



# Community Engagement in Decisions Relating to Land

## The East Neuk Community Action Plan

### Theme: Community-led planning and land-use decision making

#### Overview

The East Neuk Community Action Plan (ENCAP) is an aspirational initiative to develop a jointly held long term vision and strategy for the East Neuk area of Fife. This collaboration sees East Neuk Estates Group, Fife Council, East Neuk Community Councils Forum, local community organisations, Fife Voluntary Action, Fife Rural Partnership and local businesses working in partnership to keep East Neuk vibrant, successful and resilient.

ENCAP is designed around a community led planning approach where communities in East Neuk are supported by the partnership to prepare their own five-year community action plans. The approach allows communities to organise and identify their own social, economic and environmental aspirations. The way land is being used in communities forms a key theme in the plans. The plans provide clarity to jointly held projects and developments, by identifying who would be responsible for their delivery. The public and

private land-owning partners in these communities commit to taking the needs, priorities and actions identified in the action

plans into account within their own land-use plans and strategies.

#### Approach

ENCAP came into being in 2014, with the formation of a multi-sector steering group. Inception funding was secured through LEADER and matched by Fife Council and private contributions. This allowed the steering group to commission community action planning specialists, **STAR Development Group** to co-design a training programme and toolkit which would assist communities to develop their own five-year Community Action Plans. A four month consultation saw 67 community





groups and support organisations involved. The findings are written up in a toolkit which is made available to communities from the Steering Group as they begin their community action planning process.

To date two local community action plans have been created using the tool kit and support from the ENCAP Steering Group. One for [Colinsburgh and Kilconquhar \(2016-2021\)](#) and one for [St Monans and Abercrombie \(2018-2023\)](#) and work is continuing with neighbouring villages and towns.

### Achievements and Benefits



One of the main achievements of the initiative to date is the commitment of all sectors to a joint long-term vision, strategy and area-based approach. This is a genuine **community-led initiative** with the wider partnership responding to the community action plans as they are developed. The

support, guidance and resources provided by the ENCAP partnership offer communities the opportunity to explore, organise and create their own vision of what they want for their place. The benefits of creating these types of community action plans is starting to be recognised widely within the public and community sectors in terms of supporting and developing community empowerment.

*'Advice, guidance and practical help was a great asset in allowing us to deliver the report for the local community.'*  
**Stuart Bridges, St Monans and Abercrombie CAP Committee**

The **joint-partnership approach by both the private and public sector** has also been key to driving this initiative. The **East Neuk Estates Group** is six estates working in collaboration for the sustainable management of the land in the East Neuk of Fife. The group have an **open and transparent** way of working, and are actively involved in the ENCAP as part of the communities they belong to and operate in. The Estates Group is committed to playing their part in responding to the priorities and actions identified by the communities in their local action plans and to integrating these into their own estate and land-use plans.



*'We are all residents and part of the community – we are all here.'*  
**Toby Anstruther, Balcaskie Estate**

This shared commitment saw the Group coming together to form **the East Neuk Community Awards Fund (ENCAF.)** This community benefit fund is designed to strategically manage the investment of local private philanthropy and giving. This fund has been used to support the creation of both the Colinsburgh and Kilconquhar and St Monans and Abercrombie Community Action Plans as well as other community projects in the area.

The role and commitment of **Fife Council** is also integral to this. Both in terms of the wider planning power, expertise and strategic knowledge they bring to the ENCAP partnership and also as public land owners and managers themselves.



## Learning

ENCAP is continuing to work towards achieving its full potential. Originally the programme had an ambitious approach to be delivered in phases e.g. three rounds with 3-4 communities taking part in each round. However, this proved to be lengthy and resource intensive. It requires a long-term commitment and a number of communities to pioneer the approach, learn the skills, and embed the practice and the collaborative way of working.

*'There was a perception that this was a council/ landowner led initiative designed for their own means. We were met with a fair bit of hostility at the start of the consultation. However, the starting point is never perfect- you have to work from it. You cannot make communities do this – they have to trust the commitment and volunteer to participate.'*

**Colin Roxburgh, Senior Consultant, STAR Development Group**

**Trust** has been one of the most fundamental aspects of this multi-sector approach to community-led planning and this takes time to develop. It is acknowledged that **early community engagement** in the design of this type of initiative is essential.

The **external community engagement and brokering expertise** provided by STAR has been essential in building this trust and co-operation due to their independence and experience. It has enabled the partnership to develop a genuine community-led initiative supported by an effective and tested toolkit and resources.

**Funding and support** is a universal challenge for communities who want to develop action plans in today's financial climate. After securing inception funding to develop the structure and resources it has been a challenge for ENCAP and the communities involved to access further core funding to support the development of local plans and the wider strategic plan.

A creative model is starting to emerge in response to this challenge. After being unable to secure grant funding to cover the costs of the engagement process for the action plan process, the community at St Monan's secured private investment through community crowdfunding which was managed through the **East Neuk Community Action Fund**. These private contributions were then used as match funding to access grants from the Common Good Fund managed by Fife Council. However, this process is reliant on a **considerable amount of volunteer commitment and hours** from the ENCAP Steering Group and the communities involved as well as funding.



The **issue of timing and pace** relates to another learning point. How do these community-led plans fit in with wider public planning timescales? Due to the small number of Local Plans created to date, it has been difficult for the ENCAP Steering group to fulfil its original 'brokering' role in 'promoting the plans and promoting the 'context' that was needed to make sure that the priorities within the community action plans were fed



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into the [Fife Local Development Plan \(FIFEplan\)](#). The timescales have not coincided, but it is hoped that with continued support from ENCAP, the community action plans developed will be able to feed into the early engagement for the next Fife Local Development Plan and Community Plan.

### What's Next?

There is currently great scope for this initiative to reach its full potential within today's land use, planning and community empowerment agendas. It provides an effective framework and commitment in the East Neuk to a genuine bottom-up approach to community-led planning supported by a committed, area-based, multi-sector partnership. In terms of land-use, it offers a transparent and open route for communities to be engaged in strategic, long-term decision-making.

### Find Out More

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[www.eastneukestates.co.uk/encap/east-neuk-community-action-plan/](http://www.eastneukestates.co.uk/encap/east-neuk-community-action-plan/)

### Further information

Further information about community engagement in decisions relating to land can be found at the following links:

[www.landcommission.gov.scot/lrrs](http://www.landcommission.gov.scot/lrrs)

[www.gov.scot/policies/land-reform](http://www.gov.scot/policies/land-reform)

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