Community Partnership
Supporting communities in Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park

COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN
2013 - 2017

Benmore & Kilmun

LOCH LOMOND & THE TROSSACHS NATIONAL PARK

Benmore & Kilmun Community Action Plan

2013 – 2017

This Community Action Plan sets out the priorities for the development of the Benmore & Kilmun area for the next five years. This has been determined by the community through an extensive process of community engagement carried out from March 2012 to May 2012. The Plan summarises community views about:

■ Benmore and Kilmun area now
■ the vision for the future of the Benmore and Kilmun area
■ the issues that matter most to the community
■ our priorities for projects and action.

The Plan is for the whole community and is jointly owned by all the organisations and individuals that took part in its preparation. The Plan will be our guide for what we - as a community - try to make happen over the next 5 years.

BENMORE & KILMUN COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN STEERING GROUP

A local steering group was formed to prepare this Action Plan and brought together representatives of the Benmore and Kilmun Community Development Trust, Blairmore Village Trust, Kilmun Community Council, and other interested local organisations and volunteers. This Action Plan fully reflects priorities identified by the community and provides the guide for community organisations over the next five years.

Previous Action Plans have been instrumental in helping to develop community organisations and projects over the last 10 years. During that time Benmore and Kilmun Community Development Trust has been established and the Kilmun Community Council rekindled. Successes over the last ten years have included:

■ Graham's Point Community Park
■ Restoration of Blairmore Pier
■ Improving paths networks and compiling a leaflet of walks
■ Supporting the local news magazine
■ Setting up the Argyll Mausoleum project
■ Undertaking a feasibility study for a village shop
■ Undertaking a feasibility study into a community owned waste water treatment facility
■ Villages in Bloom

LOCAL PEOPLE HAVE THEIR SAY

The process to accumulate the views of the community involved:

- stakeholder interviews and meetings - with different groups and individuals representing all aspects of the community;
- carrying out a community views survey, which was delivered to all households;
- updating our summary community profile detailing facts and figures about the community;
- organising a Community Futures Consultation Event.

109 community views survey forms were returned from our 465 households.

22 stakeholder meetings and interviews were held with local groups, businesses, and support organisations.

50 people attended the community futures event.

Thanks to everyone who took part.

Our Community Now

We have summarised below the main facts and figures about the community and some of the views from the Community Views Survey. Full copies of these reports are available from the steering group on request.

The Area

The Kilmun Parish incorporates the area from Whistlefield on Loch Eck in the north, through Rashfield and Benmore on the A815 Dunoon road to Kilmun and Strone on the Holy Loch and round into Blairmore at the foot of Loch Long. The area also includes the small communities of Glen Massan, Glen Lean and Clachaig to the west.

Population

The results of the 2011 Census are not yet available. However, at the time of the 2001 Census, the population for the Benmore and Kilmun area stood at 1030. There had been a decline of 99 people (8.76%) between 1991 and 2001. We now have fewer children under the age of 10 and a higher percentage of residents of retirement age when compared to statistics for the National Park and Scotland. This decline in population and with it an increase in the average age of our community appears to continue.

Housing

There are around 465 residential households in the Benmore and Kilmun area. The percentage of owner occupiers is higher than the Scottish average. The number of social rented properties is still low although we have benefited from the affordable and attractive housing built by Fyne Homes.

Employment

The percentage of economically active people is substantially lower than the Scottish average and also the National Park average. This highlights that the area has a very high percentage of retired people.

In a recent report commissioned by the Scottish Government and undertaken by the Scottish Agricultural College, Dunoon was identified as the rural town most at risk from the current economic situation and public sector cuts in Scotland.

Education

Strone Primary School is the only school within the area. Some children in the area also travel to Sandbank Primary and St Mun's RC Primary school in Dunoon. Children in the western part of the community are in the Sandbank catchment area.

For secondary education children travel the 6-10 miles to Dunoon.

Village Halls

There are four village halls in the area – Uig Hall (Benmore/Rashfield), Younger Memorial Hall (Kilmun), Highgate Hall (Strone) currently closed, and Blairmore Village Hall.

Shops, Cafes, Pubs and Hotels

The area has a selection of facilities which includes, Whistlefield Inn and the Coylet Inn on Loch Eck; Benmore Café; the Pier Hotel at Kilmun (B&B, Bistro, Art Gallery and Gift Shop); the Strone Inn and a Post Office/General Store in Strone; Blairmore Gallery (art gallery and coffee shop), and The Glory Hole - a church run bric-a-brac shop in Blairmore.

There is a supermarket, petrol station and Sheila's Diner at the Cothouse; and The Cothouse Hotel will re-open when the refurbishment is complete.

Our Community Now

Piers

There are three sea loch piers in the area – Blairmore, Strone and Kilmun. Blairmore is operational as a fully navigational pier with passenger excursions to and from the pier. The PS Waverley makes regular visits to Blairmore throughout the season. Kilmun Pier is used as a working pier by Western Ferries. Strone Pier is privately owned.

Community Development Organisations

The following community organisations operate within the area:

Benmore and Kilmun Community Development Trust, Benmore and Rashfield Community Association, Blairmore Village Trust, Deer Park Woodland Trust, Friends of Blairmore Pier Trust and Kilmun Community Council.

Children and Youth Groups

There is a limited programme of outdoor activities run for the local community and children by Benmore and Rashfield Community Association. There is one play park at Grahams Point in Kilmun.

Transport

Buses: There is a network of regular bus services around the Cowal peninsula that serves this area and is operated by West Coast Motors. Where possible, most routes link with connections to further destinations.

A regular service operates between Ardentinny and Dunoon and back.

Connections can be made between Dunoon, Benmore, Inveraray, Portavadie, Arrochar and Tarbet on Loch Lomondside.

Onward Travel: Most bus services generally connect to Western Ferry Terminal at Hunter's Quay and to the Clyde Ferry services at Dunoon for onward travel to Gourock Railway Station and to Glasgow.

McGills 'City Connect' service runs regularly between Dunoon and Glasgow and calls at points within Inverclyde district and at Braehead Shopping Centre.

Ferries: There are three car and passenger ferry terminals serving the Cowal peninsula:- Western Ferries between Hunters Quay and McInroys Point (Gourock); Calmac between Portavadie and Tarbert; Calmac between Colintraive and Rhuabodoch (Bute).

There is one passenger only ferry service operated by Argyll Ferries (Calmac) between Dunoon town centre and Gourock.

Environment

The Benmore and Kilmun community is surrounded by lochs, hills, forests and outstanding scenery – and it is the 'coastal gateway' of the Loch Lomond & Trossachs National Park accessed via the Clyde sea lochs of Loch Long and the Holy Loch.

The nationally important Benmore Botanic Garden, Pucks Glen and Kilmun Arboretum are located within the area.

The beautiful and peaceful Loch Eck and the oak woodland to the west of the Loch are classified as Sites of Special Scientific Interest.

The area is rich in wildlife and is host to otters, eagles and ravens, bats, roe deer, red deer, red squirrels, pinemartens, seals, eider ducks and many other species.

Ancient Heritage

Features of historic interest include Argyll Mausoleum at Kilmun, Bernice Graveyard on the west side of Loch Eck, Inverchapel Graveyard, drove roads, the pier ruins on Loch Eck, the old settlement in the woods behind Whistlefield, gun-powder mills at Clachaig, Paper Caves to the west of Loch Eck, the tin/lead mine above Gairletter, iron smelting at Benmore, St. Munn's Church and Churchyard, the heritage associated with David Napier, and grand Victorian country houses such as Invereck, Benmore and Dunselma.

Community Views Survey
Advantages

Advantages of living in Benmore & Kilmun Area	% of responses
Nature, environment and location	50%
Community spirit and community activities	28%
Services/Amenities/Infrastructure	16%
Shops and Businesses	6%

The comments below reflect what was said about these issues.

"Benmore Gardens, Pucks Glen, and the Arboretum"

"Beautiful scenery and a peaceful environment"

"Great community support from all villages, local people who work hard to make our area a great place to live and work in"

"Scottish Country Dancing at Blairmore and other village halls"

"Access to a local school within the community"

I like that we come under Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park

"Western Ferries – our life line"

"Reasonably good amenities, good bus service"

"Having a health centre in Kilmun"

"Our friendly shop and Post Office"

"The welcoming Gallery and Glory Hole in Blairmore"

"I like the playground at Graham's Point"

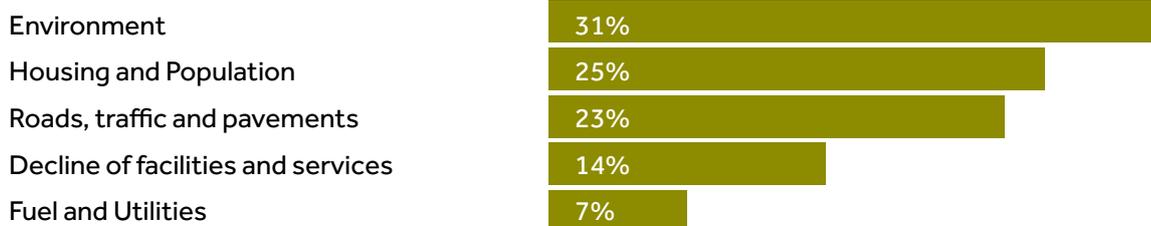# Community Views Survey
Disadvantages

Disadvantages of living in Benmore & Kilmun Area	% of responses
Environment	31%
Housing and Population	25%
Roads, traffic and pavements	23%
Decline of facilities and services	14%
Fuel and Utilities	7%

The comments below reflect what was said about these issues.

"Empty green areas that could be used for the good of all"

"Rubbish on the shore"

"There are not enough litter bins or any dog waste bins"

"We need more public toilets – ones that are open and well looked after"

"Lovely houses just left to disappear"

"Poor access to employment choice"

"People who have lived here all their lives having to leave the community to be cared for"

"There is a lack of decent broadband"

"We need more bad weather activities"

"Don't like the deterioration of the footpath between Uig and Benmore"

"State of the High Road at Blairmore"

"Don't like knotweed"

Our vision for the future

Benmore & Kilmun Area - 2020

This statement has been prepared using local residents and organisations answers to the question –

How would you like to imagine the Benmore and Kilmun Area in 2020?

Thriving Community – with a good mix of ages

"A community where there is a mix of ages, places to play for the children, care for the elderly, a thriving school, local shops, affordable housing and where local halls are the hub of the community."

A Green and Attractive Community and Environment

"Attractive piers, play areas and flowers."

"Flourishing gardens and a pleasant beach."

"Improved Village Green."

"For my children to be able to continue enjoying the beach."

"A continued haven for wildlife."

A healthy local economy and a good place to visit

"A thriving village shop, good pub and derelict properties restored."

"A brand identity for the area as an easy accessible outdoor pursuits Centre of Excellence."

"More local business. Better options for local employment."

"More small local businesses and facilities for them to operate from."

Good transport and safe roads for all users

"Better sea transport, particularly small ferries to provide access to shore side villages in the National Park during weekends and the holiday periods."

"I want to be able to get the bus to town from a proper bus stop, not from a dangerous road"

"I would like to be able to leave the house without the car and walk safely."

"More cycle and pedestrian friendly."

"Better maintained roads and paths – holes in roads and pavements a thing of the past."

Good housing and infrastructure

"A retirement village or sheltered living complex in the Kilmun area on the vacant site at Graham's Point."

"More affordable housing which still adds to the attraction of the shore."

"More affordable houses in all the villages along the shore and a small amount of sheltered housing."

"Improved treatment of sewerage along the shore."

"No empty houses and ruins."

Main Themes, Strategies and Priorities

The following pages highlight the main themes for the community, in partnership with a range of agencies and supporters, over the next five years. The community will work towards achieving action on:

| **THEME 1:**
Environment and Heritage | **THEME 2:**
Village Improvements And Community Facilities | **THEME 3:**
Services, Economy, and Housing | **THEME 4:**
Infrastructure Improvements | **THEME 5:**
Roads and Community Safety |

COMMUNITY PRIORITIES AT A GLANCE

- Where possible eradicate and control Japanese Knotweed and Ponticum
- Continue to improve the local path network including a coastal path
- Develop Powder Mill at Clachaig and other historic sites
- Recognise the work of Lewis Fry Richardson and other historical figures
- Improved interpretation and signposting in the area
- Develop Blairmore Green
- Support and upgrade Village Halls
- Strone Pier upgraded and brought back to life
- Improve derelict buildings
- Village tidy up/more planting/ more seating/ Villages in Bloom
- Keep the school open
- Explore options to develop care provision for the elderly
- Encourage business start up, development and relocation
- More affordable housing
- Upgrade water and sewage facilities
- Improve broadband, TV and mobile reception
- Developing renewable energy
- Footpath from Cot House to Kilmun
- Adoption of Blairmore High Road
- Improve the sea wall and access to the shore
- Safe roads and cycle routes

Theme 1: Environment and Heritage *ACTION*

The local environment and heritage is seen as a major asset for the area. Special places like Loch Eck, Benmore Gardens, Pucks Glen and the Arboretum; combined with the area's location on the Firth of Clyde sea lochs of Loch Long and the Holy Loch make the area very attractive and interesting.

A main theme of this Action Plan is to protect and enhance these assets, and make the most of them in a way that benefits local people, visitors and the local economy.

Main priorities

- ✔ Where possible eradicate and control Japanese Knotweed and Ponticum
- ✔ Continue to improve the local path network including a coastal path
- ✔ Develop Powder Mill at Clachaig and other Historic sites
- ✔ Recognise the work of Lewis Fry Richardson and other historical figures
- ✔ Improved interpretation and signposting in the area

Priority 1:
Tackle Invasive Species

- Develop joint initiative of all concerned
- Promote local education about unwanted flora

Champion: Benmore & Kilmun Community Development Trust

Action by:
- Benmore & Kilmun Community Development Trust and Blairmore Village Trust
- Argyll & Bute Council
- LLTNP
- Forestry Commission Scotland
- The Younger (Benmore) Trust

Priority 2:
Continue to improve the local paths network

- Work to support the development of a coastal path.

Champion: Cowal East Paths Group

Action by:
- Cowal East Paths Group,
- LLTNP
- Community Partnership

Priority 3:
Develop Powder Mill and historic sites

- Take quick action to explore options for the Mill's restoration as an education and visitor attraction before it becomes too dilapidated.

Champion: Benmore & Kilmun Community Development Trust

Action by:
- LLTNP
- Sandbank Community Development Trust
- Historic Scotland

Priority 4:
Improved interpretation and signage in the area

- Develop interpretation in parking areas and greens that include information about local history, wildlife and nature.
- Replace/improve information boards at Kilmun lay-by
- Improve signs at the Cot House area
- Explore whether attractive information boards and related art work could be located in empty shop windows and other areas that need enhancement.
- Ensure there is information about the area and its facilities in the new Visitor Centre at Benmore Gardens

Champion: Benmore & Kilmun Community Development Trust

Action by:
- LLTNP
- Benmore & Kilmun Community Development Trust and Blairmore Village Trust (for Blairmore)

Theme 2: Village Improvements And Community Facilities

The desire is also to have attractive villages and open spaces that fit into our natural environment and which offer opportunities for play and recreation for all ages. This is seen as being for the benefit and enjoyment of local people and visitors to the area.

Main priorities
- ✓ Develop Blairmore Green
- ✓ Support and upgrade Village Halls
- ✓ Strone Pier upgraded and brought back to life
- ✓ Improve derelict buildings
- ✓ Village Tidy Up/More planting/ More seating/Villages in Bloom

Priority 1:
Develop Blairmore Green
- Develop plans for the upgrade of the green to an attractive village space that includes picnic, seating areas, some play equipment, and a garden with biodiversity in mind.
- Plans could also include art work e.g. sculptures

Champion: Blairmore Village Trust

Action by:
- Blairmore Village Trust
- The Younger (Benmore) Trust

Priority 2:
Support for all village halls to thrive
- Upgrade of Blairmore Hall.
- Support the re-opening and development of Highgate Hall.

Champion: Blairmore Hall Trust (for Blairmore)

Action by:
- Benmore & Rashfield Community Association
- Blairmore Hall Trust
- Highgate Hall Trustees
- Younger Memorial Hall Trustees

Priority 3:
Upgrade Strone Pier and development of facilities
- Explore the possibilities to upgrade Strone pier and bring back into use for fishing and other recreational activities.
- Explore the possibilities to provide a launch ramp near Strone Pier for small boats where jetty used to be
- Develop links with the Holy Loch Marina to look at how facilities can be developed on 'this side of the Loch'.

Champion: Benmore & Kilmun Community Development Trust

Action by:
- Benmore & Kilmun Community Development Trust

Priority 4:
Improve derelict buildings
- Establish local register of derelict properties
- Work with the local authority to address this issue

Champion: Blairmore Village Trust

Action by:
- LLTNP
- Argyll & Bute Council
- Kilmun Community Council

Priority 5:
Village appearance and enhancement
- Support and develop local in bloom groups
- Kilmun War Memorial and seats on footpaths
- Develop walking trail with poem plaques
- Toilet facilities at Blairmore
- Loch and riverside shore cleaning
- Wildlife hides to view red squirrels etc. as an attraction

Champion: All interested parties

Action by:
- Benmore & Kilmun Community Development Trust
- Blairmore Village Trust
- Kilmun Community Council
- Strone Primary School

Theme 3: Services, Economy, and Housing

ACTION

There is a strong desire to have a thriving community that has a good mix of young and old and a stable, not declining population. Encouraging new businesses and the ability to work from home, the retention of the school and the provision of more affordable housing are seen as an important package of measures to achieve this vision.

Main priorities

✓ Keep the school open

✓ Explore options to develop care provision for the elderly

✓ Encourage business start up, development and relocation

✓ More affordable housing

Priority 1:
Keep the School Open

- Support proposals to extend the catchment area
- Develop initiatives in this Action Plan that will attract younger families to the area e.g. broadband improvements for home workers, more affordable housing etc.

Champion: Parent Council

Action by:
– Parent Council
– Kilmun Community Council

Priority 2:
Encourage business start up, development and relocation

- Explore the feasibility of developing a small commercial unit
- Develop proposals for a community market garden
- Work to improve broadband and communication network – already listed below

Champion: All interested parties

Action by:
– All interested parties

Priority 3:
More affordable housing

- Work with the Council, National Park Authority and Housing Associations to identify suitable land and develop proposals for affordable housing.

Champion: Kilmun Community Council

Action by:
– LLTNP
– Kilmun Community Council
– Argyll & Bute Council

Priority 4:
Develop care provision for the elderly

- Explore opportunities for sheltered housing
- Explore opportunities for supported living facilities

Champion: Blairmore Village Trust

Action by:
– Argyll & Bute Council
– Kilmun Community Council

Theme 4: Infrastructure Improvements

If the community is to thrive then it will need the supporting infrastructure. Improved broadband along with TV and mobile reception are important features of a modern community and needed to attract people to live and work in the area.

There is a real need to upgrade water and sewage systems particularly in Clachaig but also throughout the area and this will be vital in supporting the development of the community in the future.

Infrastructure improvements should also include looking at ways of reducing fuel costs, and developing renewable energy sources for community benefit.

Main priorities
✓ Upgrade water and sewage facilities
✓ Improve broadband, TV and mobile reception
✓ Developing renewable energy

Priority 1:
Upgrade water and sewage facilities

- Advocate upgrade of this infrastructure, for Clachaig but also other areas within the community, with the need for an expansion of mains water and improved sewage system.

Champion: Benmore & Kilmun Community Development Trust

Action by:
– Benmore & Kilmun Community Development Trust
– Kilmun Community Council

Priority 2:
Improve broadband, TV and mobile reception

Champion: Benmore & Kilmun Community Development Trust

Action by:
– Benmore & Kilmun Community Development Trust
– Benmore & Rashfield Community Association

Priority 3:
Explore options for community renewable energy

- Research and develop proposals for micro renewable energy schemes to benefit the community and householders.
- Research should explore options such as biomass from local forests, hydro, solar and ground source heat pumps.
- Look at how other communities have progressed these initiatives.
- Make application to Climate Challenge Fund

Champion: Benmore & Kilmun Community Development Trust

Action by:
– Benmore & Kilmun Community Development Trust

Theme 5: Roads and Community Safety

Community safety and the ability to walk and cycle from community to community are seen as important for local quality of life.

Main priorities
✓ Footpath from Cot House to Kilmun
✓ Adoption of Blairmore High Road
✓ Improve the sea wall and access to the shore
✓ Safe roads and cycle routes

Priority 1:

Footpath from Cot House to Kilmun

● Support the work of Kilmun Community Council in advocating the development of this pavement.

Champion: Kilmun Community Council

Action by:
– Argyll & Bute Council
– Forestry Commission Scotland
– Kilmun Community Council

Priority 2:

Adoption of Blairmore High Road

● Continue to support the campaign to have Blairmore High Road adopted by the local authority.
● The consultation for the action plan noted that its current poor condition affects refuse collection, damage cars, endanger pedestrians, deter potential buyers, limits business development and hinders people accessing some outdoor areas.

Champion: Blairmore Village Trust

Action by:
– Blairmore Village Trust
– Argyll & Bute Council
– LLTNP

Priority 3:

Improve the Sea Wall between Blairmore and Strone and improve condition of access points to the shore

Champion: Argyll & Bute Council

Action by:
– Argyll & Bute Council
– Kilmun Community Council to monitor

Priority 4:

Safe roads and cycle routes

● Support for a crossing sign at Invereck and generally more warning signs to protect pedestrians and cyclists
● Support development of safe walking and cycling routes to schools.
● Support more traffic calming in the area to reduce traffic speeds.

Champion: Kilmun Community Council

Action by:
– Kilmun Community Council
– Argyll & Bute Council

Making It Happen

The priorities in this action plan will be taken forward by a variety of our local community groups and individuals working with a range of public, private and voluntary sector partners.

If you would like to get involved with any of these initiatives or for further information please contact the specific Champion or any of the following organisations:

Argyll & Bute Council

E-mail: info@argyll-bute.gov.uk
Web: www.argyll-bute.gov.uk

Argyll Mausoleum Limited

E-mail: info@argyllmausoleum.org
Web: www.argyllmausoleum.org

Benmore & Rashfield Community Association

E-mail: Dinah.mcdonald@btinternet.com
Web: www.uighall.com

Benmore & Kilmun Community Development Trust

E-mail: info@benmorekilmun.org
Web: www.benmorekilmun.org

Blairmore Hall Trust

Contact: Bruce Marshall
Tel: 01369 840217

Booking Secretary: Pam Horton
Tel: 01369 840 217

Blairmore Village Trust

E-mail: info@blairmorevillagetrust.co.uk
Web: www.blairmorevillagetrust.co.uk

Cowal East Paths Group

E-Mail: Dinah.mcdonald@btinternet.com
Web: www.walk-the-eck.org.uk

Friends of Blairmore Pier Trust

E-Mail: info@blairmorepiertrust.co.uk
Web: www.blairmorepiertrust.co.uk

Kilmun Community Council

E-mail: info@kilmuncc.co.uk
Web: kilmuncc.co.uk

Highgate Hall Trustees

Currently closed
Contact: Lorraine Whitton
E-mail: ceale.whitton@virgin.net

Community Partnership

Web: www.thecommunitypartnership.org.uk

Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park Authority

Web: www.lochlomond-trossachs.org

Strone Primary School

E-mail: info@strone.argyll-bute.sch.uk
Web: www.strone.argyll-bute.sch.uk

Strone Primary School – Parent Council

E-mail: info@strone.argyll-bute.sch.uk
Web: www.strone.argyll-bute.sch.uk

Younger Memorial Hall Trustees

Contact: David Smith
Tel: 01369 840 060

Booking Secretary: Wilma Gillon
Tel: 01369 840 570

Acknowledgements

Benmore and Kilmun Community Action Plan Steering Group prepared this Community Action Plan.

Thanks to all those who took the time to share their views and take part.
We would also like to acknowledge the work of our Community Agent.