



# N76 Energy in Motion

## YEAR 2 (2023-2024) REPORT

Rosie Brown, N76 Development Officer

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## Thank you to our funders

PATHS FOR ALL - SMARTER CHOICES SMARTER PLACES

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# The N76 partners



## KPT DEVELOPMENT TRUST

Keir, Penpont & Tynron  
Dumfries & Galloway



## NITH VALLEY LEAF TRUST

Closeburn  
Dumfries & Galloway



## MONIAIVE INITIATIVE

Glencairn  
Dumfries & Galloway



## SANQUHAR ENTERPRISE COMPANY

Sanquhar  
Dumfries & Galloway



## KIRKCONNEL & KELLOHOLM DEVELOPMENT TRUST

Kirkconnel & Kelloholm  
Dumfries & Galloway



## NEW CUMNOCK DEVELOPMENT TRUST

New Cumnock  
East Ayrshire







## Project overview

### OUR PURPOSE

**N76 is about bringing the partner communities together to share ideas and empowering them to develop their own shared and individual sustainable transport projects.**

The N76 Energy in Motion project is a partnership with six development trusts based along and around the A76 trunk road in Dumfries & Galloway and East Ayrshire. The project was started in response to the development trusts' concerns about local barriers to travel and ways to reduce these barriers by improving low carbon transport (LCT) options. The N76 partners have identified transport as a shared challenge for their communities and essential for achieving local development goals.

### BACKED BY RESEARCH AND CONSULTATION

The first year of N76 focused on capacity building and consultation, providing the N76 group with the evidence and resources to identify and deliver work in year 2 and beyond. The N76 Development Officer worked with each group to distribute surveys among community members, leading to the production of six in-depth sustainable transport plans, developed with extensive public consultation. Year 2 activities have also involved community engagement including public workshops, detailed later in this report.





# Achievements and successes

## BRINGING COMMUNITIES TOGETHER IN PARTNERSHIP

Every community is different, but this project began because the six N76 partners recognised that they also share similar challenges around rural mobility. Working together has allowed them to share their knowledge and experiences about sustainable transport options, funding, local issues and priorities for their communities, as well as key contacts who have helped them progress their work.

The N76 partners meet fortnightly on Teams, where they each give updates about their work and any news from their communities. This is a great chance to help each other, but just as important is the opportunity to celebrate their good news and accomplishments - a new active travel path, funding successes, a well-attended event or even navigating local politics.

The fortnightly meetings have also been a chance to speak with guest attendees who work within the N76 communities. For instance, in early 2024 a representative from the new Dumfries & Galloway Bus Users' Group joined a meeting to speak with the N76 partners about issues their communities face with public transport.





## COLLABORATION AND PROJECT SUPPORT

Working together has allowed the N76 partners to identify and develop their own goals and projects more effectively, through knowledge sharing that they would have missed out on had they been working separately.

Support from the N76 project officer with funding applications in year 1, as well as ongoing knowledge sharing by KPT Development Trust (KPTDT) about their cargo- and e-bike hire scheme, has led to the purchase of cargo- and e-bikes by Nith Valley Leaf Trust (NVLT). The Trust aims to launch their own hire scheme in spring 2024, with plans for reciprocal charging and hire arrangements between both hire schemes as part of efforts to encourage locals and visitors to cycle. The N76 DO has supported NVLT with further applications in year 2, helping build Closeburn's active travel offering.

KPTDT has been an ongoing source of inspiration to all six partners, with the development and launch of the Penpont-Thornhill active travel path during N76 year 2. The path provides an accessible and scenic link between Penpont and the local hub for shops and services, Thornhill. The work of KPTDT's tracks and trails group and their generosity in sharing details and updates has empowered the other N76 groups to investigate ways of developing similar links. In particular, NVLT's Closeburn path group is now in the early stages of developing their own link with Thornhill, benefitting from conversations with KPTDT, Dumfries & Galloway Council and SWestrans as part of N76. In the near future, we hope that safe and accessible active travel routes will link all six N76 groups; and with a link between Penpont and Closeburn on the horizon, we are a step closer to this goal.





## BUILDING THE N76 TRANSPORT NETWORK

Building the N76 network has been an important part of year 2 and we are glad to have worked with other organisations including Ramblers, Wheels of Fleet cycling project, Dumfries and Galloway Council and SWestrans over the course of the year. We have also built a great relationship with local community transport providers as part of our aim to support their important work. Each of these links has been made through a recognition of shared goals for community connectivity.

Updates about the project are also released frequently on social media, as well as with other local communities with which we hope to work in the near future.

## LEGACY

The N76 project is a space for collaboration and inspiration, empowering the partner communities with the knowledge, resources and confidence to achieve their own individual and shared transport goals. Furthermore, it is helping to build their own legacies as experts in community-led sustainability, sharing flagship projects like KPTDT's active travel path and e-bike hire.

We envision that with the right improvements, sustainable travel through the N76 area will be a convenient and enjoyable experience, connecting community members and visitors with key shops and services, while allowing visitors to explore the wealth of local heritage and natural surroundings. In year 2, we are already seeing some changes toward this goal, with opportunities like the Penpont-Thornhill path showing that where sustainable transport is a viable option, people will choose it.





# Challenges and lessons learned

## THE CHANGING FUNDING LANDSCAPE

Well into the year and during Nith Valley Leaf Trust's work on developing a path project, the active travel funding landscape changed dramatically, with local authorities and regional transport partnerships now the preferred applicants for funds like Sustrans' Places for Everyone. Furthermore, Transport Scotland announced that all active travel funding will from now on be the responsibility of local authorities and RTPs.

The changing funding landscape can have significant impacts on community projects, but announcements about these changes, as well as new funding options, are easy to miss. The N76 network allows rapid dissemination of information between the groups; and in the case of the NVLT path project, meant quickly starting discussions with D&G Council and SWestrans about how to take forward their work.

## STAFFING CHANGES

In year 2 of N76, we said goodbye to Claudia Banks of Sanquhar Enterprise Company and Senga Greenwood of KPT Development Trust. Both development officers were fantastic assets to the project and were constantly generous with their ideas and knowledge alongside working on various transport- and community-focused projects with their development trusts. The two trusts have continued as N76 partners and we have since welcomed a number of new faces to the project, including SEC's new DO, Ronnie Bradford.





## Testimonials

*"For NVLT the N76 partnership has been invaluable for our recent work on active travel. We have been able to benefit from the experience and knowledge of both neighbouring N76 partners and projects further afield to help us progress. The KPT Development Trust's active travel path and e-bike hire scheme has been especially helpful.*

*By networking with N76 partners at regular meetings and off line conversations, as well as support from the N76 development officer with funding applications, we've been able to purchase e-cargo bikes and e-bikes during year 2 and will set up a hire scheme this year.*

*We have also been able to keep ahead of changes to active travel initiatives and have through discussions with Dumfries and Galloway Council and SWestrans progressed our proposed active travel path from Closeburn to Thornhill and start the development of a bike library and repair facility as part of encouraging more walking and cycling in Closeburn."*

**- MIKE STEELE, NITH VALLEY LEAF TRUST (N76 PARTNER)**

Mike is pictured above with Nith Valley Leaf Trust's path group and the Penpont-Thornhill path group from KPT Development Trust. This gathering between the two path groups helped Mike and the Closeburn path group to overcome barriers as they developed their own active travel path project.





*“Since taking up the role of Development Manager at the Kirkconnel Parish Heritage Society, I have found the N76 team, in particular Rosie, to be approachable and knowledgeable. The contacts I have made have helped the Society to further their commitment to affordable and accessible transport.”*

*With the help and advice of others within the N76, we are on our way to securing funding for a new minibus which will be more accessible for those with reduced mobility. This has only been possible with the support of the N76 group as I wasn’t sure how to secure the funding or indeed, just how important community transport is to rural areas.”*

- KYM CLEMENTS, DEVELOPMENT MANAGER  
KIRKCONNEL PARISH HERITAGE SOCIETY  
N76 CONTACT AND MEMBER OF COMMUNITY ENERGY SCOTLAND



Left: Kym and a KPHS volunteer outside their office with Stephen Sparrow of Cairn Valley Community Transport and David Kerr of Thornhill & District Community Transport. The three CTOs met with the N76 DO and Sanquhar Community Minibus Project, not pictured, as part of N76. The aim of this event was to introduce and encourage knowledge sharing between the CTOs, in line with N76 partner aims to support CTOs in the project area.





# The events calendar

		Jun-23	Jul-23	Aug-23	Sep-23	Oct-23	Nov-23	Dec-23	Jan-24	Feb-24	Mar-24	Notes
All N76	1 Wheels of Fleet visit	26										
	2 CT providers discussion (online)		3									
	3 Coalfield Community Transport visit					12						
	4 CT providers discussion (in person)									13		
KPTDT	5 Celebration of Cycling festival		22									Supporting
	6 Penpont-Thornhill active travel path opening										23	Supporting
MI	7 Path mapping workshop					3						
NCDT	8 Ramblers presentation and guided walk									3		
	9 Path mapping workshop/FitFest					10						
KKDT	10 Wheels of Fleet visit to New Cumnock Primary School									29		
	11 Road safety awareness presentation											Postponed
SEC	12 Braeheads path visit (end of year celebration)										18	
NVLT	13 Path group meeting with KPTDT Tracks and Trails group					6						

## LEARNING VISITS

Throughout the project, learning visits have allowed the N76 group to find inspiration in other sustainable transport projects. In summer 2023, the partners and guests travelled visited Wheels of Fleet cycling project in Gatehouse of Fleet, where they were able to see a brilliant community cycling project in action.

Later in the year, Wheels of Fleet visited New Cumnock to discuss their fantastic bike bus scheme with New Cumnock Development Trust (NCDT) and New Cumnock Primary School. It is hoped that NCDT will be able to use learnings from Wheels of Fleet to develop a similar project to encourage safe and enjoyable active travel within New Cumnock; a brilliant example of the benefits of knowledge sharing.





## NETWORKING AND SUPPORTING LOCAL ORGANISATIONS

Support for community transport organisations (CTOs) in the N76 area has been a key basis for events in our second year. After an online meeting with the CTOs, where they shared their challenges and aspirations with the N76 group, a visit to Coalfield Community Transport was arranged. This was a great opportunity to learn from CCT's successes and share ideas. Since the visit, a further meeting was organised between the CTOs to discuss issues like funding, bus repairs and volunteer recruitment and training.

## COMMUNITY WORKSHOPS

Community engagement continues to be a major part of the N76 project and in year 2 has been instrumental for individual partner projects. In autumn 2023, the N76 officer and Moniaive Initiative held a path mapping drop-in session where local community members were able to use maps to identify and discuss their favourite active travel routes, ideas for new connections and challenges they have faced with issues like accessibility and path conditions. This was also a useful opportunity for local landowners to share their concerns about responsible access with Moniaive Initiative, leading to constructive discussions and next steps for the development trust. See the following page for a summary of the themes and ideas discussed at the drop-in session.

In March 2024, the N76 officer and Moniaive Initiative teamed up with Ramblers to deliver a walking themed day, with a presentation about Ramblers' Scottish Paths Map project and a guided walk along a route identified by attendees in the autumn session. The trust plans to improve and promote this route as well as a number of others during N76 year 3.



# Your Opinions About Active Travel in Glencairn Workshop Outcomes

## Existing Routes

The fields and hills north of Moniaive are popular with walkers.

Dalmacallan Forest is also popular and there is an interest in extending the walk by joining the forest track with a nearby moorland track. Some attendees walk along the south side of the river. A route over Bardennoch Hill is mentioned in John Shaw's Tynron Glen book.

## Hidden Heritage, Stones and Ruins

Glencairn has rich heritage, much of which is hidden in the landscape and not always well documented. Smith's Stone (Moniaive) and Martyr's Stone (Ingleson Mains) are covenanter memorials. The former is not obvious unless looked for carefully, but both can be visited. Castle Hill near Dalwhart would be good for a heritage trail.

## Promoting Local Routes

Attendees showed an interest in promoting walking and cycle routes in the area. They wish to see more promotion of the Striding Arches destination. Others noted that the Moniaive-Tynron-Keir Mill path could benefit from further resources and promotion. There is interest in developing and promoting an official "Three Glens Cycle Route".

## Coos, Ewes and Responsible Access

Landowners highlighted that active travel routes should consider biosecurity and maintain buffer zones between livestock holdings. Dogs should be kept on leads when near sheep. Some walkers also expressed concern about safety around livestock and would appreciate corridors separating them from cattle.

## Points of Interest

There are a number of good viewpoints down to Moniaive. A designated viewpoint and interpretation board would be welcomed.

## The Changing Landscape

Attendees wish to see continued pedestrian and cycle access on forest tracks during closures to vehicular traffic. A number of attendees noted the bridge has been removed near Catloch Cave but is still marked on OS maps. Others noted missing signposts. There is an understanding that the changing climate may impact access along and across rivers.

## Challenges to Getting Around

Windfall obstructs access linking the Striding Arches. Established walking routes along rivers and burns are impacted by high rainfall, overgrown areas and a lack of suitable crossing points. Potholes on the bypass road are a danger to all road users. There are few paths in fields north of Moniaive and bracken, bogs and fences obstruct routes.

## New Routes

There is a high level of interest in developing recognised circular walking routes including:

- Around Dalmacallan Forest
- To the loch behind Crawfordton
- South of the river near Moniaive.

Other suggestions included a new core path at the back of Dunreggan and a route linking up with the new Penpont active travel path.

## Rediscovering Lost Routes

There is considerable interest in turning the old railway track into a path. Some attendees suggested the addition of stepping stones to link the old railway track to the other side of the river, as well as creating an official circular route along the old railway track and river. There are several lost or near-lost routes between the A702 and Shinnel Glen.

paths  
for all



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Thank you to our funders:







## CELEBRATING ACTIVE TRAVEL

N76 is as much about celebrating achievements as it is about highlighting challenges for transport. So, it was fitting that the end of year 2 meetup was also a chance for one of the N76 partners to share their latest achievement: Sanquhar Enterprise Company's newly improved Braeheads path.

22 guests from the N76 group, Community Energy Scotland and other local organisations gathered to walk along the path, marking the first time such a large number of people involved in N76 have met in person. As usual, the meeting was a perfect chance to network and share ideas, all while enjoying the fresh air. The Braeheads path is just one of many exciting projects the trust is working on, with a focus on creating and improving opportunities to explore the rich landscape and heritage around Sanquhar.

And after years of hard work by the trust staff and Tracks and Trails group, it was a great joy to be able to share the excitement at KPTDT's Penpont-Thornhill path opening on 23rd March. KPTDT continues to inspire and we hope that the Penpont-Thornhill path will be the first of many accessible active travel links between and within the N76 communities.





## What to expect in year 3

### FURTHER SUPPORT AND EVENTS

In year 3, we will continue support for individual partner projects started in year 2. This will include facilitating collaboration between the partners, community transport providers, local authorities and other key organisations such as Ramblers, as well as additional support from the N76 DO with issues like funding applications. Events will remain an important aspect of community engagement and knowledge sharing.

### EVS AND CAR CLUBS

A long-term aim of the N76 project is to investigate how the project area might benefit from electric vehicles (EVs) and car clubs. In year 3, the group will work with key contacts including Dumfries & Galloway Council and SWestrans, as well as CES' own Orkney Car Club, to investigate the viability of these options for their communities.

### GUIDE TO SUSTAINABLE TRAVEL IN THE N76 AREA

Year 3 will see the development of a guide to sustainable travel in the N76 area, benefiting from the wealth of knowledge shared between the N76 partners and communities over the course of N76. This guide will showcase opportunities to travel sustainably within and between the N76 communities, including recreational active travel routes as well as practical ways to get from A to B. Accessibility, affordability and celebrating the landscapes and heritage of the N76 area will be emphasised throughout.







