



MILNGAVIE COMMUNITY COUNCIL

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Response to consultation on EAST DUNBARTONSHIRE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY 2017-20

Milngavie Community Council is grateful for the opportunity to contribute to the Economic Development Strategy for East Dunbartonshire. We are generally happy with the document, but would like to comment on some specific action points as follows:

Priority 1: Town Centres

Ref 5. The parking scheme appears to be working in that there are now spaces available in Milngavie precinct for shoppers. The scheme needs to be extended to the Town Hall and Lillie Art Gallery car parks as these are now filled with commuters during the working day and so are not available for their intended purpose.

However, it is very important that there should be parking provision for those who wish to commute by train. Many of them live in the Stirlingshire villages to the north of Milngavie or in parts of Milngavie a long way from the centre. A rail halt at the Allander, with extensive park and ride facilities, was a priority in the early days of EDC and was a key reason for releasing greenbelt at Kilmardinny, but the Council no longer appears to be making an effort to achieve this. It should continue to be a top priority for the area.

Ref 7. In our response to the Milngavie Town Centre Strategy consultation, MCC provided a range of ideas which would make the centre more attractive and accessible and which would help boost the area's economy. See <http://milngavie.org/submissions.html>

We noted that several long-distance walks, including the world famous West Highland Way, start or end in the precinct. Yet for walkers there is little provision in terms of basic facilities such as toilets, information on the attractions of the area and its heritage (both natural and historic), basic equipment that might be required by walkers and souvenirs. There is a clear need for a Walking Centre, or Visitor Centre, in or near Milngavie Town Centre.

Ref 9. See Ref 7 above. In particular, we commented on the lack of signposting to the Milngavie Reservoirs, which is only 10 minutes' walk from the town centre. Milngavie is fortunate in being at the end of a railway line, so clear directions to the main attractions should be located here, or at an information centre nearby.

Ref 10. It is not clear whether this action point refers to open spaces or to spaces in public buildings.

Priority 2: Business support and growth.

We generally agree with the action points in this section.

Having analysed the results of audits, EDC should proactively encourage specific businesses to settle at particular locations, building on the success of the earlier Bearsden and Milngavie District Council which brought Boots and M&S into Milngavie precinct following its desertion after Tesco Stores opened on the other side of Woodburn Way.

We have concerns regarding the announcement by Homebase that their Milngavie store will close in November. This is a valued store which fills a clear need, and it is hoped that a similar store will take its place.

Homebase is apparently a profitable store and we understand that the reason it is closing is because the landowners are now asking much more for the rent. It is rumoured that they would like to sell the land for housing, which would give a higher return. However, since the time of the B&M District Council, this location has been designated for bulky goods retail and was also approved for this by the reporter who allowed the

Kilmardinny appeal. Moreover, EDC's most recent retail capacity assessment demonstrates a continuing need for good quality comparison goods. Therefore, the designation should be retained and EDC should proactively encourage a bulky goods retailer to open at the site.

Priority 3: Increasing tourism

We generally agree with the action points in this section, but there are some significant omissions:

Ref 32. Include the Mugdock and Craigmaddie Reservoirs (also called the Milngavie Reservoirs or Waterworks), which are of part of the Loch Katrine water supply scheme. This was a ground-breaking, internationally significant Victorian scheme which is now in its entirety Category A listed. It also links East Dunbartonshire with Glasgow and with authorities to the north.

Ref 33. Include an action point to promote the development of a Heritage Centre in Milngavie. This could also serve the surrounding area and Bearsden.

MCC formed a subgroup in 2009 to seek a permanent venue for the display of historic artefacts and the interpretation of the area's heritage. Milngavie Heritage Centre is now an independent, fully-constituted community group which mounts exhibitions twice a year on different themes and runs a series of lectures. However, there is still no permanent space for displaying the historic material that has been collected and the interpretation banners that have been professionally produced. A heritage centre or museum that is open throughout the year would benefit BOTH the local community, providing a sense of identity, AND would boost the economy as a tourist attraction. It could also provide information on the heritage features seen in the many walks around Milngavie.

With regard to Ref 3, right up until 1999 there was a museum at the Waterworks. This was removed for display at an exhibition in Glasgow but was never returned.

Ref 41. Again, this should include the Milngavie Reservoirs, which receives more visitors than all the other attractions apart from Mugdock Country Park. Note that EDC's recently published Green Network Strategy has an Action to "Work with the local community and Scottish Water to help implement actions as set out in the Milngavie Reservoirs Conservation and Recreation Management Plan."

Upgrading of the paths is badly needed, as is restoring the A listed engineering structures that are being left to rot.

Ref 42. Include exploring the idea of a WALKING FESTIVAL based in Milngavie in collaboration with the BID and Ramblers groups, perhaps initially as part of the very successful Milngavie Week 2017. A Winter Walking Weekend might fill a gap in the calendar and could include evening music and ceilidh events.

Priority 4. Sustainable development

Ref 46. This action point is now partly outdated. The recently upgraded skatepark at Lennox Park is a huge success and is attracting many children from outwith Milngavie.

With regard to provision of a café: a Fairtrade Cafe recently opened in Gavin's Mill at north west entrance to park and should be supported. This community enterprise at the historic mill should itself become a tourist attraction. Upgrading the toilet block for its original use would greatly increase the amenity and use of the park for recreation, especially by young children and the many elderly people who live in flats near the town centre.

Finally, for increasing sustainability in the Milngavie and Bearsden area the most effective development would be a RAIL HALT at the Allander, with a substantial park and ride facility. This could have a large impact by decreasing the number of car journeys, which are contributing to pollution and climate change. It would also reduce the congestion caused by parking in roads near stations and shops, thus increasing the attractiveness of these places, with benefits for the economy.