



MOUNT BLAIR COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN

COMMUNITY VIEWS SURVEY REPORT

August 2012



**AWARDS
FOR ALL
SCOTLAND**

LOTTERY FUNDED

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This survey was carried out by Mount Blair Community Action Plan Steering Group using the guidelines and templates provided by the Small Town and Rural Development Group.

1. INTRODUCTION

Background

1.1 The survey was carried out by the Mount Blair Community Action Plan Steering Group set up by Mount Blair Community Trust. We are preparing an Action Plan to help identify a vision for the future of Mount Blair and to determine through community engagement what the community's priorities are for the future.

1.2 Our work has been funded by Awards for All Funding from the Big Lottery.

Survey Organisation

1.3 The steering group helped to tailor the survey template provided by the STAR Development Group to suit local requirements and then the form was posted out to all households in the Mount Blair Community Council area. The survey was returned to designated retail outlets in the Glen. There was also an opportunity to respond on line and by email. We emailed out to all Trust members that we had email contacts for and also through the community e-news service provided by the Session House.

Survey Response

1.4 A total of 104 completed Community Views Surveys were received from 625 houses.

1.5 Of those who responded, and recorded their age group and gender

5	were under 24 years old	63	were female
10	were aged 25 -44 years.	35	were male
36	were aged 45 -59 years.		
23	were aged 60 -69 years.		
20	were aged 70 years and over.		

1.6 Of those who told us where they came from:

Area within Mount Blair	Responses
Klirkmichael	30
Glenshee	13
Blacklunans	11
Bridge of Cally	20
Enochdu	8
Ballintuim	10
Other (Cally Crafters)	3

Survey Analysis and report

1.7 The survey has been analysed by the Small Town and Rural Development Group as we were keen that the analysis and report were produced by an external body to ensure the unbiased analysis of the responses.

1.8 The report summarises the responses to the main survey questions:

- What do you like about the Mount Blair area?
- What do you not like about the Mount Blair area?
- What would make it better to live in, work in or visit?
- What are the priorities (small or big)?
- What is your vision for Mount Blair 2020

1.9 We also asked a supplementary question to ascertain whether there was interest from residents in taking part in a collective approach to oil purchasing.

2. WHAT DO YOU LIKE ABOUT MOUNT BLAIR?

Like	% of Responses
Rural Nature - scenery, peace and quiet, wildlife	84
Community Spirit	35
Local services and facilities	21
Location	13
Recreation	12
Everything	3
Nothing	1

2.1 Rural Nature

Respondents favourite aspect of their place is the way it looks - the scenery - and the wildlife. They appreciate the rural nature of the community and the peaceful lifestyle that it offers - the Glens are an uncrowded place.

Quotes

- *It's a beautiful rural area with outstanding scenery*
- *Wonderful landscape, unspoiled natural beauty and tranquillity.*
- *The beautiful hills, glens and forests which make up the area.*
- *The remote landscape - we like mountains snow, forests and no street lights.*
- *Its simpler slower pace of life*

2.2 The people and community spirit

Almost all comments under this theme focused on the friendliness of the people and other related qualities. There were one or two mentions for community projects e.g. the Session House and events - the Games - that were seen as contributing to community spirit.

Quotes

- *Rural working Glen with a community*
- *The sense of community - knowing most people, good neighbourliness and in general people are prepared to put effort in to benefit the whole community.*
- *The camaraderie of the long established local residents who share the history of the area and work well together*
- *The ability of local and incoming people to get together*
- *The friendliness of the Glenners*
- *Community projects such as Village Halls, shop and Kirkmichael shop*
- *Strathardle Highland Games and Heather Festival - the community events and the fact that everyone chats to you.*

2.3 Local services and facilities

There was a name check for the school, shops, post offices, visitor centre, website, public transport.

Quotes

- *Good quality local facilities and services when compared with the low population e.g. Kirkmichael Village Shop, Session House, Kirkmichael Primary School.*
- *Good information for visitors to the area - shop, PO and fuel available.*

2.4 Location

Respondents enjoyed the fact that the area was a good place to be based for accessing other places - main road networks and towns and cities.

Quotes

- *Ease of access to Blairgowrie, Perth, Dundee and the main road system.*
- *Being 30 minutes from both Blairgowrie and Pitlochry preserves a feeling of remoteness, but only 1 hour from Perth or Dundee allows access to city facilities when needed.*
- *Proximity to major transport links and within reasonable distance of all major Scottish cities.*
- *It's a reasonable distance from civilisation!*

2.5 Outdoor recreation

The area is seen as being great for a variety of outdoor recreation - walking, fishing, cycling, stalking and golf were all mentioned.

Quotes

- *The balance of tourism and environmental interests with hill farming and traditional estate management.*

2.6 Everything and nothing!

There were a few responses that simply said they liked everything - or nothing - with more people saying they liked everything.

3. WHAT DO YOU NOT LIKE ABOUT MOUNT BLAIR?

Dislike	% of Responses
Traffic and safety	30
Lack of public transport, remoteness and access to services	30
Environment	17
Community organisation	16
Fragility of the local economy	15
Housing and Population	12
Nothing	11
Lack of good broadband connection	7

3.1 Traffic and safety

Main concerns were the speeding motorbikes on the A93 and the condition of the roads. There was also mention of larger vehicles using the A924. In addition to concerns linked to roads and traffic there was also a small mention of the recent spate of burglaries.

Quotes

- *The weekend motor bikers using the road as a race track, we have watched the same bikes going up and down the Glen with very high speeds sometimes several times a day*
- *Motorbikes wreck the peace we have become a rat run for the bikes and they are a rule unto themselves.*
- *Motorbikes an ongoing problem - illegal noisy exhausts, racing 70+mph, and dangerous driving and overtaking, chewing up the roadside verges.*
- *The A924 becoming busier from Pitlochry with very wide coaches and very fast lorries that are selfish road users.*
- *The amount of logging lorries using the A93 as a main route south.*
- *Bad roads in winter not being cleared*
- *A bit of petty crime creeping into the area makes you feel a bit unsafe nowadays and have to lock up the sheds and barns on a daily basis.*

3.2 Lack of/ poor public transport, remoteness, and access to services

A dislike of the lack of public transport was closely linked to the remoteness of the area and the difficulty accessing services and opportunities e.g. recreational facilities, outwith the area.

Quotes

- *Public transport is very poor - you cannot get to Perth or Dundee College or to and from Pitlochry Station for example.*

- *I feel we are unnecessarily cut off from Pitlochry (nearest train station and major thoroughway to the north - there is no public transport that goes this way.*
- *Remoteness from facilities*
- *Distance time from emergency services*
- *Difficulty accessing medical care*
- *Few sporting facilities or sporting clubs closer than Pitlochry or Blairgowrie.*
- *Disappearing amenities e.g. Straloch School.*
- *Lack of public toilets from Bridge of Cally to Spittal.*

3.3 Fragility of the local economy

The main concern under this heading was lack of job opportunities in the local area. Other comments highlighted the need to do more to promote tourism, lack of shops, and high fuel prices. There was concern that if 'we don't use it we will lose it' with regard to local shops and services.

Quotes

- *Lack of local jobs - feeling particularly vulnerable to fuel prices*
- *There are few local job opportunities*
- *Just like to see it better developed for tourism and locals*
- *We struggle to encourage visitors from Blairgowrie and Pitlochry.*
- *I worry that the Kirkmichael shop could close if people do not use it more*
- *Food shopping limited would like to see more fresh vegetables sold locally*

3.4 Environment

The majority of comments under this theme were 'anti windfarm' due to a perceived negative impact on the scenery. Other comments focused on the need to enhance the environment, develop local walks, and to improve recycling and prevent littering in the area. There was also a plea from some to reduce the street lighting as there is an appreciation of the dark skies in the area.

Quotes

- *Threat of the windfarm is pretty disconcerting*
- *The desolation of the countryside/hills from too many sheep and an exploding deer population - so more natural trees and landscape.*
- *The forests that you are allowed in are owned by the Forestry Commission and a lot of the trees are non native.*
- *The derelict church at Kirkmichael*
- *Unnecessary street lamps*

3.5 Community Organisation

There was some concern that the community was not as united as it had been in the past with a loss of community spirit and a growth in divisions within the community. The main concern being that there is a perceived lack of support for local community initiatives.

Quotes

- *Lack of community feel*
- *There can be quite a negative attitude to doing things as usual not enough volunteers to move things forward*
- *Its difficult for people to find out about what is going on*
- *There is a growing sense of them and us between newcomers and those who feel the area belongs to them*

3.6 Housing and population

Respondents highlighted the lack of permanent residents and the increase in holiday homes as well as a feeling that private rented accommodation was not going to local people.

Quotes

- *High number of houses that spend most of the time empty which has a knock on effect on everyone trying to run a business, facilities, clubs etc.*
- *Too many holiday houses which were in the past occupied by local residents*
- *There are a lot of second homes that are not visited often*
- *Too many empty buildings in the winter*
- *Social security families being placed in the community with no prospects of any employment*

3.7 Broadband

Lack of decent broadband connection was thought to have a negative impact on residents and local businesses.

Quotes

- *The poor broadband, mobile phone, TV and radio services in the area*
- *No fast internet access*

4. WHAT WOULD MAKE MOUNT BLAIR A BETTER PLACE TO LIVE IN OR WORK IN OR VISIT?

Improvement	% of Responses
Local economy and tourism	27
Improve transport	27
Community facilities, activities and organisations	25
Better broadband and communication systems	22
Environment and outdoor recreation	18
Roads, traffic and community safety	14
Housing and population	12
Nothing	11
Improved access to local services	6
Renewable energy	2

4.1 Local economy and tourism

More local job opportunities was the main improvement sought, matched by a desire to see more promotion of the area through e.g. website, interpretation, information and road signage and the provision of more activities and facilities for visitors. People would like to see more local businesses, shops and cafes - and a campsite was also suggested.

Quotes

- *More opportunities for young people to get a start in the many different enterprises that take place in this rural area.*
- *Would suggest an information point at the large lay by north of Bridge of Cally on A93, clearly indicating what lies beyond....*
- *More lay-by's so visitors can admire the views, preferably with a noticeboard or information.*
- *More defined things to do in the area e.g. path/cycle leaflet etc.*
- *Better facilities for people on holiday and locals - play park for example.*
- *More simple things for visitors to do e.g. signed walks, picnic sites.*
- *Self employed or small business start-ups - how about a craft cooperative?*
- *Local shop/café/post office in Glenshee*
- *A pub/restaurant where both visitors and locals are welcome.*
- *A campsite for tents near Kirkmichael - would tie in with long distance paths.*
- *More B&Bs would improve and increase tourism.*
- *One standard website for the area and/or a bulletin of What's On - building on what Petrina has done for Kirkmichael.*

4.2 Better transport network

The biggest specific need expressed was to improve links to Pitlochry. Suggestions included bringing back the Post Bus, a community mini bus and car sharing.

Quotes

- *Public transport links to Pitlochry - particularly for school children*

- *Ways to reduce transport cost - e.g. car sharing?*
- *Organised lift share system to Blairgowrie and Pitlochry for fuel saving and fun!*
- *Restoration of the Post Bus Service*
- *A circular service taking in Blairgowrie, Pitlochry, Ballinluig, Dunkeld and back to Blairgowrie via Butterstone - even if this ran for 8 months of the year it would surely be attractive to locals and tourists alike.*

4.3 Community facilities, activities and organisations

The need for improvements to local facilities was highest within this theme with more sports facilities hoped for with the development of Kirkmichael Hall. There was also thought to be a need for more activities for young people, more events and the development of the play area in Kirkmichael. Other points raised were the need for better communication between groups, the need to make more residents feel involved, the need for less rivalry between areas and more of a community feel.

Quotes

- *A new Sports Centre and gym*
- *I think a new sports hall with some new clubs may help and may even encourage other schools to come for competitions*
- *A play park for younger and older children - there are many good examples of parks e.g. Coupar Angus, Rattray.*
- *More community based activities using community facilities to provide interest, education and entertainment within the area for both residents and visitors and help reduce rural isolation*
- *More events e.g. ceilidhs concerts, banquets!*
- *Cub scout group for boys*
- *Encourage more after school clubs*
- *More things geared for teenagers*
- *A Glen Folk Band - many little venues and dances.*
- *Better communication between groups re local events*
- *A better acceptance of the value everybody has to play in the community*
- *Schemes to make residents feel more involved with the area*
- *Greater involvement - that means me!*
- *Less rivalry between the areas - a more positive and cohesive attitude to what can be done and in particular to make best use of the Drumderg Grant opportunities*

4.4 Better broadband and communication systems

Almost all the comments in this theme focused on the need to improve broadband in the area and the benefits that that would provide. There were also one or two other comments about the need for improved TV and mobile phone reception.

Quotes

- *Far better broadband and wi fi capacity/speeds and reliability*
- *Faster internet speeds this should be a priority for businesses*
- *We need better broadband speed - 30kps is slower than dial up!!!*
- *Broadband need I say more*
- *Television that doesn't require a skydish.*

4.5 Environment and outdoor recreation

There was thought to be an opportunity to develop more walks and cycle ways in the area and to have more picnic spots, benches and viewpoints - and parking areas to help access the walks. There was also mention of the need for increased recycling places and the need for general environmental enhancement.

Quotes

- *More well signposted local circular walking routes (3-12 miles)*
- *An improved path network with maintained paths, gates and bridges and useable links to Pitlochry, Ballinluig, Dunkeld, Blair Atholl, Glen Isla, and Glen Tilt. This would enable this area to become a genuinely attractive destination for walking and mountain biking holidays which would benefit hotels, B&B's and shops etc.*
- *Footpaths marked more clearly and more accessible*
- *More places to sit by the river*
- *Mountain bike trails - well marked and maintained*
- *More outdoor activities like downhill cycle trails, cross country ski-ing trails - make more of the countryside to benefit visitors.*
- *Safe cycle routes up Strathardle off the A924 and A93.*
- *Red squirrel signs*
- *Wildflower planting on the verges.*
- *Try to stop creeping urbanisation i.e. street lighting and town style house building.*

4.6 Roads, traffic and community safety

The focus of comments was on speeding traffic on the A93 with a particular need to tackle the issue of motorbikes. Road condition was also a concern.

Quotes

- *Less traffic - motorbikes*
- *Speed controls to make it more suitable for tourists rather than speed junkies*
- *More police patrols in the Glen to sort out the motorbike racing problem*
- *A weight restriction on the A924 (and A93?) to prevent HGVs taking shortcuts through the area, thereby damaging the edges of the narrow road and being a major hazard to other road users.*
- *Lorries over a certain size required to use the A90 rather than the A93*
- *Better road repairs*
- *Better roads Bridge of Cally to Kirkmichael.*
- *Better ploughing of small roads in winter*
- *Something to make it safer coming out of the car park at Bridge of Cally Village Road (a convex mirror?)*

4.7 Housing and population

The greatest issue identified was for more affordable housing. There was a hope that people other than those on social security would take up the opportunity to rent houses on local estates.

Quotes

- *More affordable housing to provide opportunities for local people to live/stay and work in the area.*

- *More affordable housing and hopefully families would be able to live here and keep the local school, halls etc. alive.*
- *More young people working/living in the area as we are at great risk of becoming a giant retirement home.*
- *Improved housing, particularly insulation and alternative heating*
- *To use the grounds of the old school at Bridge of Cally for retirement housing - anyone who was in a tied house or work related house has to go to Blairgowrie.*

4.8 Nothing

There were some responses that indicated that there was nothing that could improve the area beyond what it was like now.

Quotes

- *I think it is pretty perfect as it is*

4.9 Improved access to local services

There is a general concern expressed by some about being at a distance from emergency health services and the suggestion that the community should establish a First Response service with defibrillator and associated training.

Quotes

- *More medical help e.g. for strokes, heart attacks*
- *First Response First Aiders with CPR/Defib training to get to casualties/patients before ambulance. Could save lives. A de-fib to be purchased.*
- *A resident district triage nurse*
- *Weekly surgery in Kirkmichael*
- *Tesco delivering up the Glen and avoid having to go shopping.*

4.10 Energy and heating

There is seen to be an opportunity to use local resources, like the local forests to develop alternative and renewable sources of fuel.

Quotes

- *Better use of local resources e.g. using local timber for heating.*
- *Common purpose to what we all need - e.g. warmth in winter - collective endeavour towards gathering firewood*
- *Alternative energy schemes, preferably reasonable in scale and providing local jobs.*

5. PRIORITIES

Smaller Scale Projects

5.1 The main priorities for small projects based on the number of times they were mentioned by respondents were:

- Tidying up of lay-bys
- Litter clean up and general tidy up of the area
- Cutting back road side verges
- Picnic sites and benches
- Signs for walks and wildlife
- Restricting large lorries from using small roads

5.2 Environment

The main small scale projects focused on ideas for environmental improvements

- Tidy up lay-bys x 6 (and consider having picnic tables installed at selected lay bys)
- Litter clean up and general tidy up of the area x 4
- Picnic sites and benches x 3 e.g. better places to sit by the river (Bridge of Cally)
- Signs x 3 (walks/wildlife/Kirkmichael car park before the village)
- Road Side verges x 3 e.g. cutting back vegetation at the sides of the roads.
- Kirkmichael Church x 2 - Tidy up the graveyard in Kirkmichael near the church and plant flowers/ get a preservation order placed on the old, derelict Kirk on Kirkmichael.
- Recycling bins x 2
- Restore petrol pump outside Session House in Kirkmichael as an interesting local feature
- Manage SSI sites e.g. between Straloch School and Straloch House gates (no to be mown cut) and orchid site on way to Pitlochry.
- Some seriously thought out landscaping of Middleton Caravan Park
- Turn off street lights in Bridge of Cally

5.3 Roads and Safety

- Large lorries x 3 e.g. get large lorries stopped from coming through/ speed restrictions on lorries
- Bridge of Cally Hall out onto A93 - make safer (convex mirror) x 2
- Move the 30mph speed signs on the south side of Ballintuim village to the caravan park
- More grit boxes around the hillier parts of the area
- Neighbourhood Watch for Bridge of Cally
- If the bank on the S.W side of the Netherton Bridge could be cut back just 4 - 6 feet farm deliveries/collections would be greatly eased.

5.4 Energy and Heating

- Community firewood scheme x 2 e.g. Community log scheme using F.C waste of which there are thousands of tons.
- Oil Buying Scheme

5.5 Economy and Tourism

- A free map of the local area showing local information such as hotels, B&Bs and shops
- More local produce available
- Continued support for local shops and services

5.6 Heritage

- History of the Strathardle Glen

5.7 Access to Services

- Develop childcare
- Persuade Tesco to deliver to us

5.8 Community

- More activities for young people
- A community engagement volunteer programme specifically focusing on support for older people on their own
- More community events
- Film shows in village halls
- Build rebound wall by Kirkmichael Primary School/Community All Weather Court.

Larger scale projects

5.9 The top priorities for large scale projects in terms of the number of times they were mentioned by respondents were:

- Improved bus services and transport links
- Improved broadband
- Renewable energy initiatives - focusing on wood fuel
- Village Hall improvements
- More affordable housing
- Traffic speed reduction

5.10 Community facilities

- Sports Hall/ Upgrade of Kirmichael and other village halls x 6
- Play Park x 2
- Folk Music x 2 (e.g. 'Mount Blair used to be renown for its famous musicians but seems to be few learning/playing opportunities now' 'improve access to live music with sessions/groups/bands/music lessons'.
- A Park
- Provision of allotments
- Declare a community interest in the Bannerfield in Kirkmichael
- Develop links between existing organisations
- Community trading/exchange of skills and goods programme
- Community buy out of Kinrdrogan or Straloch for community revenue generation

5.11 Economy and tourism

- More tenanted farms occupied
- Office space for rent
- Bunkhouse/hostel accommodation
- Pub/shop in Glenshee
- Public toilets discreetly built between Bridge of Cally and Spittal
- Tourism promotion

- Saw Mill
- Development and promotion of Blackwater Castle as a venue

5.12 Housing

- More affordable housing for local people x 5
- Retirement housing in old Bridge of Cally school x 2

5.13 Broadband

- Better broadband x 13

5.14 Environment

- Renovate the derelict church in Kirkmichael x 3
- Get Kindrogan Forest working for the local community x 2
- Purchase of woodlands for tourism and commercial use
- Downhill mountain bike run at Kindrogan
- A walkers bridge over the Arde opposite Straloch School
- Plant community orchard
- Improve water quality of the Arde with a view to improving wildlife and fishing stalks
- Get rid of street lights in Bridge of Cally
- Bridge of Cally School taken away and made into a Park.

5.15 Transport

- Improve bus services and transport links x 15
- Community Mini Bus or car sharing scheme

5.16 Energy and Heating and renewables and water supply

- Renewable energy initiatives x 8 e.g. Community woodland to maintain sustainable firewood supply.....and combine with improving energy efficiency of buildings.....biomass scheme run by us
- Sustainable use of local resources energy schemes for the community, water/wind turbines?
- Invest in our own community wind power and increase wealth for the community.
- The water should come from the top of the Glen and flow down the Glen instead of pumping it up the Glen.
- British Gas pipeline laid

5.17 Roads

- Slower speeds on A93 x 5
- Raise the standard of our roads x 2

5.18 Access to Services

- A local doctor or health centre maybe attached to the proposed new hall in Kirkmichael

6. VISION

A sample of quotes are used here to illustrate the main hopes that respondents identified for the future of the area.

People of all ages and differing backgrounds actually living full time and working in the area. This would require better housing for families and the less well off, a vibrant tourist industry bringing economic benefits and employment and good public/community transport services to enable people of all ages and abilities to live in and visit the area.

A thriving community where the sustainability of the local economy is secured by a thriving tourist trade, which attracts visitors to enjoy the improved access and links for walkers and cyclists

A thriving community with prosperous agricultural tourism, country sport, and skiing industries with more young working families stayed in the Glen.

A PLACE THAT HAS NOT CHANGED TOO MUCH

- *To be very similar to today.*
- *Relatively unspoiled with good community commitment to maintaining services and keeping excessive development at bay.*
- *As it is today..... Much as it is now.*
- *That it hasn't been subjected to further windfarms or pylons*

A PLACE WITH A HEALTHY LOCAL ECONOMY

- *A thriving community which caters well for both tourists and local residents*
- *An area on the tourist map in central Scotland which people come to instead of passing through.*
- *A well known walking/hiking centre*
- *Thriving, vibrant local economy diversifying into tourism, renewable energy but with a bedrock of more traditional industries such as agriculture, forestry and shooting.*
- *Small home industries thriving. Most day to day necessities provided in the glen*
- *Healthy culture of trade and exchange within the community*

SUSTAINABLE ENERGY AND INFRASTRUCTURE

- *High degree of resilience in terms of food and fuel.*
- *Locals benefiting from cheaper oil and logs*
- *Self sufficient in our own energy creation by the use of micro hydro systems through the glen.*
- *No more wind farms but householders being allowed to have little windmills at*

their properties

- *The area self sufficient in electrical and heating energy.*
- *Power and water to all households*
- *Superfast broadband for all*

COMMUNITY AND QUALITY OF LIFE

- *A good sports centre/village hall in Kirkmichael*
- *Plenty of facilities and lots of events - 'not a month passing without having at least 2 or 3 events to look forward to (nothing fancy or costly)*
- *Fully inclusive traditional regular and new events taking place throughout the year, appealing to a wide variety of the population*
- *Ideally all villages in Mount Blair should be talking to each other*
- *A community that cares about each other*
- *Reliable transport link to Blairgowrie and Pitlochry*
- *More community owned assets e.g. woodland, market/kitchen garden, minibus*

HOUSING AND POPULATION

- *More people living in area in existing property*
- *More young families running home based industry*
- *Young families moving back to the area*
- *Better housing with lower running costs leading to more permanent residents with interests in the area leading to more jobs.*

AN ATTRACTIVE AND BEAUTIFUL PLACE

- *A calm pleasant place to relax and enjoy the sheer beauty of this part of the county.*
- *Doing more to help the environment such as planting trees and setting aside land for wildflowers.*
- *A centre of tranquillity that welcomes visitors and reinvests in maintaining the natural beauty of the place*
- *Continuous protection and improvement of the environment/wildlife which is the main asset and attraction of the area.*

7. INTEREST IN COLLECTIVE OIL PURCHASE

7.1 Of the 104 surveys returned there were 85 that answered this supplementary question:

- Yes - (interested in oil buying scheme) 42
- No - (not interested in oil buying scheme) 43