

St Monans & Abercrombie

Community Action Plan 2018 - 2022



A Community led action plan for St. Monans & Abercrombie in the East Neuk of Fife

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The engagement process

This Community Action Plan (CAP) presents the opinions and aspirations of the residents of St Monans and Abercrombie as demonstrated in a public survey conducted in the summer of 2018. These are augmented by the views of local stakeholders, from business and community groups. The process was coordinated by a team of volunteers, all of whom are local residents.

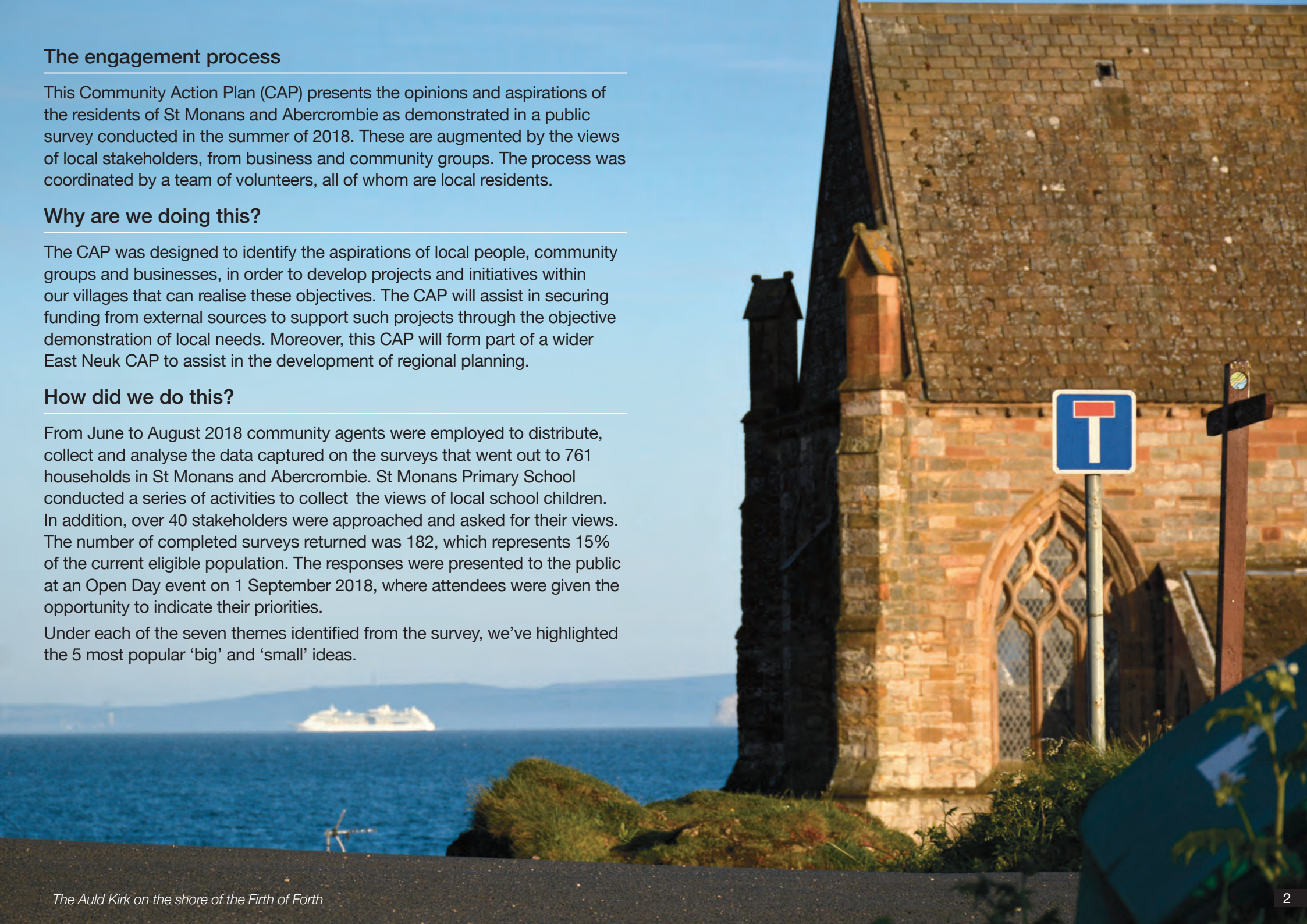
Why are we doing this?

The CAP was designed to identify the aspirations of local people, community groups and businesses, in order to develop projects and initiatives within our villages that can realise these objectives. The CAP will assist in securing funding from external sources to support such projects through the objective demonstration of local needs. Moreover, this CAP will form part of a wider East Neuk CAP to assist in the development of regional planning.

How did we do this?

From June to August 2018 community agents were employed to distribute, collect and analyse the data captured on the surveys that went out to 761 households in St Monans and Abercrombie. St Monans Primary School conducted a series of activities to collect the views of local school children. In addition, over 40 stakeholders were approached and asked for their views. The number of completed surveys returned was 182, which represents 15% of the current eligible population. The responses were presented to the public at an Open Day event on 1 September 2018, where attendees were given the opportunity to indicate their priorities.

Under each of the seven themes identified from the survey, we've highlighted the 5 most popular 'big' and 'small' ideas.



Our Community Now

Location

St Monans is situated in the East Neuk of Fife with a south facing coastline surrounded by agricultural land. The village supported a fishing and boat-building industry until the late twentieth century. Today, along with other East Neuk villages, it is a frequently visited tourist destination assisted by its location on the Fife Coastal Path. St Monans' main attractions are the historic harbour, the remains of Newark Castle, the windmill and salt pans, and the 'Auld Kirk' with its unique situation and is thought to be the only church in Scotland that it situated so close to the sea.



The Auld Kirk

The seaside locations of the windmill and Auld Kirk in particular have led to their becoming notable landmarks, synonymous not only with the East Neuk, but also of Scotland's East Coast.

Abercrombie is a hamlet situated 0.8 miles north of St Monans, well integrated in the local agrarian landscape and economy, with the area being farmed by the same families for many generations.



Newark Castle



The old salt pans windmill



Abercrombie

Population

According to mid-year estimates from the National Records of Scotland, the population is around 1200. Approximately 18% of the population are under 15. Those aged between 30 and 59 account for 40%. Seniors (aged 75 and over) account for approximately 8%. Comparing these figures to the 2001 Census, the percentage of people of working age in the community has declined by 2% whereas the elderly population has increased by nearly 3%.

Employment and Economy

A high percentage (74%) of the population is of working age (16-74), with 69% of the total population considered to be economically active, in either full time or part time employment. Wholesale and retail trade are the major sources of employment within the communities. Other major employment sectors include Health and Social Care, Construction, Education and Manufacturing.

Housing

There are currently 761 households in St Monans and Abercrombie. 62% are owner occupied, while 12.4% are privately rented. A large proportion of homes are provided under social rent by Fife Council and Kingdom Housing, amounting to 24.3% of housing.

Education and Childcare

The Primary School in St Monans is the largest in the East Neuk outside Anstruther, and currently has over 100 children in attendance. The village also has a nursery, which provides morning and afternoon sessions. The nursery and primary school serve children from St Monans and Abercrombie and also from the surrounding area.

Health Care

Although there is no surgery in St Monans and Abercrombie, health services are readily accessible through GP surgeries in Elie, Pittenweem and Anstruther. Skeith Health Centre in Anstruther provides community nurses, midwives and health visitors. There is a Community Hospital in St Andrews, while general and specialist services are provided through regional hospitals: Victoria in Kirkcaldy, Ninewells in Dundee and Queen Margaret in Dunfermline.

Social and Community

There are no social groups or clubs currently operating to serve the young population of St Monans and Abercrombie. St Monans Primary School organises transport to youth clubs in Anstruther where possible. There are community groups for the older population, such as the Autumn Club, which meet in the Town Hall and Church Hall. There is also an active Guild. A number of community events are held throughout the year and are organised by local volunteers. There is a well used library in the village which is also visited monthly by the school and nursery.

Charities and Trusts

St Monans and Abercrombie are home to a small number of charitable bodies. These include the recently established St Monans Charitable Fund and the Community Trust. St Monans and Abercrombie also benefits from a Common Good

Fund (CGF). This investment vehicle for the assets of the villages' common land is managed by Fife Council, but is expressly reserved for investment in the community. In 2017, the fund generated around £30,000 for community investment.

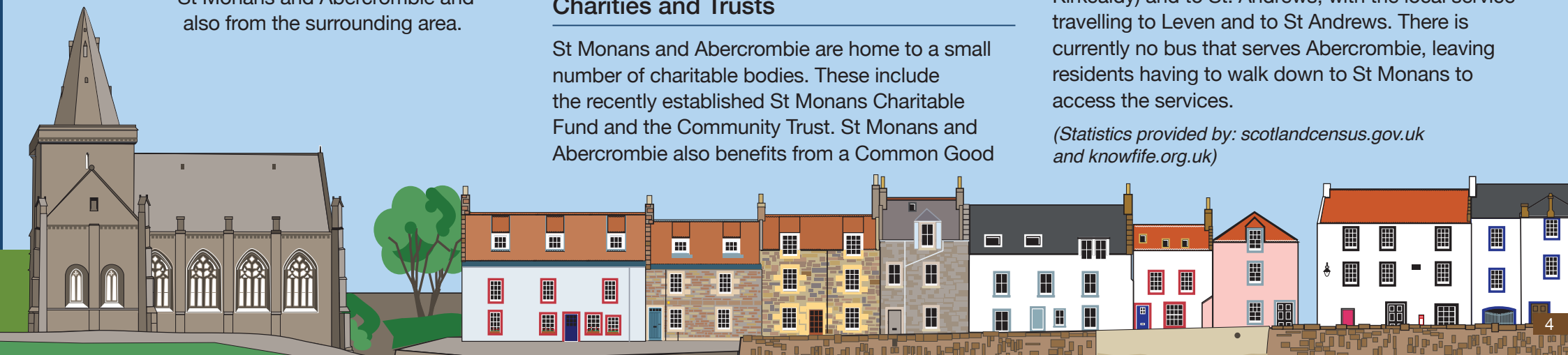
Leisure and Recreation

St Monans has a Bowling Club and Multi User Games Area (MUGA), but both facilities have been recognised as being under-used in recent times. In addition, there are three play parks and a skate park for the younger children. The condition of these parks is deteriorating, with the skate park currently being closed and requiring repairs. There is a local amateur football club, St Monans Swallows AFC, that has been part of the community for over 100 years. The beach area is used by the Primary School regularly for a 'Beach School'. However this lacks basic facilities, such as shelters and toilets.

Transport

St Monans is served by two regular bus services. An express service goes directly to Edinburgh (via Kirkcaldy) and to St. Andrews, with the local service travelling to Leven and to St Andrews. There is currently no bus that serves Abercrombie, leaving residents having to walk down to St Monans to access the services.

(Statistics provided by: scotlandcensus.gov.uk and knowfife.org.uk)



Community Survey Views

What do you like about St. Monans and Abercrombie?

“Beautiful harbour & scenery”

“Great community spirit”

“Quiet area to bring up children”

“Great school and nursery”

“Having the sea on one side and farmland on the other side”

“Historic and picturesque village”

“Good neighbours, everyone helps others”

“I like the peace and quiet you can really get from a small village”

“Good bus service serving the village”

“The history of the village, the church, the windmill and salt pans, harbour & Newark Castle”

“The feeling of being part of a community”



West End



The breakwater - known locally as “The Blocks”

Community Survey Views:

What do you dislike about St. Monans and Abercrombie?

“Anti-social behaviour in the village”

“Lack of signage for car parks, toilets and other amenities”

“Potholes in road and poor footpaths”

“The closure of the Mayview has been a real loss to the village”

“Unaffordable house prices due to houses being sold as second homes & holiday homes pushing local families out of the village”



Theme 1 – Amenities

The survey results showed that residents feel that the villages have a good selection of amenities, such as convenience stores, the post office and a number of places to eat. However, the range of shops is currently limited compared to other East Neuk villages, and developing the variety on offer would increase the attraction of the area to visitors. With St Monans being known for its fishing history and historic harbour, it is clear that residents feel that more could be done to the harbour area to ensure it serves the needs of residents and visitors alike.

The closure of the hotel and pub in St Monans is very much regretted by the community. It became apparent from the survey that the residents would like it to reopen in some form as they considered it was the hub of the community. Such is the strength of feeling on the issue that converting the property away from use as a hotel and public house is likely to be strongly opposed.

Local residents also want to see the development of allotments and/or community gardening. While assessing the right location for any allotments would require public consultation, the extent of the demand for this amenity is considerable.

In addition, existing facilities such as public toilets could be improved with better signage and increased opening hours.

Small Ideas

Big Ideas

42	Place to buy local produce at the Harbour	1	Re-open public house / hotel	60
33	More public toilets	2	Develop allotments	27
21	Introduce mobile banking service	3	Develop community pub at Bowling Club	23
17	Community shop for homemade goods	4	Improve facilities at the beach	19
13	Swap shop for crafts & skills	5	Construct toilet/shower block at the Harbour	16

Amenities priorities:

- Development of a community pub
- Development of allotments/community gardening
- Provision of a facility to buy local produce at the harbour
- Improve the provision of toilet facilities in St Monans
- Develop the accessibility and utility of the beach area



The beach

Theme 2 - Character and Aesthetics

St Monans and Abercrombie are surrounded by the Fife coast and beautiful farmland. St Monans still has the atmosphere of a small fishing village, and many residents would like to maintain this sense of place and promote it to the younger generation.

The character and history of St Monans and Abercrombie were consistently referred to by respondents as being integral to the appeal of the villages as places to live. These are also important in drawing visitors to the area. While there is an acknowledgement that tourism will continue to form an important element of the local economy, there is a concern that this may detract from the character that makes St Monans and Abercrombie a rewarding community to live in.

It is important to ensure the social and economic viability of the community through residential and commercial development which is sympathetic to the character of the villages. We need to balance the attraction of St Monans and Abercrombie as a tourist destination with the needs of its residents.

The prospect of residential development to the west of St Monans Manse, although consistent with local residents' ambitions for retaining a varied and affordable housing stock, raises the issue of the sustainability of the village's atmosphere. Although beyond the bounds of the historic conservation area at the heart of St Monans, new housing should still be sympathetically designed and of high quality, so as not to compromise the village's aesthetic, vital to its success as a tourist destination.

A major concern in both villages was the lack of litter bins and recycling facilities, especially in Abercrombie. Many residents feel that the appearance of the villages is being degraded by an issue that can be easily resolved.

Small Ideas

Big Ideas

60	Address litter	1	Clean & improve the Harbour area	40
27	Plant more trees	2	Promote cohesiveness between generations	37
23	Improve public parks & green space	3	Develop a visitor centre for the Harbour	31
19	More litter bins, especially Abercrombie	4	Make the beach more accessible	26
16	Promote local history in school	5	More recycling points	16

Character and Aesthetics priorities:

- Improve and develop green space in the villages
- Address litter problem with provision of more bins in both villages
- Increase the recycling points in the village
- Educate school children about local history and environment
- Seek opportunities to raise the profile of St Monans and Abercrombie and their heritage



Theme 3 – Infrastructure

Infrastructure in St Monans and Abercrombie could be substantially improved. St Monans in particular suffers from congestion due to the existence of a single road as the main access in and out of the village. Traffic problems are particularly acute in the vicinity of the Primary School and nursery. Some facilities are not easily found due to the lack of signage throughout the village. Improving the signage will also help to improve the parking issues on Station Road and in the harbour area. Road surfaces have been degraded by increasing levels of traffic, harsh winters and budget constraints by Fife Council. Given the economic opportunities presented by the growing tourist industry, it would be unfortunate for visitors to be deterred by poor roads and traffic management.

Traffic concerns are likely to be exacerbated by new residential developments. Where such construction takes place, increasing the number of junctions with the A917 and attendant routes into St Monans would seem appropriate.

One area in the village that the residents would like to see returned to its full potential is the historic harbour, which is still used by a small number of shellfish fishing boats. Facilities for harbour users, both commercial and private, are limited with no power, toilets or waste disposal. Investment in slipway facilities in particular would aid in the maintenance of St Monans’ small fleet of fishing boats and private craft. Residents and stakeholders feel the harbour could serve the purposes of the community and visitors considerably better than in its current condition.

Small Ideas

Big Ideas

37	Repair potholes	1	Improve slipway & Harbour facilities	41
33	Improve public toilets	2	Improve parking around the Harbour	35
28	Improve signage	3	Bring bus route back down into the village	20
24	Develop disabled access to Auld Kirk	4	Resurface village roads	17
21	Resolve parking issues on Station Road	5	Improve mobile signal coverage	15

Infrastructure priorities:

- Improve signage throughout the village.
- Improve disabled access to public spaces
- Resolve parking issues and manage congestion
- Improve slipway and harbour facilities
- Lobby for the improvement and repair of road surface in and between the villages



Theme 4 – Tourism and Events

Tourism is fast becoming the economic mainstay of St Monans and Abercrombie. This brings a substantial number of visitors throughout the year, including in the off-season. With many of the historical sites in St Monans being situated on the coastal path, these are popular attractions, but relatively little information is provided about specific landmarks or the industrial history. The unique location of St Monans, combining coastal and agrarian environments needs to be maintained. Not only is this combination appreciated by residents, but it supports a wide variety of animal and birdlife, that can form a vital component of the village's appeal to tourists. For this to be sustained, it would appear necessary to limit development of land beyond the northern and eastern boundaries of St Monans.

As gastronomic tourism has developed in Scotland in recent years, the monthly Bowhouse food markets stand to attract a consistent stream of visitors to the area with an express interest in local produce. This could be exploited further within St Monans, as the majority of local fish merchants are focused largely on wholesale, despite the Netherton estate being the most visible and accessible food outlet in the village.

The St Monans Heritage Centre situated at the harbour has many visitors during the summer. However it is run on a voluntary basis and has little promotion beyond its appearance on 'Brown signs' around the village.

St Monans and Abercrombie host several events throughout the year which attract residents and visitors. These include the Community Arts Festival and the St Monans Sea Queen Day (now in its 60th year). All the East Neuk villages now host festivals, with themes from food to music, and are an essential part of sustaining the local tourism industry.



The Reaper visiting St Monans on Sea Queen Day



St Monans from the sea

Small Ideas

Big Ideas

34	Keep Sea Queen day at the Harbour	1	Develop the coastal path as a nature reserve	43
31	Do more to promote St Monans & Abercrombie as a tourist destination	2	Secure funds to preserve and restore historical landmarks	39
26	Increase tourist information boards	3	Develop a visitors centre and museum	28
23	Improve advertisement of local events	4	Increase the range of events and festivals	16
16	Develop historical activities	5	Establish an art gallery	10

Tourism and Events priorities:

- Promote St Monans and Abercrombie as a community and destination
- Increase provision of tourist information
- Encourage the development of existing events and festivals, while encouraging the creation of new attractions
- Preserve and promote the villages' historical landmarks
- Encourage the development of galleries and heritage-focused initiatives
- Develop the local coastline as a nature reserve and conservation area

Theme 5 – Sport and Recreation

The use and provision of sport and recreation facilities could be considerably improved. Although there are three small play parks and a skate park in St Monans, in recent years the associated play equipment in these facilities has become dilapidated. There are no active youth groups in the villages, resulting in residents feeling strongly that local children have little to do beyond school hours. There are no uniformed groups in St Monans and Abercrombie, such as cubs, scouts and brownies, with children having to travel to nearby villages to participate in these organisations. St Monans Primary School encourages its pupils’ attendance of youth groups in Anstruther, but lacks its own means of transport. There is no longer a Mother and Toddler group in the area, despite a rising number of infants in the community.

St Monans has a Bowling Club, which is currently seeking to increase its membership and develop the use of its club house facilities. The Bowling Club has the capacity to support activities beyond bowling, due to its central location and being adjacent to the MUGA and football club. A number of respondents expressed the need to improve the cycle paths in and around the villages. The main road is dangerous for cyclists given the volume and speed of traffic.

The harbour supports some recreational activity, with a number of private leisure craft moored throughout the year. However, there are no water sports clubs present in St Monans, with residents travelling to nearby villages for rowing, kayaking and sailing.



Sport and Recreation priorities:

- Renovate and enhance the play parks and skate park
- Promote and integrate the use of the villages’ existing sports facilities
- Start a tennis club at the MUGA
- Establish a Mother and Toddler group
- Develop a youth activity group
- Develop the picnic, play area and garden by the windmill
- Renovate outdoor swimming pool
- Develop cycle paths between East Neuk villages
- Develop a Community Bus – owned and operated by the community



Theme 6 – Community Support

Residents value the community spirit and responded in overwhelmingly positive terms about their experience of local life. However, there remain concerns in relation to a number of vulnerable groups within the community, especially the elderly, those on low incomes and others struggling with addiction. Support from Fife Council in relation to the difficulties faced by these members of the community is welcome, but the visibility and coordination of such services could be improved.

During the autumn and winter months there is an Afternoon Club for the over-60s in the village. This has always been well supported by residents, but is one of very few clubs for the aging population. The lack of interaction between the generations in St Monans has been remarked upon, in particular by staff and children at St Monans Primary School. Church services are a feature of village life and the local church periodically holds services in the Church Hall, due to its increased accessibility for those with mobility problems.

The St Monans Common Good Fund (CGF) is a critical asset belonging to the community that could make a tangible difference to the quality of life for local people. This fund provides an annual income to support activities, investments and initiatives within the community. This internal funding provides the community with a means of supporting its own interests without relying on external assistance.

Small Ideas

26	Increase cooperation between community groups
24	Start a lunch club for residents
23	Increase police presence
13	Establish mother & toddler group
10	Start after-school club

Big Ideas

1	Develop support for vulnerable people in the community	29
2	Develop funding projects run for & by young people	20
3	Increase assistance for addiction	20
4	Develop a community centre	19
5	Develop a learning and skills hub	18

Community Support priorities:

- Increase support and assistance for vulnerable people in the community
- Develop a hub for the provision of social services in conjunction with Fife Council
- Develop and fund projects run for and by young people
- Increase cooperation and coordination between community groups
- Establish a regular activity group allowing different generations within the community to socialise



St Monans Primary School



St Monans Town Hall



Theme 7 – Economy and Employment

Although St Monans' historic industries of fishing and boat building have disappeared, employment within the community is high and provided by a variety of industries within East Neuk and beyond. Besides family businesses employed in trades and the thriving fish processing enterprises in the Netherton industrial estate, an increasing number of residents are working flexibly from home while employed in service industries. The increasing size of the University of St Andrews is also driving employment in the East Neuk. With the local increase in tourism and the provision of holiday accommodation, there has been some generation of seasonal employment. Agriculture continues to be at the heart of Abercrombie's economy, although modern intensive farming only provides a limited number of employment opportunities.

Over the last five years the number of self-employed and home-based workers in the villages has increased, but support is scarce for small enterprises. Internet connections within the community vary in quality in both St Monans and Abercrombie, which is a concern for home-based businesses as well as visitors. Neither St Monans nor Abercrombie has a high street with multiple commercial premises, and so space for retail businesses is limited. This is a particular disadvantage in terms of exploiting growing visitor numbers. Moreover, the limited quantity of commercial property in the villages risks being subject to conversion into residential use as the tourist industry develops.

The creation of rental offices on Station Road is welcome, but the preservation of St Monans and Abercrombie's remaining commercial premises should be a priority for the community's future economic prospects.

Small Ideas

45	Start a co-op for purchase and sale of local produce	1	Develop an online store for local produce and crafts	37
45	Promote local businesses in the community	2	Develop communal office space for self-employed residents	30
25	Increase cooperation between businesses & community groups	3	Develop free WiFi within the village	28
7	Identify new storage space	4	Develop an enterprise hub	15
6	Develop local business directory	5	Identify & develop commercial space	11

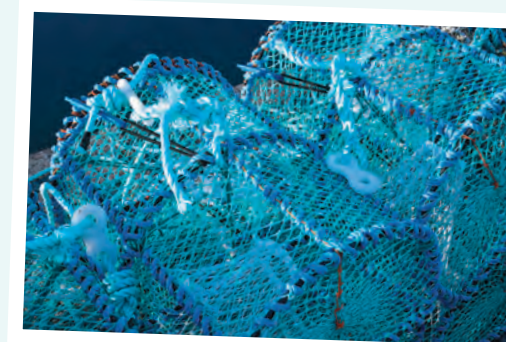
Big Ideas

Economy and Employment priorities:

- Establish a village run outlet for the purchase and sale of local produce and goods
- Develop communal office space for self-employed/home based workers
- Develop village-wide Wi-Fi
- Promote local business and craftspeople in the community and beyond
- Create a commercial website for businesses within the community
- Increase commercial awareness among community groups, encouraging them to use local businesses



Cragjewells behind St Monans



Netherton industrial estate

Stakeholder Interviews

Fifteen stakeholders from local community groups and businesses agreed to be interviewed as part of the CAP process. A number of questions were put to these individuals to assess their current perspectives on operating within our community.

A selection of their responses is provided below:

What is St Monans and Abercrombie like and how has it changed in relation to your organisation?

- Increase in tourism to the village
- St Monans has gained valuable businesses in recent years
- The local economy has improved, but this could go further
- Local businesses help each other
- Residents want to support the village and see it develop

What would you like for St Monans and Abercrombie in 5-10 years time?

- To have a successful and vibrant economy
- More affordable housing
- More diverse businesses
- An increase in sources of local employment
- For networking within the villages to be improved, along with their social media profile
- The hotel and public house reopened
- The maintenance of tradition and history in the villages
- More organised activities for young residents
- The local conservation area to be better protected
- More social interaction between the community's various demographic groups
- For the villages to continue to be a vibrant and thriving community

St Monans Primary School Survey

The children of St Monans Primary School were also asked for their views and opinions, which largely reiterated the main points of the community survey. Three primary questions were asked, and a selection of responses is provided below:

What do you like about St Monans and Abercrombie?

- The beautiful location and lovely views
- The MUGA and parks, but with requests for improved facilities
- The Serenity Garden
- The friendly people in the village
- The farm at Abercrombie
- The walk at Sandy Kirn
- Walking on the Coastal Path
- The flowers in the hanging baskets and tubs

What do you not like about St Monans and Abercrombie?

- Not enough for children to do
- Not enough play equipment in the parks
- The amount of litter in St Monans and Abercrombie
- Certain parts of the village feel less safe because of antisocial behaviour

What would make St Monans and Abercrombie a better place to work, live and visit?

- More activities for children
- Increase in the quality of play equipment and skate park
- Increase the village Library opening hours
- More recycling bins



Acknowledgements

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