



ACTION PLAN: WALKING PLACES PROJECT REPORT

Ayr Action Plan Report

Living Streets

April 2024

Introduction

This report describes the findings of the Walking Places project in Ayr, which was delivered by Living Streets.

The Walking Places project aims to support walking and wheeling in Ayr with Holmston Primary School as the centre of a 20-minute neighbourhood.

Living Streets is the UK charity for everyday walking. We want a nation where walking is the natural choice for everyday local journeys. Our mission is to achieve a better walking environment and inspire people to walk more.

The Walking Places project is funded by Paths for All through the Active Nation Fund.

Walking Places brings together Living Streets' expertise across our school programme and community work. It incorporates the following elements:

- **WOW – the walk to school challenge from Living Streets:** WOW sees pupils record how they travel to school. If they travel actively, they are rewarded with a badge at the end of the month. This has been launched with Holmston Primary School to support walking to school.
- **Living Streets' Out & About approach:** This initiative helps people to remain or become more physically active in their community to stay socially connected and to be active in improving the walking environment for everyone.
- **Living Streets' community and school street reviews:** Our street reviews evaluate the walking quality of local streets and help build a case for improvement to the walking environment. Holmston Primary pupils participated in a school street review.
- **20-minute neighbourhoods:** This is an approach which focuses on walkable neighbourhoods, where people can meet their daily needs within walking distance (10-minute walk each way). In this case, Holmston Primary is the focus for the 20-minute neighbourhood in Ayr.

The infographic below shows which features should be found in an ideal 20-minute neighbourhood.





Fig 1.1 - an infographic showing the features of a 20-minute neighbourhood

Living Streets talked to lots of people in the local community about their views and experiences. They asked what issues stopped residents from walking more in Ayr. This took place through street reviews, surveys and meetings.

Local context and changes

- The Ayr train station was temporarily closed due to a fire in the Station Hotel, stopping local services. There was a bus replacement service to Prestwick or to Stranraer, or a train service with change of trains at Prestwick station.
- During early stages of the Walking Places project, the A70 was closed to all pedestrian and vehicle traffic due to the unsafe Station Hotel building, following the fire. This resulted in pedestrians having to walk to Mill Street (under the railway bridge) to access the town centre.
- South Ayrshire Council completed the *Ayr Town Centre Framework* consultation in March 2024. This Framework looks to set out the key priorities for creating a mixed-use town centre, promoting access and creating safe and appealing places for people to visit.



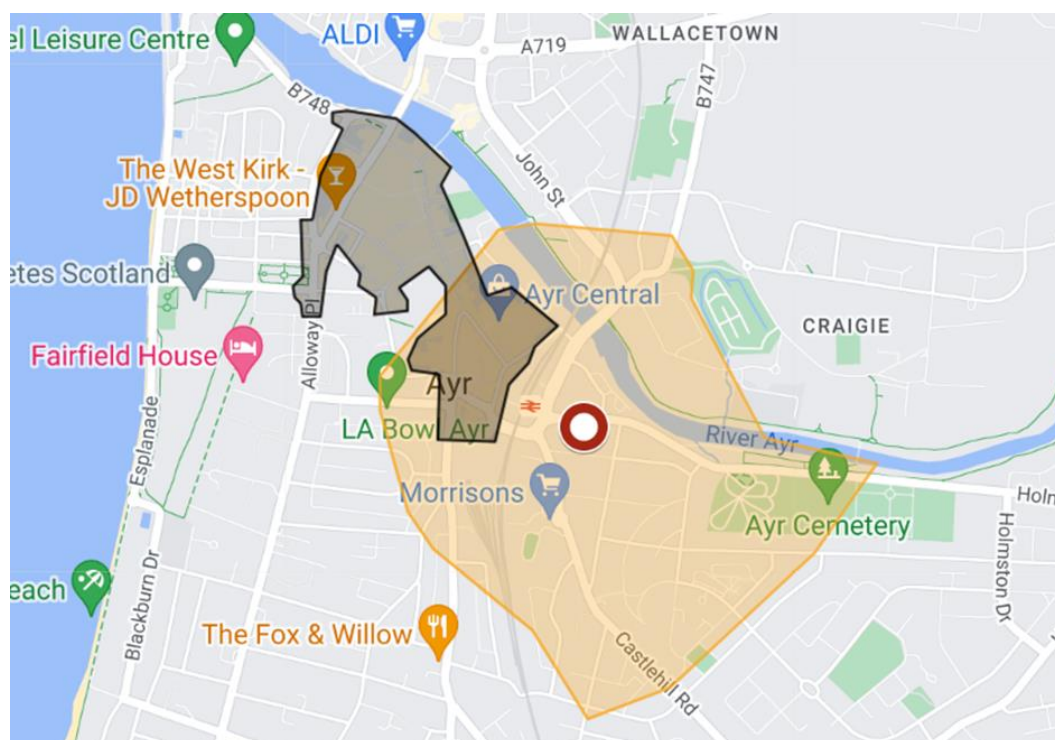


Fig 1.2 - A map showing the 20-minute neighbourhood focused on Ayr.

The light orange area on the map represents the 20-minute neighbourhood area including schools, train station, supermarkets, chemists, historic buildings, dentists, bus station, cafes, restaurants, public houses, entertainment venues and retail outlets.

The darker grey area on the map represents the high street, which includes food shops, cafes, restaurants, dentists, public houses, chemists, theatre, historic buildings and other retail outlets.

Community and school consultation

Community workshops and drop-in sessions were held with various groups across Ayr between September 2023 and March 2024, including:

- Ahead of the Curve, Occupational Therapy Team
- Ayr United Strollers
- Invigor8 group, SAC Leisure
- Monday Health Walk
- Reclaim the Night Walk event
- Sensory Impaired Support Group
- Sensory Walking Group
- British Sign Language introduction class
- Three Sixty group

An online survey was conducted between November 2023 and February 2024 and a household survey was undertaken in early 2024.



School consultations also took place, including:

- Meetings with Holmston Primary School about their participation in WOW - the walk to school challenge between October 2023 and March 2024.
- Holmston Primary School participated in the Walking Places interactive school workshop and Community Street Review with junior road safety officers and upper schoolhouse captains in February 2024.
- Holmston Primary School pupils joined a Walking Places family and community information event in March 2024. Parents and community members were invited to attend and give comments.

Data analysis

The following section outlines key findings from survey collection that took place across Ayr between November 2023 and February 2024.

High levels of walking and public transport use

- Ayr residents were more likely to use public transport (46%) compared to other areas.
- Nearly half (48%) of Ayr residents accessed public transport daily or several times a week.
- Many Ayr residents (56%) preferred walking for short local trips
- Over half (54%) of residents walked to local amenities. 62% walked regularly in general.

Barriers to walking

- The main deterrents to walking were time constraints (40%), weather (35%), and poor pavement conditions (31%).
- Common concerns included dog mess, traffic volume and speed, lack of safe crossings and poor street lighting.

Positive attitudes towards walking

- Most Ayr residents felt confident (79%) or safe (100%) walking in their community.
- Walking for health reasons was the strongest motivator (63% strongly agreed).
- Half (51%) of residents agreed walking was affordable, and 43% preferred it for convenience over driving.

Desire to walk more

- Nearly half (43%) of residents wanted to walk more often.



The following themes were identified from comments received through surveys:

Safety and infrastructure

- Residents repeatedly mentioned poor pavement conditions, including uneven surfaces and dog mess, making walking unpleasant and unsafe.
- Traffic volume, speeding drivers and a lack of safe crossing places were major concerns, especially for those with children or disabled people.
- Inadequate street lighting discouraged walking, particularly at night.

Specific needs and observations

- A resident requested the return of a "quiet road" trial on Ashgrove Street during school drop-off/pick-up times.
- Concerns were raised about a specific pedestrian crossing near Morrisons where drivers disregard red lights.
- Several comments highlighted the need for more and better maintained cycling paths, especially segregated ones. One resident mentioned a cycling collision due to another cyclist on the road.
- Residents said the poor condition of pavements and dropped kerbs made using a wheelchair difficult.

General comments on active travel

- Some residents felt Ayr had a good foundation for walking and cycling due to existing routes, but better connections were needed.
- Public transport could be improved, with comments on infrequent buses.

The following recommendations from surveys were noted:

- Improve pavement conditions, especially addressing dog mess
- Implement traffic calming measures and safer crossings
- Enhance street lighting
- Consider segregated cycle paths for improved safety
- Address concerns about speeding drivers
- Explore ways to make walking more convenient (such as more frequent pedestrian phasing at crossings).

Consultation findings



The following key themes were identified through consultation with Ayr community members and pupils at Holmston Primary School:

Ayr community members consultation feedback:

Public toilets

- Community members raised concerns over a lack of free public toilets. They felt their only choice was to buy food or drink from cafés to use the toilet facilities, which incurs a cost. The lack of toilets stops some people from walking far from home.

Pavement surfaces

- The number of uneven pavements in Ayr was raised. Residents said that uneven or raised paving slabs along the main shopping routes causes trip hazards and fears of tripping or falling.

Household bins

- Safety concerns were raised about household bins being left on pavements, especially when windy. They move across the pavement and make it difficult to walk, especially for those using mobility aids or with buggies. This results in residents having to walk in the carriageway.
- Community members wished to raise the bins issue with South Ayrshire Council. They wondered if the Waste Management team could receive some awareness training on moving bins back to appropriate positions after collecting household waste.
- Community members also wanted the wider community to receive some awareness information on this issue and how poor placement can affect pedestrians.

High street atmosphere

- Community members discussed the negative look and feel of Ayr, especially the main shopping streets, with many empty shops and lack of shopping options resulting in people driving to Braehead Shopping Centre or Glasgow.
- Some community members stated that the number of street beggars is off-putting and intimidating.
- Some residents who live in Ayr but want to shop at Asda, Sainsburys or Tesco drive because it is too far to walk carrying shopping or too difficult to use buses with shopping.
- The majority of community members were unaware of the South Ayrshire Councils *Ayr Town Centre Framework* consultation.

Public transport

- The train service suspension due to a fire in Ayr significantly impacted the community members' public transport options.
- Poor public transport (bus and train services) was said to be limited, unreliable and costly.



- Community members wondered if bus drivers could receive awareness training on supporting people with mobility and sensory issues to better access public transport (such as Thistle Assistance Card and App scheme or bus hailer cards).

Quality of footways (street cleaning)

- The amount of dog mess and overgrowing hedges or branches over pavements was identified by community members as issues that create barriers to walking.

Pavement under railway bridge (Mill Street)

- The community raised that the pavement is too narrow, especially when college students are using the pavement. Pedestrians must step into the road to pass each other.
- There is a large puddle by the pavement, so whenever there is rain, pedestrians get soaked when cars drive through it.
- Community members voiced concerns that this area is dark and that the lighting should be improved.

Attitude to walking

Community members discussed:

- The importance of walking for physical and mental health and wellbeing
- Pleasant walking areas such as beside the river Ayr and the beach
- The importance of being able to walk with others to provide support and friendship and reduce social isolation
- The need to get out of their homes and meet friends or simply see people in their local community
- The impact of having to contend with barriers to walking which can stop some people from walking local amenities
- The lack of benches, bins on pavements and uneven pavement causing issues due to mobility or sensory conditions.

Pedestrians feel their views are undervalued


- Community members stated they do not feel that their views or experiences about walking in Ayr are listened to by South Ayrshire Council.

Some quotes were received from local Ayr residents who participated in a community street review:

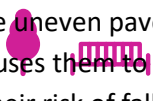
Ayr is a changed place.

So many empty shops, it looks awful. Why would you want to come into Ayr to shop?

We take the easy option (car) because of all the barriers to walking.



We ask people to look forward when they are walking to help with their posture, but due to their fear of tripping on the uneven pavements, they look down which causes them to tip forward, increasing their risk of falling.



I have the Thistle Card app and card, now. I wouldn't have known about this without the Walking Places project.

Holmston Primary pupil consultation feedback:

Pupils shared their views in a workshop and during a school street review. Key issues were as follows:

Crossing points and desire lines

- Pupils said they found it difficult to cross Holmston Road due to lack of crossing points. They were particularly nervous about crossing near the roundabouts at the train station.
- Due to the wide junction at Dongola Road onto Holmston Road, pupils said they would find it difficult to see traffic before deciding to cross.

Footway conditions and obstructions

- Parents and pupils highlighted that street sign poles in the middle of the pavement at Millbrae forces children onto the road.
- Pupils identified pavement parking as an issue.
- Pupils and parents said they disliked the amount of dog mess in the local community.
- Pupils and parents stated the pavements were uneven and children were concerned this may cause them to fall off their scooter.
- Pupils and parents were concerned about puddles and ice on pavements.
- Pupils and parents from the Craigie area were concerned that there is not enough space on Victoria Bridge for all pedestrians (children walking to school and students walking to college in the opposite direction) at peak times.
- Pupils said the pavement on Holmston Road was narrow, meaning they can't walk beside each other.

Personal safety

- Parents from the Craigie area perceived the woodlands near the college and the river footbridge pose a risk to an unaccompanied child. Therefore, they preferred to drive their child to school.



- Parents said the LED streetlights didn't provide adequate light for walking at night.

Traffic

- Pupils living south of the river Ayr said they are driven to sports clubs in the Craigie area because the amount of traffic makes it feel unsafe for walking and cycling.
- Pupils said they would like traffic to be slower at the school exit and entrance on Holmston Road.

Quotes from pupils were collected and some are shown below:

I wouldn't know how to cross the roundabouts to get to the train station – it's so busy!

Maybe we could walk to football training – but there is a lot of traffic.

Next Steps for Walking Places

The Walking Places project's main focuses are based on the findings from the consultation. These focuses are outlined in the table below, known as the Living Streets Action Plan.

For schools

- Continue participation in the WOW programme to encourage active travel with Holmston Primary School.
- Expand Living Streets schools programme, including Little Feet and Next Steps.
- Facilitate workshops with pupils and their families/carers to raise awareness and develop understanding of active travel.
- Collaborate with South Ayrshire Council on initiatives to improve safety and traffic calming measures around the school.

For the local community

- Support community members to campaign for free public toilet access.
- Work with community members to ensure their views are expressed and their voices are heard about active travel in Ayr.

For the local authority



- Work with South Ayrshire Council to address dog mess, investigate the need for improvements to pavement surfaces and pavement width.
- Training for Waste Management teams on the issues caused by household bins being left inappropriately on pavements.
- Work with South Ayrshire Council to improve the Mill Street railway bridge underpass area (pavements, drainage, and lighting).
- Continue to work with South Ayrshire Council Walking Development Officer to promote the benefits of walking, support community members to access local walking groups and increase the levels of walking in Ayr.

For external organisations

- Liaise with local bus service providers to investigate adding mobility and sensory awareness sessions to bus drivers' training.



Ayr Action Plan Table

Action	How?	Who is involved?	Who is responsible?	Timeline
Hold a workshop with parents/families to raise awareness of the benefits and importance an active travel routine at Holmston Primary.	<p>WOW Travel Tracker</p> <p>Development of resources /information for parents/guardians and carers</p> <p>Pupil workshop sessions</p> <p>Information and awareness sessions with parents/guardians and carers (after school or evening)</p>	<p>Living Streets</p> <p>Ayrshire Roads Alliance - Barbara Rae</p> <p>SAC Community Partnership Officer</p> <p>Holmston Primary Head Teacher</p> <p>Holmston Primary Parent Council</p>	Holmston Primary Head Teacher	May 2024 – August 2025
Investigate the potential for Primary 7 pupils transitioning to secondary feeder schools to participate in Next Steps to promote active travel to school	<p>Living Streets Next Steps programme</p> <p>(Dependent on Living Streets funding)</p>	<p>Living Streets</p> <p>Head Teachers Cluster feeder school.</p> <p>Ayrshire Roads Alliance - Barbara Rae</p>	Living Streets	May 2024 – August 2025

Action	How?	Who is involved?	Who is responsible?	Timeline
Investigate the potential for the Early Years settings across Ayr to participate in the Little Feet programme.	Living Streets Little Feet resource package (Dependent on Living Streets funding)	Living Streets Early Years Teachers across Ayr	Living Streets	By December 2024
Investigate the potential for extending the introduction of the WOW – the Walk to School challenge to all Ayr primary schools.	Living Streets (Dependent on Living Streets funding)	Living Streets Head Teachers across Ayr	Living Streets	By December 2024
Determine who can take on responsibility for advocating and moving this action plan forward	Distribute action plan and conduct stakeholder mapping to understand makeup of local organisations and where their priorities link to action plan Start process for working group	Local organisations Living Streets	South Ayrshire Council Community Partnership Officer	December 2024
Action	How?	Who is involved?	Who is responsible?	Timeline



Feedback community concerns about uneven pavements, pavement parking, dog mess, overhanging vegetation to South Ayrshire Council.	<p>Distribute Ayr action plan to key partners.</p> <p>Hand over responsibility to key partners to action</p>	<p>Living Streets</p> <p>South Ayrshire Council</p> <p>SAC Community Partnership Officer</p> <p>Forehill, Holmston and Masonhill Community Council.</p> <p>Local Councillors:</p> <p>Councillor Cullen</p> <p>Councillor Kilpatrick</p> <p>Councillor McGinley</p>	South Ayrshire Council	October 2024
Feed information back to South Ayrshire Council's Ayr Town Centre Framework regarding issues raised on active travel suggestions for the town centre.	<p>Arrange delivery of action plan to key partners</p> <p>Plan and organise a face-to-face discussion with lead officer for South Ayrshire Council's Ayr Town Centre Framework</p>	<p>South Ayrshire Council</p> <p>Ayrshire Roads Alliance</p> <p>Sustrans</p> <p>Streets UK</p> <p>SAC Community Partnership Officer</p> <p>Living Streets</p>	South Ayrshire Council	By December 2024



Action	How?	Who is involved?	Who is responsible?	Timeline
Feed information back to South Ayrshire Council regarding possible awareness raising training for the Waste management team; household bin collections	<p>Arrange delivery of action plan to key partners</p> <p>Plan and organise a face-to-face discussion with Waste Management team Lead Officer</p>	<p>South Ayrshire Council SAC Community Partnership Officer Living Streets</p>	<p>South Ayrshire Council Living Streets</p>	By October 2024
Promote benefits of Walking, and support local community to walk more	<p>Build understanding of walking motivations in Ayr based on survey results and any required, additional primary research</p> <p>Determine what activity should take place in Ayr to support walking, based on motivations for Ayr residents (e.g. activity, event, paper resources) and launch with residents.</p>	<p>Living Streets Forehill and Holmston Community Council Holmston Primary School</p>	<p>South Ayrshire Council Walking Development Officer</p>	On-going until March 2025



Action	How?	Who is involved?	Who is responsible?	Timeline
Provide walking group opportunities to interested community members who may be socially isolated or at risk of falling	Liaise with partnership organisations to provide information and signpost to external organisations.	South Ayrshire Council Sensory Team South Ayrshire Council Walking Officer Sensory Impairment Support Group External walking organisations NHS Ayrshire and Arran	South Ayrshire Council Living Streets	Ongoing action
Build partnership with bus companies around supporting walking for impaired groups	Liaise with local bus service providers to investigate adding mobility and sensory awareness sessions to bus drivers training.	Living Streets Bus Operating Companies Visually/hearing impaired groups	Bus Operating Companies	By March 2025





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