

DUMFRIES TOWN BOARD

Meeting of 14th April 2025

4pm @ Room 1, Municipal Chambers, Buccleuch Street, Dumfries

PRESENT

Richie Nicoll – Town Board Chair (Via Teams)
Tom Mcaughtrie
Anne Marie Coulter- Summerhill Community Centre
John Caskie- Guid Nychburris
Isabelle Johnstone- Town Board Admin Support
William Currie – DG College (Via Teams)
Anna Boyd- Police Scotland
Cllr Keith Walters

Council Officers

Nicola Hill - Economic Development Officer
Matthew Watt (representing John Cooper MP) (via teams)
John Copper -MP
Stuart McMillian-Strategic Economic Investment Manager (Via Teams)

Guests

Cliff Robertson – Dumfries Loyalty App
Craig Geddes- Local Business owner
Graeme F Lawrence

1) Welcome and Introductions

The Chair welcomed the 13th Town Board meeting and also introduced the following guest
Cliff Robertson (Dumfries Loyalty App), Craig Geddes (Starksy) and Graeme F Lawerance
(Individual).

2) Apologies

Kenny Bowie – DG Chambers
Duncan Cameron- Police Scotland (Replaced by Anna Boyd)
Nicola Robison- Police Scotland (Replaced by Anna Boyd)

Jamie Milligan- The Swan/ Steamboat
John Dowson
David Slater
Maureen Johnstone (replaced by Keith Walters)

3) Minutes from the meeting on the 18th of March 2025 were approved with no issues rising.

4) Dumfries Town Loyalty App

Cliff Robertson presented an introduction to the Dumfries Town Board about the potential of implementing a loyalty app in partnership with *Squid*, an Irish-based company. Cliff met with Squid two weeks prior to gain a clearer understanding of how the app works and to inform them that there are potentially seventy-five other towns across the region that could also receive help from such a program.

During the meeting, several key questions and concerns were raised by the board. These included:

- What direct benefits the app would bring to the Dumfries community and the Town Board itself.
- Why Squid, an Irish company, was being considered over a local or Scottish-based alternative.
- What the costs would be to both set up and keep the app on an ongoing basis.
- How long it would take to see results or a return on investment.

It was explained that for the app to be successful, it would require the support or backing of a local organisation or charity to help scale it up within the community. Cliff noted that Squid's latest app development has been a major success in other areas and has already proved the potential to generate additional funding for local communities, while also encouraging consumer loyalty to local businesses.

Squid currently boasts a strong record, working with over 2,000 retailers and having a user base exceeding 500,000, which speaks to their reliability and credibility as a partner.

However, the main concern expressed by board members centred around the financial commitment involved. While the app could potentially be a source of revenue for the Town Board and a quick solution to some of their ongoing challenges, it also poses a risk if not carefully managed.

The consensus was that more detailed information and transparency is needed from the app developers, particularly around costs, implementation timelines, and ongoing responsibilities, before any decisions can be made.

5) Where are we at now?

The Chair of the Dumfries Town Board, along with Deputy Jamie Cowling, attended a meeting with all Chairs of Scotland on April 4th to discuss the latest developments surrounding regeneration plans. It was confirmed during the session that regeneration guidance is currently in development and expected to be released soon, though it has not yet been received by the board. This guidance will be essential in shaping how local areas, including Dumfries, approach upcoming projects.

There was a strong show of support for the idea of setting up a charity or Community Interest Company (CIC) to lead and deliver regeneration efforts. This model is seen as a meaningful way to empower local communities, allow more flexibility in operations, and provide a dedicated structure for managing funding and community engagement.

One of the key focuses outlined in the discussions was street cleanliness and improving the local environment within the Dumfries town boundary. The board was encouraged to hear that this area was being prioritised. However, it was clearly said that the £200,000 distributed in funding cannot be used to directly buy cleaning equipment or machinery. Instead, the funds should be used more broadly in ways that align with regeneration goals and future guidance.

The importance of ongoing collaboration with the local council was also emphasised. To avoid any duplication of work or resources, the town board must engage with the council to ensure their plans are aligned and complementary. It was noted positively that Dumfries already enjoys a strong working relationship with both the council and the local college—both of which are expected to be key partners in delivering certain aspects of the regeneration programme, such as training, workforce involvement, and support for community initiatives.

Looking ahead, Lisa Steeton from MHCLG will be attending the next Dumfries Town Board meeting on May 15th. Her role will be to provide further clarity on the initiative, share updates, and answer any questions or concerns raised by board members. This is expected to be a valuable opportunity for more in-depth discussion and planning.

In terms of administrative progress, the Ministry is currently awaiting final confirmation about area boundaries, names, and other relevant details. Nicola Hill is overseeing this process and is expected to send the necessary information later this week, ahead of the April 22nd, 2025, deadline. In addition to this work, Nicola has also taken part in a Q&A session designed for town and neighbourhood boards across the region, helping to address common queries and offer consistent guidance.

Lastly, the board is still waiting on the release of the official regeneration toolkit, which had originally been scheduled for distribution this week. This toolkit is expected to provide practical resources and support to help boards implement their local plans more effectively.

6) Civic Focused Town Clean Up Festival

The Dumfries Town Board discussed the positive impact a large-scale clean-up of the High Street could have on both the community and the Board itself. It was

agreed that such a visible initiative would serve as a strong, practical demonstration of progress being made—whether on a smaller or larger scale. The clean-up would help to boost community morale, show tangible improvements in the town centre, and build public confidence in the regeneration efforts currently underway.

The timing of the clean-up was also considered strategically important. Following the April 22nd funding submission deadline, there will likely be greater access to added funds, which could support more community-driven activities. The Board recognised the opportunity to create more interactive spaces—such as stalls along the High Street—where residents can get involved, provide feedback, and engage directly with the initiatives. This would help foster a sense of ownership and collaboration within the community.

As a next step, the Town Board agreed that the areas of High Street, heritage, and regeneration should work more closely together to explore this idea further. They have been tasked with developing a deeper understanding of the coordination, feasibility, and potential partnerships needed to make the clean-up a success. An action plan will be created to guide this process and provide more information on how the clean-up could be conducted as part of the wider regeneration strategy.

7) Dumfries Town Board Name

The Ministry were asked about the potential of keeping the name of the Town board and not adopting the Plans for Neighbourhood board. It came back to the chair that it was the Dumfries Board decision on what they would prefer. The vote was put to the board, and it was decided to keep the name which it is currently Dumfries Town Board, with the Plans for Neighbours adopted as the name of the plan to be submitted. DTB have committed financially to the DTB website, emails, and Logo, so the Chair was against changing the name equating to a waste of funding

8) Dumfries Town Board legal Alignment

During the recent meeting, it was discussed that both the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) and the Scottish Government have shown interest in Town Boards transitioning into formal entities, such as charities or Community Interest Companies (CICs). This structural shift is being encouraged as it would open the door to wider and more sustainable funding opportunities, giving boards more autonomy and flexibility in managing regeneration and community engagement projects. However, the conversation also highlighted some concerns and uncertainties around this potential change. Specifically, board members raised questions about the practicalities and implications of operating as a charity, including governance requirements, reporting obligations, and whether it would ultimately bring the desired benefits to the community. Importantly, it was noted that if the board chooses to explore this route, it would not be needed to fully transition into a charity or CIC at once. Instead, the existing community hub could still be used as a platform for public engagement and consultation, allowing the board to support flexibility while piloting innovative approaches.

To move this discussion forward, the board agreed to set up a resolute sub-committee tasked with exploring the idea in greater depth. This sub-committee will manage

conducting a thorough review of the pros and cons of becoming a charity or CIC. Crucially, it was agreed that part of their remit should include seeking independent legal advice—specifically from a reputable external legal firm, rather than relying solely on the council's in-house legal team, to ensure transparency and specialist ability.

The board expressed enthusiasm and support for taking this investigation further. There was a clear consensus that involving a legal advisor throughout the process would be critical to making informed decisions. It was therefore proposed that, once the sub-committee is formed, a legal advisor should be invited to sit as a member of the group. This would ensure that legal guidance is integrated from the outset, helping the board navigate any complexities as they explore this potential new direction.

9) DG College 'Town Centre Skills Partnership'

There was a meaningful discussion around how to better involve the local college, schools, and wider community in the regeneration of Dumfries town centre. The conversation focused on ways to connect education, community pride, and practical skills development to the town's ongoing improvement efforts.

The Chair of the Dumfries Town Board shared that they have arranged a meeting with Douglas Dickson, the CEO and Principle of DG College, to explore opportunities for collaboration. The focus of this meeting will be to discuss how students currently undertaking apprenticeships—particularly in woodworking, joinery, construction, and related trades—could actively contribute to town improvement projects. This initiative would serve a dual purpose: enhancing the physical appearance and infrastructure of the town, while also offering students real-world experience and a sense of ownership and responsibility for their contributions to the community.

The idea is rooted in a long-term vision of fostering community pride and encouraging a generational shift in how the town is looked after. By involving students, school pupils, and local community centres, the goal is to build a stronger connection between younger residents and their town. If these groups take part in direct projects—such as improving public spaces, refurbishing unused shop fronts, or contributing to heritage restoration—it could foster lasting care for the spaces they helped transform. It was also noted that involving children and young adults in regeneration projects could bring long-term social and educational benefits, particularly for those pursuing vocational training. The direct experience would not only enhance their learning but could also improve employability, confidence, and civic pride.

Support for this idea was echoed by several landlords who had attended the recent stakeholder meeting. They expressed a keen interest in being involved and showed that, if the idea progresses, they would be willing to support and potentially back the initiative, whether through access to premises, resources, or funding partnership

10) 'The HUB' Update

Not a lot taking place currently as ongoing chats with painters and having access to uninterrupted Wi-Fi. Kenny Bowie is taking lead on speaking to the painters. This involves getting prices and thoughts. Richie Nicoll was also talking to Starlink to gain access to having uninterrupted Wi-Fi and connections. The trustees are holding a meeting in the upcoming weeks to discuss further development on the HUB.

11) Sub Committee Intervention Groups

The sub committees have been paused until further development on the Big clean and guidance has been distributed. However, the Transport and Connectivity are wanting to set up a meeting with Swest Trans to gain more insight on the public transport and the councils plans with this so there isn't any over lapping.

12) Programme Manager Update

Firstly, the chair would like to give his personal thanks Kenny and Rachael for setting up the interviews and the commitment during the process.

With the new programme manager is confirmed Joanna Johnstone who will start on the 19th of May and will be attending the meeting on the 15th of May.

13) Website Update

While we awaited confirmation the on the name change, we collectively gained images to be used on the website and now awaiting Pete Murray to confirm when he is available to complete the final additions. Hopefully will be live in the upcoming months.

14) AOB

A town board member Jamie Milligan has resigned due to other commitments prioritising his time and attention to his business.

Craig Geddes and Graeme F Lawerance gave an introduction and a speech to why they think they are good fit to join the board. This will be finalised by the chair in upcoming weeks.

15) Next Steps

The Chair will be sending out several emails about legal alignment and once the documentation is released will be distributed to al the required board members.

16) Date Of Next meeting

15th May 2025 SPEN Office, Leafield Road, Dumfries.

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