



ALL ROADS LEAD TO
WHITHORN

South of Scotland
Community Destination Alliance
Conference

19/03/2025



Hazel Smith
Chair of All Roads Lead to Whithorn
Community Development Trust





Royal Burgh of Whithorn



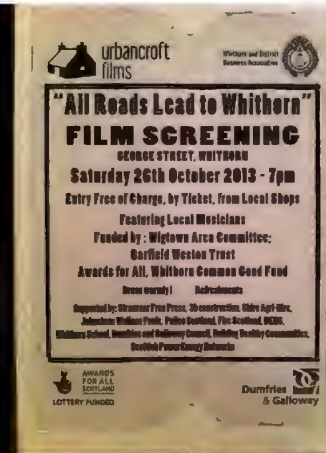
- Small town in Dumfries & Galloway, known for its deep historical and religious significance.
- Population of around 850.
- Cradle of Christianity; first recorded Christian Church in the country founded by St Ninian in the 5th Century.
- Towns layout shaped by its medieval past, with a central street lined with traditional buildings, dating back several centuries.
- Rural community attracting visitors for its strong historical identity, religious history & archaeology.
- Located on the Machars peninsula, offering beautiful coastal scenery, walks, cycling and a quiet escape.



Community Development Trust

Established 2014

Board made up of seven volunteer trustees, living in the Whithorn & District Community Council boundary and committed to the charity's aims and objectives.



Community filmed consultation in 2013 reflecting on past, present and future of Whithorn. Pride in local heritage but concerns for options for young people; employment and income. Ambitions for better intergenerational working and for opportunities to come together in **sports** and **events**.

400 turn out for outdoor film screening

Our Projects; The New Town Hall

- The **New Town Hall** is a Victorian building on St Johns Street in Whithorn, built in 1885 as a public gathering space and closed by Dumfries & Galloway Council, we undertook a Community Asset Transfer of the building, only once we had full funds in place in April 2021 to refurbish the building and transform into a state-of-the-art community hub. We then hired our first staff in summer of 2022 as building works neared completion.
- The award winning Bravehearts Boxing Club now have their own dedicated gym and train three nights a week. New ladies class.
- Fitness Suite opened in January 2023; now with approx. 200 members. Fully accessible to all with a lift and changing facilities with showers. Key cards allow easy access to members.
- Main hall can be sub-divided into three spaces with large video screen for conferencing, meetings, parties, clubs, dance classes, dog training, youth club, drugs and alcohol service.
- Four study carrells allowing computer access for those having trouble getting online, for printing and assistance with online forms etc also used by teachers for remote learning, supporting pupils who are finding school challenging.



The hall as a community hub space;

- The hall was designed to be as functional and flexible a space as possible, with three distinct areas which could be sectioned into rooms or opened out into the full hall. Full kitchen facilities too.
- We have held farmers markets, wedding & Christmas fayres, ceilidhs, birthday parties, coronation celebrations, local flower show, local film premieres, discos, our first (in 2023) and second (in 2024) **beer and cheese festivals**, school concerts, bingo nights, tea dances, pantomimes, breakfast with **Santa** & many more events.....
- We were also the **Whithorn & District Resilience Group warm hub** during Storm Eowyn in January 2025, providing hot food, showers, phone charging & use of our laundry & kitchen facilities.
- We have provided **free lunches for school children** over the summer holidays in 2023 when over **600** lunches were provided and in 2024/25 **Food Friday**; providing delicious lunches free to all, an essential service in combating social isolation, loneliness and sign posting people to other services when needed. **Over 150 local people of all ages attend weekly!**





The New Town Hall Bunkhouse

18 beds across 5 rooms, all en-suite, 4 star-rated hostel new build to rear of the New Town Hall, accessible room with shower room, e-bike chargers, cycle storage, bike repair station, shared kitchen/dining & laundry facilities. Opened in March 2023.

Background & conception

The bunkhouse was custom built, in the place of a demolished Victorian supper room. It was built to provide accommodation at the end of the Whithorn Way 146 mile route from Glasgow. The All Roads Lead to Whithorn Trust did extensive research into bunkhouses; their facilities, layout and pricing before creating the final design, the hope is that the income from the bunkhouse subsidises the community hub. The bunkhouse is heated by an air source heat pump and is super insulated with triple glazed windows.



Welcome to Whithorn's brand new bunkhouse!

Located at the heart of the town, tucked away behind the historic New Town Hall is our bunkhouse, perfect accommodation for any travellers, walkers, cyclists or adventurers.



www.allroadsleadtowhithorn.com

01988401296



- Dog friendly
- In Euans Guide (disabled access review)
- Living wage employers
- UNESCO Biosphere Certification Mark; promoting sustainable tourism



Bunkhouse success

- We opened the bunkhouse in March 2023. Bookings have more than doubled from 2023 to 2024. Hopeful of 2025!
- Bookable through booking.com, free-to-book and directly through our website, phone, email, or walk-ins.
- We have had bookings from all over the world – Canada, Australia, America, Spain, China, Japan, Italy, Poland, Hungary, Africa, Germany, India, the Netherlands, Belgium and a party of 16 French students with their teachers.
- Recently a group of female wild swimmers from Yorkshire & had groups of motor-cyclists and many cyclists (including a famous rugby player). Along with travel bloggers, Duke of Edinburgh Award student groups and youth work groups.
- We have achieved a 4-star rating through a secret stay with Visit Scotland, and are proud supporter members of the Galloway & Southern Ayrshire Biosphere & are fully certified. We're members of the South of Scotland Destination Alliance.
- We are constantly learning and evaluating our offering & have made changes to make all more functional & comfortable.
- We are extremely proud to say we have had overwhelmingly good reviews so far and we really hope to keep the momentum going with new changes, ideas and additions.
- Our bunkhouse book with local facilities has been well received and local walk cards that can be borrowed, enjoyed.



Other projects;



Former Grapes Hotel; 10-12 George Street, Whithorn;

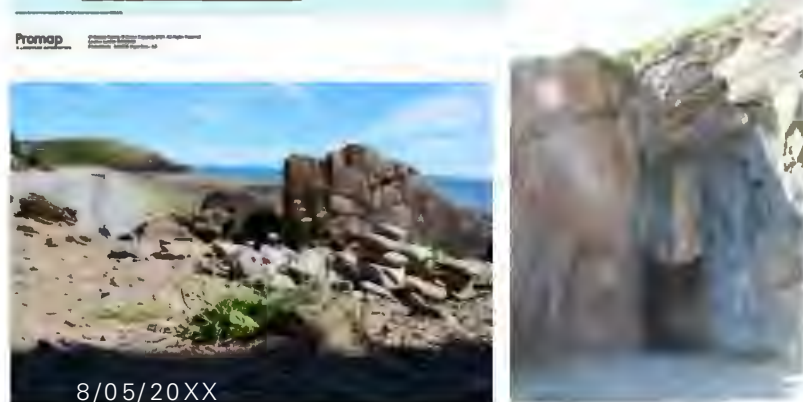
A Georgian C Listed building dating back to 1800 and lain as an empty shell in Whithorn's outstanding conservation area for 30 years, we purchased the former hotel in 2020 and undertook a full re-fit in 2021 creating affordable community owned housing, energy efficient with high levels of insulation, secondary double glazing and air source heat pumps.

Working with South of Scotland Community Housing who undertook the housing needs and demands survey initially and then facilitated the allocations process; the two 3- bedroom affordable houses were offered to two local families at Christmas 2021. The housing has indeed proven to provide modern living and affordable to heat.

The Scottish Empty Homes Partnership awarded the project the 'Best Use of Empty Homes Work to Create Social/Affordable Housing' in 2023; for strong contribution to increasing supply of social/affordable housing.

Other Projects;

The extension to the **Whithorn Way** ; 15 kms of high quality, accessible, additional paths & routes created for walkers and cyclists, locals and visitors in 2022! Connecting Whithorn to St Ninian's Cave allowing pilgrims to trace the steps of those who, since the 8th Century have journeyed to the sacred site.



8/05/20XX

ALL ROADS LEAD TO WHITHORN

What's next?



- We're hoping to receive funding for **phase two** of the Community-owned **affordable housing** development to the rear of the phase one site.
- We're also developing another **extension** to the **Whithorn Way** paths in collaboration with The Whithorn Trust.
- Continue to serve & support our **community** and their **needs!**

South of Scotland Thistle Award Winner 2024 Celebrating Thriving Communities

All Roads Lead to Whithorn, Whithorn

"Thank you so much to the community of Whithorn for your support of our charity over the last ten years, it's a pleasure to live and work in the beautiful area we have, being able to know and support so many members of our community, in so many different ways is an honour. We will continue to work for the local community and support locals in every way we can."

Nominate now! <https://www.ssdalliance.com/thistles/>





Key takeaways

We hugely value our **community** and we try to combine **tourism** with community wherever possible.

Our hall and gym are tailored towards serving the needs of the town, although wherever possible we try to tie the hall into use with the bunkhouse with festivals and events.

The bunkhouse is used predominantly by visitors and tourists although is also used by locals for families & friends and even our locum GP & ANP. We try to support all local businesses and tourist attractions and hope to work more closely in the next year designing packages for tours and cycle holidays with local museums and tour providers.

Consultation with our community, feedback from visitors & collaboration with local groups is fundamental to our success and growth moving forward.



Thank you for listening, any questions?

Find out more and follow us:

<https://allroadsleadtowhithorn.com/>



Thank you to all of our funders and supporters;



Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba
gov.scot



Scottish Land Fund
Ionmhas Fearainn Na H-Alba



THE HUGH FRASER FOUNDATION

