



Spirit of Community Plan

Forres Area Community Plan 2024-2034

*"A review, a celebration
and a series of conversations."*

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Introduction

This Forres area community plan is called the Spirit of Community Plan.

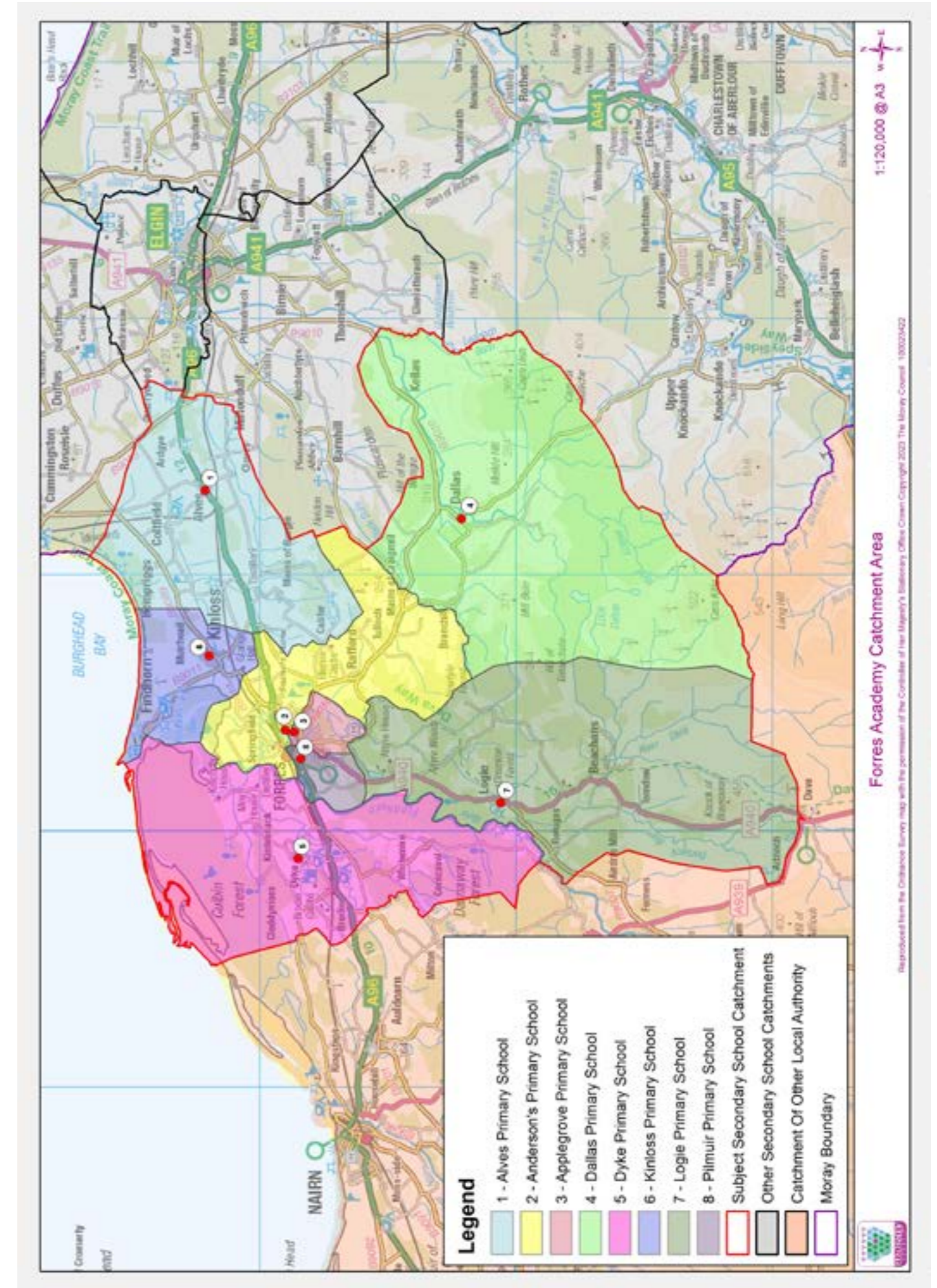
It outlines the vision, objectives, and strategies for enhancing the well-being and sustainability of the Forres area.

This plan is a collaborative effort involving community members, local businesses, organizations, and governmental agencies to address key priorities and improve the quality of life for residents.

Together, we envision a vibrant, inclusive, and sustainable Forres area where all residents thrive, businesses flourish and natural resources are cherished.

Where this plan covers:

This plan covers the Forres Associated School Group area (ASG). A map of the ASG boundary is shown on page 4.



Welcome from the Spirit of Community working group

This is the Spirit of Community Plan for Forres ASG, 2024-2034. This plan has been brought together by Forres Area Forum and Forres Area Community Trust with invaluable input and support from numerous community groups, agencies and local people in the Forres Academy Associated School Group area.

It has been an extended process to bring together this report due to a number of challenges which have hit us all over the years, such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Sometimes we do feel overwhelmed by the number of consultations about the area's future development but we continue to be engaged and respond accordingly. It is refreshing to see people are still willing to work together to improve things in the community for their families and the community at large.

Currently there are multiple ongoing initiatives such as the Forres Culture and Heritage Scheme and the Moray Town Centre Task Force which have also been reaching out to residents for their thoughts and ambitions. Our intention is for the results of these consultations, and others, to be fed into this Spirit of Community Plan to ensure future development in our town is led by local people.

To date we are grateful for the amazing commitment that has been made by all ages to bring the Spirit of Community Plan together. The plan provides an immense volume of information which we hope will be of great value not only to the local community but to local statutory services and businesses that support the Forres Area.

We are at a time of opportunity and together we can make sure that Forres is a better place to live, work and visit. We are indebted and grateful for the input and support from the following community groups, organisations and agencies:

- Dyke Landward Community Council
- Finderne Development Trust
- Forres Area Business Association
- Forres Area Community Trust
- Forres Community Council
- Forres Area Forum
- Forres Friends of Woods & Fields
- Forres Highland Games
- Forres In Bloom
- Forres Rotary Club
- Forres Sports Hub
- Leancoil Trust
- Moray Council Community Support Unit
- Ray's Opportunities
- Transition Town Forres
- tsiMoray (who also helped fund the project)



Sandra MacLennan
Chair of Forres Area Forum



Jim Farquharson
Chair of Forres Area Community Trust

Supporting words from our Local Elected Members

As the four local elected councillors for the Forres Area we are delighted and excited for the future with the publication of the Spirit of Community Plan which is the community plan for the Forres Academy Associated Group Area (ASG).

It is an insightful plan that shines a light on the extraordinary commitment of local people to their community. All four of us have worked on developing local networks and plans over the years and this is a perfect example of what is possible through public engagement and empowerment. This type of engagement and consultation really helps all Partners make decisions which affect the People of Forres and the surrounding area and allows planning for the future.

Kathleen in fact was involved in the engagement sessions when she was Chair of the Forres Community Council, and it was particularly refreshing to see the input from young people. This document helps shape the blueprint for a future Forres and the views of our community are important to capture. The publication of the document highlights what the people of Forres consider is important for the future and sustainability of our Community.

The priorities outlined give a clear snapshot of immediate concerns and highlight the work needed to forward them. The next steps will be critical in addressing these issues and indeed, surface new ones. And we would encourage all members of our community to keep feeding into future engagements and consultations to ensure whatever we do, we do for you!



Scott Lawrence
Scottish National Party



Kathleen Robertson
Scottish Conservatives



Paul McBain
Scottish Conservatives



Dræyk van der Hørn
Scottish Greens

The story so far...

2013

- Forres Area Tourism Network set up
- Forres Events Limited organised the first European Pipe Band Championships, 'Piping at Forres' and continued until 2018.

2014

- First major consultation took place and published, Spirit of Community Event, November.
- CARS – Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme Report published.

2015

- Forres Area Business Association re-formed.

2016

- Second Community Consultation – Forres 2020 Vision Planning for Real
- Findhorn Village Conservation Company secured residual land from Novar Estates
- Forres Features ran the first 'Colours of Cluny' light festivals which ran for 2 years.

2017

- FACT Cameron Project to reduce social isolation.
- Forres Features ran second Colours of Cluny light festival.
- Forres Events Limited launched the Heritage Trail App as part of 'Piping at Forres'.

2018

- Findhorn Village Conservation Company secured the old Armstrong Garage Site.
- Forres Green Spaces Group formed.

2019

- FACT secured ownership of Forres Town Hall to ensure it remained a community asset for the people living, working and visiting the Forres area.



- Forres Community Council produced a Management Plan for Sanquhar Loch.
- Mosset Burn Development Survey completed.

2020

- **Community groups and partners worked together to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.**

2021

- Forres Skate Park Initiative- options appraisal, feasibility & design completed.
- Refurbishment of the Mercat Cross starts due to funding from the Town Centre Regeneration funding from the Scottish Government.
- FACT offer free well-being activities at Forres Town Hall.

2022

- First meeting of the Spirit of Community Engagement Group – January.
- The 4th Findhorn Bay Arts Festival took place which is usually a biannual event.
- FACT Forres Online Digital Inclusion and Employability Project.
- First Public Spirit of Community Engagement Event held in Forres Town Hall with over 80 attendees and 119 online responses to survey questionnaire
- Funderne Development Trust secured land for community led affordable housing project in Rafford.
- The Moray Council, Town Centre Improvement Plan is produced.
- Cluny Hill Woodland Management Plan was commissioned by Moray Council (MC) in partnership with Forres Green Spaces Group (FGSG) with input from various interested community groups.
- Improved commuting link between Forres Train Station and Inverness Airport.
- Mannachie Park Master Plan was completed.



- Mannachie Play Park was identified for improvement and its new design was created and voted on through participatory budgeting with Moray Council.
- Forres Community Council Tree planting - Queen's Jubilee Canopy and fruit orchards at Mannachie & Mosset
- FACT sets up community-run Pop up Pantry.
- Autumn a Young Persons' Focus Group set up with 76 responses and in addition 163 responses gathered from Forres Academy senior pupils.



2023

- Forres Sports Hub and Forres Community Council Outdoor Gym Project installed in December
- Additional Young Persons' Focus Group organised at Forres Academy and one focusing on employability with 23 participants
- Leancoil Trust is in the process of completing a Community Asset Transfer of the old Leancoil Hospital site.
- Forres Theme Day re-introduced for first time since the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Directory of Services for those 50+ published; now being upgraded for all age groups.
- Improvements to traffic lights and crossing at junction of Orchard Road, Thornhill Road and St. Catherine's Road by Moray Council
- 50 years celebration of Forres House Community Centre.
- Many local community groups including local churches offering community lunches and welcoming space events as a response to the cost of living crisis and to help reduce loneliness and isolation.



2024

- Launch of Spirit of Community Plan, Spring
- Conservation and Heritage Scheme engagement events took place at Falconer Museum
- Consultation of Leisure and Libraries Facilities ongoing
- Consultation of Forres Area Learning Estate ongoing
- Rafford Housing Development Plans being consulted on
- British Pipe Band Championships, 8th June
- Forres Scottish Week, 1st-9th June
- Toun Mercat as part of the Scottish Week, 7th June
- New Forres Family Fest, 29th June
- 'GP100' - Celebration of the handover of Grant Park to the Community in 1924. 24th August
- Pride in Moray, 7th September
- Biannual Findhorn Bay Festival - 20th - 29th September



Environmental (General)

- Forres in Bloom continues to win numerous accolades for enhancing the local area.
- Food growing initiatives and community gardens are increasing.
- Electric charging points introduced.



Snapshot of our area:



Population & Households:

Population levels vary throughout the area ranging from around 200 in Dallas up to 9,951 in Forres. There is a higher proportion of one-person-over-65 households in Forres compared with that of Moray and Scotland. Having a higher rate of elderly residents living alone is likely to put more pressure on Health and Social Care services.



Transport & Active Travel:

The A96 links Forres to Inverness and is serviced by a number of bus routes. Forres train station provides links from Aberdeen to Inverness including a direct Inverness Airport link since 2022. There is also an established and growing network of core paths and designated cycle routes throughout the area. There is a larger proportion of households with no vehicle in this area compared to the Moray average. This makes it important to have strong local transport services.



Young People:

Although the ASG has an ageing population, Kinloss has the highest percentage of young people (0-15) and young adults (16-44) with half the population under the age of 30. Forres has a slightly lower number of 16-17 year olds in full time education than the rest of Moray and Scotland, indicating that pupils are leaving school early and either entering or seeking employment or training. The unemployment rate for younger people in Forres is higher than national and Moray levels. Child poverty is a prominent social issue in the area.



Education:

Forres ASG has one secondary school, Forres Academy, and 8 feeder primary schools Alves, Anderson's, Applegrove, Dallas, Dyke, Kinloss, Logie and Pilmuir. At the current time, Moray Council is undergoing a Learning Estate review. This means that a number of engagement sessions and focus groups have been held looking at the current school buildings in the area and how to improve their sustainability in the future. The design and build of the new Forres Academy is expected to be completed by December 2027.



Health:

The Forres ASG has two medical practices, Culbin and Varis, both based in Forres Health and Care Centre providing NHS primary care services and host a variety of community health and social care teams. The area has a number of pharmacies and specialist health services. Mental health continues to be a growing health concern in the area.



Employment:

Those economically active in full time employment has reduced over the years, though those in part-time work has increased. This statistic could be related to increased caring duties. 259 (2.6%) of residents in Forres provide over 50 hours of care per week, which is higher than the Moray rate and fractionally higher than the national rate.



Heritage:

Our area has a diverse heritage including Forres's links with the real King Macbeth, the monolithic Sueno's Stone found at the east end of Forres, a 21 foot Pictish carved stone and Nelson's Tower sits at the top of Cluny Hill. Findhorn is a beautiful coastal town and is a popular destination for beaches, water sports and nature lovers enjoying the seven miles of beaches with many heritage focus points. Kinloss is home to a Cistercian Abbey, Kinloss Abbey, created in 1150 and is open for visits. Dallas holds a popular gala every year and the local church dates from 1793.

More information on heritage sites and other visitor attractions in the area can be found on the Visit Forres website:

<https://visitforres.scot/forres/>



Social & Community:

There are numerous parks, halls, churches and historical buildings within the ASG which are used by many groups including Youth Uniformed Groups, Men's Shed, Air Training Corps, Army Cadets, dance, pipers, social, toddlers and youth volunteer groups.

The area is known for its plentiful community groups offering opportunities for all users. There are also many hospitality venues supporting tourism for locals and visitors. For further information go to the Visit Forres website: <https://visitforres.scot/forres/>

Forres had a higher rate of incidents of Anti-Social Behaviour compared to Moray (35.1 to 34.9 per 1000 pop. per year).



Environment:

The Forres ASG area is well provided for with green spaces, many of these located within housing areas. Forres has been a constant winner of the Beautiful Scotland and Britain in Bloom awards.

Logie provides spectacular walks along the River Findhorn and offers salmon fishing and other water sports. Findhorn, although no longer a major sea port is home to many leisure vessels who use its moorings. There are also many other open areas which can be easily accessed to enjoy the local environment including the Dava Way, Culbin Forest, Sanquhar woods and routes that link into the Moray and Coastal Ways.

Our aim

The aim of the Spirit of Community Plan was to capture and understand the needs and aspirations of folk in Forres and surrounding areas and to distribute these findings to local groups and partners, helping to inform future developments in the area over the next ten years.

Since the last 2 major area consultations, Spirit of Community (October, 2014) and Forres 2020 Vision Planning for Real (2016)*, the community wanted an update on what had been achieved to date and an opportunity to shape priorities for 2024-2034.



Our engagement process

From early 2021 to May 2023, a number of conversations, focus groups and online surveys were completed with individuals, groups and organisations across the Forres ASG area. The community were asked to share their thoughts about living and working in the area. These engagements were based on four themes from the Forres 2020 Vision engagement;

- Local Environment
- Traffic, Transport & Access
- Leisure, Tourism & Heritage
- Facilities & Services

The additional themes of **Young People** and **Cost of Living** were considered later in the consultation process in response to emerging issues.

The results from the various engagement methods have been collated into this report, ordered into these six themes.

The full details of the consultation methods, comments and results can be found in the separate document 'Spirit Of Community Forres Area Community Plan 2024-2034 Data Report'*.

Spirit of Community Plan 2024-2034

Theme 1: Local Environment

Members of the community were passionate about protecting and enhancing the natural environment and green spaces. They were also concerned about climate change mitigation and were keen to explore new ways of addressing waste management and litter, and increase local food growing.

Priority:	Action:	Community Ideas:
Green Spaces & Wildlife	Continue work on improving green and blue spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Map / guide of green-spaces across Forres • Map of local beaches coastal areas within the area • Promotion of transport / links with the areas • Details of facilities available at the areas i.e. toilets, parking etc. • Increase planting to encourage wildlife • Improve ways of addressing litter including dog fouling
Sustainability & Land Use	Increase use of renewable energy sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase awareness of schemes to access renewables (i.e. Moray Council household scheme) • Promotion of local organisations who can support with energy efficiency • Wider promotion of funded opportunities for renewables within Moray
	Increase growing spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further allotment plots across area • Improved projects around schools to encourage early interest • Promotion of current projects such as TTF • Increased fruit trees in public areas • Utilise planters up the High Street

Theme 2: Traffic, Transport & Access

Members of the community were looking for improved transportation infrastructure and connectivity including rail frequency, realistic routes, timings and links.

Priority:	Action:	Community Ideas:
Public Transport	Improve public transport provision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase operational hours of bus service to and from surrounding towns • Enhance local bus access in Forres / links with estates on a circular route • Utilise Transport Forum to strengthen voice of local residents • Links with Moray Council Public Transport Unit around M Connect bus service
Accessibility & Safety	Improve access to High Street	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce more disabled spaces on High Street • Remove right of access (aside from delivery) for HGVs • Enforce speed limits to increase safety of main streets • Improve signage to surrounding car parks to deter parking on High Street for those who can use other car parks
	Improve safety crossing A96	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make additional space / pedestrian crossings • Decrease speed limits approaching junctions on A96 / accessing A96
Active Travel	Improve cycle access and infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase repair points and storage across area and at key gateway areas i.e. Dava Way, Kinloss, Findhorn • Provision of dedicated cycle lanes • Provision of cycle crossing over A96 • Shared e-bike access / promotion of availability of bikes via Moray Car Share • Introduction of cargo bikes publicly available to aid shopping

Theme 3: Leisure, Tourism & Heritage

There was a strong sense that the community wanted to celebrate and preserve the cultural heritage and traditions of the Forres area. In response they wanted to see more arts, cultural events, and festivals as well as leisure venues and activities that enrich community life.

Priority:	Action:	Community Ideas:
Access	Promotion of local information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional / utilise current local noticeboards • Local website – build links with social media pages • Local directory (building on FACT directory?)
	Access Forres	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain free parking throughout Forres • Disabled access bays on High Street • Local businesses open later (even on a rotational basis) • Increase in town markets / stalls and festivals in town & Grant Park • Utilise empty stores / buildings for pop-up shops & local businesses
Leisure	Increase leisure offerings for all ages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase classes available for all ages • Development of outdoor gym • Development of skate park • Development of 4G pitch • Basketball / multi sports pitches to be repaired/ introduced
Tourism	Support local tourism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilities for motorhomes – parking, waste disposal / service areas • Seasonal opening hours – local businesses open later during peak summer months • Wider promotion of large events (Highland games, piping championships etc.) • Links with local guide / social media pages / website around accommodation, tours etc.

Priority:	Action:	Community Ideas:
Heritage	Promote and support heritage of area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re-opening of the Falconer Museum and its tourist office • Utilise the Macbeth connection • More historical walks & promotion of local walks • Promotion of local heritage/ a heritage trail • Interactive map of attractions and facilities

Theme 4: Facilities & Services

Members of the community wanted to see more done to promote buying local and saw the importance of this to the local economy as well as encouraging more visitors to the area. Enhanced access to affordable housing, health and well-being services the provision of quality education, was highlighted.

Priority:	Action:	Community Ideas:
Health & Well-being	Increase access to money support services (banking, advice etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Banking hub (day to day pay in / withdrawing of money, staff on rota basis, mortgage appointments etc.) • Access to outreach information via likes of Citizens Advice Bureau outreach, Moray Council money advice, employment support
	Improve access to health and social care services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requirement for local access to NHS dentists • Increased access to support for mental health & counselling • Need for more access to GP surgery – lack of available appointments • Information hub on available services /how to access services • Mobile health point available

Priority:	Action:	Community Ideas:
Learning	Increase learning opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish what could be offered as outreach with Moray College /UHI • More adult learning opportunities & wider offering from adult and family learning team • Establish local apprenticeship opportunities • Wider distribution of FACT's online programme
Public Facilities	Improve public facilities provision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve Grant Park toilets • Reopen toilets behind Co-op • Increase awareness of Forres House toilets and public access • Public toilet provision within Forres Town Hall • Increase number of bins in public spaces • Introduce recycling bins in public spaces (mostly general waste bins currently)
Information & Connectivity	Develop a Forres ASG directory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build on the local aspect based on FACT directory of local services for all ages • Include information on local businesses, eateries, tourist attractions accommodation
	Improve local connectivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better broadband speeds in homes • Free Wi-Fi in community spaces • Broadband provision in every home throughout the area

Impacts of Covid-19, climate change and cost of living

The COVID-19 lock-downs have impacted on voluntary groups and some groups have folded with many volunteers stepping down. Most volunteers are of an older demographic and groups are seeking volunteers of all ages.

COVID 19 responses were led by individuals and community groups working together in partnership to fill the void as public service resources were depleted due to the restrictions and due to the increased demand. This work strengthened many local connections and created new ones.

Other challenges that still have an impact on the community locally are the concerns of Climate Change and the Cost of Living.

Some of the negative and positive impacts included:

- Groups that were hardest hit by lock-downs were young people and those already isolated and/or living on low incomes
- Lock-down increased the need for and reliance on connectivity and digital literacies
- The cost of living crisis has been felt across all age groups and has hit those already on low incomes the hardest

- Lack of transport and poorer connectivity continues to be a barrier for those in rural areas
- Budget cuts to statutory provisions combined with grant funding being stretched more thinly continues to be a challenge
- Climate change and measures to reduce carbon emissions is of increasing importance to people
- Lack of provision for young people was one of the strongest themes of this engagement exercise; raised across all age groups i.e. adults were concerned about this on behalf of young people.

It however should be repeated that the community response to the many challenges facing individuals, families, groups and businesses has been immense. Since the conversations to inform the Spirit Of Community Plan many new groups and forums have already been established to take forward the priorities outlined in the plan to help make the Forres Area a better place to live, work and visit.

Theme 5: Cost of Living

The escalating cost of living across Scotland has significantly impacted our community's ability to afford basic necessities, placing strains on families and individuals alike. Our community plan aims to address these issues through collaborative efforts, advocating for policies that promote affordable housing, equitable wages, and access to essential services, ensuring a sustainable and thriving future for all in Forres.

Priority:	Action:	Community Ideas:
Cost of Living	Support initiatives that address the rising cost of living	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce public transport fares • Free Wi-Fi in community spaces • Debt and advice services available locally • More affordable housing • Secure living wage employment across area • More local initiatives that address the cost of living

Theme 6: Young People

The priorities of young people in the Forres area reflected their aspirations for a more inclusive and sustainable community with increased opportunities for their age group. Access to quality education, safe and inclusive spaces, as well as opportunities for youth voices to be heard and valued within their communities were of clear importance.

Priority:	Action:	Community Ideas:
Young People	Develop employment and training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase job and training opportunities for young people
	Improve facilities and activities for young people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a safe space for young people with optional access to support and advice services • Reduce barriers preventing young people accessing clubs and activities such as; transport costs, waiting lists (swimming lessons), those experiencing mental health challenges • More ASN support groups and activities • Increase offering of free activities for young people (explore current offerings and opportunities for concessionary rates) • Link with partners such as Active Schools around free activities • Reintroduction of youth clubs in Forres on a drop in basis • Explore with local businesses the chance to make businesses more youth friendly i.e. youth nights @ local café. • Directory of things like play parks, clubs etc. publicly available • Support the redevelopment of Mannachie Park • Create more music and craft sessions for young people • New skate-park • Improve outdoor basketball court

Next steps

A Steering Group consisting of local people, groups and organisations from the Forres ASG will be formed to take the results from these engagement exercises and conversations, and create an Action Plan. The Action Plan can then be used to support and enhance initiatives, inform providers and work jointly with the local community to make improvements for the people who live, work and visit the area.

Some ways the actions could be taken forward are as follows:

- Forres Active Travel group, Forres Town Centre Improvement plans, Forres Community Council and Moray Transport Forum working together.
- Green Spaces Group to come up with a plan of improvements with the relevant agencies on the local environment.
- Forres Area Business Association, Forres Area Tourism Network and other interested parties to discuss how local produce and services, broadband and connectivity and could be better utilized and promoted.
- Health and Social Care Locality Group, Multi-disciplinary Conversation Cafe and other providers to discuss how Health and Well-being Services could be improved.

- Forres Area Community Trust (FACT) can build on the findings to support funding applications for Town Hall refurbishment and projects within.
- Community Councils, Forres Area Forum, Development Trusts and other representative organisations can use these findings, to inform their own future development plans.
- Shared interest groups could work together on actions in this Spirit of Community Plan and a potential Local Place Plan.

The progress of this review should take place every three years as decided by the Steering Group with support from the Moray Council’s Community Support Unit.

The findings for this consultation can be found on the Forres Area Community Trust website: https://forresarea.org/the-community/projects/spirit_of_community/

Acknowledgements

A big thank you again to everyone who contributed to the Spirit of Community Plan - completing surveys, taking part in conversations and attending community consultation events.

Particular thanks are to be given to tsiMoray and Forres Community Sports Hub for funding this exercise and to Moray Council Community Support Unit for their continued support.

Thanks to the local photographers, groups and organisations that contributed the amazing images for the plan:

- Forres Local
- Forres Heritage Trust
- Forres Camera Club
- Forres in Bloom



References and links

Spirit of Community Event 2014 Report:
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<https://www.hie.co.uk/about-us/policies-and-publications/strategy-and-operating-plan/>

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Well-being Economy/ Well-being Alliance Scotland:
<https://www.weallscotland.org/briefings-reports>

Moray LOIP Local Outcome Improvement Plan
<http://www.yourmoray.org.uk/downloads/file118306.pdf>

Moray Active Travel Strategy
<http://www.moray.gov.uk/downloads/file139800.pdf>

Mannachie Master Plan
<http://www.moray.gov.uk/downloads/file145345.pdf>

Moray Plan 2026
<http://www.yourmoray.org.uk/downloads/file118367.pdf>

Moray Town Centres Plan (select Forres option)
<http://www.moray.gov.uk/>

