

Wigton Town Plan

Summary and Action Plan – JANUARY, 2016



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Summary of the Plan

Introduction

'The Throstle's Nest of all England' . . .

Wigton is a traditional historic market town situated between the Northern Fells and the Solway Coast in North West Cumbria. Wigton has long been regarded as the **'Trading Centre'** for North Allerdale, servicing local business and industry, along with the rural agricultural community. Whilst Wigton is in many ways a vibrant centre and has real potential, like many other market towns, it is showing signs of decline which need to be addressed.

The town, locally referred to as *'The Throstle's Nest of all England'*, is well documented through numerous books, photographs and videos. Local residents (both born and bred and incomers) have a strong affection for the town, and, on the whole, agree that Wigton is a good place to live, work and bring up a family – but could be better.

Wigton is fortunate to have a major employer based in the town, Innovia Films PLC (the Factory). It is perceived that because of Innovia Wigton is prosperous, but in reality a large percentage of salaries from Innovia are not spent in the town but elsewhere. Also there are many other successful and prominent businesses in the Wigton area, contributing to employment and the town's economy.

However, there are concerns that town centre retail trade is in decline and that local authority services are being reduced to an unacceptable level. These concerns need to be quantified.

Background

Community Led Plans are based on the views of local people and organisations in parishes/towns. The whole community is given the opportunity to agree and plan how to achieve their goals and inform the Town Council and local authorities. The objectives are to provide a long term collective vision for all the community's partners; ensure local engagement and a sense of ownership; make connections between community groups and parishes leading to joined up planning; provide measurable, attainable and relevant actions; to unlock additional funding opportunities. The Parish Council is thus given a basis on which to make its decisions and set its priorities for its work for the next four or five years.

Findings

An initial survey was conducted asking the public to identify what they valued about the area and what they would like to see improved. Based on the feedback a detailed questionnaire was generated. The findings are detailed in Appendix 1

Economic Development

Support can be provided to the local economy with assistance and investment by local authorities in order to deliver a strong, sustainable and vibrant local economy.

Daytime hospitality is catered for in Wigton with a number of cafés, sandwich bars, take-away establishments and public houses. The night time economy has improved recently due to new business ventures adding to the diverse range of restaurants operating in the town centre.

We must stimulate business (including new start-ups), by providing incentives as well as encouraging the development of skills.

There are a number of factors which influence and contribute to the area's economy, including:

- Parking and Car Parks
- Industry
- Retail and Service Sector
- Commercial Sector
- Agriculture and Rural Businesses
- Markets
- Evening and night-time economy
- The provision of better communication (e.g. Websites and Broadband).

		Timeframes	Partners
Economic Development	Explore the following:		
	Provision of some Limited Free Car Parking	Ongoing	Allerdale BC
	Wigton TC to run the car parks	Ongoing	Allerdale BC
	Ways to improve the profile of Wigton	1 – 2 years	Chamber of Trade/Civic Society
	To support a Wigton Market	Ongoing	Chamber of Trade / Geraud/Allerdale BC
	Provision of a Facebook page for information	Less than 1 year	Social Media
	Improve Wigton TC's communication	Less than 1 year	Chamber of Trade / TC's website/ Social Media

Infrastructure

Work needs to be done to maintain and refurbish some of the town's properties, including some prominent buildings. Work has started on some properties, but encouragement must be given to completion and to others to start.

For Wigton to develop as we would wish, and the town centre to become a vibrant shopping centre, key actions and initiatives must be put in place which will become part of the town plan. A key partner in this instance is the Civic Society

This will include:

- Improvements and enhancements to public areas – such as street furniture, planting and reduced but better signage.
- Pedestrian-friendly streets (High Street, King Street and Water Street)
- Attractively designed and well-kept green spaces, including public art
- Increased or refurbished cycle ways and footpaths throughout the town
- A review of parking provision
- And more . . .

		Timeframes	Partners
Infrastructure	Explore the following:		
	The promotion of conservation and enhancement of the Town Centre	2 – 5 years	Allerdale BC /Cumbria CC/ Civic Society
	Improvements to Street Furniture	Ongoing	Wigton TC/Civic Society
	Signage - Tourist	Ongoing	Wigton TC/Civic Society
	Provision of extra toilet facilities	2-5 years	WTC

Environment

It is vital for both residents and visitors to experience a clean and safe environment, whether shopping, using services, visiting friends, or just passing through. The town council has recently reinstated public toilets and has taken on responsibility for the maintenance of these. The Cornmarket area is now free of parking, and a welcome open space in the centre of the town.

Issues reported by the public are recorded on an “issues” log, which is regularly reviewed by all responsible public bodies in a multi-agency approach. Action is taken where necessary.

A “town clean up” day takes place annually where specific areas are addressed.

Recent flood events meant the town was effectively “cut off” with residents and visitors unable to cross from one part of town to another. The Town Council is in the process of adopting an Emergency Plan, and will work with partners to minimise the effects of flooding.

The Government brought in a new act in 2005 - *Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005* - *New powers for parish and town councils* - which enables councils to issue fixed penalties for offences. Should offenders fail to pay, they could end up in the magistrates’ court.

		Timeframes	Partners
Environment	Explore the following:		
	Flood mitigation measures	Ongoing	Environment Agency/Innovia, ABC/CCC
	Measures to Control Dog Fouling	Less than 1 Year	Allerdale borough Council
	Issues Log	Ongoing	ABC/CCC/WTC

Health and Well-being

Wigton is quite well equipped with Health Services which include the Medical Centre and Wigton Hospital. However, there are concerns that the Hospital may not be fit for purpose in the coming years and its long term viability needs to be addressed.

The town is also well provided with care for the elderly and for people with disabilities. We have Residential Care Homes, including facilities for those with dementia. With people living longer we must be aware of the longer-term future, when these homes will not be able to accommodate the increasing requirements of the population.

We welcome the new development at South End, there is no doubt we will require more developments of this type.

There are a number of active clubs/groups who provide well-being for the elderly in Wigton, including days out and dining out, along with old time dancing and other activities.

Budget pressures increasingly put Health Services at risk, with some services being cut.

		Timeframes	Partners
Health and Well Being	Explore the following:		
	Measures to ensure current Health Services are at least maintained	Ongoing	All providers
	Collate an index of local Health Service providers both public and privately ran	Ongoing	All Providers

Young People

A Young person is by definition someone up to the age of 24

The provision for young people in Wigton is wide and varied. Many mainstream sports clubs and facilities are available, including Rugby Union, Cricket, Football, Hockey, Athletics, Gymnastics, Swimming, Tennis, Lawn Green Bowling, and Boxing.

The Town has recently acquired more land adjacent to Barton Laws with the intention of accommodating more sports facilities in the future.

The Scout movement is also strong in the area with provision for all ages. In addition there are Sea Scouts and the Army Cadets who have good memberships.

The Youth Station provides a facility for young people from their base in High Street and is involved in community projects.

NADT (North Allerdale Development Trust) also provides a variety of amenities for young people, including out-reach facilities for the wider community.

The John Peel Theatre has a thriving youth membership.

It is acknowledged that there is a lack of weekend provision for young people in Wigton.

Education in Wigton is provided by four schools – Infant School, St Cuthbert’s Catholic School, Thomlinson Junior School and The Nelson Thomlinson Comprehensive School. There are also Pre-Schools/Child Care facilities.

		Timeframes	Partners
Young People	Explore the following:		
	Provision of indoor and outdoor Social space evening and weekends	1-2 years	Youth Stn,CCC
	Representation on North Allerdale Youth Partnership	1-2 years	ABC

Sport and Leisure

Wigton is fortunate to have many mainstream sports clubs and facilities in the town - Rugby Union, Cricket, Football, Hockey, Athletics, Gymnastics, Swimming, Tennis, Lawn Green Bowls, Boxing and more. Wigton also has two Fitness Centres, which are very well used.

Wigton has a good public park where bowls and football can be played. There is also play equipment for use by children of all ages. The park, which can also be used as a venue for events, is looked after by Groundsmen employed by the Town Council. The Town Council are currently looking to update the changing rooms at Barton Laws to meet FA standards.

There are a number of smaller play parks set around the town. The Town Council has recently developed another play park at the east end of the town with the help of a financial contribution from a local developer.

Phoenix Park (developed through the Door Step Greens awards) is an open green space, owned by the Town Council and currently leased to 'Free for All', a local recycling charity. The park is used by many and is popular with dog walkers and cyclists with the new cycleway running through it. Plans to make improvements to the park are currently under discussion.

The town has a number of walks available in and around Wigton, with some requiring maintenance from time to time. A cycle route has been built from West Road to Longthwaite Road, which, it is hoped, is the beginning of additional routes in Wigton.

There are also many opportunities for non-sport leisure activities in the town, including Wigton Library, the John Peel Theatre Club, Solway History Society, Wigton Choral Society, and allotments for gardeners.

		Timeframes	Partners
Sports and Leisure	Investigate the following:		
	Upgrade of Barton Laws Changing Rooms	2 – 5 years	Allerdale Borough Council/Funding Partners
	Continue to support a Swimming Pool in Wigton	Ongoing	Wigton Baths Trust
	Provision of additional allotments	Ongoing	WTC/Allotment Society

Emergency Planning & a Safer Community

Emergency Services are available in Wigton. The Fire and Rescue has a station based in Station Road which is operated by retained fire-fighters (who are trained volunteers).

The Ambulance Service is based at Station Hill.

Wigton is served by a Local Policing Team (NPT) which now operates from Cockermouth.

At the present time the Town Council is in the process of adopting an Emergency Plan, but this is in the planning stage. Flooding and power cuts are issues to be considered, but plans for other possible emergencies will be initiated.

With the closure of the local Police Station, we will look at how communications can be improved with our local neighbourhood policing team.

		Timeframes	Partners
Emergency Planning	Investigate the following:		
	TC to complete an Emergency Plan	Less than 1 year	Cumbria CC / Allerdale BC / Emergency Services / Environment Agency/ Cumbria Constabulary
	Improvement of communications with the police		Cumbria Constabulary

Provision of Services

The Town Council is responsible for the provision of statutory services for Wigton (along with some discretionary services), and in order to provide these services, the Council employs a number of staff including Administration Staff and Park Staff/Groundsmen. Services delivered include:

- Allotments
- Parks and Open Spaces
- Barton Laws Playing Fields
- Children’s play areas
- Bus Shelters
- Public seats
- St Mary’s Churchyard
- Public toilets

Wigton Cemetery is run and operated jointly by three Parish Councils - Wigton Town Council, Waverton Parish Council and Woodside Parish Council, with staff employed by the Joint Burial Committee through the precept system.

		Timeframes	Partners
Provision of Services	Investigate the following:		
	Consider and Evaluate the provision of additional services as an opportunity arises	Ongoing	ABC/CCC

Housing – private and social

Housing stock in Wigton is provided by the private and social housing sectors. A limited number of social houses has been built over past years – new social housing is limited to 10-20% of private developments as affordable housing. Allerdale Borough Council does not have any housing stock, having handed it over to Housing Associations – in Wigton's case, the Home Group, Derwent and Solway, and Impact Housing. With changes to the planning laws, local communities (in theory) will have more say over planning applications and may be able to influence the type of houses built in the future. National Planning documents are available from Allerdale Borough Council.

In the private sector there has been a large quantity of properties recently built in Wigton and this trend is likely to increase significantly over the coming years. This will certainly add to the already expanding town, and, with the new planning laws, will hopefully aid Wigton’s economic future.

		Timeframes	Partners
Housing	Investigate the following:		
	Opportunities to improve infrastructure, health provision, open space, school facilities etc. as a result of planning approvals.	Ongoing	ABC/CCC/EA

Highways and Transport

Cumbria County Council is responsible for Highways and Transport along with some of our lighting, which is delivered through the Allerdale Local Committee. Whilst Wigton Town Council is not directly responsible for highways, the council is a strategic consultee.

Through our County Councillor, the Town Council and the community can lobby for work to be done. Cutbacks to Highways maintenance budgets means a deterioration to highways and footpaths as well as a reduction to transport services with the removal of some bus routes.

The Allerdale Local Plan, adopted in July, 2014 lists a key identified project of a new bypass for Wigton which will link the A595 with the A596.

Wigton is served by road and rail transport with regular services on both systems. The Town also has a local bus services (taking in some out-lying villages).

Parking in Wigton has been a major concern for some time with many local people and businesses campaigning for reduced or free parking.

		Timeframes	Partners
Highways and Transport	Investigate the following:		
	Monitoring of Width restriction in town	Ongoing	Cumbria Constabulary
	Campaign for the A595/A596 by-pass	Ongoing	ABC/CCC
	Seek improvements to pavements/road surfaces/ effective drain clearance	Ongoing	CCC