

DUMFRIES TOWN BOARD

Meeting of 15th May 2025

4pm-6pm

Scottish Power Energy Networks, Leafield Road, Dumfries

PRESENT

Richie Nicoll – Town Board Chair

Tom Mcaughtrie – Vice Chair

Isabelle Johnstone- Town Board Admin Support

William Currie – DG College

Anna Boyd- Police Scotland (via teams)

Graeme F Lawerance - Individual

Craig Geddes- Shop Owner

Joanne Johnstone- Town Board Programme Manager

John Dowson - Individual

Kenny Bowie- DG Chambers of Commerce

Council Officers

Nicola Hill - Economic Development Officer

Cllr Maureen Johnstone (Provost)

Matthew Watt (representing John Cooper MP) (via teams)

Guests

Cliff Robertson – Dumfries Loyalty App

1) Welcome and Introductions

The Chair opened the 14th meeting of the Dumfries Town Board by welcoming members and providing updates on recent engagements and developments. He began by noting a recent visit from representatives of the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local

Government (MHCLG), which underscores continued support and involvement from UK Government.

Following this, the Chair shared that he had met with Douglas Dickson from Dumfries and Galloway College. This meeting was focused on exploring opportunities to bring students learning Trades into the town centre to learn their craft which would revitalise local areas, increase footfall, and strengthen community connections between the college and the town.

Additionally, the Chair and board member Kenny Bowie (as DG Chambers President) took part in a joint discussion with the Irvine Town Board. In this exchange, they shared how Dumfries Town Board had managed to save a sizeable portion of its funding by choosing to engage with a secretariat, to provide admin and programme manager support. This approach was presented as a cost-saving measure whilst giving the Town Board more autonomy. Irvine TB were struggling with their relationship with their local council, and reliant on external agencies, which they acknowledged was not the most cost-effective means. DTB Chair in previous meeting with the Scottish Town Boards Chairs described how he had set the board up, and this was something that Irvine and other TBs were interested in following suit.

2) Apologies

Anne Marie Coulter MBE- Summerhill Community Centre

John Caskie MBE- Guid Nychburriss Association

Rachael Milligan- Covetrus

Cambell Young – SOSE

3) Minutes from the meeting on the 14th of April 2025 were approved with no issues rising.

4) Dumfries Town Loyalty App

Cliff Robertson introduced himself to the Town Board and responded to questions that had been raised during the meeting on April 14th. He confirmed that, based on current research, no other local business can match the pricing offered by Squid, the Irish-based company being considered for the Town Board's loyalty app initiative.

However, questions were raised by board members regarding the app's data security and GDPR compliance, particularly given that Squid is based in Ireland. As a result, it was agreed that these are the kind of issues that should be further investigated once a subcommittee was confirmed and formally raised with the local council for guidance and assurance.

The proposed benefits of implementing the Squid loyalty app include increasing footfall in Dumfries town centre by encouraging customer engagement and rewarding loyalty. The plan also includes a phased approach, starting within the town and eventually expanding the initiative into surrounding communities within the Dumfries and Galloway region.

As for next steps, the Board discussed the importance of identifying and understanding the target users—both business owners and members of the public. Additionally, it was proposed that a small subcommittee be formed, consisting of 3 to 4 board members. This subcommittee would be responsible for managing the development and implementation of the app alongside the Programme Manager, providing input as needed, and regularly updating the wider board with progress and feedback.

5) Where are we at now?

The Chair of the Dumfries Town Board reported a recent visit from three representatives of the UK Government, who are touring town boards across the UK. While en route to Edinburgh, they were available to stop in Dumfries. Richie met them at the train station and guided them through the town centre, including a visit to the HUB. The visitors appreciated the presence of a dedicated space in the town where residents can engage with the Town Board and share their thoughts. The group continued to the Loreburn Shopping Centre, where they met Anne Marie Coulter, who provided information about the Summerhill Community Centre Town Centre Hub. The Chair took the opportunity to discuss upcoming community engagement initiatives, particularly the planned **“Dumfries Shine”** event, and expressed hopes to involve local colleges, schools, groups, and sports clubs in future activities.

Additionally, the Chair noted positive developments in building a stronger network with local businesses using the Chamber of Commerce. The HUB is expected to open within a few weeks, which is anticipated to further enhance community engagement which pleased the UK Government officials at the possibilities and collaboration of the space.

The UK Government officials expressed satisfaction with the collaborative relationship between the Town Board and the local council and were pleased with the progress being made. Encouragingly, the new government guidance continues to promote greater flexibility for all seventy-five town boards, granting them more autonomy over how funds are managed, and decisions are made—an empowering shift for local leadership.

Nicola Hill had submitted documents confirming the board's boundaries and its members. The feedback received was entirely positive, with no complaints raised. Nicola also attended the Nithsdale Area Committee meeting, where she was asked to provide an update on the Town Board and answer questions about the boundaries. Richie fully supported Nicola continuing to represent the board in this capacity.

No further documentation or Plans for Neighbourhoods toolkit received yet and will hopefully be delivered by MHCLG by the beginning of June.

6) Civic Focused Town Clean Up Festival

The cleanup festival has been officially named **“Dumfries Shine.”**

Planning is now focused on the subcommittee, which is preparing for the next steps ahead of the upcoming meeting scheduled for May 27th at 2pm at the SPEN office. Joanne and Isabelle will be working closely to coordinate preparations and determine what needs to be done in the lead-up to the event.

It was discussed at the possibility of The HUB to purchase cleaning equipment, which would then be made available for use by the Town Board and shared across local communities within the boundary to support wider participation in the initiative.

7) DG College 'Town Centre Skills Partnership'

Douglas Dickson met with the Chair to discuss involving apprentices and trade learners in the regeneration of the town centre. The idea is to start with projects on the High Street and gradually expand to community centres within the board's boundary, promoting direct learning and community engagement whilst painting and fixing various buildings throughout the Town Centre and then wider buildings within the boundary.

Landowners such as Wirefox have shown strong interest and are keen to involve other landlords in the initiative. Businesses and Landlords including Andersons, Monaghans, and Wheatley have also expressed their willingness to be involved in the project.

Dumfries and Galloway College is enthusiastic about building a partnership with the Town Board. They are also open to involving their Student Association in board activities, providing students with a platform to be heard and actively contribute to town development efforts.

8) The HUB Update

A meeting was held on Monday, May 12th to discuss the upcoming opening of the premises, with trustees aiming for it to happen within the next two weeks. Most preparations are complete. To entice more businesses to adopt The Hub as a useable space, Starlink will be installed which will give them the best internet speed available.

The rent price was also discussed in which the Town Board would be able to offer free community engagement programmes that would range from various support groups and initiatives that would be able to use the space for free to deliver their work.

9) Dumfries Town Board Website

The Town Board website is undergoing final checks while awaiting photographs and summaries from some members. It has been shared with all board members for feedback, and any concerns raised have been addressed and amended. While these

updates are being made, the website will remain unchanged until the web designer implements the definitive version. The goal is to launch the live site by early June, provided all members are satisfied with the final product.

10) AOB

Julie Dykes has resigned from the town board due to personal circumstances but is willing to help if anything is ever required.

Loreburn Community council is looking for contacts in the art community to help with upcoming projects and are hopefully receiving funds from the Common Good fund.

11) Next Steps

Once the guidance documentation is released from MHCLG this will be distributed to all the board members.

12) Date Of Next meeting

17th June 2025 The HUB, Friars Vennel Dumfries.