



Alva Community Action Plan Consultation Report

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Alva Community Council

Twitter: @AlvaCommCouncil

Email: info@alvacommunitycouncil.org.uk

Web: www.alvacommunitycouncil.org.uk

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1. Background

1.1. In 2014, Alva Community Council began to hold community meetings to gather public views and prepare a community action plan document. Through this process, three public meetings were held and a small steering group of community council members and other representatives was formed. In 2015, the group prepared a survey with six qualitative questions and two background information questions, in order to gather views from the wider community. A paper copy was delivered to every property in Alva, and was also available as an online survey on Citizen Space (hosted by Clackmannanshire Council and accessible via the Community Council website).

2. Methodology

2.1. The responses for each question were read and categorized using a spreadsheet which then gave a total number for each type of response given. Themes were then highlighted based on the highest types of responses for each question and have been included in this report along with other related responses which were felt to link in with the common themes.



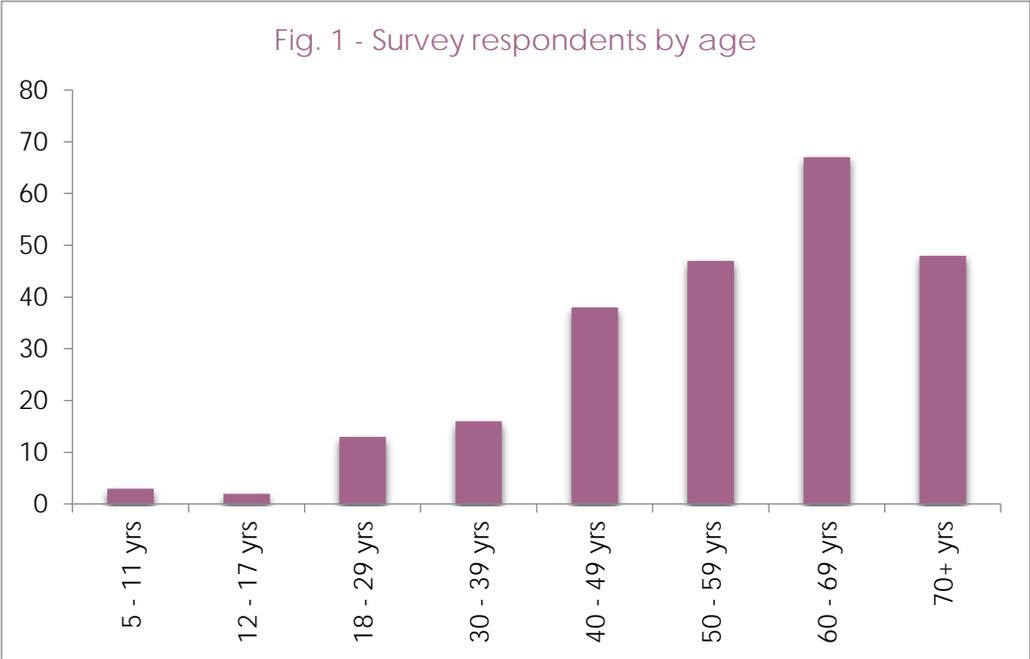
3. Demographics

Age of Respondents

3.1. There were a total of 240 responses, 66 of which were completed online and the remaining 174 on paper. Participants were asked to indicate their gender and to choose from the following age brackets:

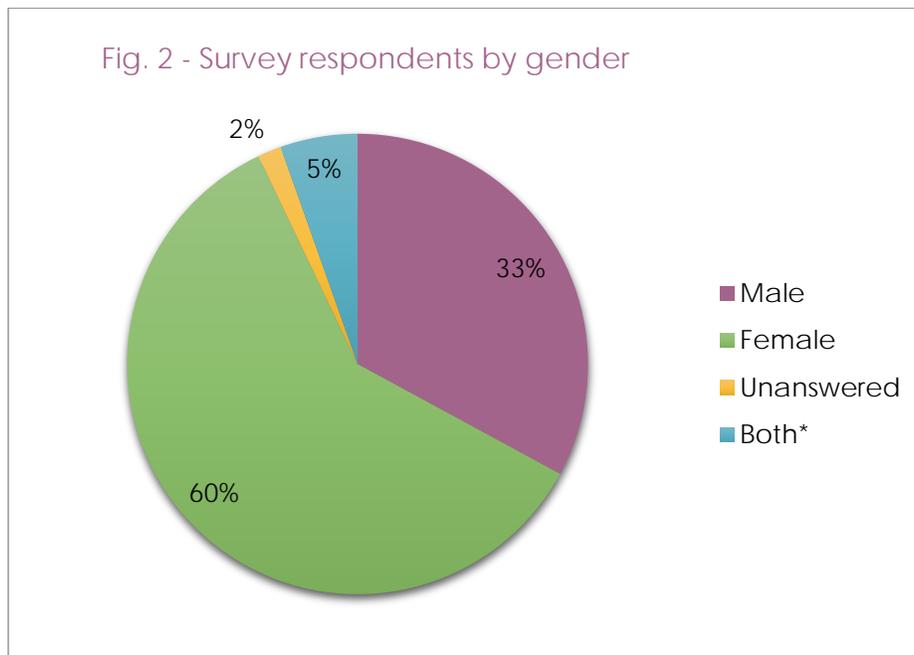
- 5 – 11 years
- 12 – 17 years
- 18 – 29 years
- 30 – 39 years
- 40 – 49 years
- 50 – 59 years
- 60 – 69 years
- 70+ years

3.2. Figure 1 shows how many respondents there were from each age group. The age category with the highest number of respondents was 60 – 69 years old where 67 people fell into this category, and the lowest was 12 – 17 years old where there were only two respondents. You can also see that the majority of responses were from those above the age of 40 years old. Above this age there were 200 respondents and below there were only 34.



3.3. In addition to the responses represented on this graph there were three responses where no age category was indicated and three responses where more than one category was chosen where a family group or couple had chosen to fill out the survey together. I have treated these as only one response throughout the analysis.

Gender of Respondents



- 3.4. In terms of gender the majority of respondents were female. As you can see from figure 2, female respondents made up 60% of the overall total and only 33% were male meaning that nearly twice as many women as men took part in the survey. As above there were a number of people who did not specify a gender, 4 in total, and 13 of the responses indicated both genders where a couple or family group had answered the survey together.

4. Q1 – What do you like about Alva?

- 4.1. The most popular response was that people liked the countryside and scenery in and around Alva. This was noted by 84 respondents. In addition to this 41 commented on liking Alva's location for similar reasons. The Ochil Hills were mentioned by 39 people, 63 said Alva Glen and 25 commented on their love of the local walks. Immediate access to the natural environment from Alva was listed 21 times. The third highest answer was the parks in Alva, 68 people listed these as one of their top likes in the town.

"The scenery, it takes my breath away on a regular basis!"

- 4.2. The second highest answer was that the people of Alva are friendly and helpful, 75 respondents highlighted this. Thirty people also valued the sense of community spirit within the town and 22 liked the local events such as the illuminations, the fun days in the park and the Scampagmata (Scottish Italian Football) event. It was also mentioned that the community provides a strong sense of togetherness and support in challenging times too.

"Having just moved to Alva what attracted me was the views, the open spaces, the lovely walks, great cycle routes. Having been here for a few months now it's the people who have made the difference, very friendly and helpful."

- 4.3. The top five most popular responses also included the shops which were listed by 56 people as one of the main things they liked about the town. There were nearly 40 separate types of shops and amenities specifically mentioned in addition to this which were all clearly valued. There was a sense that people liked to be able to shop for most things they needed within the town. The schools were thought to be good with 30 people highlighting them.

"I like the friendliness and helpfulness of most people in the community and the way people rally round, to support each other when they are doing things to help the community or fundraising. I like being able to shop locally and the feeling that each shop cares about you. It is an advantage that we have access to the natural environment which people take pride in"

- 4.4. People felt Alva was located well within the central belt in terms of access to other cities, 24 mentioned this, but there was also a sense that the 'village feel' to Alva was important too with 29 liking the town's floral displays and others mentioning the bunting and the recent pom pom festival.

"I like where it is located - easy access to rest of Scotland. It is beautifully set at the bottom of the Ochils. The people are friendly. I have lived here all my life and wouldn't want to live anywhere else"



5. Q2 - What don't you like about Alva?

5.1. The highest response in answer to this question was the run down appearance of Stirling Street, which was mentioned by 64 people. There was a general sense that people were disappointed with the state of the main street and they felt it reflected badly on the town, discouraging others to stop and visit. Along with this there were 25 who specifically mentioned the run down state of the properties on the main street, and 20 who highlighted the derelict buildings. The former cinema building at the West end of the town was mentioned by 55 people. This was the second highest response. It was felt very strongly that this building was an 'eyesore' and was bringing down the main street in terms of its appearance. The number of empty shops was another concern for residents with 39 people raising this issue making it the fourth highest response. Linked with this was a feel that there was a high turnover of businesses with remaining open a real struggle, and as a result of this, a lack of employment opportunities too.

"It's increasing decline with the lack of investment, services/ businesses closing down, lack of community facilities – especially for the young people e.g. swimming pool closure – this is impacting on the health and wellbeing of our children."

5.2. Access to Stirling Street was another issue. It was highlighted that it was difficult for pedestrians due to lack of public crossings and the state of repair of pavements, along with a lack of public toilets and benches in the town. It was also mentioned there is a lack of safe cycle paths through town. The biggest issue mentioned here though was illegal parking on the main street. This was the third highest response with 41 people including this, and a further 23 highlighting the lack of safe parking alternatives in the town.

5.3. The general environment of the high street was a concern too with 34 people listing the high number of pigeons and a further 13 mentions of the mess they leave around the town. Dog waste was also noted by 29 respondents and general litter by 26. The brownfield sites around the town were mentioned by 28 people who were concerned about these sites being left undeveloped. The site of the former Alva Glen Hotel, was listed by 34 people in addition to this and described as 'unsightly'. The Berryfield site at the East end of Alva was included by 27 people and the ground at Erskine Street and Queen Street by 22. There was some concern that these spaces have all been lying empty for some time and are getting more and more overgrown, adding to the neglected and run down feel of the town.

- 5.4. There was some sadness at loss of the pool and the lack of leisure facilities within the town including a lack of facilities for children and young people. In total there were 40 mentions of the loss of the pool and lack of facilities in Alva.

"The high street is drab with buildings in despair...Alva used to be the 'jewel in the crown' of Clackmannanshire, let's make it so again – it has the potential."



6. Q3 – What would make Alva a better place for yourself, family, friends and visitors?

6.1. Top responses:

- Wasteland sites to be developed/tidied (40)
- Tourism developed (39)
- The main street to be tidied up (36)
- General clean-up around the town (36)
- More public parking (29)

6.2. A total of 36 people wanted the main street tidied up with 27 asking for a facelift of the buildings along the street and 17 wanting businesses to take more pride in their buildings. The former cinema was mentioned here again with 19 people asking for it to be re-decorated. A general clean-up of the town was also quite high in the responses being mentioned 36 times and including various issues such as general cleaning of the streets, cleaning up pigeon mess on buildings, tidying up brownfield sites, taking away rubbish left by the River Devon, in Alva Glen and at the Golf Club, tackling the general litter problem, clearing out the burn, and tidying the parks.

“I would just like to walk down a pretty main street, with smart buildings and flowers...Alva needs to look more prosperous, and more loved”

6.3. There were 40 mentions of the brownfield sites; 16 people mentioned these in general, 9 highlighted the former Alva Glen Hotel site, 9 mentioned the Berryfield site and 6 the land at Erskine Street and Queen Street. Suggestions on how to use these sites included new housing, car parking, community spaces such as allotments, gardens, a town square or a multi-purpose community hub facility, with most agreeing they wanted them to be at least maintained until development were to take place to keep the town looking presentable.

6.4. There was a distinct level of support for the development of tourism within Alva and a desire to use the location and history of the town to attract visitors and help the town thrive again. A total of 31 people mentioned this subject and a number of different ideas on how to do this were put forward. A good number of suggestions centered on the Ochil Hills and included developing a base for hill walkers with changing facilities and a café, and providing information on walks and other tourist attractions. It was mentioned that the parks within Alva could be developed further to attract more visitors adding attractions such as a putting green, trampolines, tennis

courts, crazy golf, more picnic tables and an outdoor gym or trim trail. There was an idea that new walks linking the parks and the hills could be developed and new signage and maps made up to advertise and promote these. Some asked if it was possible to re-open the mill trail and to develop a space within Alva for people to learn about the history of the town. The development of places for people to stay also came into this along with the mention of the need for public toilet facilities for visitors, which was mentioned 26 times and public parking mentioned by 29 respondents. On this issue some were in favour of putting in bollards to stop illegal parking on the main street and others suggested taking away the width of the current pavements to create lay-bys for parking.

“Alva requires a centre for activities, sports – a meeting place – somewhere that’s open to all at reasonable prices so people have a sense of ownership and can feel included”

- 6.5. There is also a strong desire for further investment in sports and leisure facilities within the town. Frequently respondents spoke of having to travel outside of Alva to enjoy these types of facilities which seemed to be costly for families. A new swimming pool and leisure centre was listed by 31 people, and there was specific mention of the need for activities and facilities for children and young people especially, coming up 26 times. High on this list was the suggestion of a skate park in Alva mentioned by 26 respondents. There was also a desire to see business investment attracted to Alva in order to see employment opportunities developed for residents and especially the younger generation.



7. Q4 - What would you like to see happen short term?

7.1. Top responses:

- Properties on Stirling Street tidied up (48)
- The former cinema building re-decorated (37)
- More parking available in town (21)
- The site of the former Alva Glen Hotel developed (19)
- All brownfield sites in Alva developed (18)
- Pigeons removed from the town (18)

7.2. The priorities for the short term came out quite clearly, the highest response being to tidy the properties on Stirling Street which was given as an answer by 48 people. A further number of people mentioned the need for the former cinema building to be tidied up, this was mentioned 37 times and 14 people also wanted shop fronts improved.

7.3. The next highest response was the request for more parking in the town, 21 people listed this as part of their short term priorities. After this the fourth highest response was that the site of the former Alva Glen Hotel should be developed, 19 people mentioned this and a further 18 highlighted the brownfield sites in general. This was also the same number of people that wanted to see the pigeon problem in town dealt with.



8. Q5 – What would you like to see happen long term?

8.1. Top responses:

- Development of a multi-purpose community facility (32)
- Development of tourism within Alva (27)
- Main street looking tidier and brighter (26)
- Development of brownfield sites (18)
- New swimming pool (16)
- Addition of skate park to park facilities (16)

8.2. The results here were also quite clear with the development of a multi-functional community centre or 'HUB' coming out as the most popular response to this question. There are quite a few suggestions as to what this could include ranging from general sports facilities to tourist information, and other facilities such as a café, to including local services such as a C.A.P. and the library, and even the health centre and a swimming pool. The latter was also mentioned separately with 16 people making this their long term priority for the town. The same number also put forward the suggestion of developing a skate park in Alva.

8.3. The comments put forward in relation to tourism focused on making the town more welcoming for visitors and developing specific attractions and facilities that will draw them in, as well as capitalizing on Alva's natural assets like the surrounding hills and scenery.

8.4. The improvement of the main street came out as the third highest response and development of all brownfield sites the fourth with 18 mentions, although there were a further 10 people who mentioned the Berryfield site, 5 highlighted the derelict building at the entrance to Alva Glen, and 5 spoke about the site of the former Alva Glen Hotel.



9. Q6 - What is your big vision for a “Better Alva” in 5 – 10 years?

- 9.1. This question was answered very differently by different respondents. Some gave their answers to earlier questions again mentioning specific issues and how they would like to see these resolved, and others gave a broad vision statement of their dream of what Alva could be. In terms of the top responses these were difficult to pick out as the answers varied so much. The only one that came through loud and clear was to have a tidier, better looking main street which 35 respondents said. There were other themes that came through, tourism being the most common with 54 comments around welcoming people into the town and developing facilities to attract visitors. The other category was around business and the local economy; 19 people described how they wanted to see local businesses thriving and staying in the town, and linked with this was a desire for investment in Alva in order to create local employment opportunities, 16 people made comments around this.
- 9.2. In addition to the above, I have included quotes from respondents below which I feel represent the common vision for a “Better Alva” which came through in response to this question.

“To create a vibrant attractive village, where people love to stay and others love to visit.”

“To return to the lovely little town that it used to be, where you can be proud to say you live here”

“A thriving community – good housing, small industry and good sports facilities, a good place to bring up a family and grow old”

“My vision for Alva is to make it like the Model Burgh again”

“To be a lovely place to live and for the next generation to enjoy”

“A happy and safe community where my children and grandchildren can grow and enjoy their lives, taking pride in their town and countryside”

“To be a place where people are proud to be from, appreciate and invest in what we have, to preserve and improve, and be a safe and pleasant place to live.”

"To become the most attractive and lively village along the Hillfoots, a centre for tourism and offering a range of leisure activities and events."

"Alva thriving as a place to live, work and play"

"Work for the youth and a happy safe haven"

"I would like to see Alva restored to its former glory, it's a great town with great people and it deserves to be a great town again!!"



10. Innovative Ideas

10.1. Throughout the responses there were some positive suggestions and ideas on how to develop the town put forward by individuals which I have listed below.

10.2. **Local facilities/events**

- A local hill climb challenge/sponsored run/walk up hills to bring visitors to the area
- Outdoor family/community space including BBQ area
- Illuminations developed and promoted
- Activities/facilities for young people including a youth café
- Small shopping centre
- A theatre
- Local food festival/market
- Sports venue with changing facilities at Cochrane Park with possible funding from Sport Scotland

10.3. **Tourism**

- Building at Alva Glen entrance developed into café and tourist attraction, possibly including tourist information, a museum, or local crafts
- A living museum to show the working history of Alva
- Development of the local brewery as a tourist attraction, linked with local food and drink
- Rural art located in the Ochil Hills
- A chair lift up to the top of the Ochil Hills with visitors centre at the top

10.4. **Town**

- Empty shops used for community purposes & activities/murals
- Canvas posters to cover derelict sites or buildings in the town temporarily until redeveloped, showing old pictures of Alva

10.5. **Business/local economy**

- Water turbine at Alva Glen to generate energy with profits returning to the town for community use
- Creation of a local business plan such as that of the Alloa Town Centre Business Improvement District
- Shop front improvement grants
- A shop local reward scheme
- Establishment of an Alva Development Trust
- A local community development team to foster creation of local projects and activities

11. Summary & Recommendations

- 11.1. Key points moving forward:
- Alva has much potential, residents want to see this released so that it can thrive again for future generations.
 - The town's high street needs a boost and a re-vamp with properties cleaned up and perhaps redecorated, specifically the former cinema needs restoration.
 - People would like to see Alva developed as an attractive destination for tourists and visitors. There are things that can be done in the short and long term to encourage this.
 - The various brownfield sites within Alva need to be utilized, preferably developed to include facilities that will enhance life for residents of the town.
 - Investment in business and in leisure facilities for the town, especially with opportunities for young people within both of these will be an essential consideration.
 - It is important to note that the views of children and young people were not fully represented in this report and it would be recommended that further consultation be carried out going forward.
- 11.2. Throughout the analysis it was clear to see that Alva is a much loved town with a rich heritage and lots of potential. The local residents are longing to see Alva fulfill its potential, many people wrote of restoring Alva to its 'former glory,' and a desire to see the town thrive again.
- 11.3. In terms of priorities for the Alva Community Action Plan, the feeling of a high street in decline was very much at the forefront of these results, with shop fronts needing to be taken care of, along with empty shops and derelict buildings, and especially the former cinema. The lack of parking in and around the high street also needs to be addressed as a priority and may well help to boost the success of businesses in the town centre. Residents are hoping for a clean, bright and attractive main street, and the town as a whole brought back to life again, restored, with opportunities for future generations through thriving industry and business.
- 11.4. In the long term residents would like to see Alva become a thriving tourist location. Many value the local green spaces, countryside and scenery and are proud of these natural assets, wanting to share these with others. The people of Alva being friendly and helpful was one of the strongest themes coming through in the responses and with this in mind it would

seem that the town are ready to welcome others in to what is already a strong community. In the short term promotion and development of existing events and places of interest would start this process and perhaps support further investment in new facilities and tourist attractions moving forward. It was also a priority that amenities and facilities for local residents are improved and invested in. Many felt that the key to the town's success would be the development of brownfield sites in the town, along with attracting investment in local industry and creating new facilities for leisure and tourism. It was hoped in the long term these would all serve to attract more people to stay and visit, helping Alva to thrive once more and securing a strong future for younger generations within the town. Unfortunately there has been a definite under representation of young people and their views in this report and going forward it will be essential to include them in decisions made and work with them to create a sustainable future for Alva.





This Community Action Plan was facilitated by Alva Community Council, with support from Clackmannanshire Council, Marshall's Farms, the No.5 Inn, and volunteers from Alva.

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