

Consett Area Neighbourhood Forum – Community Action brainstorm

23 Jun 2024

This document captures notes on possible community actions, as produced by a brainstorm by Forum attendees. The ideas have been arranged into themes.

1. Public transport

Bus services are not meeting the needs of residents and visitors. They should:

- Be regular.
- Stop close to where people live.
- Provide express services (fast with minimal stops) to key destinations.
- Provide stopping routes (e.g. circular) that can pick people up and connect them to the express routes.
- Connect to industrial estates and other key employment areas, so people can get to work.
- Have a long-term commitment to sustain services, so people can plan where they live and rely on transport being available for years to come.
- Be affordable.
- Be reliable – currently, many buses just not showing up
- Extend to more areas, meaning that public transport is an option for more (often vulnerable) residents

Cycle routes:

- It was thought that the cycle routes in the area are sufficient – however they are often faded and could do with re-painting, etc.

Cars:

- Car shares/car rental schemes - an extension of current ones

2. Youth services

More leisure facilities for young people, including:

- Open spaces for sports and activities
- Multi-sport halls indoors
- Identifying and supporting the creation of activities that will appeal to young people in the area – potentially a more active ‘youth co-ordinator/leader’ who could identify the relevant activities, organise, and promote them.
- Improved skate park, akin to the type that other areas (such as Wolsingham) have.
- Better and more defined play areas for children
- Protection of current playing fields and areas - reassessment/repurpose of areas that are not fit for purpose.
- A central venue for youth clubs and events for young people

3. Accessibility

The area should allow people to access services regardless of physical abilities. For example:

- Provision of public lavatories. People often need to go into local cafes to use the facilities, but that may not be affordable to all. In addition, there are a general lack of any facilities along the many miles of walks/trails in the area.
- Seating and other street furniture where people can rest.
- Pathways wide enough to allow mobility scooters to access.
- Provision of non-emergency services, such as a diagnostic hub, in an easily accessible location
- Footpaths that are well maintained, without tripping hazards.
- More lowered curbs so mobilities scooters/ wheelchairs / pushchairs don't need to travel down the road before can get on the pavement.
- Ensure there are sufficient paths and that they are kept clear – e.g. cars or overgrown bushes can stop some people being able to use them.
- Trails/walks need to be more accessible – currently there are many gates / fences etc to stop motorbikes etc – however these also cause issues for wheelchairs/mobilities scooters/pushchairs

4. Anti-social behaviour

The built environment should be designed to discourage anti-social behaviour. For example:

- Adequate lighting
- Cycle routes that offer a safe alternative to cycling on the footpath

5. Information

There seem to be many community facilities that are unknown to most residents. We need some way to gather information on and promote the range of facilities available in the area. Potentially doing something to improve 'Visit Consett' or 'Consett magazine'?

Could there be some central repository (website?) that could enable residents to find and access existing facilities more easily?

Collaborations with community groups - a mapping of what is already happening at each venue and a better advertising of facilities that are available to the community.

6. Community Parking

- There is insufficient parking in Consett and surrounding areas.
- Where there is public parking the charges are not clear and are subject to changes leaving people confused and reluctant to use them.
- This also links to promotion of tourism – as, if car users are visiting, they will need a place to park (and if they get a parking fine will be less likely to return, etc.)
- We have assumed that residential parking for new homes/housing estates will be covered already as will be linked to gaining planning permission.

7. Environmentally Sustainable Buildings

Promoting more environmentally sustainable buildings such as ways to encourage better home insulation or solar panels etc when building new homes (or even ways to promote on existing buildings).

8. Tourism/Events

Raise funds to implement community events - the cycle event was mentioned.

Have better and more inviting signage – e.g., Welcome to the Durham Dales at each boundary - have a clearer distinction of where each area/village is and celebrate all of these.

Focus on tourism, and a mapping exercise of the facilities that are available for visitors to the area

Work with Sustrans to advertise our section of the C2C - and promote tourism in this area – i.e., so that they stop off and visit (a mapping exercise for this would be useful).

Identify the 'public rights of way' for footpaths - so communities have clarity about the routes they can use.