



BLACKRIDGE AND DISTRICT COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN 2017 – 2022



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Activities and Facilities in Blackridge

Craiglnn Community Centre – Main Street EH48 3SP Tel 01501753227

Activities include:

Card Making	Steps Dance Class	Peace for parents
Gentle Exercise	Art Class	OAP Bowls
Ridge Roller (mother&toddler)	Pinky's Baby Music	Coffee Time
Indoor curling	Peep Baby Group	Pinky's Percy
Women's Rural Institute	Pinky's	Flutes for Fun

Community Wing – Blackridge Primary School, Main Street EH48 3RJ

Tel: 01501752352 Mob: 07764857317

Activities include:

Junior Youth Club p1-p5	Junior Youth Club P6,P7 &S1	Young Farmers – Annual Fundraising Events
Steps Dance Boogy Bounce	After School Club P3-P7	Birthday parties can also be booked at this venue.
Senior Youth Club age S2 up to 25yrs	Kids Boogy Bounce	
Karate	Astro Turf available – book in winter for lights	





41 Community Household Surveys were returned representing the views of approximately 100 residents

200 people attended the Community Futures Family Fun Day

INTRODUCTION

Coalfields Community Futures

The Coalfields Community Futures Programme is an approach to local community planning and sustainable community development that aims to encourage active citizenship and build local democracy. It enables communities to devise a community action plan which makes a case for the things that the community thinks are important and wishes to make happen.

The process builds on existing processes of community action research to identify local needs and priorities, using residents as co-researchers. We work with local residents and groups to develop a common sense of purpose and assist them to produce a deliverable community action plan.

To support the action planning process the community receive a Participatory Budget which is available to local constituted community or voluntary groups.

This budget enables the community to fund small projects that are identified by the community through the results of the household surveys, stakeholder interviews and the Family Fun Day.

Blackridge & District Community Action Plan

The Action Plan summarises community views and information about:

- Our community now
- Our shared Vision for Blackridge and District
- Priority themes and actions

The Steering Group brought together representatives from Blackridge Community Council, Beechbrae, West Lothian Council and Blackridge & District.

Thank you to everyone who took part in helping Blackridge and District plan for a bright future!



OUR COMMUNITY NOW

Background

This profile has been produced to give an insight into Blackridge village and the nearby areas of Westcraigs and Westrigg. It is part of a wider Community Futures process being delivered by the Coalfields Regeneration Trust across Scotland's coalfield communities to assist them to reflect on what is good, what could be improved and how to go forward.

Location and History:

Blackridge is a village in the western part of West Lothian, Scotland.

The village name dates to 1581, first recorded as Blakrig. Later, Blackrig and then Blackrigg became the standard spelling until Blackridge became the norm in official documents after about 1840. Blackrig remains the local pronunciation.

Population

The population, as of the mid-2013 estimate, of Blackridge is 1,926 which includes Westcraigs and Westrigg. The modern village dates from the building of the new Edinburgh-Glasgow road in 1796 and the building of a coaching inn midway between the cities, officially Westcraigs Inn but known locally as the Craiginn. It now serves as housing, a community centre and library.

Industry

After the arrival of the railway line linking Airdrie and Bathgate in 1862, the exploitation of local coal reserves became more practicable although it was

not until the late 1880s that the first local colliery was sunk at Westrigg. The village grew from a population of under 200 to over 2,000 by World War I with coal mining and whinstone quarrying the main employments.

The last colliery closed in the late 1950s and Blackridge became a dormitory for nearby towns. For much of the 1960s and 1970s, the British Leyland truck and tractor manufacturing and assembly plant at Bathgate became the principal employer.

Housing

The building of council housing from the late 1920s until the late 1960s established the modern village with 85% of residents renting from the local authority. Small scale private house building in the 1980s gave way to more substantial developments in the 1990s and early 21st century and the current local plan visualises a doubling of the number of dwellings to around 1,500.

Social and Community

The Community Wing at Blackridge Primary School hosts a number of community activities and can be booked for birthday parties.

Another well used facility is the Craiginn Centre which is a medium size facility that caters for all age groups, activities and events.

Public access computers are available in this Community Centre.

This facility is available for booking from 8.00am until 10.00pm seven days per week.



OUR COMMUNITY NOW

Facilities Available

- Local Library
- Museum
- Main Hall with capacity for 120 people
- 2 x Meeting Rooms with capacity for 12 - 40 people
- Computer suite
- Playroom
- Cooking Kitchen

Other resources available:

- Outdoor play area
- Bowling equipment
- Disabled parking
- Baby changing facilities
- Photocopying

There is one church remaining in the village, Blackridge Parish Church. The present stone building was built by public subscription and donations and is situated on the Main street in the middle of the village and celebrated its centenary in 2001. There is a Blackridge Fellowship Group that meets monthly as well as a monthly coffee morning on the last Thursday from 10am -11.30am.

Health

Blackridge Health Centre offers a GP service as well as access to a Health Visitor, Podiatrist and Plebotomist. There is a “stop smoking” service available as part of Local West Lothian. There is also access to an optician and local nurse. The pharmacy is open Monday – Saturday and they

offer a prescription delivery service for the elderly, frail and housebound patients.

The surrounding hospitals include St John’s, Livingston, the New Royal Infirmary in Edinburgh, the Western General in Edinburgh, Monklands Hospital in Airdrie and Wishaw General Hospital. The number of people living with a limiting long term illness is 19.8% which is slightly up on the figure for Scotland as a whole at 19.6%

Education and Training

Schools that support pupils in Blackridge, Westrigg and Westcraigs include, Blackridge Primary School, St Anthony’s Primary Armadale, Armadale Academy and St Kentigern’s Blackburn.

Figures show that 58% of students in S6 achieved 3+ awards at SCQF level 6 or above with 66.7% going on into employment. (from Skills Development Scotland figures Sept 2013)

West Lothian College is an award winning provider of further education based in Livingston.

Environment

The survey shows that Blackridge has nice countryside, good for walks & cycle rides and local wildlife.

Beechbrae is a local charitable organisation based in Beechbrae Wood. It is committed to supporting the local environment using practices that enhance biodiversity. It offers environmental education and practical workshops to help children and adults to engage with and learn from nature.



OUR COMMUNITY NOW

Transport

The Scottish Government previously excluded Blackridge from the stations to be created on the Airdrie-Bathgate Rail Link, due to be reopened in 2010 but this decision was later reversed. The campaign group Platform Blackridge eventually achieved victory in the campaign and the station was confirmed on 14 October 2008 and opened on 12 December 2010.

There are 11 bus routes that go through Blackridge including one to Edinburgh.

Community Action Plan: Considerations

Results from the survey and fun day show quite clearly that there are several key issues that the people of Blackridge and District would like to see addressed.

A key issue raised is common to many communities, that of irresponsible dog owners and the amount of dog fouling that contaminates the local environment and affects everyone, most especially the children and young people who spend a lot of time outdoors playing and socialising. The Community Council work hard to encourage local people by highlighting this issue and encouraging responsible action by dog owners in their regular newsletters. This approach of constant encouragement to use green bags and take responsibility as a dog owner can be helped by the local authority by making sure there are sufficient bins and signage available to people out in the community.

Another important issue is that of speeding traffic through the village. The options being proposed as a means of tackling this issue include mini roundabouts at junctions, chicanes, pedestrian crossings, warning lights that display current speed and speed cameras. It is important that appropriate action is made before anyone is seriously hurt.

Activities for young people as well as improved outdoor play areas are also of high importance for local people. Further engagement, with a focus on young people would help identify more clearly how these needs might be addressed.

The increase in green energy initiatives include the construction of the Drumduff Wind Farm near Heights Farm to the north of Blackridge and will use the site of an old opencast coal mine. It is important to make sure that the financial benefits afforded to the community through hosting these green initiatives should be used in a strategic manner to make sure that the local community can fully benefit from the financial support they offer locally.



BLACKRIDGE & DISTRICT OUR VISION FOR THE FUTURE

We are working together as a vibrant and resilient community with a strong community spirit.

Well located with good links to other places, we have an attractive, busy and safe community that welcomes visitors.

We acknowledge our creativity and encourage people to realise their potential.

Offering extensive walking routes in a rich landscape, steeped in cultural heritage and a forward looking vision, we embrace change.

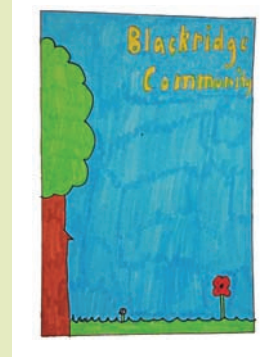
We honour our industrial past and recognise it as the foundation of our present.

We are making the most of our significant contribution to the green energy economy and appreciate the financial and environmental benefits it brings to the local and wider community, now and into the future.

We are actively investing in the future of our younger generation, encouraging them to stay in the community and we welcome in new people with fresh ideas and skills.

Building on our strong volunteer base that cares for and respects its community members, we will focus on good communication between local groups and agencies, helping create life long education opportunities for everyone.

We will work together in partnership with others to achieve excellent services that give good quality affordable housing, safe roads, good transport links and responsive health care.

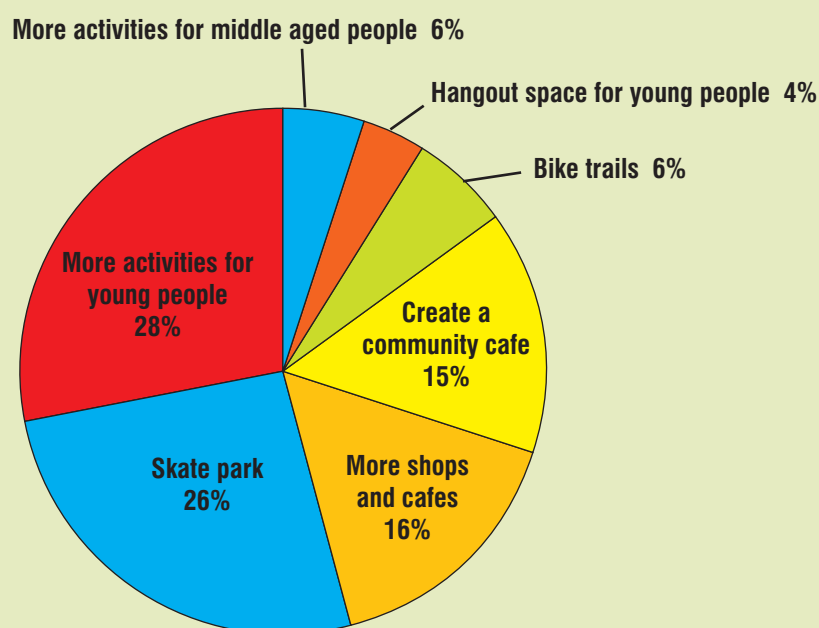


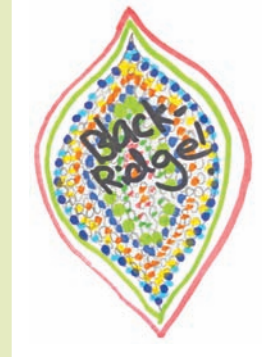
FAMILY FUN DAY VOTING RESULTS

% votes for Public Services Theme



% votes for Facilities and Activities Theme

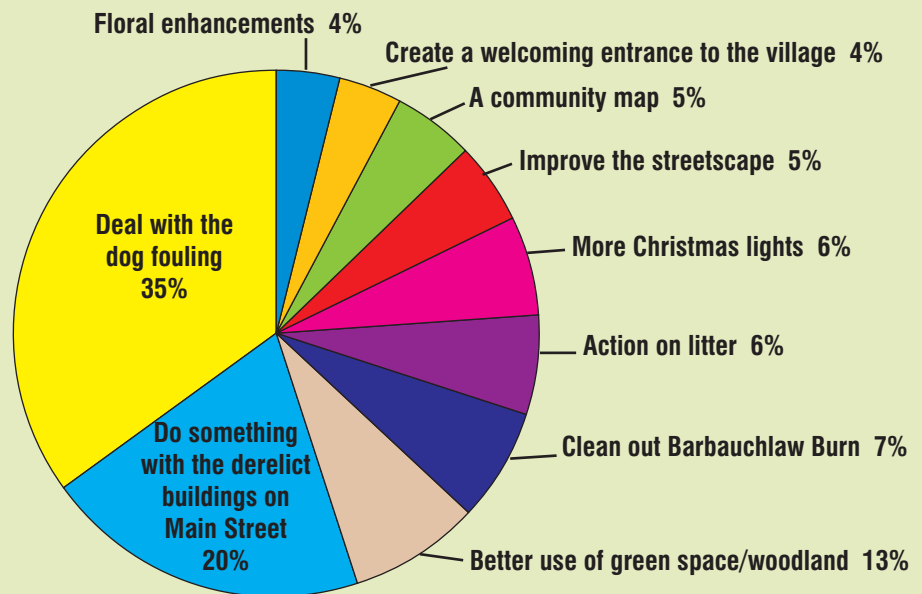




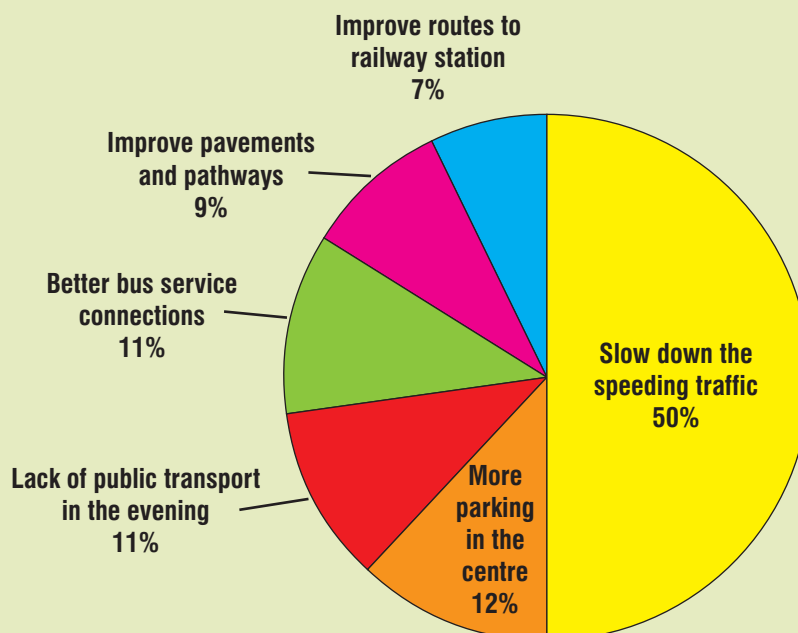
Thanks to the pupils of Blackridge Primary School for their artwork

Two hundred people attended the Family Fun Day where everyone had an opportunity to vote on the themes and priorities that emerged from the community survey.

% votes for Village Environment Theme



% votes for Roads and Transport Theme





What people have to say:

OUR LIKES ...

The people are warm and friendly always willing to help and support each other

Country life that is still connected to busy city life

Green spaces and places to go for a walk and enjoy scenery

It's great to have the health centre, post office, shops, cash machine, and the pharmacy, as lots of villages this size don't have these

Railway station with fast trains to both Edinburgh & Glasgow

I like that we have a little walk up to Beechbrae and they grow stuff in an orchard

Close to motorways and central for travel

The people, the village atmosphere, it is a great place to work, nice place to live

Nice countryside, good for walks & cycle rides, local wildlife

OUR DISLIKES ...

Vandalism, derelict land and buildings

Not enough for kids and young people to do

Speeding traffic through the village

Poor bus service for work purposes – no bus to surrounding area

Dog dirt on pavements and walks

Lack of variety of shops

No speed bumps



THEME 1: Public Services

These are the main strategies and priorities the community will work towards achieving in partnership with public agencies and other supporters.

Good quality public services rank high on the priority list for the people of Blackridge & District. Issues highlighted included community safety, improved play areas for children as well as youth. Partnership working and bringing together people and resources are an essential part of moving forward with each of these priorities.

PRIORITIES	ACTIONS
Better play areas for children and youth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Carry out community engagement to help identify level of need and type of facilities required. ● Work with West Lothian Council to take plans forward. ● Work with partners and appropriate agencies to develop the necessary funding package.
Greater Police presence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Continue to work with Police Scotland to increase visible local community policing.
Improved sports facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Carry out community engagement on the theme of sports facilities to help identify level of need and type of facilities required. ● Work with West Lothian Council to consider options. ● Work with partners and appropriate agencies to develop the necessary funding package to secure the required facilities.
Youth club	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Promote the existing youth club for P6-S1. It meets from 7pm - 9pm every Thursday at the Community Wing. ● Work with West Lothian Council Adult Learning and Youth Services to identify level of need and type of youth club that young people would find valuable.
Recycling facilities – too far away	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Work with West Lothian Council to identify options for recycling.
Better lighting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Work with West Lothian Council to identify priority areas needing an improved quality of lighting.
Potential partners	<p>Blackridge Community Council, Blackridge Futures Action Group, West Lothian Council, Transport providers, Police Scotland, Local Residents.</p>



THEME 2: Community Facilities and Activities

These are the main strategies and priorities the community will work towards achieving in partnership with public agencies and other supporters

Building social capital is a key aspect of creating strong, resilient communities. Good quality community facilities that are fit for purpose with regular opportunities for people to meet and share in activities and conversation, this is the glue that binds communities together. This theme has emerged from the community survey and it is essential that the community can work with other stakeholders, support organisations and agencies to realise these outcomes over the term of the community action plan.

PRIORITIES	ACTIONS
More activities for young people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Engage young people to find out more about the ideas that came out of the survey. These include: A skate park A community cafe More bike trails Hang out space for young people ● Work with partners and appropriate agencies to develop the necessary funding package to secure the required facilities. ● Work with West Lothian Council Adult Learning and Youth Services to develop activities to meet the needs of young people.
More activities for middle aged and older people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Promote the existing activities that are available more widely. ● Identify what people would like to do through local community engagement and work with voluntary groups and West Lothian Council Adult Learning and Youth Services to create activities to meet the needs of middle aged and older people.
Potential partners	Blackridge Community Council, Blackridge Futures Action Group, West Lothian Council, Beechbrae, Blackridge Primary School, Greenspace Scotland and Local Residents.



THEME 3: Village Environment

These are the main strategies and priorities the community will work towards achieving in partnership with public agencies and other supporters.

Dog fouling received the largest number of votes for this theme at the Family Fun Day which sends a strong message for action to help address this issue. It is also clear that there is a desire to create a clean, attractive and vibrant village. It is essential therefore that the community work together with other stakeholders, support organisations and agencies to realise these outcomes over the term of the community action plan.

PRIORITIES	ACTIONS
Deal with the Dog Fouling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Learn from other Coalfields Community Futures communities who have tackled this issue in their communities. ● Work with others to campaign for clean streets and parks eg Primary School. ● Work with West Lothian Council to make sure there are sufficient bins and green bag outlets available. ● Explore setting up a green dog walkers initiative. ● Raise awareness of the importance of taking personal responsibility.
Better use of green space and woodland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Carry out a mapping exercise with an appropriate organization and create a green space action plan.
Action on Litter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Clean out Barbauchlaw Burn. ● Organise a litter pick campaign. ● Raise awareness of the importance of taking personal responsibility. ● Identify the need for more bins.
Improve the streetscape	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Work with West Lothian Council to investigate ways of dealing with derelict buildings ● Encourage more shops and cafés into the village. ● Work to fund more Xmas lights. ● Continue to maintain and develop village floral enhancements.
Create a welcoming entrance to the village	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Community Council have plans to erect welcome signage with additional floral enhancement at the entrance gateways to the village. ● Maintain these as an attractive welcome to residents and visitors to the village.
Potential partners	<p>Blackridge Community Council, Blackridge Futures Action Group, West Lothian Council, Beechbrae, Greenspace Scotland and Local Residents.</p>



THEME 4: Roads & Transport

These are the main strategies and priorities the community will work towards achieving in partnership with public agencies and other supporters.

Speeding traffic claimed half the votes on this theme at the Family Fun Day. This validates the work carried out to date by local people who are lobbying hard to get safety measures put in place. Parking, especially in the village centre is another priority. An increased bus service, especially to nearby areas, is also important to local people as well as improved connectivity between places that will help make the most of living in Blackridge, Westrigg and Westcraigs.

PRIORITIES	ACTIONS
Slow speeding traffic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Work with West Lothian Council to explore options to reduce car speeds through the village.
More parking – especially in the centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Carry out a mapping exercise to identify potential areas suitable for use as parking bays. ● Work with West Lothian Council to look at ways to improve parking in the village.
Better bus service connections and transport service in the evening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Lobby local transport providers to improve bus services locally.
Improve pavements and pathways	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Host a paths workshop to identify what needs done. ● Work with West Lothian Council and other partners to take this priority forward. ● Improve routes to the railway station.
Potential partners	<p>Blackridge Community Council, Blackridge Futures Action Group, West Lothian Council, Paths for All, Sustrans and Local Residents.</p>

Early actions funded through the Participatory Budget

APPLICANT	NAME OF PROJECT
Beechbrae	Beechbrae Wetland Haven
Blackridge Community Council	Health and Wellbeing Physical Activity Classes
Blackridge Community Council	Paper Craft Group
Blackridge Community Council	Make Blackridge Beautiful
Blackridge Community Education Association Management Committee	Tables and Chairs
Blackridge Vale of Craig FC	New Equipment
Time Out Art Class	Resources for Art Class

Making the Links to the West Lothian Community Plan

The theme for the West Lothian Single Outcome Agreement is ‘Tackling Inequality’.

“We will work together to make sure that West Lothian is the best place possible to live, work and do business in – for everyone. Our Single Outcome Agreement is a 10 year plan. We have agreed outcomes, indicators and activities that will be delivered now and that will have impact on the short term, medium and longer term – ensuring sustainability and transformational change.”

West Lothian Community Planning Partnership

West Lothian Single Outcome Agreement 8 outcomes include:

Our children have the best start in life and are ready to succeed

We are better educated and have access to increased and better quality learning and employment opportunities

Our economy is diverse and dynamic, and West Lothian is an attractive place for doing business

We live in resilient, cohesive and safe communities

People most at risk are protected and supported to achieve improved life chances

Older people are able to live independently in the community with an improved quality of life

We live longer, healthier lives and have reduced health inequalities.

We make the most efficient and effective use of resources by minimising our impact on the built and natural environment.

The Blackridge & District Community Action Plan Themes and Priorities

1. Public Services

3. Village Environment

2. Community Facilities and Activities

4. Roads and Transport



MAKING IT HAPPEN

This community action plan sets out the priorities for the development of Blackridge & District over the next 5 years as identified by the community through an extensive process of community engagement carried out over a period of 6 months, June to November 2016.

The Plan contains

- A summary of the Blackridge & District Community Profile
- How you voted on the themes identified from the community survey
- Our Vision Statement for Blackridge & District
- The main themes and priorities for taking action
- The Participatory Budget projects that are helping kick start the community action plan

Information on how to get involved or just be kept informed

This community action plan is not just for the few but for everyone, we hope you will read it, consider its content and help toward making it work by taking action where you are, in whatever way you can. If everyone did something positive for their community every day, then what a difference that would make!

Many thanks go to all those who took their time to share their views, to the volunteers and participants who made the Family Fun Day a great success. Thanks go to members of the steering group who contributed images to this community action plan.

The Participatory Budget from Coalfields Regeneration Trust of £25,000 has been used to help take forward local projects which support the key themes found in this community action plan.

To find out more information about the Blackridge and District Community Action Plan or to volunteer with any projects please contact **Blackridge Community Council at the Craiginn Centre** or email blackridge.community.council@gmail.com

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