

Southdean Community Place Plan A View from the Community

Southdean Community is now in a position to introduce a Community Plan having undertaken an initial Community Consultation. The Consultation sets a framework from which Community issues can be brought to the fore, and the Plan looks to enhance what are perceived to be the assets within the community, and address the issues that have emerged as concerns.

This framework can also drive consultation responses, help prioritise future funding requests, and enhance discussions with service providers both public and private all of which can help Southdean Community thrive.

The Survey was conducted in August and September 2022, closing on the September 10th. The Survey was opened to both Residents of Southdean and those from other communities who use Southdean's facilities.

There were 71 responders to this Survey, the first of its kind for Southdean
48 were Southdean Residents , with a further 23 stating they were from outside the Southdean Community Area but participated in Community events.

The Demographics of Southdean

There are two ways of measuring population demographics in Southdean. The most recent accurate population counts for the Community Council Area are currently only available from the 2011 Census. These showed that the Southdean Community Council area had a population of 156 people and 71 households in 2011, the main settlements being Southdean and Chesters. Much of the Community Council area is unoccupied and covered by forest.

More up-to-date estimates are available at Datazone level. These are statistical "neighbourhoods" of around 500 people, covering all of Scotland. The Bonchester Bridge and Chesters Datazone covers Bonchester Bridge, Southdean, Chesters, Hobkirk and other small settlements from south of Denholm to the Scotland-England border. Analysis at Datazone level gives us a useful profile of the character and comparative demographics of this area, within a Scottish Borders and Scottish context.

A comparative profile of the Bonchester Bridge and Chesters Datazone shows that it has an ageing population profile, even more than the Scottish Borders average, which is also ageing compared to the Scottish average. The proportions of children aged 0-15, young adults aged 16-24 and adults aged under 50 are all well below the Scottish Borders and Scottish averages in the Bonchester Bridge and Chesters neighbourhood. The proportions of over 50s and particularly over 65s are well above average. These figures are from the NRS 2021 Small-area Mid-year Estimates, which are the most recent source of population data.

This ageing population has implications for the dependency ratio, i.e. the diminishing proportion of younger people who are able to care and finance the burgeoning proportion of older people. This in turn has economic implications for the wider community and for the sustainability of shops, services and the community spirit in the area.

According to NRS, the ratio of people aged 65+ per hundred working-age people in 2019 was 61 in the Bonchester Bridge and Chesters datazone, which is well above the Scottish Borders average of 42.2 and over double the Scottish average of 29.9. It is also one of the highest dependency ratios in the Teviot and Liddesdale locality.

There were only five babies born in the Datazone in 2019 and the neighbourhood has been slowly losing population since 2011, at a rate of 2.3%. This goes against the Scottish Borders and Scottish trends of a gradual increase in population. If this trend of ageing and population loss continues, the neighbourhood could struggle to remain vibrant and maintain sustainable services in the future.

The 2022 Survey Participants.

In the 2022 Survey, over 70's provided 21.1% of the responses, with 50-70 the majority at 57.7% . The age range 30-50's provided 19.7% with 18-30 1.5%

By comparison, 22.8% of the population of the Bonchester Bridge and Chesters Datazone comprised people aged 70 plus in 2021, with 39.2% of the population of the Datazone aged 50-70. A further 18.1% of the population are aged 30-50, with 9.4% aged 18 – 30.

This means that the survey responses are roughly proportionate to the population in the 30-50 and the 50-70 age groups. The survey was over-represented in the 50-70 age group and significantly under-represented in the 18-30 age group.

It is clear that with nearly 80% of the responses from over 50's the issues raised are reflective of the reach of the initial survey. Rather than canvas for younger participants mid survey, this is something that will be a focus for future surveys.

The Household spread in the Survey

Members of families, 28.2% , Couples 59.1% and Single House responses 12.7%.

The 2021 Council Tax Database tells us that 29% of households in the Bonchester Bridge and Chesters Datazone claimed "single adult" discount, indicating a possible under-representation in response from single-adult households. (NRS)

The Survey Responses. The Big Issues

The Issues that commanded the greatest responses from the Community all achieved over 50%. The biggest issue to feature was the Setting/Landscape 73.2% , then Broadband 59.1% , Roads 59.1%, and Community Facilities 57.7%

The next tier of responses.

These included Family Facilities, Public Transport, Local Business, Entertainment, and Net Zero

Other Issues mentioned

There were also mentions of Crime, EV Charging, Pub, Shop , Schools, Fitness, and other.

The Best Things perceived about Southdean brought forward in responses.
Community, Landscape /Unspoilt, Friendliness//kindness, Quietness/safety

And The Worst as registered on the Survey

Local Transport, Roads, Speeding motorbikes, Broadband and Mobile, No Shop /post office

Southdean — The Bigger Community Picture

Before bringing forward a Community Plan it is worth assessing the broader community picture in combination with the survey results.

House price demographics

Nothing was mentioned in the survey about the cost of living and house prices. Official Statistics on house prices from 2018 show that the Bonchester Bridge and Chesters Datazone is a relatively expensive place to live. Average house prices in the neighbourhood were well above the Scottish Borders and Scottish averages: the mean house price in 2018 was over £210,000 in the area, compared with £180,000 on average for Scottish Borders and £181,000 for Scotland.

Even using the median house price figure (which helps to reduce the skewing effect of the most expensive properties), the median property in Bonchester Bridge and Chesters sold for £178,500 in 2018, well above the Scottish Borders and Scottish averages of £150,000 and £152,000 respectively.

Remoteness and accessibility

The Southdean Community Council area is one of the most scenic and remote parts of the Scottish Borders region. This makes the area more desirable in which to live but also presents challenges for accessibility to services, particularly amongst the older population and those without access to a car and particularly during winter weather. The housing density is also one of the lowest in Scottish Borders.

The Scottish Access To Bus Indicator (SABI) is the official statistic on accessibility of bus services by Datazone. The metric measures the number of bus stops within a 400 metre walking distance at several points near where people live, and scores them by Datazone. All the Datazone scores are ranked and grouped by Quintile (groups of 20%), Decile (groups of 10%) and Vigintile (groups of 5%) to provide a comparative measure for every neighbourhood in Scotland.

This measure showed that the Bonchester Bridge and Chesters Datazone was in Vigintile 1 in both 2017 and 2019 for both weekday and weekend bus services. This means that it is one of the 5% worst datazones in Scotland in terms of the number of bus stops in the community that are within easy walking distance from people's houses.

Multiple Deprivation

The 2020 Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation uses the same system of quintiles, deciles and vigintiles to rank all of Scotland's Datazones relative to each other in terms of Multiple Deprivation. The following ranks were given to the Bonchester Bridge and Chesters Datazone for overall Multiple Deprivation and for each of the deprivation "domains".

Overall, this Datazone is in Decile 6 out of 10 for **Multiple Deprivation**, which is around average for Scotland or slightly better.

Bonchester Bridge and Chesters Datazone is in Decile 7 for **Income Deprivation**, meaning that it has below-average Income Deprivation for Scotland. The measures used mostly involved income-related welfare benefits.

The Datazone is in Decile 8 for **Employment Deprivation**, which is better than average average for Scotland. This domain is measured by employment-related welfare benefit claim rates.

The Datazone is in Decile 8 for **Health Deprivation**, meaning that the neighbourhood enjoys better health than average for Scotland. The measure is measured using relevant welfare benefit claim rates.

Bonchester Bridge and Chesters Datazone is in Decile 7 for **Education Deprivation**, again showing that the neighbourhood has better than average education outcomes than average for Scotland.

Bonchester Bridge and Chesters Datazone is in Decile 1 and Vigintile 1 for **Access To Services Deprivation**, which is the most access-deprived 5% of Datazones in Scotland. This reflects the long journey times and poor public transport in accessing local services faced by most people in the neighbourhood.

Bonchester Bridge and Chesters Datazone is in Decile 10 and Vigintile 19 for **Deprivation Due To Crime**, meaning that it is within the top 10% safest neighbourhoods in Scotland in which to live.

And finally, Bonchester Bridge and Chesters Datazone is in Decile 9 and Vigintile 18 for **Housing Deprivation**, meaning that it is within the 15% least-deprived datazones in Scotland due to overcrowded, cold and poor quality housing. This domain is measured using only a small number of indicators from the 2011 Census and is in the process of being improved.

Southdean Community Plan

The Southdean Community Plan has been drawn up to reflect the direction that Community Members and those external to the Community have expressed in the Survey, and issues that have arisen within community meetings. It has also reflected some of the broader background information from the Datazone rankings.

The Twenty Minute Neighbourhood

Southdean has considerable challenges when it comes to the much talked about 20 minute neighbourhood. Southdean for example has no Schools, no shops, relatively poor infrastructure, no pub or entertainment venue, no Council owned building, no retirement homes. Local Towns are of key importance in service provision for the local community. A number of the elements that would help improve the 20 minute community are amongst the items being raised in this Community Plan.

There are several Tourism Accommodation Businesses, An Agricultural Contractor and a significant number of Farm and Forestry businesses.

The A68 Scotland England crossing point at Carter Bar borders the South East of the CC Area, and the CC Area also incorporates the Border with England for several miles. The local towns most utilised by the Community are Hawick and Jedburgh, and where connectivity provides a key role.

Enhance and Protect the Best Setting /Landscape Community Spirit

Setting /Landscape and **Community Spirit** feature in the majority of responses ,and one of the main aims of the Community Plan is to preserve the major positive attributes of the Community.

Addressing the Concerns raised in the Survey

Communications .. Broadband and Mobile

Infrastructure ..Roads (Roads, verges, potholes) and Grid reinforcement.

Community Safety .. Speeding and Heavy Traffic .

Lack of Community Facilities for all ages..

Landscape and Setting

The leading issue of importance in the Survey

The setting of Southdean in general, and the outlook from Chesters has been a consistent theme in Community engagements and discussion.

Considerations

Teviot Hills Special Landscape Area includes the northern part of Southdean Community Council area.

There are several **SSSI's** within Southdean. Kielderhead which covers a large area , and the smaller Cragbank and Wolfhopelee.

A **Scottish Borders National Park** is a proposal currently under early consideration, and Southdean Community is within the potential area outlined for the Park as outlined in the Feasibility Study.

River Tweed Catchment Area ..a number of waters rise in the Community Area feeding the Jed and the Rule and then to the Teviot and the Tweed. Run off and Flooding are an increasing concern for the local community .

Southdean Community also aspires to greater engagement and interaction with major Landowners in the Community to encourage greater participation from all those in a position to influence community development.

The setting has importance not only for residents of Southdean, but also visitors, whether they be local or further afield.

As we will see Southdean lacks a number of attributes, but the Scenery and landscape helps to attract visitors for the local Tourist Providers, an important component on the local community.

Enhancing Outdoor Activities

Southdean has Rights of Way, and Core Paths and also the Wheel Causeway crossing the Community. The A68 entry point into Scotland crosses the Border at Carter Bar, which adjoins the Southdean Community Council Area.

The Rights of Way and Core Benefits would benefit from upgrade and clearance. The Wheel Causeway is a significant opportunity not only Southdean but also neighbouring communities. There is an opportunity for the Community to enhance the outdoor activity opportunities for the benefit of residents and visitors alike working with the relevant landowners.

Community Spirit and Community Facilities

Serving the Community

The Community Spirit is strong but Facilities need to be enhanced for all generations. The Community needs to see broadened the Community services for older residents, and introduce more for families.

Southdean Village Hall —The Community Hub

Southdean Village Hall lies at the heart of the Community, and is owned by the local community, and is operated as a SCIO, and it is the only building currently within the Community's control. It is used for a number of Community events and entertainment and there is an aspiration for its use to be broadened.

The Hall will require further decoration and modernisation to bring one of the rooms in particular into condition for Community use. This would allow a warm room for community members to congregate and socialise.

Southdean Show is based around the Hall, there are Gift and Christmas Fayre's, Film Nights, Craft Evening's and Yoga Lessons, and Community Supper.

With a desire to improve Community Services there is a need to enhance facilities within the Hall, and to broaden the range of events to appeal to all generations.

A defibrillator has also been installed outside the Hall, and local resilience facilities are also located there.

Southdean Church

Southdean Church is due to be closed and sold by the Church of Scotland within five years, which requires consideration as to what role the building might play in a future community activities.

Addressing the Concerns raised in the Survey Communications .. Broadband and Mobile

Communications have been a major concern for the Community and continues to be so whilst elements of the community are as yet unable to benefit from enhanced communication.

Mobile Services .. There are still properties which are effectively "Not Spots" within Southdean Community.

There has been an improvement in the signal reach across the community with more masts being installed in the area, but this is not a fully comprehensive.

Southdean is looking for further improvement for the properties that have been left behind

Broadband —There has been a Broadband rollout in Southdean

Some Properties are connected via Fibre to the Cabinet in Chesters, and some have been connected by Fibre to the Premises

However not all properties in the Community have been connected, with a number in the South and East of the community yet to get access.

This remains a long standing area of concern and a priority for the Community to seek a resolution so that all can benefit from the improved service and something the community regards as a necessity.

Community Safety .. Speeding and Heavy Traffic

Community Safety and Quality of Life are regarded very highly.

Rural crime is an increasing concern but a major issue is traffic going through Chesters at speed. In addition to heavy vehicle traffic, there are also speeding Motorbikes, cars and vans which contribute to the concerns.

The Community welcomes the introduction of a 20mph zone and the Introduction of speed measurement sign. However it is clear that more needs to be done to address the issue. Further signs were requested, alongside other traffic calming measures, and these need to be explored further.

Lack of Community Facilities for all ages

What was clear also from the survey is the concern at the lack of Community Facilities.

This is not to be confused with Community Spirit which remains very strong.

Southdean is dependent on other nearby communities for access to a services such as Education, Dental Care , Opticians, Shops, Fuel and Entertainment.

Banking Services have reduced across the Scottish Borders. Public transport to access nearby communities does exist though sparse in nature, and could be significantly augmented. Lack of local transport is a key concern.

The lack for facilities for families is a growing feature of community concerns.

Southdean had noted the recent debate of funding of play parks. This highlighted to the community that Southdean wasn't involved in the original discussion, as the Community does not have access to a play park, and the Community has already started to investigate the possibilities of introducing a play park.

A number of survey comments cited the lack of shops and also Entertainment. The Horse & Hound in Bonchester is a Community pub that gains local support but there is nothing in Southdean. The Community priority is to enhance what we already have in Southdean Village Hall, expand the offering, and look at broader suggestions.

Infrastructure Roads (Roads, verges, potholes) and Grid reinforcement

The quality of Infrastructure has been raised as a concern in the Survey and has been a longstanding issue.

Roads and Verges damage, Potholes, Ditch and Drain Clearance are all regularly raised. The heavy vehicle traffic on the local roads, notably Timber Traffic, has put added strain on the local infrastructure. The frequent damage to road quality and verges, with sharp edges as heavy vehicles come off the roads, risk damage to local vehicles.

Damage also arises from water run off from fields in particular and if the local drains are obstructed in any manner, more infrastructure damage occurs.

Grid Reinforcement

One of the biggest structural issues that the Community will face is Grid resilience.

The system has been tested in recent climate events, which brought power and communication interruptions. However the bigger concern is the lack of capacity within the network to allow alternative energy technologies to be adopted at scale

Sustainability and Resilience

Southdean recognises the need to adopt a sustainable community future.

The Community needs to look forward to a Net Zero Future and adopt new technologies. Climate Change will be a major driver that the community will have to address. Southdean Community Council is a member of Community Energy Scotland

Energy Provision and Transition.

Southdean is not on the Gas Grid, as is the case with a number of Rural Communities, so when it comes to Heating, alternative solutions will need to be found.

Heat Pumps will need a Grid with more capacity than currently exists, and provision of heat will be vital for future resilience of Community members. Insulation and fabric first is an initial priority, and there are considerable concerns over the access to alternative fuels without triggering significant fuel poverty

The Community is also looking for the transition to EV's and provision for public chargers in appropriate locations. This again will require grid enhancement but will also require enhanced community space. Southdean is looking to advance discussions with providers of EV chargers, Grid Operators and also will need to seek locations for public facilities.

Climate Change

Weather events have had an increasing impact on the community bringing disruption.

Local resilience has kicked in during some of the major incidents.

However there were significant supply interruptions to both Power and Communication especially during Storm Arwen that required a better response from key providers. Tree damage was significant and alongside flood risk bring the biggest threats to community resilience.

Priorities arising from the Community Plan

Setting and Landscape .. A Key issue for Southdean

Walks —enhancing outdoor opportunities for the community.
Working with local landowners

Community Spirit and Community Facilities

Improvements to the social hub ..Southdean Village Hall
Local public transport improvement
Southdean Church closure

Family Facilities

Play park

Connectivity

Improvements in Mobile
Improvements in Broadband

Community Safety

Seek Enhanced speed control measures

Infrastructure

Roads —Verges, Potholes , Drainage, Ditches
Grid resilience

Sustainability and Resilience

Net Zero transition

The Community Plan will be utilised in a Place Plan to be drawn up potentially in cooperation with neighbouring Community Council areas.

Philip Kerr

Southdean Community Council