

Penrith's Community Plan

Stepping stones

towards a better future.

Plan February 2016



Welcome to Penrith's Town Plan

After discussions with interested parties between October 2014 and November 2015, the Penrith Partnership [PP] sought to carry out an extensive survey with householders, businesses and schools to identify issues of particular concern and to develop where possible courses of action to address those concerns. A number of open meetings were held, seventy of the town's interest groups were contacted for comment, as were the three main community residents' associations. The Partnership wants to reflect the views of all residents but recognizes that there will be gaps in the information collected, and potentially important areas of local interest which are not represented. However the aim is that this should be a dynamic plan, updated and reported on an ongoing basis. As a result it will ensure that new ideas and views to be input at any time; please feel free to contact any of the members of the Partnership or the Town Council, or to place comment on the Penrith Partnership web site at <http://www.penrithpartnership.org.uk/contact>.

The following plan has been subject to several rounds of consultation over the course of 2015. This final version is designed to:

- ensure Penrith offers an attractive environment in which to work, rest and play
- ensure Penrith offers a full range of events and activities for all age ranges, and also for visitors
- enhance Penrith's appeal as a dynamic commercial centre
- improve Penrith as a transport hub
- build on and promote the unique heritage of the town through active management of the conservation area, sensitive building developments and active management of the infrastructure
- improve facilities in the town for young people

The Action Plan therefore categorizes areas of concern under six themes: Environment, Leisure and Amenities, Economy, Transport, Heritage, and Young People. It describes areas of concern and the actions that might be taken by a lead organization or person. The format is designed to allow the actions to be highlighted in blue to indicate priorities and red, amber and green to reflect progress over time. The Partnership recognizes that while some initiatives can be addressed by individuals or groups, others can only be achieved with consent from and collaboration with larger bodies: Cumbria County Council [CCC], Eden District Council [EDC], Penrith Town Council - but it is important that this plan recognizes the larger ambitions and wishes of the town.

Background

The Penrith Partnership is just one of many community, business and activity groups in Penrith and the immediate surrounding area. It has been active in raising money for enhancements to the town: e.g new lighting in St Andrews churchyard, installation and painting of street furniture, improvements to the alleyway between Little Dockray and Devonshire Street. It has also run events, most notably the Eden Food and Farming Festival in July. This work has brought it into contact with other key groups in the town, and this has made it apparent that there are overlaps between groups in both ambition and detail.

The main drivers for a single joint plan were therefore as follows:

- The desire to bring together, and to maximize the impact of all of the good work that is already being taken forward by individuals and groups within the town.
- The wish to ensure that a critical mass of resources and people can be created to deliver any particular organization's objectives.
- The wish to minimize, or at least recognize and work with, overlaps or areas of mutual interest and concern.

The Partnership claims no monopoly on ideas – which is why we have sought to generate as much input as possible from other groups and individuals into this plan, and why we continue to welcome ideas and comments. Nor does the Partnership lay claim to any ownership of the Plan: we have simply sought to act as the catalyst to bring ideas together into a single document.

In arriving at this plan we have consulted as follows

- Initial meeting October 2014
- Web based survey February/March 2015
- Contact with 70 local organizations, asking for comments and ideas
- Community Forum meeting 13 April 2015
- Circulation of draft plan
- Recirculation of draft for comment – September 2015
- Open Forum, Library 17th November 2015
- Identify people to lead on the six key themes – January 2016
- Publish Plan – February 2016

The Vision

To create a desirable, vibrant and safe environment for everyone, whilst sharing a clear identity for Penrith now, and in the future.

The Vision has been agreed by Penrith Town Council, The Penrith Chamber of Trade, The Penrith Business Improvement District and the Penrith Partnership. We hope it will also be adopted by Eden District Council in due course giving us all a common set of objectives

Principles to underpin implementation of projects

- * Local employment for all contracts delivered under the plan (except where there are skills shortages or compelling financial grounds)
 - * Environmental sustainability
 - * Project sustainability
 - * Financial sustainability
 - * Equality of access

- * Community involvement in planning and project delivery

THEME 1: ENVIRONMENT - TO ENSURE PENRITH OFFERS AN ATTRACTIVE ENVIRONMENT IN WHICH TO WORK, REST AND PLAY

Lead:- Peter Ward peter.j.ward@hotmail.co.uk

Penrith is already an attractive town but could be greatly improved. Specific tasks in this area will include the use, design and maintenance of quality green spaces, the greening of the town centre, maintenance of public space and removal of “grot spots”

Action No	Issue	Action required	Key partners /Lead	Current Status
1A	Continued litter problems in various areas of the town (despite some improvements over the last 4/5 years)	Install bigger/ more numerous litter bins to be placed where a specific litter problem is identified (e.g. Cornmarket)	PP/BID/ Chamber of Trade/ Town Council/ EDC	
		Promote community litter-picks using voluntary groups/“clean teams”/schools to tackle problem areas on a regular basis	PP/Local voluntary groups & individuals	
		Encourage retailers to take responsibility for the cleanliness of areas around their businesses.	Chamber of Trade/CoT Ambassadors/BID	
1B	“Grot spots” needing cleaning	Promote cleaning and general improvement of identified “grot spots” – examples as below	Penrith Partnership/BID/Town	

	and improvement.		Council	
		Renovate alleyway between Little Dockray and Devonshire Street	PP/BID/Town Council	The Partnership has upgraded the alley way that runs from Devonshire St to Little Dockray. Installing a new gate and lights as well as replacing the ceilings and painting the walls. Work completed Nov 2015
		Renovate alleyway between Little Dockray and Three Crown's Yard in conjunction with UCC	PP/UCC	Initial meetings have taken place and a condition survey commissioned. Timescale for completion July 2016
		Mural (?) on footpath from Benson Row to Brentfield way		
1C	Castle Park old-fashioned, under-utilized and in need of a new vision and the funding to take it forward.	Public consultation undertaken in 2014. Specific issues raised were toilets, genuine attractions, play area, water fountain for children, snack bar. New entertainments and exercise area for young and old. Mention of mini golf and climbing; develop plan.	EDC and Castle Park Steering group, schools	Plans considered and drawn up and Heritage funding being sought
		Consider how better to signpost Castle Park from the town centre.	EDC/BID	
		Arrange for car-parking in or near the park to improve accessibility		
1D	Poor public toilet facilities	Upgrade current facilities and charge for use so as to create a fund for ongoing maintenance and improvement	Town Council/EDC	

			EDC/CCC Highways/Town Council/BID	
1E	Maintenance of public spaces There is significant room for enhanced maintenance by authorities.	Undertake concerted action to penalize owners whose dogs foul the pavements.	EDC in conjunction with local communities.	
		Improve weed control along footpaths and roads	EDC/Town Council	
		Repair pavements and footpaths (eg Little Dockray), ideally with Lazonby Red.	CCC Highways/EDC	
		Improve and maintain flower beds so all-year display at lower cost.	EDC/Town Council	
		Bushes and trees encroach on pavements/walk-ways creating a hazard for pedestrians. Key problem areas need to be identified and vegetation cut back		
1F	Improvements to appearance, convenience, and enjoyment of the town.	Continue to provide more seating in town centre, ideally in a configuration for people to face each other.	EDC/BID/PP BID/Town Council/PP BID/Town Council/PP	New seating in Old Grammar school yard and Sandgate completed by PP Work completed Summer 2015
		Encourage memorial seating throughout town to improve sustainability.		

		Continue to improve greening of town centre – hanging baskets, planters - to make it an enjoyable place to be. Monitor signage to ensure a coherent image for the town.		
		Upgrade all lighting round St Andrews – broken and inadequate esp. for the winter when dark areas present a risk to pedestrians.	Highways / EDC/PP	Work completed by the Partnership September 2015
1G	Make the Beacon the icon for the town, visible from every area and recognizable from a distance	Consult with Lowther Estates and Lonsdale Estates re development. Develop overall plan.	PP/Penith lead Ron Kenyon	Initial discussions taking place with both Lowther and Lonsdale Estates.
		Look to involve Newton Rigg College (Dept of Forestry) Clear sightlines, remove some trees, so Beacon visible from distance, and from viewpoints		
		Add iconic value: suggestions include a sculpture (to explore in detail), lighting. Better footpaths and improved signage, cycle paths, and even a café.		
1H	Areas of the town look run down	The frontages of shops are in some cases shabby, with inappropriate signage.		
		Need businesses to take responsibility for the area outside their own premises		
1J	Improve approaches to the town	Houses at entrances to town are in some cases very poorly maintained. These need to be painted and upgraded.		
		Improve attractiveness of the Kemplay roundabout; develop improvement plan		

1K	Need to develop a strategy for ALL green spaces so that they are of real benefit to the local community	Bring together a committee to take responsibility for all green areas. This will create critical mass and give the best prospect for improvement.		
		Promote conservation/ wildlife areas of town. To include wildlife trails. Specific mention of Thaka Beck and Carleton End (Eden's own secret garden).		
1L	Need to reduce noise from A66	Work with planners to reduce noise from M6 and A66 as well as introduction of soft landscaping as part of any new building proposal		
1M	Improve town's environmental standards	Develop and promote a low-carbon vision. Renewable energy and help for businesses and residents with older buildings, maintenance and energy costs. Promote use of waste to reduce cost, generate a new income stream and support other businesses.		

THEME 2: LEISURE, EVENTS AND AMENITIES TO ENSURE PENRITH OFFERS A FULL RANGE OF EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES FOR ALL AGE RANGES.

Lead:-

Penrith currently has some good events e.g. May Day, Eden Food and Farming Festival, Penrith Show, Pot Fest and the Winter Drovng event. However there needs to be an improvement in coordination and learning between the organising groups and there is also need to find ways of making these and other events sustainable in the long term in an environment in which grant funding will be increasingly difficult to source. Other specific tasks could include proposals on how to enhance the existing range of activities, how to make better use of amenities like Castle Park and the Leisure Centre and how to develop a full calendar of cultural attractions.

Action No	Issue	Action required	Key partners /Lead	Current Status
2A	Lack of co-ordination and learning between events. Also failure to engage all sections of the community in planning	Establish an events committee for the town, to bring together all of the major parties. Include businesses that could benefit from these events	EDC/ Town Council/ BID/ Penrith Partnership/Penrith Chamber of Trade & Commerce/Lions/ Rotary/ Eden Arts	Discussions taking place between all key players
2B		Improve co-ordination across all groups in town	EDC/ Town Council/ BID/ Penrith Partnership/Penrith Chamber of Trade & Commerce/Lions/ Rotary/ Eden Arts	Discussions taking place between all key players
		Develop a year-round events calendar		
2C	Lack of funding to support events	Explore ways to generate income-stream for/ from these events, so they are sustainable over the longer term. This might involve seeking private sponsorship.	EDC/ Town Council/ BID/ Penrith Partnership/Penrith Chamber of Trade & Commerce/Lions/	Discussions taking place between all key players

2D	Lack of a market in a place advertised as a “market town”	Develop a monthly artisan market in town, enhanced by quarterly key events. Liaison with all interested parties and raise funds to turn this into a reality	EDC/BID/Penrith Partnership/Chamber of Trade	Start date 16 th April with funding from EDC
2E	Lack of a full-scale sports strategy for the town	Seek to support developing Community Group, on the future of Fairhill Playing Field; Promote more engagement between sports clubs to share ideas and equipment, promote each other etc. Perhaps facilitated by the formation of Sports Forum	All sports clubs/EDC	
		Explore and redefine Eden Sports Council and Sports Forum; determine roles, ensure liaison for mutual benefit.		
2F	Need to publicize and promote currently available facilities.	Produce a list of available facilities (eg Play House) which can be highlighted on the town web-sites, with conditions of use etc		
2G	Need to broaden range of activities available	Review range of facilities available in town and explore options for extending the current range of options; examples suggested are a sports day, an ice rink, bowling ...		
2H	Need for more vibrant arts agenda.	Explore possibility of developing an arts centre along the lines of the Brewery in Kendal, or the Kirkgate in Cockermouth.		
2J	Extend facilities for tourists/visitors	Install hook-ups for campervans etc in Sandgate car park		
2L	Lack of family based activities where families can take their children e.g. soft play, wacky warehouse etc	Review existing facilities and consider what is required going forward	Family based community groups/TC/PP	2L

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THEME 3: VIBRANT ECONOMY, SHOPS, COMMERCE & JOBS
- TO ENHANCE PENRITH'S APPEAL AS A DYNAMIC
- COMMERCIAL
- CENTRE

Lead:- Richard Utting richardutting@gmail
Grattan Bowen grattan.bowen@btinternet.com

There is an overriding need for a long-term commercial plan which addresses the key issues faced by the community. This would start by undertaking a detailed audit to understand what we currently have and what is its contribution to the local economy.
Specific tasks could include proposals on increasing the diversity of the town centre experience, how to increase footfall, create higher-value jobs and develop the town as a tourist centre.

Action No	Issue	Action required	Key partners /Lead	Current Status
3A	Lack of footfall in the town.	Re-examine Penrith's offering with the view that the town can't just be about shopping: needs to be more about community and about the creation of a 'different' town centre [USP].	BID/Penrith Town Council/EDC/P P/Chamber of Trade	
		Improve publicity via web-site(s) and social media, news management	BID/Chamber/P P/Town Council	Delivered through creation of Discover Penrith website; potential for integrating all other major websites so a single reference point.
		Create WiFi hub in town centre	BID	Delivered by BID 2015
3B	Penrith seems to lose out to other centres' for tourism and	Market Penrith as a destination of choice and a convenient tourist	Tourist Information	

	visiting in the Lake District	centre for the Lakes, Eden Valley and beyond.		
3C	Penrith's shopping experience too dispersed, although it is clear that there is not the demand for this quantity of retail outlets.	Seek to define what is in future to be the town centre, concentrating investment in this area and encouraging other shops to convert to residential use.	Penrith Town Council/EDC	
3D	Eden is a low-income economy with limited career-paths outside the public sector	Encourage provision of higher-value jobs and career-paths in the area so as to make it a more prosperous work place.	EDC/Chamber of Trade	
3F	A danger that Penrith will be overrun with high street retailers.	Encourage and foster small independent shops and alternative shopping experiences.		
		Penrith town centre needs to be different enhancing what we already have but having a different culture/USP (perhaps a café culture with open spaces etc)		
3G	Lack of a link road to Junction 41	Press for this to enable the industrial estates to expand with new business start-ups and allow existing businesses to flourish; it will also ease congestion at Junction 40	EDC/CCC	
3H	Need to support and promote initiatives like Totally Locally.	Explore and develop markets and craft fairs.		
3J	Too many empty shops in New Squares.	Find a way of using these for the benefit of all parties.	Sainsbury's, with help from local enterprises e.g. BID	
3K	Income stream needed to fund development	Develop income strategy including use of existing assets, to help fund future developments		

3L	Consider approaching other retailers from other towns to set up shop in Penrith. To include small national chains like White Stuff, Fat Face etc	Need to consider 'a package' of incentives to encourage them to come	EDC/TC/PCOT	
3M	Create opportunities for existing businesses on the industrial estates with a retail arm to open premises in the town centre	Need to consider 'a package' of incentives to encourage them to come into the town.	EDC/TC/PCOT	

**THEME 4: TRANSPORT, PARKING & CYCLING - TO IMPROVE
PENRITH AS A TRANSPORT HUB.**

Lead:- Richard Utting richardutting@gmail.
Peter Ward peter.j.ward@hotmail.co.uk

Penrith is a transport hub for the North Lakes and Eden – but a number of recent developments have put this in jeopardy. Specific tasks could include proposals to develop the town further as a transport hub, to remove traffic congestion in the town centre, to provide appropriate parking facilities and to enhance the town as a cycle hub

Action No	Issue	Action required	Key partners /Lead	Current Status
4A	Reductions in local bus links	Budget cuts at CCC level mean cuts to local bus routes. Seek to emphasise the need for these services if the rural economy is to be maintained. Seek to develop viable alternatives (community buses). Serious concerns re under-16s and links to local villages. Integrate with train timetables.	EDC and local communities	
4B	Potential reduction in train connections as operators seek to enhance journey times to London.	Continue to promote Penrith as a key destination so that there is a good regular service up/down the West Coast line	EDC/Town Council/Penrith Chamber/PP/local MP	
4C	Pollution in town centre – Narrows and Devonshire Street	Explore ways to reduce/eliminate through traffic from the centre of town. Pedestrianisation of the town is key and should possibly start with the pedestrianisation of Little Dockray	CCC Highways/EDC	

4D	Need for a full-scale overall parking strategy	Expense of car parking, particularly when compared with free supermarket and out of town parking arrangements Whilst there is not a shortage of car parking in Penrith there is evidence that charging regimes place the town centre shops at a disadvantage when compared with out of town shopping. Need to find ways to level the playing field.	EDC/ Penrith Town Council/BID	
		Specific mention of the need for the residents parking areas to be available to businesses during the day		
		Lack of dedicated parking for business users		
		Need for a parking strategy specifically for town car-parks to ensure they are properly designed and managed.		
		Look to create a long-stay car-park for workers, but also for visitors and tourists.		
		Traffic wardens, whilst doing a useful job, are perceived to be unreasonable and do not help to promote the town. Replace with a new Town Ambassador role. The Ambassadors would manage traffic and provide information in a way that helps to promote the town.	Highways CCC/Chamber of Trade/town Council/BID	
4E	Rail line to the West Coast with the first phase being the reinstatement of the Penrith to Keswick Railway	Work already carried out shows there are strong economic arguments for this to be reinstated. However there needs to be the political will for this to happen	PP/EDC/CCC/Penrith Chamber of Trade & Commerce/local MP	
4F	Poor signage for car drivers	Needs research and implementation		
4G	Length of time it will take CCC to	Press CC to complete study quickly		

	produce transport study.			
4H	Develop a cycling strategy for the town, as centre of activities and a hub for cycling in Cumbria	Penrith is on a number of key cycle routes – look at facilities available to ensure the local economy benefits. Survey existing facilities, research what is needed.	Penrith Chamber of Trade/Sarah Graham	
		Consider developing Cycle Festival: research ways and means, assess demand		
		Improve cycling/train links by having common wheels provision at Penrith station		
		Update/develop C2C signage as something for everyone.		

THEME 5: HERITAGE, BUILDINGS & CONSERVATION - TO BUILD ON AND PROMOTE THE UNIQUE HERITAGE OF THE TOWN THROUGH ACTIVE MANAGEMENT OF THE CONSERVATION AREA, SENSITIVE BUILDING DEVELOPMENTS AND ACTIVE MANAGEMENT OF THE INFRASTRUCTURE

Lead Grattan Bowen grattan.bowen@btinternet.com
Jane Taylor jane.taylor@durham.ac.uk

Specific tasks here might include an audit of historic buildings and their current state of repair, and measures to make the conservation area more attractive, to enhance understanding of Penrith's heritage and culture, and to publicise its attractions.

Action No	Issue	Action required	Key partners /Lead	Current Status
5A	Need to develop a strategy for historic buildings and town heritage, and drive its implementation	Undertake an audit of historic buildings, their current state of use and repair, and their potential,	Civic Society/EDC	
		To avoid danger of heritage's being lost, create a digital record of buildings and areas of town.	Civic Society/EDC	
		Penrith has a conservation area, and rules and regulations on signage and colour palette, but these need updating and enforcement. Ensure that the rules/guidance around conservation areas are updated and enforced.	EDC/Town Council/Civic Society	
		Promote and celebrate heritage of town, Specific mention made of need for historic maps and walks.		
		Capitalize on the numerous historic yards in Penrith; make more attractive, celebrate their history and culture. Celebrate culture. Suggestion of art, green spaces. Specific suggestion: to create themed gates for yards, depicting history and culture		
		Promote links between Penrith Castle and town, with Richard III.		
5B	Need to upgrade and improve general appearance of the town,	Improve overall appearance of town: several of the buildings in Penrith are badly maintained and modern window		

	including modern building and infrastructure	fittings/promotions and signage spoil the overall impact of the town		
		Explore the option of a bid to the Heritage Lottery fund for town centre improvements (taking advice from Alston which has recently been successful with a bid).	EDC/Town Council/Civic society	
		Several buildings are in urgent need of improved maintenance and are currently an eye-sore. Work with EDC to serve notice of improvement on these building.	EDC	
5C	EDC's significant house-building programme for Penrith needs monitoring	Need to ensure that developments are built to best environmental standards	EDC/Town Council	
		Need adequate affordable housing (meaning by this also affordable in use)	EDC/Town Council	
		Need to look at opportunities for community-led housing, including self-build)	EDC/Town Council	
		Ensure that infrastructure, public services, roads, schools etc keep pace with speed of development (raised as an urgent issue as part of the Community Plan consultation).	November 2015	
		Ensure adequate parking for new flats and houses – eg on Old London Road, Gasworks Car Park		

THEME 6: YOUNG PEOPLE - TO IMPROVE THE FACILITIES IN THE TOWN FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Lead Jane Taylor jane.talyor@durham.ac.uk
Fiona Johnson fj104@live.co.uk

Young people and young families have significant pressures on their time. but it is important that we find ways to develop the town for these groups as they are the future and will reap the benefits of our work. Specific tasks could include developing destinations of choice for young people and finding ways to understand and respond to the requirements of young people.

Action No	Issue	Action required	Key partners /Lead	Current Status
6A	Increase and enhance youth space in Penrith particularly after school space	Create a youth space within Castle Park, with seating under cover. Explore possibility of indoor youth space in town: discuss with owners/organisers Explore provision of space for practicing/performing eg music (which is lacking in Penrith) Consult young people as to there needs/wants for activities, including space for new activities and sports.	EDC/Castle Park Group	Young people have expressed a wish for this.
6B	Difficulty in discovering what the younger people actually want. Need to harness their views and opinions via formal consultation, schools and activity groups eg scouts, girl guides.	Create a Forum where the voices of young people can be heard; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • secondary schools (School Councils) • primary schools • scouts/guides 		Secondary schools Councils meet 27 Jan

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> youth organisations <p>Ascertain young peoples wishes. The School Councils meet on 27/10/16 and highlighted the following</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provision for young people in Castle Park (see 6A above) Improved transport links Opportunities for work experience, internships. 		
6C	Need to create more quality work and skills opportunities in town. Specific mention of IT linked work Lack of quality work and skills opportunities in town	<p>Explore possibilities which could include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Short term work-experience Apprenticeships Greater engagement with businesses in and around the town to create opportunities for those leaving school. IT especially mentioned 	Penrith Chamber of Trade and Commerce/EDC	RU in discussion with UCC
6D	Difficulty in discovering what the young people are doing in schools /colleges, primary schools, and what they would wish to do	<p>Recently UCC has been allowed to use an empty shop in New Squares to showcase their work with short-term displays, exhibitions. Need to find ways to do more of this, and to engage QEGS and Newton Rigg.</p>		UCC already using New Squares shop
		<p>Also explore opportunities to engage with primary schools. Specific ideas – for exhibition? - include gardens, or crafts such as art work, knitting, sewing rag rugs ...</p>		
6E	Limited shopping opportunities for younger people. Would prefer something on lines of New Look, Top Shop.	Young people prefer brands, but Penrith could look to encourage small independents and market stalls.		
6L	There should be more opportunities for the young to showcase their entrepreneurial skills	Pop up shops/presence at the new artisan market	Chamber/PP/EDC	

6F	Need for youth engagement in the development of the Town	Engage the youth of the town in a major project that they can call their own.	Penrith Partnership and UCC	In train with UCC. Mural planned for alley way at bottom of Little Dockray 1B
		Increase young people's involvement in events in town		Looking for young people to help with Marmalade Festival March 16