

# Callander's Local Place Plan

2022-2032

FINAL DRAFT TEXT

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# Introduction

We are pleased to present Callander's Local Place Plan, which sets out our community's vision for the next ten years. It will run from 2022-2032 and will replace the 2016-2022 Callander Community Action Plan.

This Local Place Plan is submitted, jointly, by Callander Community Development Trust and Callander Community Council.

Evidence gathering, analysis and formulation of the Local Place Plan has been overseen by a steering group representing Callander Community Development Trust, Callander Community Council, Callander Enterprise, McLaren Leisure Centre, McLaren High School, Callander Primary School, Callander Youth Project and Callander Medical Centre.

The project was funded by Callander Community Development Trust's Hydro Fund and production costs were funded by the Braes of Doune Community Fund.

## Background

One of the key aims of the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 is to empower communities, allowing them meaningful input into the decisions made on their behalf by statutory authorities.

In Callander's case the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park Authority (LLTTNP) and Stirling Council have

responsibilities for different aspects of our lives. LLTTNP oversees visitor experience, conservation, land management, and planning. Stirling Council is responsible for most of our public services: education, social services, some social housing, sanitation, community liaison, economic development, non-trunk roads, traffic management and building standards. Because LLTTNP is our planning authority, we must submit Callander's Local Place Plan to them for approval rather than to Stirling Council.

Our Place Plan is the result of multiple public consultations held between July 2021 and June 2022. The COVID-19 pandemic prevented us from holding the open day meetings we are accustomed to. Instead, we provided a series of regularly updated statistical snapshots of the town on our dedicated website and drove participation online rather than in person.

The Place Plan sets out our vision of a connected, active, prosperous, resilient and cohesive community, and suggests how these aims can be achieved. Callander's residents have a strong sense of place and believe that the integrity of our natural and built environment should be protected without compromising the economic benefits accrued from living in a setting of outstanding natural beauty.

Importantly, this Place Plan belongs to the community. It was formulated

during a period of great uncertainty but with optimism that life would return to normal as the pandemic eased. Nobody could have foreseen the energy and food crises that have since arisen, and it is likely that local strategies will need to evolve to meet these challenges.

The Place Plan should, therefore, be seen as a foundation for closer engagement between the community, planners and our local authority: one that can be built on during its lifespan with Callander residents' local knowledge and best interests at its heart.

## Context

The Highland Boundary Fault runs just north of Callander from south-west to north-east, making the town a gateway between Lowland and Highland Scotland. Above the fault are the dramatic hills of the Trossachs, carved by glaciers from hard, metamorphic rocks. Below, is a gentler landscape of sedimentary rocks overlain by material that glaciers brought with them from the hills. The Teith catchment of burns, rivers and lochs are the veins that connect these still-evolving landscapes.

This is an area of outstanding natural beauty. Callander's western skyline is dominated by Ben Ledi, 6 km away on the other side of the Highland Boundary Fault, while the town centre abuts the forest and escarpment of Callander Crags. Glacial landform sequences, including eskers, kame terraces,

kettle holes and a terminal moraine, give the town its appealing, undulating topography. Wildlife abounds in a range of habitats, and far outnumbers the human population.

Callander's rich landscape is cherished by locals, and valued by science. The river Teith, which bisects the town, is a Special Area of Conservation; Callander Moraine and the Mollands are Geological Conservation Review sites; Leny Quarry, the Pass of Leny Flushes and the Mollands kettle hole are SSSIs.

The town's modern history began when Sir Walter Scott inspired English Romantics to brave the midges and almost incessant rain and see the Trossachs for themselves. Tourism has been the mainstay of the local economy ever since, providing employment and supporting trades and retailers. The economic impact of the recent shift from traditional hospitality to self-catering is not yet known.

Visitors are supported during the high season by our community-owned Visitor Information Centre which, like several local services, is staffed by volunteers.

Callander also acts as a hub for smaller neighbouring communities, providing primary and high school education; a medical practice, dental surgery and optician; a bank, post office and library; two small supermarkets and a leisure centre.



# Our place

## Population

This Local Place Plan covers the area falling under the remit of Callander Community Council. In 2017 the National Office of Statistics estimated that this area's population consisted of 3,543 people. There have since been a significant number of new social housing developments and so we have estimated that the population has increased to about 3,700.

## Housing

Since 2017, 77 new affordable homes have been built, 73 by Rural Stirling Housing Association and four by Stirling Council. Callander now has 355 affordable rented homes, representing around 23% of all residential property. Over the same period four new-build properties have been built and sold. Private rented accommodation remains in short supply.

Between 2017 and 2022 the average house price in Callander rose by 37% from £156,036 to £215,217. This increase is broadly in line with the trend across Scotland.

The most significant jump in property prices occurred between 2020-2022 as a result of the UK-wide population shift from cities to rural areas during the COVID-19 lockdowns.

## Education and childcare

### McLaren High School

The McLaren High School is the only high school in the National Park and has a catchment area of over 600 square miles. In its current prospectus the school roll is given at 645 pupils, up from 616 in 2018. The Scottish Government does not produce league tables, but in 2021 *The Times* ranked McLaren High School in the top 5% of Scottish secondary schools.

### Callander Primary School

Callander Primary School has reached capacity. In December 2020 Stirling Council secured funding to develop a new primary school in Callander. It is hoped that the creation of a pedestrian link between the east end of the town and the new campus will be an integral part of the new development. There have also been discussions around the provision of a lifelong/adult learning facility within the new school building.

### Early years

A new nursery facility, within the High School complex, provides extended year places along with places for eligible two-year-olds. There is currently no formal provision for children under the age of two but there are some local registered childminders.

McLaren Leisure Centre provides year-round soft play facilities for mothers with babies and young children up to eight years, and Kids' Camps for primary-aged children during school holidays.

## Health and care services

### GP surgery

Callander Medical Practice provides a full range of primary healthcare services along with supporting services, including psychiatry, physiotherapy, dermatology, wound management, chiropody, continence care, speech therapy, social worker support, alcohol counselling and end of life care.

### Nursing homes

Currently, Callander has one 20-bed private nursing home. Planning consent has recently been given for the development of a new 50-bed facility on Stirling Road.

### Sheltered housing

Trust Housing offers 38 managed units within the town.

## Community groups

There are 65 active groups in Callander. Some provide community and/or volunteer opportunities; others function as special interest groups. They encompass a wide range that includes mental and physical

wellbeing, lifelong learning, performing arts, heritage, the environment, sports and commerce. As in many small rural settlements, volunteer groups fill gaps left by cuts to local authority budgets. For example, Greener Callander works hard to enhance the appearance of our town; and the Craigard Club and Thursday Club provide nutritional and social support for our elderly residents.

Many of these groups access grants from Callander Community Hydro Fund which is administered by CCDT. The Braes of Doune Community Fund (formerly the Airtricity Fund) has recently opened for applications from local groups.

## Employment

The 2011 census reported that the largest employment sectors in Callander were Wholesale & Retail (14.8%) Health and Social Work (14%) and Accommodation and Food Services (12%). In 2020 it was estimated that unemployment had fallen but more working people were in receipt of in-work benefits. When the 2022 Census is published it is likely to reflect significant change.

## Our economy

### Social enterprise

In 2019 Callander was named Scotland's first Social Enterprise Place. Our social enterprise sector comprises of the McLaren Leisure Centre, Callander Youth

Project Trust, Callander Community Hydro and Creative in Callander.

McLaren Leisure Centre is a significant local employer, providing 30 jobs. Residents and people from neighbouring communities value it highly as a community resource. Its facilities include a swimming pool, fitness suite, games pitches, sports hall, indoor climbing wall, and fitness classes. It also offers meeting rooms, event spaces and a popular café.

Callander Youth Project offers a range of youth clubs and holiday programmes for P6-S3 children, SVQs in hospitality, modern apprenticeships, and employment support. Training programmes are available up to age 29. It also creates employment opportunities through its commercial operations as an events venue and visitor accommodation provider.

Callander Community Hydro offers funding for projects with clear community benefits. Since it started operating, it has generated over 10 million kilowatt-hours of clean energy and has committed £337,061 to local projects. Our Visitor Information Centre is entirely funded by Callander Community Development Trust via the Hydro Fund.

Creative in Callander is an artists' and makers' collective with retail premises on the Main Street.

## **Tourism**

Callander has been a popular visitor

destination since the 19th Century, and between 1858 and 1965 it was easily reached by rail. By the 1960s, particularly during the Glasgow Fair fortnight, demand for accommodation was so great that some hosts would let out their own rooms and camp in tents.

In the late 1990s demand for hotel and B&B accommodation began to wane. Currently, day trippers predominate. Callander does still host significant numbers of overnight visitors but most now favour self-catering accommodation. Since 2016, six B&Bs have closed. In their wake short-term holiday let businesses have sprung up, 54 of which operate from former residential properties.

There is a degree of tension between residents and visitors which is exacerbated by antisocial or thoughtless visitor behaviour. However, Callander does enjoy facilities that might not be available were it not for the influx of visitors.

## **The Main Street**

Shops in the Main Street are geared mostly to tourists: 60% are non-essential retail while only 6% provide the convenience services needed regularly by residents.

Since early 2022 some new businesses have opened, however the range of choice remains narrow for those wishing to shop locally. In our consultation, both High School students and residents felt this was a negative aspect of living here.

At the time of writing there is a retail unit vacancy rate of 7%. Some units have been vacant for over five years. The main issues deterring new tenants are high rental charges and poorly maintained properties.

Many businesses, particularly those in food services, have been forced to restrict opening hours because they cannot find serving or kitchen staff.

### **Trades**

There is a good range of skilled tradespeople in Callander. Many of them rent units at the Lagrannoch Industrial Estate or the Cambusmore Estate.

There is little evidence that additional light industrial units are required: there are vacant units at the Cambusmore Estate. However, it was felt that the Stirling Council-owned Lagrannoch units urgently needed upgrading.

### **Evening economy**

Compared to other tourist-focussed towns, Callander offers little evening entertainment. The Crown Hotel and The Old Rectory Inn both regularly feature live traditional music and the Crown also hosts cabaret performances. Callander's pubs offer food service but most restaurants are closed by 7.30 p.m.

In the Place Standard survey, the lack of restaurants was one of the most common complaints. Residents

and visitors would benefit from a more diverse evening economy.

## **Community engagement**

Community consultation for our Place Plan faced two major challenges: COVID-19 lockdowns prevented public meetings, and a series of disruptions within the community necessitated an especially rigorous approach to information gathering. It was decided that a stepped approach would provide us with a richer body of evidence than one open-ended survey.

### **Step 1. Focus groups**

Between June and November 2021 we held five small focus groups online. Each group of residents was selected on the basis of a common characteristic, such as being volunteers or newcomers. Their input deepened our understanding of residents' experience of living in the town.

### **Step 2. Information and Placecheck**

Aware of the impact of COVID-19 restrictions on Callander's informal information channels, we published a data-rich website to enable residents to keep up-to-date with local facts and figures. We also set up an interactive Placecheck map online on which people could comment on Callander's spaces and places.

### Step 3. High School survey

We conducted a survey of McLaren High School pupils which found that they most wanted:

- A safe hang out space to socialise
- Safer access to school for bikes and pedestrians
- A meaningful voice for young people in community decision making
- A wider range of after school activities and clubs
- Access to a football pitch out of school hours
- A wider range of shops on the Main Street
- A brighter and more welcoming Main Street
- Better transport links
- Prioritisation of the climate emergency
- Action on the town's litter problem.

### Step 4. Place Standard Survey

We produced a mailshot inviting locals to complete the Place Standard Survey, either online or on paper. Royal Mail delivered it to every residential address in Callander. Reminders were disseminated via the local community newspaper, social media and community networks to encourage participation. The results of

the survey are shown on the next page.

### Step 5. Community survey and ballot

Results from all these consultations were collated and analysed, and the findings informed the structure and composition of the final community survey.

It was a simple “Yes”, “No” or “No opinion” ballot on 35 propositions that we designed to accurately reflect community feedback gathered since June 2021.

We used the same methods to reach all residents in good time. Again, the survey could be completed online or on paper.

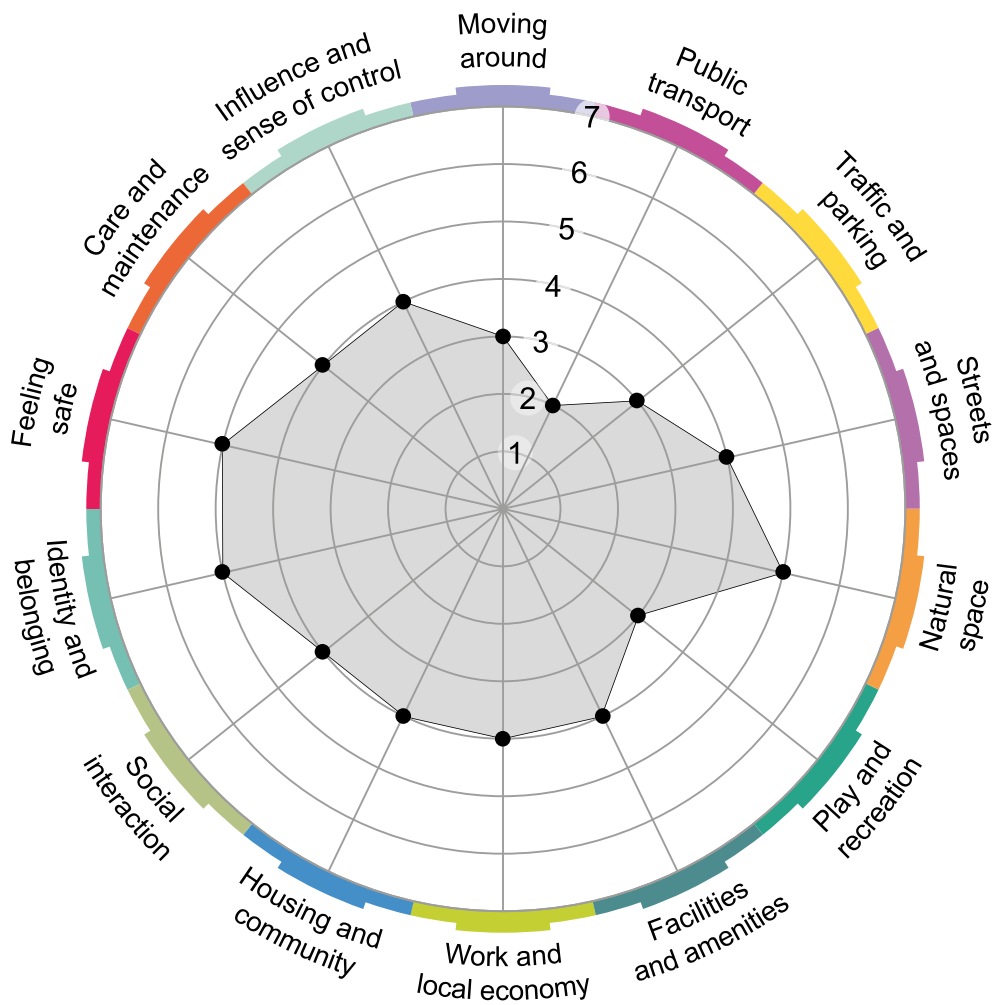
All 35 propositions received majority support and form the basis of Callander's Place Plan.

### Who took part?

- 175 pupils participated in the High School survey.
- 105 people made 273 separate comments on the Placecheck interactive map.
- Callander Enterprise polled their members for business responses.
- People from 238 Callander households made over 2,500 comments in the Place Standard Survey. This represents about 15% of all Callander households.
- 357 people from 352 Callander households participated in the final survey. This represents about 23% of all Callander households.

**Fig. 1. Results of the Callander Place Standard Survey 2022**

This chart summarises how local people rate 14 aspects of living in Callander. The scale for the chart runs from 0 (worst) to 7 (best).



# Community vision – the future

A clear vision for Callander's future emerged from our community consultations. Proposed solutions are outlined below.

Discussions have begun with LLTTNP and Stirling Council about the major capital projects proposed by the community. A structure has been agreed for signing off local authority decisions at the highest level, and there is a dedicated forum in Callander Community Partnership for local stakeholders.

Some of the proposals can be addressed immediately; some will take months or years to come to fruition. A separate delivery plan has been prepared that sets out an ideal timeline through the next decade.

This Place Plan sets out Callander's priorities and groups them into the following nine themes:

1. Well connected
2. Green and active
3. Community cohesion
4. Sustainable tourism
5. Vibrant Main Street
6. Flourishing families
7. Public services
8. Transition to Net Zero
9. Homes and planning.

Each theme identifies the existing issues and sets out the community's solution to the problems.

Although the intended focus of a Place Plan is hyper-local, many of the problems that exist in Callander are shared with our Trossachs neighbours. Some of the proposals in our Place Plan address these common problems by acknowledging Callander's role as a rural hub for education, retail, tourism, and transport.

## **1** Well connected

Getting from our homes to essential services or workplaces is difficult without a car. Ribbon housing development along the A84 and A81 has lengthened the main part of Callander to 2.6 km from east to west on the A84, and 3 km from the east end to the newest development in the south on the A81. The High School and nursery are in the south and the medical centre and vet are in the east. Those who live at the opposite end of town to where they need to go face a 70- to 90-minute round trip by foot.

There is only one pedestrian short cut: the foot bridge across the river that joins the Creep path. The path, however, is very steep, has steps, and is inaccessible to people with mobility issues or baby buggies. Those who cannot use the Creep must negotiate the narrow and perilous

pavement at the Bridgend roundabout.

Outwith the Main Street, many of our public footpaths and pavements are badly maintained. Access for people with disabilities and those with children in buggies is poor, painful and dangerous — and in places impossible — because pavement surfaces are uneven and gradients and cambers are too steep.<sup>1</sup> Residents, especially women, feel unsafe using footpaths after dark due to inadequate lighting beyond the main drag. There is also an urgent need for safe road crossings at the east end and at the High School.

Our public transport service is not fit for purpose. Buses are cold and dirty and are cancelled without warning. The existing timetable precludes evening study at Forth Valley College for those without access to a car. An evening out in one of our nearby cities will mean an expensive cab ride home. Connections with our neighbouring communities are practically non-existent.

Poor public transport impacts on anyone without access to a car: people who need to shop locally or who need regular care at the Medical Centre; families with nursery-

or primary-age children; people seeking further education or employment outwith the town; those who work in the town but live at Callander's extremities or in another settlement. Businesses feel that an improved public transport service would help to alleviate the current labour shortage. It would also support retailers who are struggling against online competitors.

Thanks to our connections to National Cycle Network Route 7, Callander is a haven for cyclists and we certainly benefit from the trade they bring to the town. However, poor signposting means that it is difficult to find other off-road routes. At present there is no off-road path along the A81, compelling cyclists and pedestrians to share the road with fast-moving traffic.

## Solutions

### i. Connecting the town

The construction of a pedestrian bridge over the Teith at the east end of town, along with fully accessible paths along the south of the river to the McLaren campus would allow Callander to become a 20-minute

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<sup>1</sup> In Callander some slopes at crossings far exceed the maximum gradient of 5% [1:20] considered safe for people with mobility disabilities. Furthermore, some cambers exceed the recommended maximum of 2.5% (1:40). For technical data see: i) Department of Transport (2021) *Inclusive Mobility. A Guide to Best Practice on Access to Pedestrian and Transport Infrastructure*. Section 4.3. Online at [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1044542/inclusive-mobility-a-guide-to-best-practice-on-access-to-pedestrian-and-transport-infrastructure.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1044542/inclusive-mobility-a-guide-to-best-practice-on-access-to-pedestrian-and-transport-infrastructure.pdf). ii) Kockelman, K. *et al.* (2002) "Sidewalk Cross-Slope Design: Analysis of Accessibility for Persons with Disabilities" in *Transportation Research Record*. 1818(1) 108-118. Online at <https://doi.org/10.3141/1818-17> and [https://www.cae.utexas.edu/prof/kockelman/public\\_html/TRB02Sidewalk.pdf](https://www.cae.utexas.edu/prof/kockelman/public_html/TRB02Sidewalk.pdf).



neighbourhood. Callander has been asking for a river crossing in this location since 2008 and the construction of the new Primary School at the campus offers an opportunity to access the necessary funds.

It is unacceptable that the Creep footpath is inaccessible to people with mobility disabilities, baby buggies and cycles. It is a core footpath and, as such, should be fully accessible. It needs to be upgraded to make it accessible to all.

## ii. Safety first

There should be a formal review of all pavements and paths in Callander, leading to a plan for improvements. It should assess lighting, gradients, cambers, kerbs, and surfaces; pedestrian access and road crossings at the east end of town; and a site for a safe crossing between the Mollands estate and the High School.

## iii. Community transport

Callander, Killin, Aberfoyle and Doune are investigating the feasibility of a community-run transport network connecting our settlements to one another and with Dunblane railway station. The envisaged low or zero carbon vehicles with bike storage facilities would provide car-free access to the Trossachs for cyclists and tourists. Optimised scheduling would facilitate local commuting within the network and connection to rail services to and from Glasgow, Edinburgh, Perth and Dundee.

## iv. Cycle paths

Existing cycle paths should be better signposted. They should be maintained and, where needed, upgraded. Better off-road connections should be created, and an off-road, all-access path should be created along the south bank of the Teith to the new cemetery, as an extension of the McLaren campus link.

## 2 Green and active

The deterioration of the Meadows has provoked considerable concern. Once a popular and attractive space offering picnic and play facilities, it has become overgrown, litter strewn and, to many residents, an eyesore.

Despite signs forbidding overnight residency in the Meadows car park, visitors in camper vans stay there anyway. Their proliferation and waste adds to the general sense of a lack of care.

Regenerating the Meadows will be a major project, requiring significant investment. However, there are funding streams available for large projects like this and the economic, environmental, and social benefits would potentially be greater than the cost of transformation.

The Callander Charrette produced a vision of a connected town with a sustainable level of new housing development, a continuous green

corridor along the south bank of the Teith, and ample provision of green spaces for recreation and community events. The report was published in 2012 and was the result of an intense period of community consultation. And yet, its findings have largely been overlooked in subsequent development or strategic plans.

In our consultations, residents made it clear that they wanted the Charrette to be revisited and that readers of our Place Plan should be reminded of some of its proposals.

While Callander's landscape is beautiful and open, in or near the town centre there is very little suitable land for play, team sports, recreation or large community gatherings. Where it is available, it has either been purchased for development or designated in a manner that does not reflect the Charrette, or it remains undesignated.

This Place Plan proposes the creation of an environmentally sustainable visitor attraction and play space in the centre of town, a community-owned sports field, and a community-owned events space. All would offer numerous benefits.

## Solutions

### i. Meadows masterplan

The community supports the commissioning of a design masterplan for the Meadows to create a sustainable and safe recreational space for residents and

visitors. The masterplan should consider provision of all-weather viewpoint(s) and shelters, new public lavatories, a play park, recreational field, natural ponds, an outdoor gym, and upgraded footpaths and picnic areas. Importantly, natural flood mitigation measures should take priority over car parking.

### ii. Green active spaces

Callander Thistle FC and Callander Cricket Club are in negotiations to purchase the field adjacent to the Camp Place playing field. The process is being hindered by LLTTNP having designated the field for economic development. LLTTNP should redesignate it as a playing field.

In relation to this Place Plan's proposal 1.i, above, the football and cricket clubs have confirmed that if they succeed in buying the land then they will be happy for the end of the field to be used as a site for the pedestrian bridge.

The Primary School playing field was gifted to the community by the McLaren Educational Trust on condition that it remained as a 'play field' in perpetuity. As well as being the school's playing field, it is widely used by residents for recreation.

The Charrette indicated that the land should form part of the green riverside park running along the south bank of the Teith. However, the current LLTTNP Development Plan does not afford the site any designation or protection. The

community supports the proposal that the land should be classified as Amenity Green Space and be protected from development.

### iii. A community field

Land should be allocated near to the McLaren Campus for outdoor community events, such as the Highland Games and live performances. McLaren Leisure Centre is committed to funding this initiative.

## 3 Community cohesion

For several years there has been turbulence at the heart of our community and residents want it to stop.

Discord stalls progress and gnaws at resilience. Better communication and meaningful collaboration between our local civic organisations are essential to our town's future.

Many unincorporated local groups depend on either Callander Community Council or Callander Community Development Trust to support their projects.

Newcomers to the town told us they would like to get more involved in community organisations. However, some did not know how to apply while others were deterred by public squabbles.

Most of these issues are for the whole community to solve. Callander needs change and the community needs new

voices, talents and energy to help bring it about. That said, change must be appropriate, proportionate and wanted. It must not damage those excellent qualities that draw people here and sustain so many residents' lives.

## Solutions

### i. Community hall

St Kessogs is Callander's landmark building but it has been unoccupied for four years. Residents have said that they want to see the building brought back to life as a community centre/town hall.

Reopening the building for community events would provide a central meeting and socialising space. The provision of a business hub would generate income towards the building's upkeep.

The St Kessogs Steering Group is working with Stirling Council to secure the estimated £2.1 million of funding needed to restore and upgrade the building. Additional funds would be needed to pay rent, employ staff and maintain the building.

If that level of funding cannot be met, Callander will need another site for our community centre. The current Primary School building would be a good alternative when the school moves to its new home.

## ii. Communications

Callander's civic groups should work together to create a central information point that disseminates accurate, up-to-date information in both physical and digital formats about events, meetings and proposals affecting the community.

## iii. Public consultations

Callander residents should be given a forum for participating in community decisions and should be consulted more frequently.

## iv. Welcoming new people and ideas

To recover from the present economic shocks and to build a stronger future, Callander must embrace change, though not at the expense of its character or environment. Callander's civic groups should encourage new members or board members in order to widen the scope of their expertise and broaden their demographics. For example, there should be a High School pupils' representative on Callander Community Council.

## v. Community resilience

Climate change is increasing the frequency and scale of severe weather events. Callander needs to establish a resilience plan and a designated place of safety. The building should be equipped, in advance, to provide heat, light, food and communications links.

## 4 Sustainable tourism

Tourism is a mixed blessing. It gives the town vibrancy, provides seasonal and permanent jobs, and helps to retain services such as the post office and bank. The downside is that many residents, especially those living close to attractions such as Loch Venachar and the Bracklinn Falls, must endure illegal and dangerous parking, littering, fouling of the landscape and anti-social behaviour from visitors.

There is a belief, here, that visitors are given priority over residents, and that visitor management policy is imposed on the community without due consideration for residential amenity.

Policy making seems reactive not proactive. There is no strategic vision for Callander's long term future as a place where people should stay for more than a few hours. We need a long-term strategic approach focussing on Callander's potential as a place people come to to stay, to appreciate, and respect. Central to this should be environmental sustainability and ecotourism.

Camper vans staying in Callander Meadows impact the visual amenity of the area. Litter bins are inundated and campers have been observed emptying their waste into the Teith. There is no enforcement of the ban on sleeping overnight in the Meadows and some camper vans stay for more than one night.

## Solutions

### i Prioritising amenities for residents

Stirling Council and the National Park should prioritise amenities for Callander residents over those for visitors. What is good for the community is good for tourism but the opposite is not necessarily so. This shift in emphasis should be recognised in all planning, tourist management and economic development policies. There should be meaningful consultation with the whole community before any major new visitor strategies or developments are considered.

### ii. Callander's future as a tourist destination

Tourism policy for Callander should refocus on our unique geological setting and our heritage, and on promoting active enjoyment of our natural environment. Upgrading the Meadows, footpaths and cycle routes will support this aim.

### iii. Camper vans

Stirling Council and LLTTNP should work more constructively with community organisations to establish a serviced camper van facility within the town, away from Callander Meadows.

## 5 A vibrant Main Street

Few things irritate Callander residents more than our Main Street. A listed building being allowed to fall into dereliction without intervention, the empty shops, the lack of retail choice, the proliferation of coffee shops, traffic congestion ... the list goes on. As previously highlighted, Callander offers little for residents and tourists in the evening. As one resident put it, 'Callander is a ghost town after 5.30.'

The community cannot control who opens a shop or restaurant, or what they chose to sell. However, businesses have failed and their premises have lain unoccupied, some of them for years. Our consultation received some complaints about the number of charity shops but it might be argued that premises occupied by charity shops are preferable to empty store fronts.

The Charrette set out a vision of an attractive, pedestrian friendly town centre and noted that the "Main Street is badly in need of a significant upgrade to improve the quality of the environment for visitors and the local community alike. This is critical for the future wellbeing of local businesses and the town as a whole. Successful placemaking and a successful trading environment are closely interlinked." (Callander Charrette, part 3, page 9.)

Good places draw people, people draw more people, and more people will drive a successful Main Street. Little has been done to address the

recommendations made in the Charrette since the report was published, in 2012.

## Solutions

### i. Respect the Charrette

The Main Street needs to be made more attractive as well as pedestrian and wheelchair friendly. Transport Scotland and Stirling Council's Transport Development Team should look again at the Charrette and work towards fulfilling the proposals set out in this report.

### ii. Signage

Signage in and around the Main Street must be improved, reducing visual clutter by combining information into fewer signs and providing clear directions to paths, local attractions and facilities.

### iii. Innovate to regenerate

A Main Street regeneration group should be established to identify innovative uses for empty shops and encourage new, start-up traders onto the Main Street to diversify the products and services available.

### iv. Parking and traffic

Stirling Council should update their traffic and parking management plans. There should be a specific focus on the Main Street area (A84). Updated plans should include a formal study to identify which types

of parking restrictions would best serve Callander – the people who live and work here, local services, businesses, and visitors.

Consideration should also be given to the following issues:

- a review of 20 mph speed restrictions
- a review of traffic management in Bridgend
- better enforcement for parking and speeding violations in the town and specifically along the A81, A84 and Invertrossachs Road
- better signs (Speed Indication Devices) to make drivers aware of the speed at which they are travelling.

## **6 Flourishing families**

Attracting young families to the town is vital. A new primary school building is planned, and *The Times* rated McLaren High School in the top 5% of all Scottish secondary schools. Because we have excellent schools, more young families are moving to Callander. Their fresh ideas and skill sets will help to build a stronger, more cohesive, community.

Retaining young families should be a priority for Callander. We can encourage this by expanding early years childcare for children under two years, providing social support for young adults through their teens, and offering all residents the chance to gain employment, new skills, and meaningful qualifications.

If we want to encourage new, innovative, businesses to move into Callander, we need a workforce with the right qualifications and skills. Forth Valley College is keen to establish an outpost in Callander if the right facilities are available. This would be a significant resource for Callander and our neighbouring communities.

## **Solutions**

### **i. Young people's space**

Our young people need a safe place to socialise out of school hours. It should also provide access to confidential support and counselling services. Finding and securing the right space will take time but there

are some inspiring examples of structured and unstructured young people's spaces across Scotland to learn from, and funding is available from multiple sources.

### **ii. Upskilling and lifelong learning**

Callander and the surrounding villages have ambitions to equip our workforce with the twenty-first century skills needed to boost our local economies. The new primary school building should include facilities that allow Callander to become a rural centre for lifelong learning. Forth Valley College and other SVQ-accredited providers could offer skills training and courses for meaningful qualifications to people of all ages.

### **iii. Early years childcare**

Stirling Council, the National Park and community groups should encourage and support new businesses offering childcare facilities for children in Callander aged between six months and five years, provided those businesses have the necessary accreditation.



## **7** Public services

Crime rates in Callander have risen significantly. Data for 2016-2020 show that crime rose by an average of 25% each year: a total increase of 96% in just four years. Callander is the only area in the National Park where crime rates have increased.

Rural communities like Callander have shouldered the brunt of cuts in public service budgets. Were it not for our local volunteer groups organising litter picks, woodland maintenance and planting baskets and floral displays this would be a far shabbier town. Dog fouling and litter remain two of the community's major concerns due to the associated health risks and because they impact negatively on our landscape and on visitors' perceptions of the town.

The recent changes to bin collections mean that residents are having to use the recycling centre at Lagrannoch more frequently. Ours is the only household waste recycling centre within the National Park and neighbouring communities come here to avoid going all the way to Stirling. The Callander facility only opens for a total of 16 hours per week and last entry on weekdays is at 7.30 p.m. This makes it hard for people who commute long distances for work to access recycling services.

First impressions of Callander on the eastern approach have become spoiled by the poor external appearance of the social housing at the entrance to the town. This neglect continues along the Stirling Road.

The sight of poorly maintained houses is depressing and unsettling to visitors.

There is a sense that both of our statutory authorities are failing to listen to the residents and civic groups in the town. Where there is consultation, it is either as a response to local outcry (for example the flood wall scheme) or is cursory and poorly publicised. Worse still, feedback from public consultations has been ignored.

## **Solutions**

### **i. Crime and policing**

Police Scotland should produce and implement an action plan to combat rising crime in Callander, immediately. Attempts to underplay the problem have led to people taking action into their own hands and this must be discouraged. To help community relations there should be a better flow of information between the Police, residents and businesses.

### **ii. Community empowerment**

The Scottish Government's Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 was designed to build and sustain community relationships. It set standards for public engagement, and both our statutory authorities have a duty to adhere to and implement them.



### iii. Bins and hygiene

Stirling Council should provide more litter bins along our paths and in recreational spaces, and empty them more often. Stirling Council and LLTTNP should provide practical support for community groups in raising public awareness of responsible dog ownership.

### iv. Better maintenance of social housing

Social housing landlords should contribute to Callander's sense of place by maintaining the external appearance of their properties.

### v. Recycling centre

If the current schedule for bin collections is to continue, extended weekday opening hours at our recycling centre should be considered.

## 8 Transition to Net Zero

Since Callander and Climate Change published their report in 2011 our community has embraced the challenges of environmental sustainability. The report had immediate positive impacts and work has since been undertaken by schools, social enterprises, and community groups to keep the initiative alive.

In 2021 Callander held a successful COP26 fringe fortnight, and McLaren High School sent student representatives to the COP26 summit in Glasgow on behalf of the National Park.

Earlier this year Callander Woodland Group was established to help maintain and improve Coilhallan Woods.

The urgent need to address the climate emergency and secure a just transition to net zero spurred Callander Community Development Trust to secure funding to revisit the 2011 report and re-evaluate its findings. There is still much to be done locally and smaller, neighbouring, communities appear to be a few steps ahead of us.

## Solutions

### i. Community allotments

The 2011 report highlighted the local demand for allotments but so far no suitable plot has been found. In their next Local Development

Plan LLTTNP should allocate two hectares of land for community allotments. The newly formed Callander Allotment Development Group should lead efforts to secure this aim.

## ii. Circular economy

Callander's community groups should work together, and with neighbouring communities, to initiate and deliver projects that support Zero Waste Scotland's aims to design waste out of how we live. Callander should, where possible, adopt circular economy principles to reduce waste in business, the built environment, food systems, energy, and day-to-day life. The community should also create a local network through which products can be rented or shared and items can be repaired.

## iii. Woodlands

There should be continued support for Callander Woodland Group both from our civic groups and, where necessary, from our statutory authorities.

## 9 Homes and planning

LLTTNP identifies Callander as a 'key placemaking priority site'. The town can provide access to key public services and has some infrastructure capacity.

LLTTNP's 2016-2021 Local Development Plan (LDP) and their Callander South Masterplan Framework allocated land for up to 148 houses with provision for some infill site development. It proposed a major greenfield site development of 90 homes at Claish Farm and envisaged a further 100 longer-term.

Since the LDP came into force, 77 affordable rented homes have been built and occupied: 50 at Claish Farm, 23 at Station Road, and four at Pearl Street. Another new-build development of four flats is privately owned.

The LDP also marked Claish Farm for economic development, a playing field and visitor experience. For long-term visitor experience development it highlighted Claish Farm, again, along with Gart Farm.

The LDP proposed retail and business development in the Station Road Car Park alongside the site's existing parking and transport functions.

A revision of the Callander South Masterplan Framework was due in March 2022 but was not approved by the time the final community consultation closed. In August 2022 advance notice was given of major residential development on the

Mollands Farm, another greenfield site.

Callander has a profound sense of place. Its vernacular architecture contributes significantly to our town's attraction to residents as well as tourists.

The 'identikit' nature of new housing developments does not reflect any elements of the local vernacular. Planners have permitted elevated rooflines on new-build properties that dwarf nearby traditional houses.

New development has not addressed the needs of people living with disability or older residents seeking to downsize.

Social housing constitutes 23% of all homes in Callander, and the town now has the largest social housing provision in the National Park. Despite the ratio of social to private housing, local people and families struggle to find affordable housing in the town. This problem has been exacerbated by increases in property prices over the past two years and by homes being turned into holiday lets.

In the past decade the climate emergency has manifested in Callander as more frequent flooding events and warmer, wetter, winters. LLTTNP policies do not set clear standards around climate-friendly housing design, they only ask that developers 'consider incorporating zero carbon technology into your building designs'. It is hoped that LLTTNP will revise their position on environmentally

sustainable housing development ahead of guidelines in the draft NPF4.

## Solutions

### i. Affordable homes for Callander residents

Planning and development policy should require housing developers and social landlords to provide a mix of low-cost starter homes, rent-to-buy, and/or shared ownership properties. This policy has local precedent. In 2000, 15 low-cost private homes were built in Callander for those on the housing waiting list.

### ii. A wider range of new homes

New developments of multiple homes in Callander should provide a range of options to cater for the various stages in people's lives. It should address the needs of people who are single, new families needing starter homes, larger families, those who need to downsize, and people with disabilities who need accessible homes with room for equipment and carers.

### iii. Sense of place

New-build development in Callander should be designed with future adaptability, climate change and resource efficiency in mind. Any new-build property should respect our topography, views, and skylines as well as the wider landscape. Design and density should complement its surroundings in

terms of height, scale, materials, and finishes.

#### **iv. Protecting our natural assets**

There should be no new residential or commercial development or quarrying on, or close to, Callander's unique geological features (including the eskers and moraine), the SACs, GCRs or SSSIs, or land identified as being at risk in SEPAs 2080 Flood Future maps.

#### **v. Holiday lets**

All new-build private homes should be subject to a burden stipulating that they cannot be used as holiday or short-let accommodation for at least ten years after completion.