



Port Elphinstone Community Action Plan

July 2015

“Moving into Port Elphinstone as a new bride back in 1957, we moved into an active wee community that had all we needed on our doorstep. A butcher, a baker, a paper shoppy, a post office and Jimmy Thomson’s shop - the mannie who sold everything from an anchor to a sewing needle - and if he didn’t have it, he could get it!

The Fountain dress shop used to be a corner shop, with a hairdresser in the back. There was so much going on in the Port back then.

We knew all of our neighbours! From then until now, there are about a half dozen of the people who were here when we moved in still staying here. It felt friendlier

back then. It’s a shame to not know many of your neighbours anymore.

The Post Office was the first to go, a great loss to our community, which took people away to get essential services like collecting a pension. JG Ross moving up to Highclere was a huge loss. Thankfully the wee paper shoppy provides a lifeline for many of us, selling the essentials to avoid many a trip into Inverurie or along to Kintore.

The school is still the heart of the Port, with most people having a link to the school, past or present.

Sometimes, the Port feels like the forgotten bit - we are not on all the bus timetables anymore!

Saying all of that, I would not choose to stay anywhere else! There are lots of things to do, and still has a great core of an active community - from the WRI who worked hard to get the light controlled pedestrian crossing, with clubs and activities for everyone, ranging from the Port Toddlers, through exercise groups, Buddhist meditation, craft classes to the Lunch club.

Being involved with the action plan is a chance to help make the Port more lively again, and make it a better place to stay!”

Sheila Rae,
Port Elphinstone resident.



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Map Scale 1:5266

Origins and Development

Port Elphinstone is a small community on the south banks of the River Don with a population of approximately 2,000. The vast majority of residents fall within the 16 - 64 age range, but with around 200 being under 16, and a similar number being in the 64+ age group. It is also bordered by the A96.

The Paper Mill at Port Elphinstone can be traced back to the direct ancestors of the Tait family in around 1650, when they built a dam to provide power for their Meal Mill. The paper mill was built in 1852. Over the years there have been ownership changes and also major industrialisation changes that allowed the mill to flourish, but sadly after a decline in profitability, the last reel of paper came off on 26th March 2009.

Port Elphinstone was initially founded because of the canal, which linked to Aberdeen Harbour in 1806, although the Port and Inverurie are mentioned in the towns earliest charter dated 1558. The houses were built to allow people to move to where the work was. A number of mills were built near the canal - meal, bone and grain, none of which are still there today. The canal was closed in 1854 and the railway followed the line of the canal quite closely but had taken over the trade the canal relied on.

The first school was built by the Earl of Kintore in 1832, although it sadly burnt to the ground in 1870, but was rebuilt and reoccupied within 6 months, with some of this forming part of the school today. The school was added to over the years with the last addition to the main building being in 1968.

The “Port Priorities” Project

The Local Community Planning Group for the Garioch Area of Aberdeenshire identified one of its priorities for 2014-15 as:

“To work with the community of Port Elphinstone to identify the needs and aspirations of the community through a community-wide engagement”

The main partners identified in taking this forward were The Garioch Partnership, which has the lead role in the development of community action plans, and Aberdeenshire Voluntary Action.

To kick off the process The Garioch Partnership rented an office that had become available in Port Elphinstone Community House (PECH) for a period of six months. Staff from both organisations then set up a series of meetings with local user groups in the Community House and held discussions with them on what they liked about living in Port Elphinstone, what could be better and what changes they might like to see.



An old photo of Port Elphinstone Public School.



Port Elphinstone School as it is today.



Port Elphinstone sign.



Local children getting involved.

One of the locals prompted the project title of “Port Priorities” A Facebook page for the consultation was also set up and this, plus contacts for the consultation, was publicised in public places in Port Elphinstone.

Following the discussions with local groups the two organisations ran a stall at the Port Elphinstone School Parent Council coffee morning on Saturday 29th November 2014, where the same three questions were asked, a range of ideas suggestions and comments were forthcoming.

The feedback from both the user groups and the coffee morning consultation were pulled together and started to give a picture of common issues and priorities for development in the area. These became the basis of a public consultation held at Port Elphinstone School on Saturday 14th March 2015.

Prior to this consultation every house in Port Elphinstone was leafleted to make sure that everyone in the area was aware of both the consultation and the background to the public meeting. The public meeting also identified people interested in being involved in taking the priority actions forward.

The Community Action Plan that follows is the result of the above consultation processes.

What We Heard ...

Throughout the process, the feedback from everyone was how much they love the Port, and what a good place it is to stay, with many people having been there for a long time.

There was a very strong feeling that the school was very much the heart of the community, and some concerns that if the Crichtiebank development goes ahead, and the school moves in the future that it will remove the focal point for the area.

Specific Actions

Within the consultation, we spoke to numerous groups, people and went to some of the school events. The specific actions come from all of these groups, and then were prioritised at an event at the school.



Residents at Port Pancakes consultation event.

Crime and Community Safety:

Road Safety Issues

Traffic speed in several locations throughout the village was identified as a problem in the consultation, in particular the slip road from the A96 into the village just past the BP station on Elphinstone Road. The community would like to explore measures to reduce traffic speed and to improve safety for pedestrians. Congestion is an issue at the school for drop off and pick up. The timings on the pedestrian crossing was also brought up, and the fact that many drivers do not pay heed to the zebra crossing on Elphinstone Road.

The Elphinstone Road, Kemnay Road, and Ladeside Road crossing was identified as a major “hot spot” for traffic issues, especially during peak time traffic.

Community Safety Issues

On the whole, people felt the Port is a very safe area to stay in, and feel safe here.

Environment:

Parks And Walks

People felt very lucky to have the play parks and local walks that are easily accessible. There was a feeling that there should be more information available on the walks so more people use them.

Dog Fouling

As in every area, dog fouling was identified as an issue. People wanted to know where the dog bins were. It was also discussed that there needed to be a raised awareness that it is ok to put bagged dog mess into normal refuse bins, but there was also the acknowledgment that responsible dog owners already clear up, and it is the ones who don't who are the hardest to tackle.

Recycling And Waste

A need for more bins was identified for the canal area, as this would possibly help reduce littering.

The Davidson Park recycling station was identified as often being messy, with people leaving things outside the bins when they are full.

People also identified garden waste as an issue as not everyone has transport to get along to the tip with it, so it often ends up in normal waste bins for collection.

There were concerns with the smaller food bins and how easily they blow away and fears over damage and replacements.



Ladeside crossing.



Canal walk.



Recycling facilities.



Elphinstone Road bus stop.

Health And Wellbeing:

Health Information

Within the consultation, people were happy that the Inverurie Medical Practice would be moving to the hospital site as this would make it easier to access health services.

Access To Healthy, Affordable Food

There is a real lack of shops in Port Elphinstone, so access to affordable, fresh and healthy food is limited without having to travel into Inverurie.



Bus and pedestrian crossing.



Canal walk.

Transport:

Public Transport

There was a feeling of disappointment that the bus company had removed the Port from their timetable, so whilst still stopping, and being a well-used busy service from the Port in both directions to Aberdeen and into Inverurie, it no longer features as a timed stop on the timetables.

Cycle And Walking Routes

There was a request for information boards and more to be made of the walks available, especially as there have been walking groups set up locally.

Housing:

Appropriate Housing

The comments made about housing were that there should be more appropriate housing provided for elderly people and young people (mixed tenure). It was also suggested that the community's voice should be heard more by developers. It was also felt that larger, but affordable housing was required as many families have to move out of the area if they outgrow their homes.

Economic development:

The closing of the JG Ross shop that was demolished to build the flats has been an issue, leaving people having to travel some distance to buy basic shopping. The paper shop was highly praised for staying open, but there is a real need for something local. A local working ATM (bank machine) was flagged as important.



Port housing styles.



Port housing styles.



Port paper shop.



Davidson Field Park.



Ladeside/Kemnay road junction.



Port art.

Leisure

Parks And Pitches

There were requests for benches and picnic tables to be placed in the parks to attract families. A lot of families came forward asking for improvements at Crichtie Park to attract children to use it more. There were also requests for some safe area to use for roller blades and scooters somewhere round Crichtie Park as well, and for larger pieces of equipment to attract older children to play.

Davidson Park is well used but does suffer from a lack of care at times, with people often leaving their rubbish behind them, particularly after football as empty plastic drinks bottles are in evidence then.

Community:

School

Port Elphinstone School was very much the heart of the community for the vast majority of people we spoke to, even those with no children in attendance. People wanted to see the school used more in the evenings offering a social and educational venue for community groups.

There were some concerns over the future of the school if the new development goes ahead at Crichtie village over the A96, and the impact that would have on the school both in terms of viability and numbers, or if it would close and children would have to travel further to school.

Parking was an issue around the school, particularly at peak school times when children are being dropped and collected from school. The parking and roads situation is a concern as the narrow roads were not designed for the volume of traffic now present at these times.

Community Activities

People wanted more available locally, from a range of social opportunities to informal and more formal learning, delivered within the Port Elphinstone Community House or at the school.

Out Of School Activities

A need for a youth club for secondary school was identified as people felt there was a lack of things for that age of children to do locally.

Improved Communication

A community notice board was requested numerous times, and the Parent Council does have one but is struggling to get it sited and placed.

Development OfThe PECH House

Port Elphinstone Community House was highly commended and many said what a great resource it was, but people were saying they were unsure what was currently on offer there, and what more it could be used for. Some people were looking for opportunities to attend classes and would love them to be provided locally.

Essential Services

Services like The Port Elphinstone Lunch club were identified as part of the rich tapestry that keeps people supported to stay in Port Elphinstone for as long as possible within their own homes.

The lunch club runs once per week during school term time, as lunch is provided via the school dinners service, at a small cost, for the members of the club. Ages range from retirement up to 100+ and the club aims to keep people as active members of their community.



Port Elphinstone Community House sign.

How will this be taken forward?					By When?
Action	Independent Community Group/Private Initiative	Partnership	Outside Agencies		
Improvements for local play parks & upgrading play equipment	Sharon Strachan (bench) at Crichtie Park	PECH/Local community	Aberdeenshire Council		Ongoing
Guides and information on local walks			Pathways to Health walks/NHS		Identify local group to lead by end 2015
Community Notice board	Port Elphinstone Parent Council				By end 2015
Road Safety issues - traffic, speed, congestion, parking		Community Safety Partnership/ Inverurie Community Council/ local community/Police Scotland			Ongoing
More Shops			Private business		
Out of School Activities		PECH/Port Elphinstone Parent Council			Ongoing
Community House		PECH committee			Ongoing, review annually
Port Elphinstone Lunch Club		Aberdeenshire Council school dinner service, Port Lunch club committee/PECH			Ongoing

How will this be taken forward?				By When?
Action	Independent Community Group/Private Initiative	Partnership	Outside Agencies	
Litter Picks		Local community/PECH/Port Elphinstone Parent Council		Ongoing
Cleaner pavements and more dog bins		Aberdeenshire Council/Inverurie Community Council/Greener dog walk initiative		Ongoing
Mixed tenure of housing/Planning and development		Aberdeenshire council		Ongoing
Recycling & waste collections		Aberdeenshire council/local residents		Ongoing
Access to affordable, healthy food		Aberdeenshire Council/ NHS Grampian/PECH	CFine	2016
Access to an ATM			Private business	
Bus Timetable			Garioch Area Bus Forum/ Local Councillors	2015

This booklet is one of a series produced by the Local Rural Partnerships for a number of communities in Aberdeenshire.

This initiative is sponsored by Aberdeenshire Community Planning Partnership and run by Aberdeenshire Local Rural Partnerships. The aim is to provide community action plans in an attractive, easy to read, professionally printed format.

This information can now guide the community and Community Planning Partners in drawing up detailed action plans to implement the top priorities as well as addressing the other issues which have been identified. For each priority or issue this will involve agreeing who should be involved, what resources will be needed and target dates for completion. It is hoped that this process will be driven by representatives of the community with support - moral, technical and financial - from the relevant Partners.

It is important that this booklet is seen by all concerned as an account of the community's views at the time of the latest consultation, and that it will have to be regularly updated. As some projects are completed, other issues will arise and take their place in future versions of the community plan.

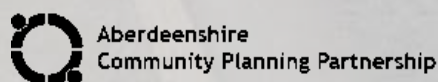
It is recommended that this plan has a maximum life of five years

With grateful thanks to:

- **The Port Elphinstone Lunch Club**
- **Mrs Sheila Rae for the foreword**
- **The Port Elphinstone Community House**
- **The Port Elphinstone Parent Council**
- **The Port "Friday Friends" Group**
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- **The Port Toddlers Group**
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