to the Council regarding planning applications which may conflict with LPP priorities	High	Long Term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Local Action groups ○ Glengap Community Group ○ Dumfries and Galloway Council <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ local residents
Paths	Seek improvements of paths (pavements and footpaths) through Council	High	Ongoing	Dumfries and Galloway Council – Core Paths Highways Action Groups Local landowners
Public transport	Seek links with Council regarding public transport surveys and ongoing consultation for area	Medium	Long term	Community transport groups Dumfries and Galloway Council with SWestrans

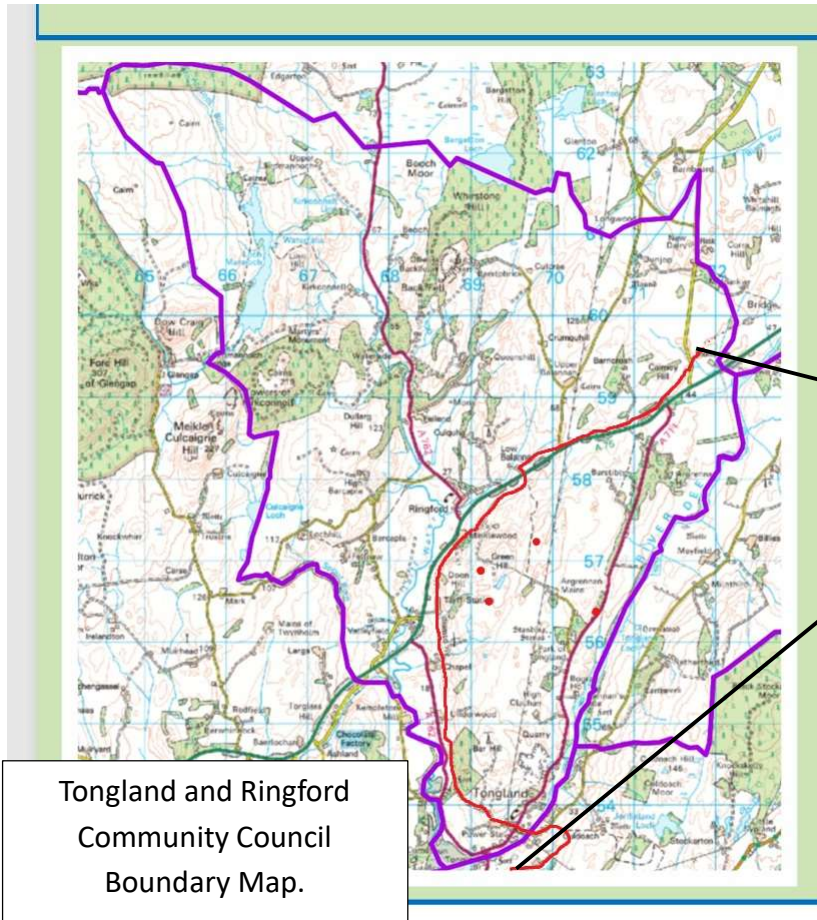
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Public transport	To speak to community transport groups for a feasibility study for a 'phone and go' approach to community transport provision	Medium	Long-term	Community transport groups Dumfries and Galloway Council with SWestrans Local Transport Businesses
Active Travel Route	To seek advice and raise awareness of a proposed route	Medium	Long-term	Dumfries and Galloway Council AMEY (with regard to any proposed update/upgrade of A75 in our area)
Planning and Conservation	To inform planning department where planning applications are detrimental to local landscape, historical sites. wellbeing of community or oppose LPP priorities	High	Continuous	Dumfries and Galloway Council LDP 3 and Planning department Scottish Government Planning Appeals
Local Living	Community council to speak to ward officer regarding grant funding for improvements to Ringford Village Hall	High	Short Term	Ward Officer for Funding Grants
Connectivity	Community Council to continue to raise awareness regarding poor connectivity to reliable internet for residents	High	Long term	Open Reach, Starlink Dumfries and Galloway Council, Awareness raised with Public Bodies Reference Communicating via Online Methods

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Appendix A

Proposed Active Travel Route is indicated in red on the Map below



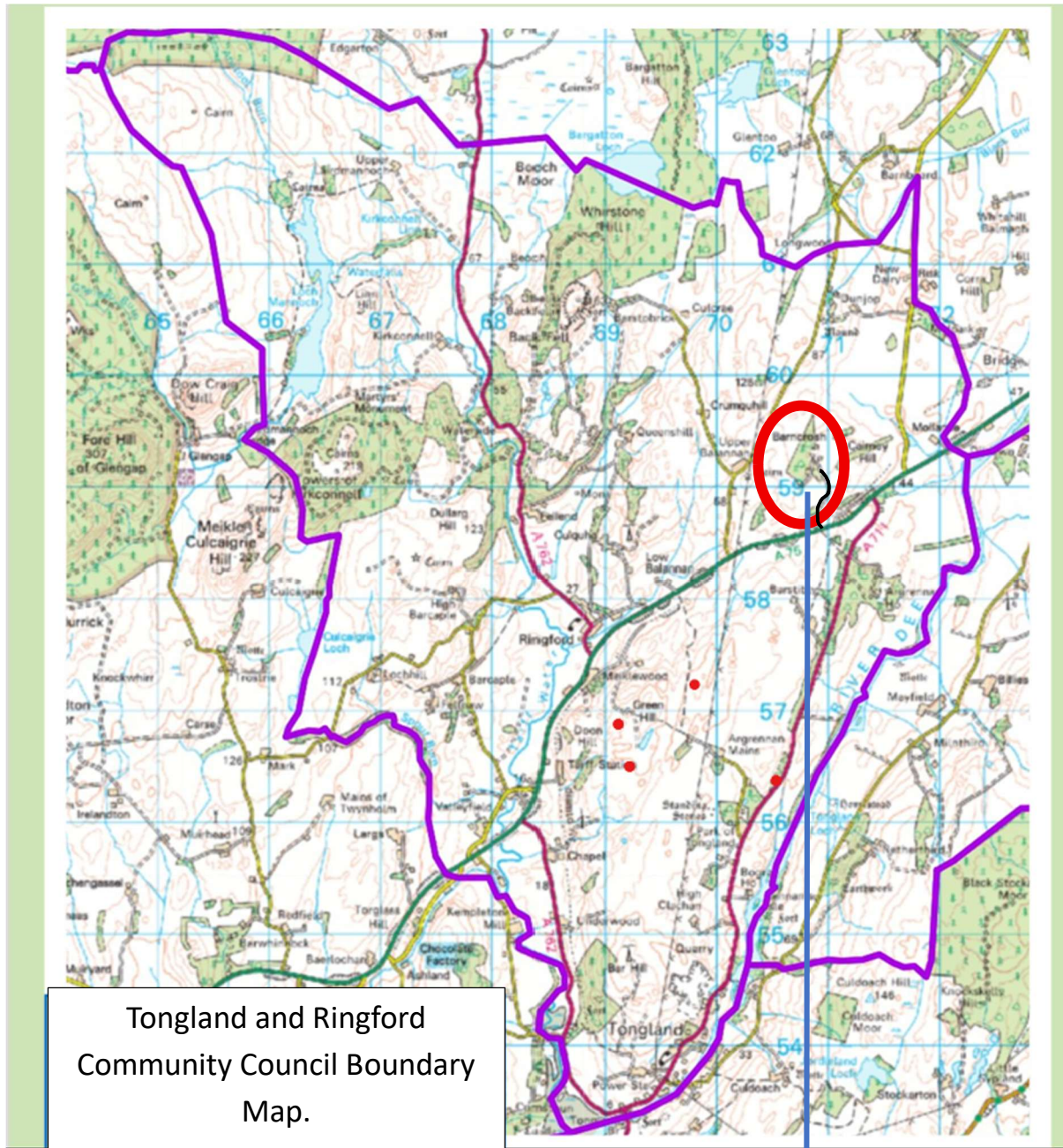
Active travel route utilising old railway line starting at Bridge of Dee north of A75, follows A75 to Low Balannan, cross A75, passes Meiklewood, descending south past Tarff Station, Chapel and Underwood to Tongland Power Sation. Crossing A711 to join core path from Tongland Bridge to Kirkcudbright

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Appendix B

Barncrosh Development Site – Local residents highlighted need for housing for elderly which this site could provide. Main road access means services would be easier to provide within such a development.

Area highlighted within red oval.



Tongland and Ringford
Community Council Boundary
Map.

Barncrosh site with driveway highlighted in black showing direct access to A75