



# Insch Community Action Plan

August 2013



The village from Dunnydeer in winter.



Dunnydeer.



Golf Course.

## A Doric Summary

*Fit's er in Insch? Fit div we wint in Insch, foo div ye find oot fit's gan on?*

*Jist some o the questions that are bandied aboot on a regular basis.*

*In February 2013, twa deems came tae Insch, Wilma and Anne, wi the plan tae see fit it wis that we winted and thocht about a Coomunity Consultation tae answer the above and see fit it wis that fowk really winted.*

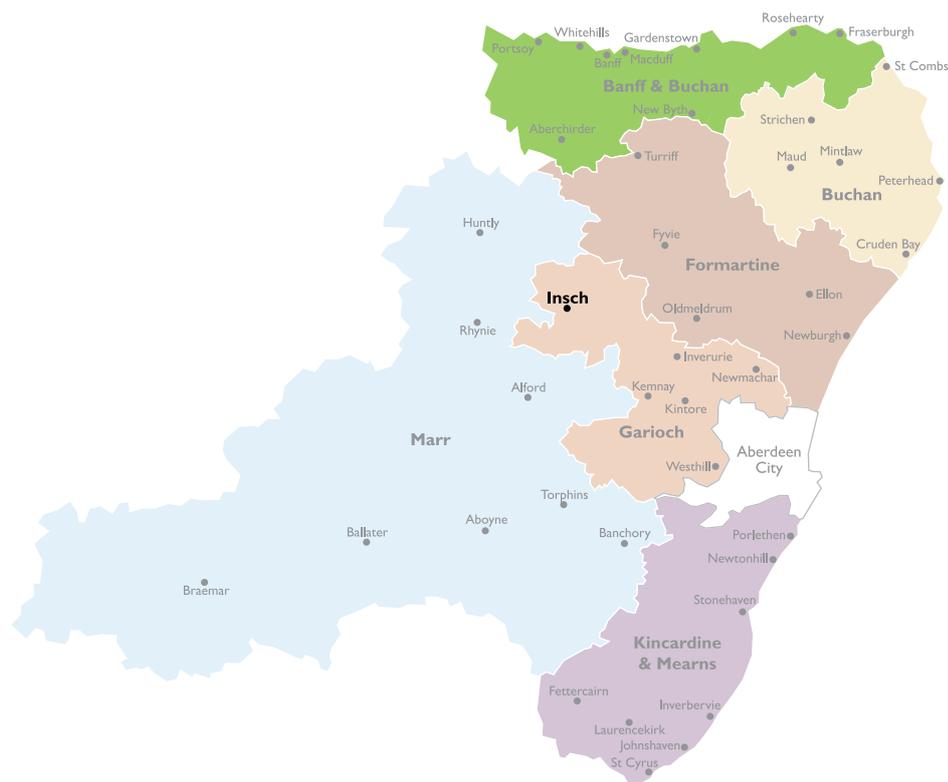
*So the plan wis hatched under the heidin and direction o' these twa quines, and a tool ca'd Plannin for Real<sup>®</sup>. We wid start wi' a 3D model o' oor village and get fowk tae help bigit, pittin' on their ane hoose and sic like. Oh and nae forgetting the landmark Dunnydeer hill and the ither ain aside the Station.*

*Aince it wis built, we wid tak it tae as many places and events in the village as we cood and tae get as muckle input fae the fowk o' Insch. The hale thing is for them tae tak ownership o' their village and its future.*

*Five hunner fowk came forit an' hid their say, generating twa thoosan' comments on a' kind o' things. The team then hid tae collate and record a' this, and then tae sort it intae some kind o' order afore huddin' a Prioritisation Event far the local fowk, internal and external partners came thagither and discussed the main concerns in each category that resulted in this, the Insch Community Action Plan.*

*Noo the next stage is tae tak it fae Plannin' for Real<sup>®</sup> tae makin' it real.*

*So it's o'er tae the guid fowk o' Insch tae tak forward and mak Insch the place they wint it tae be.*



## Insch: Origins and Development

The name “Insch” is first mentioned in the 12th Century and is considered to be of Celtic origin to signify an island.

Insch is at the heart of Garioch in Aberdeenshire and is sheltered by hills, Bennachie, Carrier’s Hill, Christ Kirk’s Hill and Dunnydeer to the South and West and Foudland Hill to the North.

Standing 406 feet above sea level, Insch, historically, was the area bordered by the Shevlock Burn to the West and South, the Valentine Burn to the North and The Mill Burn to the South.

The lands of Insch belonged to David, Earl of Huntingdon. As a thank you for the safe return of his brother from a Crusade, he founded Lindores Abbey in Fife and gave his land of the Garioch for its upkeep. Duty was paid in corn and flour. The last feu was paid in 1967.

In 1565, Insch was created a Barony by Mary Queen of Scots.

Ownership of the lands of the Garioch has passed to various lairds. The Leith Hays of Leith Hall possessed the lands of Insch.

In the 1700’s changes in agriculture transformed the countryside, creating bigger farms, forcing people and their skills into villages. With this increase in population, more houses were built and the village spread out from the church and market, formerly in Market Street. The railway came in

1854 and this changed Insch dramatically.

Insch became a bustling village with dozens of shops including a grocery store, bakers, watchmakers and jewellers, saddlers, boot and shoe shop, tailors, milliners and dressmakers plus a gasworks, sawmill, threshing mill and electric power station.

Today there are two churches, (the Parish and Episcopalian), two convenience stores (Costcutter which includes the Post Office, and the Co-operative), butchers, chemist, bank, DIY Shop, bakers, craft shop, health centre including doctor’s surgery, veterinary surgery, upholstery, a hotel, an Indian restaurant, chip shop, florist/gift shop, hairdressers, an accounts firm, a community hospital that offers palliative care and a casualty department, a library, podiatrist, and day nurseries.

There are various places to meet including the Community Centre which hosts clubs like the pre-school club, Scouts and Brownies and Guides and the Institute which has the Bowling Club attached to it. The Parish Church Hall is used as a meeting place for the Caring and Pensioners Club plus yoga, drama and country dancing. There is also the purpose built Bennachie Leisure Centre with an all-weather pitch. There is also a football pitch, a golf course, a skate park, a playground and a boxing club.

## Things we like about Insch

*(as given by various members of the community of different ages at the start of the project)*

- There’s a lot of facilities and lots to do
- It’s a beautiful setting with Dunnydeer and the hills around
- It’s very safe
- There are plenty of walks in the area
- Nice houses!

**What could be better?** *(as given by various members of the community of different ages at the start of the project)*

- How is the community going to work together as it expands?
- Tidying up the derelict sites
- Knowing what is the future of Insch Hospital
- We need very sheltered housing
- The High Street?
- Pressure on path network and consequent damage to Drumrossie trees
- Is the council confident that our school can cope with the numbers of children that might come to Insch?
- The skate park needs upgraded



*Dunnydeer from the village.*



*Work in progress.*



*The finished model.*



*The prioritisation event.*

### The Inside Insch Project

In February 2013, the Garioch Local Community Planning Group organised a meeting to discuss the idea of a community consultation. At this meeting a working group of local people was established in order to take forward this consultation using the Planning For Real® technique. In May 2013 the model that the working group had made was exhibited at various locations in Insch. The community in Insch and the surrounding area responded very positively to the Planning for Real® consultation. Some 550 people gave their views on making Insch an even better place to live and work. Over 2000 comments were provided during the consultation

events where the model of the village was displayed. It was clear from these comments that there were three main areas of concern namely

- the closure of the Carriages Hotel and its impact on the village
- the road safety issue at the Costcutter junction
- the state of the old depot in the centre of the village.

These three issues and the other outcomes of the consultation have been used to create this prioritised Action Plan to help the community to focus and develop their future goals and to inform the Garioch Local Community Plan.

### The Garioch Community Plan 2013 -2016

The Garioch Local Community Plan brings together the key actions and projects of a number of public agencies. It also includes actions based on consultation with the local communities and local community groups. The plan can be accessed on the following link:

[www.ouraberdeenshire.org.uk/images/media/document\\_library/minutes/local\\_groups/garioch/garioch%20community%20plan%20%202013-16%20final.pdf](http://www.ouraberdeenshire.org.uk/images/media/document_library/minutes/local_groups/garioch/garioch%20community%20plan%20%202013-16%20final.pdf)

The plan is a live document that is updated every six weeks to allow new actions to be added and completed ones to be removed. The main priority outcomes are around the themes of social inclusion, welfare reform, strong, resilient,

safe communities, and early intervention. Currently there are two specific actions for Insch:

**1.1.7** To strengthen links between people, particularly cross-generational links, and to promote health & wellbeing of older people in Insch

**3.2** To work with the community in Insch to identify their needs and aspirations through a community-wide Planning for Real® exercise

Many of the other actions in this plan are high level and Garioch-wide, and are intended to improve the quality of life and have an impact across the whole area. It is pleasing to see that the actions in the Insch Community Action Plan are entirely complementary to those in the local community plan.



*Insch Fire Station.*



*The Institute, Library and Bowling Club.*



*The Museum.*



The High Street and that crossing!

Many other issues were raised through the Planning for Real® process, and these, as well as the three main areas of concern already mentioned are described in more detail under the headings below.

## Crime And Community Safety

### Road Safety Issues

Traffic speed in several locations throughout the village was identified as a problem in the consultation, in particular in Western Road and South Road. The community would like to explore measures to reduce traffic speed and to improve safety for pedestrians. Congestion is an issue at the school for drop off and pick up. Inconsiderate parking creates problems here, and at the Costcutter junction, where there is a dangerous blind spot. This also requires remedial action. Unfortunately no-one from Police Scotland or Aberdeenshire Council Roads department attended the consultation event. Their input will be sought later.

### Community Safety issues

Insch is a very safe community in which to live and work. The community wishes to ensure this remains the case and is considering establishing a neighbourhood watch scheme as a way of doing this. Aberdeenshire Council's Strategic Development Officer (Community Safety) will support the community association with this action.



The former depot.

## Environment

### Green Spaces

Insch is fortunate in having a recreational woodland area within the village, The Meadows. The local community association, ICAN, has carried out some improvements there and encouraged greater use, but the community is keen to explore further development and improve access to Drumrossie woods, while maintaining the natural environment. The Council's Access Officer is working with a group of local people and liaising with the local landowner on this project.

### Allotments And Community Composting

There were many requests for allotments and a community composting scheme in the village. A group will be set up to look at the feasibility of this proposal.

### Visual Improvements

The old depot is an eyesore. It is in the centre of the village and its current state has a visual impact on community members and visitors. This issue has been raised with Aberdeenshire Council. The community would like to see both short-term improvements and a longer-term solution to this problem area.

### Dog Fouling

The issue of dog fouling was of concern to many, with some areas of the village more prone than others. There are examples of ways to tackle this issue from elsewhere in Scotland, and within Aberdeenshire, that could be used to address this anti-social behaviour including a neighbourhood dog watch scheme. Advice will be sought from the Council and others.



The Hospital and Health Centre.

## Health And Wellbeing

### Health Information

A number of community members felt there was a lack of easily accessible information on health services in and around Inch. It was suggested that a community noticeboard would be helpful as would an update of the existing health information booklet.

### Access To Clinics

Access to optician and dentistry services was highlighted as being difficult, especially for those who rely on public transport. It would be helpful as Inch expands further to have these in the village. This will be investigated by the NHS Area Manager for Garioch.

### The Future Of Inch Hospital

A well-established support group, The Friends of Inch Hospital and Community, is taking forward its own plan for the hospital in Inch and is working the NHS Grampian and other partners on the provision of a new building with adequate car parking and modernised facilities.

## Transport

### Co-ordination Of Public Transport

While Inch is well served in terms of transport, being on the main railway line from Aberdeen to Inverness, and near the main A96 road, there are issues with regard to the co-ordination of public transport, frequency of service and times. In particular there is a need to look at the connectivity of the No 10 bus. Contact will be made with the bus companies and Scotrail, as well as exploring the A2B service and contributing to the Garioch Bus Forum.

### Cycle And Walking Routes

There is a need to develop sustainable transport options e.g. cycle routes and foot paths in and around the village to link with buses, trains and other villages. Advice will be sought from Sustrans.



*Inch Railway Station.*



*Play area at the Meadows.*



*Signpost.*



The former Carriages Hotel.



High Street.



Inch School.

## Housing

### Planning & Development

The only comments made about housing were that there should be more appropriate housing provided for elderly people and young people e.g. flats. It was also suggested that the community's voice should be heard more by developers. This issue should be passed to the Bennachie Community Council (BCC) in order to inform the new Local Development Plan.

## Economic Development

### The Future Of Carriages

At the time of writing this report it was unclear as to whether the former hotel had been sold or was still a potential community-run asset. This needs to be clarified before any further action can be taken.

### Regeneration And Sustainability

Inch, like many communities has a number of empty shops. It also has some independent businesses that would benefit from mutual support. It is planned to set up a business forum to work together for the economic prosperity of the area. Aberdeenshire Council's Economic Development team will provide support.

## Education, Learning And Leisure (ELL)

### Parks And Pitches

There were requests to improve some of the existing outside leisure facilities including the skate park. Better lighting and improved drainage is required. Maintenance is also an issue, as is ownership. A working group of interested individuals has been proposed.

## Swimming Pool

A number of residents had asked that a swimming pool was built in Inch. It was felt that this is not a viable proposition. Access to the swimming pools in Inverurie and Huntly could be improved by taking a look at timetabling, actions to reduce waiting lists for classes, and better links to public transport. The Council's Leisure Officers will lead on this.

## Education Provision

There is an issue with overcrowding in the nursery and primary classes in Inch School. While there is land identified for a new purpose built primary school, this does not yet feature in the Council's Capital Plan. There is a concern that should more houses be built in the village as is extremely likely, the existing educational provision will not be adequate. Steps should be taken to ensure that the timing of the replacement school prevents further overcrowding. While responsibility for this sits with the Local Authority, local people will act as a pressure group.

## Bennachie Leisure Centre

Inch is fortunate in having a purpose built modern leisure centre, run by a trust. There have been some sustainability issues at Bennachie Leisure Centre (BLC) due to changes in funding from Aberdeenshire Council which the trust has worked very hard to address. Some comments were made about the accessibility of the facility to all members of the community because of cost, while others commented on difficulties with access to the gym due to its popularity. It would be useful if

links were made between BLC and the other leisure providers in Inch in order to look at sharing good practice and a joint way forward.

## Community

There are a number of community events in Inch e.g. the community association held a very successful family picnic earlier this year and the Friends of Inch Hospital has an annual Strawberry Fayre. There were some suggestions that there should be more of these activities and perhaps a gala to bring the whole community together. The community association (ICAN) will take this forward.

Improved Communication  
Inch is a thriving community with approx. 40 community groups and a good number of community facilities. However there is a need to share information amongst the groups and the community as a whole. ICAN publishes a regular newsletter, as does the Church, and there is a village website, but these could be developed further and a more co-ordinated approach taken.

## Development Of The Community Centre

The Council-owned and managed community centre is well used during the week. There is potential to extend its opening hours to establish for example some community based adult classes, a community cinema or other activities. There is a user's group, which is supported by Community Learning & Development (CLD) staff and will be asked to explore these ideas.

A summarised Action Plan follows. The actions in **bold** are the three that provoked the most comments during the consultation.

### **The Inside Inch working group would like to thank:**

- **the communities of Inch and its surrounding area for their enthusiastic participation in this project**
- **the three Ward 10 Councillors for their encouragement**
- **the Lodge of St. Andrew, The Institute, the Golf Club, the Parish Church Hall and the tenants and staff of Foudland Court for practical support with venues**
- **Aberdeenshire Council for the use of the Community Centre and the School**
- **Inch School parent council**
- **ICAN**
- **the local businesses that displayed posters and attended the prioritisation event**
- **Nom Wright for the Doric summary and Iain Mitchell for the section on Origins and Development**
- **our statutory community planning partners**
- **Anne Simpson from The Garioch Partnership and Wilma Smith from the Council's Marr CLD Team.**



Bennachie Leisure Centre.



Family picnic at the Meadows.



Inch Community Centre.

How will this be taken forward?					By When?
Action	Independent Community Group/Private Initiative	Partnership	Outside Agencies		
Road Safety issues - traffic, speed, congestion, parking		ICAN, Bennachie CC, Police Scotland, Aberdeenshire Council			2014
Community Safety Issues - neighbourhood watch scheme		ICAN, Police Scotland, Garioch & North Marr Community Safety Group			2014
Green Spaces - Meadows & Drumrossie		ICAN, Aberdeenshire Council, Landowner			2015
Allotments and community composting		ICAN, new ICAN sub-group, Friends of Insch Hospital & Community			2016
<b>Visual Improvements</b>		<b>Bennachie Community Council, Aberdeenshire Council</b>			<b>Review 2014</b>
Dog Fouling		ICAN, Bennachie Community Council, Aberdeenshire Council			Ongoing
Health Information, including map of Insch		Friends of Insch Hospital & Community, Aberdeenshire Council, NHS Grampian			2014
Access to Clinics			NHS Grampian		Review 2015
The Future of Insch Hospital		Friends, NHS Grampian, Bowling Club, The Institute, Aberdeenshire Council			Review 2016
Co-ordination of Public Transport		ICAN, BCC, Aberdeenshire Council			Review 2014

How will this be taken forward?				By When?
Action	Independent Community Group/Private Initiative	Partnership	Outside Agencies	
Cycle and Walking Routes		ICAN, BCC, Aberdeenshire Council		2016
Planning & Development		BCC, Aberdeenshire Council		Ongoing
<b>The future of Carriages</b>	<b>Private individual or Company?</b>			<b>2013</b>
Regeneration and sustainability	New business forum	Aberdeenshire Council (Economic Development), Local Businesses		2014
Parks & Pitches		New skate park group, ICAN, Aberdeenshire Council ELL, Bennachie Leisure Centre		2016
Access to Swimming			Aberdeenshire Council ELL	2014
Education provision			Aberdeenshire Council ELL	Review 2015
BLC (linked to park & pitches action)		BLC, ICAN, Aberdeenshire Council ELL		2014
Community Activities		ICAN, Friends, Parent Council, other community groups		2014
Improved Communication		ICAN, Friends, Parent Council, other community groups		Ongoing
Development of the Community Centre		Users group, Aberdeenshire Council ELL		

This booklet is one of a series produced by the Local Rural Partnerships for a number of communities in Aberdeenshire.

This initiative is sponsored by Aberdeenshire Community Planning Partnership and run by Aberdeenshire Local Rural Partnerships. The aim is to provide community action plans in an attractive, easy to read, professionally printed format.

This information can now guide the community and Community Planning Partners in drawing up detailed action plans to implement the top priorities as well as addressing the other issues which have been identified. For each priority or issue this will involve agreeing who should be involved, what resources will be needed and target dates for completion. It is hoped that this process will be driven by representatives of the community with support - moral, technical and financial - from the relevant Partners.

It is important that this booklet is seen by all concerned as an account of the community's views at the time of the latest consultation, and that it will have to be regularly updated. As some projects are completed, other issues will arise and take their place in future versions of the community plan.

It is recommended that this plan has a maximum life of five years.

## THE GARIOCH PARTNERSHIP

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