



Banchory Community Action Plan

2023 Progress Report

The purpose of this report is to present a current view of local priorities and to suggest broad themes for inclusion in a new Community Action Plan (CAP) and Local Place Plan for Banchory.

The 2017 Banchory Community Action Plan was prepared by a steering group of local residents under the auspices of Banchory Community Council. It set out to try and resolve a series of issues which were seen as the most pressing by the people of Banchory. The issues were identified following a thorough and inclusive consultation programme. The full version of Banchory Community Action Plan 2017 can be [read here](#).

The plan presented a number of key findings which were categorised into 7 broad themes.

1. Education
2. Health and Wellbeing
3. The Local Economy (Business and the Town Centre/High Street)
4. Recreation
5. Communication
6. Housing and Domestic Services
7. Access for All

Banchory Community Council surveyed local people to review the current status of the key findings under each of these themes. We asked people to tell us whether the topics identified under the 7 themes were still important to them now and going into the future, and to tell us about any new priorities. We received 367 individual submissions (online and in-person) which form the basis of the information contained in this report.

We have used a traffic light system on Page 2 to indicate progress on each of the Key Findings.

Red – Little or no progress towards objective.

Amber – Some progress towards objective but obstacles remain.

Green – Objective achieved.

Each finding has been given a “priority” score. This is the percentage of responses which indicated that topic is “very important” or “fairly important” to the responders.

In addition we have provided a summary of public comments, some commentary outlining our current understanding of some of the major issues highlighted in the 2017 CAP, and emerging new themes which have become important to local people over recent years.

In our conclusion we present a broad vision for a future Banchory which might be used as the basis for a new Community Action Plan, Local Place Plan or other Community Development work.

Current status of 2017 Key Findings - Summary		Status	Priority	Summary
1. Education				
1.1	Replace Banchory Academy in the medium/long term		93%	No prospect in medium term
1.2	Upgrade Banchory Academy in the short-term		81%	Partial upgrade has been completed
1.3	Upgrade Banchory Primary School in the short term		75%	Minor upgrades have been completed
1.4	Consider adding capacity to Hill of Banchory Primary School in the short term		71%	No prospect in medium term
1.5	Improve adult education opportunities in the short/medium term		71%	Some community led improvements in place
2. Health and Wellbeing				
2.1	Replace Health Campus in short / medium term		83%	No prospect in short term
2.2	Review range of health services and staffing provided, including for nutrition advice		–	AHSCP Strategic Needs Assessment completed
2.3	Provide various outreach services including for mental health		87%	Community led project in development
3. The Local Economy (Business and the Town Centre/High Street)				
3.1	Action on Rent and Rates to make the High St more attractive and attract a better mix of shops		92%	Some improvements in place
3.2	Investigate the feasibility of developing plans for a new Cinema		42%	No community interest forthcoming
3.3	Upgrade the Town Hall		60%	Access and kitchen facilities upgraded
3.4	Develop a community hub		72%	Some community led improvements in place
3.5	Refurbish Bellfield Park		69%	Some community led improvements in place
3.6	Pop-up exhibitions		41%	No community interest forthcoming
3.7	Develop an events calendar		70%	Possible community project under discussion
3.8	Consideration of signage		–	Completed
3.9	Reintroduction of a coat of arms		–	Completed
4. Recreation				
4.1	Delivery of Banchory Sports Village		–	Completed
4.2	Better play parks		69%	Accessible play equipment project underway
4.3	Develop skateboarding/BMX park		–	Completed
4.4	Investigate feasibility of a 3G football pitch		70%	Community led project under discussion
4.5	Better facilities for teenagers, including a mountain bike trail network		89%	Bike trails complete, other projects unknown
5. Communication				
5.1	Improve broadband connection		92%	R100 project underway
5.2	Improve mobile phone reception		93%	No co-ordinated action group in place
5.3	Better communication of events and activities		89%	Community led project in discussion
5.4	Investigate a community hub		76%	Community led project in discussion
6. Housing and Domestic Services				
6.1	Protect the south bank of the river from development		82%	Current LDP protects area, future TBD
6.2	Achieve a better balance of housing provision, including affordable housing for young people and first time buyers		80%	Local Place Plan to address these issues
6.3	Action to improve waste services		74%	New household waste scheme in place
7. Access for All				
7.1	Improve pedestrian safety across the A93		69%	No co-ordinated action group in place
7.2	Explore moving the Taxi Rank from the High St		54%	No co-ordinated action group in place
7.3	Improve public transport		86%	No co-ordinated action group in place
7.4	Improve street lighting on footpaths		74%	No co-ordinated action group in place

Respondents' comments

During the review we gave respondents free reign to let us know what was important to them within the existing CAP categories, and to indicate what else they felt was missing or had changed over the years. A summary of comments is provided below.

Education	Health and wellbeing
<p>Buildings and Capacity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Need for a new Banchory Academy (overcrowded, outdated)• Need for a new Banchory Primary School (dilapidated, inadequate)• Concerns about capacity with new housing developments <p>School Facilities and Resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Improve library access and hours• Improve before and after school care options• Improve outdoor play facilities at both schools• Improve sports facilities at the Academy• More investment in technology and resources <p>Curriculum</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Wider range of subjects offered at senior high school• More support for students with additional needs• Improved sex education and personal safety education• More after-school extracurricular activities• Improved teacher training and support <p>Other Concerns</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Impact of school cuts on staffing and course availability• Bullying and student safety concerns• Better communication and planning for future needs <p>General</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Current schools are inadequate and cannot support a growing community• Need to prioritise new school buildings before approving more housing development	<p>Healthcare Facilities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Keep Glen O'Dee Hospital open• Build a new health centre (current facility is outdated and too small)• New health centre should be centrally located• Improve access to GPs and appointments• Mental health services for all ages• Need for more staff (doctors, nurses, etc.)• Consider a new integrated health campus <p>Other Healthcare Needs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• More support for new mothers• Promote healthy food choices• Improve exercise options for people with health conditions• Protect green spaces for mental and physical wellbeing <p>Mental Health</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• More mental health services for all ages• Mental health support in schools• Promote mental health through sports facilities and green spaces <p>Sports Facilities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Build an all-weather full-size football pitch• Improve access to sports facilities for all ages <p>General</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• New housing developments should not strain healthcare services• Need for better communication and planning for future needs

Local economy

Parking

- Re-introduce free parking, especially in Bellfield Car Park.
- Increase availability of short-term parking for shoppers.
- Improve signage for car parks.
- Consider electric car charging points.

High Street Businesses

- Reduce rent for shops to encourage new businesses.
- Fill empty shops with pop-up shops or short-term leases.
- Attract a wider variety of shops (e.g. larger stores)
- Encourage later opening hours to cater to full-time workers.
- Allow more outdoor seating for cafes and restaurants.
- Community events to bring people to the High Street.

Development

- Prioritise revitalising the High Street before building new out-of-town developments.
- Redevelop Bellfield Park and the old fairground area into a space that attracts visitors.
- Carefully consider the impact of the proposed retail park next to Tesco on existing businesses.

Other Ideas

- Improve walking and cycling paths.
- Develop a marquee attraction to draw tourists.
- Create a community hub that offers a variety of activities and services.
- Invest in green initiatives to make Banchory more sustainable.
- Conduct a study to understand what businesses need to thrive in Banchory.
- Explore options for attracting public sector jobs.

Overall sentiment

There is a strong desire to maintain a vibrant High Street with a variety of shops and services. Residents are concerned about the impact of out-of-town-centre developments and would like a clear plan to ensure the town centre remains vibrant and viable.

Recreation

Parks and Open Spaces

- Maintain and improve existing green spaces like King George V Playing Fields, Tillybrake, Silverbank, Alexander Park, and Burnett Park.
- Improve connections between green spaces with multi-user paths and signage.
- Develop an awareness of the natural environment around Banchory with information boards
- Improve access to the River Dee
- Protect Captain's Wood and Sunset Seat.
- Improve the play park at Bellfield with new, modern equipment for a wider range of ages.

Sports Facilities

- Multi-use, all-weather sports pitch (3G/4G) with floodlights, with priority given to an 11-a-side football pitch.
- Refurbish existing sports facilities at Tillybrake Park, including improved drainage and potentially additional grass pitches.
- Improve changing facilities at sports pitches.
- Create a community sports forum.
- Consider better use of the tennis courts near the bowling club for multipurpose sports.

Community Hub

- Refurbish the Town Hall as a community hub that can host events and activities.
- Build a multi-use sports pavilion in a central location that can be shared by various sports clubs.
- Develop a Banchory Town App to share local news, events, and information in case of emergencies.
- Consider a community newsletter or e-noticeboard to share information.

Other Ideas

- Organise more events in our parks.
- Provide picnic benches at the main public parks.
- Explore options for a dog park.
- Create a community garden.
- Organise activities for teenagers.
- Investigate options for a bike hire scheme.
- Provide outdoor gym equipment in parks.
- Create a bandstand or central focal point at Bellfield Park.
- Consider a nighttime economy.
- Improve accessibility for people with disabilities in parks and playgrounds.

Overall sentiment

The community values its green spaces and wants to see them protected and improved. There is a strong demand for better sports facilities, particularly an all-weather football pitch, a central hub for events, activities, and information sharing and a need for more activities for teenagers and older adults.

Communication

Improved communication of events

- Develop a digital presence to share local news, events, and information.
- Consider a printed community newsletter to share information about local groups, events, and developments.
- Improve noticeboards with better placement and potentially digital displays.
- Create an information hub(s).

Better accessibility of information

- Have a central point for sign-posting people to help/information.
- Address digital exclusion.
- Equity of access for those with different communications requirements.

Improved internet and phone connectivity

- Work with providers to improve phone signal and internet service throughout Banchory.
- Investigate the feasibility of community-run Wi-Fi hotspots (e.g., Scott Skinner Square).

Overall sentiment

The community desires a more comprehensive and accessible way to find out about events and activities, with a mix of digital and traditional communication methods is preferred to reach all demographics. Alongside this is the need to for improved internet and mobile phone connectivity across Banchory and projects which address digital exclusion.

Housing and domestic services

Balance and sustainability

- Need for a mix of housing types (bungalows, smaller houses) for different demographics (young families, elderly).
- Balancing development with preserving green spaces and wildlife habitats.
- Ensuring new developments have infrastructure (schools, healthcare) to support new residents.
- Prioritising energy-efficient housing and exploring renewable energy options.

Community and Affordability

- Prioritising affordable housing options (social rented housing, first-time buyer schemes).
- Ensuring new developments create a sense of community, not just housing units.
- Preserving the rural character of Banchory and avoiding urban sprawl.

Infrastructure and Planning

- Upgrading existing infrastructure (roads, schools, healthcare) before approving new developments.
- Considering the impact of development on traffic congestion.
- Ensuring proper waste management services (e.g., glass recycling, garden waste collection) and re-use/repurposing/repair services.
- More community involvement in the planning process.

Overall sentiment

There is a strong desire for thoughtful development that meets the needs of the community while preserving the character of Banchory. Residents prioritise creating a sustainable and inclusive community with a mix of housing options, green spaces, and improved infrastructure.

<p>Access for all</p> <p>Pedestrian safety and accessibility</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need for more pedestrian crossings, especially near schools and shops. • Improved street lighting on paths and walkways for better visibility at night. • Wider pavements to accommodate wheelchairs, prams, and bicycles. • Improved signage and information for navigating the town on foot. • Reduced speed limits in town center to improve safety for pedestrians. <p>Public transport</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved public transport network, including frequency, reliability, and affordability. • Better connections to surrounding communities (e.g., Torphins, Lumphanan, Durris, Drumoak). • Exploration of alternative options like reopening the Deeside Railway or car clubs. • Improved bus stops and shelters. <p>Parking</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finding a balance between parking availability for shoppers and residents, and discouraging excessive car use. • Exploring alternative parking options like park-and-ride facilities and reconfiguration of existing parking. • Addressing parking congestion caused by idling taxis. • Ensuring sufficient disabled parking bays. <p>Cycling</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creation of a safe and dedicated cycling network. • Encouragement of cycling as a viable mode of transport. <p>Other</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved accessibility for people with disabilities in shops and public spaces. • Better road maintenance to address potholes and uneven surfaces. <p><u>Overall sentiment</u></p> <p>Residents desire a more connected and accessible Banchory, with a focus on pedestrian safety, improved public transport options, and a shift towards more sustainable modes of transportation like cycling and walking. There are concerns about the current state of public transport, lack of connection between villages, and dominance of car use.</p>	<p>What else</p> <p>Green Space and Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Balancing development with green space preservation. • Prioritising development on non-woodland areas. • Reforestation efforts to mitigate deforestation. • Sustainable building practices (e.g., energy efficiency). <p>Climate Change and Resilience</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning for climate-related challenges (flooding, power outages). • Exploring renewable energy sources (hydrogen plants, solar, biomass). • Community preparedness for emergencies. <p>Social Equity and Affordability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limiting sprawl and maintaining a sense of community. • Investing in essential services (schools, healthcare) before approving new developments. • A mix of housing options (affordable housing, social housing) to cater to diverse needs. • Ensuring public transport meets the needs of all residents, including those without cars or with disabilities. • Supporting local businesses and a vibrant high street. • Activities and facilities for all ages and interests. <p><u>Overall sentiment</u></p> <p>Residents prioritise environmental sustainability alongside social equity in Banchory's development. They desire a balance between protecting green spaces and building a community with essential services and infrastructure. There is a strong focus on walkability, cycling, and public transport to reduce car dependence. Concerns include overcrowded schools, limited healthcare access, and a lack of activities for young people. There is a general sense that any new housing developments should be accompanied by investment in infrastructure and social services.</p>
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Future vision for Banchory

Five broad themes have been drawn from the responses and may be used as the basis for Local Place Planning and Community Action Planning. Our findings show that the community in Banchory want to live in a place which is

1. Healthy and happy

A place where children can grow up with confidence in their future, and where people can live long, happy and fulfilling lives.

2. Vibrant and prosperous

A place with a vibrant economy which supports local employment, attracts visitors and provides vital services to the community.

3. Active and creative

A place where people have access to an abundance of opportunities to participate in sport, recreation and cultural activities.

4. Safe and accessible

A place where people feel safe, supported and part of a community, and where local provision of essential services is of paramount importance.

5. Sustainable and resilient

A place where people have the strength and skills to deliver positive change in the community, confront the challenges of climate change and strive for equity.