

EAST RENFREWSHIRE A PLACE TO GROW



Community Conference Summary

April 2025



There was a lively panel discussion expertly chaired by Paul McNamee, the UK editor of the Big Issue.

Community Conference A Place to Grow Insights

The first community conference for East Renfrewshire's vision- A Place to Grow, took place on 26 April 2025 at Carlibar Primary School. The conference was attended by over 100 people from local community and faith groups, the business sector, councillors, partner organisations, Parent Councils and youth activists.

At the conference we heard from Community Planning Partnership leads including the leader of the Council, Owen O'Donnell and Chief Executive, Steven Quinn. Jamie Reid, Head of Communities and Transformation for the Council presented an overview of the three vision pillars and priority outcomes and how they were shaped. Sir Harry Burns gave the keynote speech and spoke of the importance of prevention and early intervention and listening to the voices of experience when planning services and making decisions.

The panel line up included Lorna Wilson from Barrhead Housing, Neil McInroy from Community Wealth Builders Ltd, Ruth Gallagher from Voluntary Action East Renfrewshire, Steven Quinn from East Renfrewshire Council and Sir Harry Burns with questions invited from the audience. Topics included the importance of secure and affordable housing and how it acts as a foundation for health, education, employment, and overall quality of life, the vital role that community groups and the third sector play in supporting wellbeing and health outcomes, and how Community Wealth Building can be a vehicle for change that looks at inclusive and fairer ways of wealth distribution through methods like Fairwork and local procurement.



Spotlight Sessions - your views

At the conference, it was important to hear from our communities and local groups about the role you can play in delivering a Place to Grow. Participants were invited to choose a pillar spotlight session where the following three questions were considered.

- What part can you play to deliver a Place to Grow for your community?
- What matters to you most for East Renfrewshire right now?
- What would be the biggest change you would like to see happen through a Place to Grow vision by 2040?

The following is a summary of your views, ideas and contributions shared in each spotlight session.



our children
and young people
flourish



Our priorities

In East Renfrewshire by 2040

- Our children and young people will experience love, safety, happiness, good physical and emotional health, have friends and adults they trust, and hope for the future.
- Achievement will continue to improve in all our establishments, with every child and young person in East Renfrewshire learning successfully and being well prepared for their future.
- Children and young people facing challenges and disadvantage will be supported as early as possible in a compassionate and aspirational way that builds on their strengths.
- The voice of every child and young person will be heard and their rights recognised, respected and nurtured

Pillar 1

Our ambition for East Renfrewshire is that **every child and young person**, regardless of background or circumstance, will **fully flourish** on their journey to adulthood.

We can help to deliver a Place to Grow by:	What is most important right now is:	The biggest change we want to see by 2040 is:
<p>Educating children and young people about sustainable living and growing their own food for healthy meals</p> <p>Teaching essential life skills in ever changing climate</p> <p>Providing work experience and apprenticeships</p> <p>Creating volunteer mentorship programmes between semi-retired/older generation and young people</p> <p>Sharing information about what is available in our communities for children and young people</p> <p>Supporting young carers and their families</p> <p>Churches and faith communities can provide meeting spaces for groups and provide opportunities for young people to explore and develop faith and spirituality</p>	<p>Continued support and recognition of our outstanding teachers and schools – pupils feel valued</p> <p>Strengthening the network between our third sector organisations and the community</p> <p>Scottish Government needs to fund initiatives</p> <p>Having equal aspirations for all our children and young people</p> <p>Personalised support to young people when they need it and increased access to counselling</p> <p>Support for breakfast clubs in schools</p> <p>Ensuring newly arrived children and young people are supported in schools by other students, teachers and pastoral care and with counselling</p> <p>Our young people feeling valued and having a voice</p> <p>Understanding diversity of all young people and ensuring we meet everyone's needs</p>	<p>Intergenerational learning, cultural and social activities with closer relationships between generations</p> <p>More joined up working between local organisations, charities and schools</p> <p>More post-school opportunities for young people particularly ASN and neurodivergent young people</p> <p>Training opportunities that make young people ready and fit for future labour market needs</p> <p>No wrong paths and ensuring all who work with young people are aware of the different routes and pathways</p> <p>Accessible employment opportunities for all</p> <p>Social inequalities are reduced</p> <p>No child in poverty</p> <p>More affordable and social housing for young people to allow them to stay in the area and shared ownership models</p> <p>Fruitful sustainability and genuine care for the environment</p>

our communities and places thrive



Our priorities

In East Renfrewshire by 2040

- We will have well-designed and sustainable housing options, with more affordable homes.
- We will have strong, diverse local businesses, encouraging investment, developing skills and providing a wide range of fair work opportunities.
- We will have attractive places that encourage wellbeing and strong community bonds.
- We will have a modern digital infrastructure to keep our residents, communities and businesses connected, able to innovate and make the most of new technological advances.
- We will have a network of accessible and connected active travel routes and public transport, providing easy access to work, services, leisure and play.
- We will be working together to achieve net zero carbon emissions, protect our natural spaces, encourage biodiversity and be well prepared for climate challenges.

Pillar 2

We will be an **inclusive, connected and green place**, with a **fair, sustainable and healthy local economy**, that our residents are proud to call home.

We can help to deliver a Place to Grow by:	What is most important right now is:	The biggest change we want to see by 2040 is:
<p>Encouraging more movement in the housing market/social housing with options for downsizing, other choices of rent (for residents)</p> <p>Including more business sector representatives like Chamber of Commerce as a CPP partner</p> <p>Supporting our local businesses</p> <p>Engaging with external investor businesses</p> <p>Build awareness of the role of the Barrhead Rotary Club including fundraising and supporting growth</p> <p>Better engagement with communities</p> <p>Creating a model of community centres that support community cohesion and activity</p> <p>Regeneration of our BID areas and improving community spaces and places for residents, visitors and businesses and engaging with young people in that process</p> <p>Churches and faith groups providing meeting spaces for community groups at affordable rent/hire costs and support social integration</p> <p>Joining youth rights associations and ensuring young people are given a space to share their ideas and opinions</p> <p>Creating a register of community facilities and spaces</p> <p>Identify volunteering opportunities locally</p> <p>Working with ERC and partners to explore more transport options including Clyde Metro</p>	<p>Equality of approach across communities</p> <p>More affordable housing</p> <p>Redevelopment of Barrhead Main Street and shopping centre</p> <p>Addressing the lower paid salaries for people who are working in East Ren</p> <p>Identifying and coordination of funding to make things happen</p> <p>Continued partnership and place-based approach with local people</p> <p>Local groups and organisations want to support community activity but running costs make it difficult</p> <p>Better use of our leisure centres/sports pitches through free /subsidised access for young people</p> <p>Completion of Aurs Road</p> <p>A circular bus service for Silverburn, Eastwood and Barrhead</p> <p>Working together to look at transport options</p> <p>Working with SPT to secure funding for community transport and with CT operators to grow sector</p> <p>Look at how land is zoned- can we create more mixed/multi-use options?</p> <p>Developing and protecting green spaces</p>	<p>Ability to attract and retain younger people to East Renfrewshire</p> <p>Housing that is affordable for all with investment in mid-market rent and more options for different housing needs e.g. first-time buyers, downsizing</p> <p>More skilled professional opportunities locally and a connection to wider business networks</p> <p>Better use of land and buildings for business/jobs/skills development</p> <p>Visual improvement of town centres to attract business and visitors</p> <p>Good local salaries to attract and keep workers in East Renfrewshire</p> <p>The Shanks site has been fully developed in a green way to support jobs and wellbeing</p> <p>Car dependency has reduced</p> <p>Connected places across East Renfrewshire and beyond through public transport</p> <p>Better bus franchising</p> <p>Improved rail connections with an interchange at Williamwood station to connect East Kilbride and Neilston lines</p> <p>Lots of green space</p>

we all
live well



Our priorities

In East Renfrewshire by 2040

- Our communities will be stronger, more connected and collaborative and will be leading on solutions to support people to live well.
- Health inequalities will have significantly reduced, and residents will have routes out of poverty.
- Our older population will be supported to live healthy, active lives and have opportunities to participate, contribute and thrive.
- Our residents will be enabled and empowered to make healthier choices and have access to high-quality sport and physical activities and facilities.
- Our residents will have access to creative and vibrant cultural experience and have opportunities to celebrate their diversity of heritage.
- Life-long learning will be valued and available to all.

Pillar 3

Our ambition for East Renfrewshire is that everyone **can live well at all stages of life** and communities will be taking the lead in driving change for **good health and wellbeing**.

We can help to deliver a Place to Grow by:	What is most important right now is:	The biggest change we want to see by 2040 is:
<p>Understanding and removing the barriers to community participation</p> <p>Exploring how we promote local groups and organisations in a way that is accessible to all e.g. notice boards</p> <p>Creating a community directory that is live and dynamic</p> <p>More joined up support and advice for local groups and organisations</p> <p>BIDS are exploring a digital app for local communities</p> <p>Shouting about what's going well! Share the positives</p> <p>Making community centres more accessible</p> <p>Public health messaging about how we live and what we eat affects all aspects of life- sharing more lived experience data and creating peer support structures</p> <p>Creating community centres/hubs focused on health</p> <p>Calling out and challenging discrimination and prejudice</p>	<p>The power of networking for organisations and people</p> <p>Using existing festivals and events to promote support networks for people and community groups</p> <p>How we prioritise prevention in communities with less funding</p> <p>Ensuring health activities need to be accessible, inclusive and open to all with no barriers</p> <p>Making sure all young people have all the same opportunities to thrive and learn</p> <p>Challenges of gaining access to primary care and increasing capacity</p> <p>Transport to ensure people can access help and support in their communities</p>	<p>More places for people to socialise –creating informal spaces for people to meet for tea/coffee</p> <p>A stronger sense of community in each area</p> <p>More interconnectivity between different communities rather than each council having their own plan to deliver for residents</p> <p>Young people feeling less socially isolated</p> <p>Understanding and sharing the value of physical and social activity to encourage involvement</p> <p>We value and promote formal and informal participation and volunteering</p> <p>By 2040 no place-based health inequalities. ALL people can live well</p> <p>Life expectancy difference between male and female has reduced</p> <p>We are better connected by good transport</p> <p>Gyms in schools get used more across the community</p> <p>Fair system of contribution for health and social care services</p>

At the conference we also shared a QR code for people to contribute to the three questions. Here is a summary of what you said ...

We all can help to deliver a Place to Grow by ...

**“Creating a community
led organically sustainable
green space which we
believe fits into the 2040
vision”**

**“Providing meeting
spaces for community
groups to come
and offer different
activities”**

What is most important right now is ...

**“Building strong communities
through sport and wellbeing,
space for all groups to thrive,
especially youths to grow and
develop”**

**“Connectivity between
the third sector, statutory
sector, business and
communities”**

**“Safe, happy
communities with
more social housing”**

The biggest change we want to see by 2040 is ...

**“More opportunities (volunteer
and paid) for small businesses
... to connect, work with and
network with residents in a
collaborative way”**

**“Long term mental health
support beyond school
age years especially for
struggling students”**

**“Connectivity of
transport to other
parts of Greater
Glasgow”**



The contributions, ideas and suggestions captured here and through the spotlight sessions will help us to work with communities to achieve the [Place to Grow delivery plan](#).

Conference feedback

At the end of the event, we shared another QR code to invite feedback and made paper evaluation copies available. We had a small number of responses but all very positive. All agreed or strongly agreed that the event had given them a better understanding of A Place to Grow vision and all found the speakers excellent or very good.

In terms of what went well our responders said:

“timekeeping! the workshops were great, so good to feel heard “

“the topics and communication”

“the vision for the future of ER development”

We also asked what could have been done better:

“More group chat time for the 3 pillars exercise perhaps..... as it was really interesting to hear all the ideas and passions from those involved”.

“a little more time to network around the stalls perhaps”

“more people invited”

We asked for suggestions for future events:

“somewhere for children to go (e.g activity area) to allow more parents to attend”

“....separate meeting groups over the months for say, each of the tenets of the 3 pillars.... for residents to offer their expertise, ideas, volunteering in each area”.

And the final comments included:

“very inspirational event”

“Thank you for organising such a really well-run event that takes the local community and our voices into account.”



Thank you and Next Steps

A huge thank you to all individuals, community groups, and partner organisations who attended the event and shared their expertise, ideas, and feedback. These contributions will be carefully considered as we shape our *Place to Grow* delivery plans.

Over the coming months, we'll be strengthening our Community Planning Partnership governance structures to help achieve the outcomes set through a *Place to Grow*. Continued community engagement and participation will be vital, and we look forward to hosting further events across East Renfrewshire.

Finally, sincere thanks to our conference chair, speakers, session facilitators, and panel members for their valuable contributions; to the Youth Rights Association and Champions Board members for interviewing participants; to Carlibar Primary, the Trust, and our catering and BAM staff for their support in running the event.

