

Abbey St Bathans, Bonkyl & Preston Local Place Plan

2025-2035



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Welcome to the Abbey St Bathans, Bonkyl and Preston Local Place Plan 2025 – 2035. This plan supersedes our previous 2015 Community Action Plan and has been developed based on the feedback received at recent community events and through on-line surveys targeted at the younger members of our community.

The plan sets out our vision ***“to create a vibrant, active, supportive, caring community, with great facilities that are well used. We want the community to be a sustainable place to live with the appropriate services, infrastructure and housing.”*** To achieve this vision, we will focus on six themes which are set out in this document - they will drive how we plan and prioritise projects and activities.

Most importantly this plan belongs to the community, it is our opportunity to influence how we would like things to be in the future. To this end I would encourage everyone to take time to look through the plan and if you are able to, get involved in helping to achieve the vision that we have set ourselves. If any resident is interested in joining the Community Council or our Community Trust PACT, or would like to know about their activities, please visit our website **www.coabp.org** for more information.

Finally, I would like to thank everyone in the community who has provided input to the plan through the community events and surveys. Wendy Reid and Community Enterprise for leading on the development of the plan, and Scottish Borders Council (SBC) and Preston and Abbey Community Trust (PACT) for providing the necessary funding.

Keith Dickson

Chair - Abbey St Bathans, Bonkyl and Preston Community Council (ABPCC)

photo by Natasha Williams



Introduction and Overview

01

1.1 About this Document

A Local Place Plan¹ is a new type of community-led plan, introduced by Section 14 of the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019. This gives communities the opportunity to come up with proposals for the **development and use of land** in their local area². Communities work with others to reach a shared view on how the area should change in the future.

This Local Place Plan will influence the development of the Scottish Borders Council's next Local Development Plan³. The plan will identify what should happen across the area and where it should happen.

However, the focus of a Local Place Plan is not restricted to Scottish Borders Council's planning concerns. Some of the themes and project ideas included here will be the responsibility of the community to develop and deliver.

With a Local Place Plan registered and verified, the people of our community will be able to influence and drive developments in the area, and this is our platform to voice our own aspirations for the area.

Development of the plan has been led by the Abbey St Bathans, Bonkyl and Preston Community Council (ABPCC), in conjunction with the Preston and Abbey Community Trust (PACT). Abbey St Bathans, Bonkyl and Preston Community Council is an eligible community body to submit a Local Place Plan to Scottish Borders Council.

1. www.ourplace.scot/home/local-place-plans

2. www.storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/d426e6addf114cbe86be1cf0cf564214

3. www.scotborders.gov.uk/plans-guidance/local-place-plans



1.2 Our Vision

Our vision is for Abbey St Bathans, Bonkyl and Preston to be a vibrant, active, supportive, caring community, with great community facilities that are well used. It will be a sustainable place to live with the appropriate services, infrastructure and housing.



photo by Natasha Williams

1.3 Investment Themes and Strategic Priorities

The Place Plan process has identified core thematic areas that will underpin and support the achievement of the vision.

Directly aligned to the investment themes, we have identified strategic objectives with the specific purpose of setting out what we want to achieve, and to express what points we would like to reach.

Theme 1: An active place for everyone

Strategic Objective: A place that has services and facilities for all local people, regardless of age or circumstances. A place that has good support and affordable things to do.

Theme 2: A connected place

Strategic Objective: A place that has better public transport, accessible community vehicles, good active travel routes and well maintained pathways enabling people to get about effectively and with minimal impact on climate. Good broadband will connect people to each other and support businesses.

Theme 3: A resilient place where people can stay

Strategic Objective: A place where there is appropriate, accessible and affordable housing so people can stay here, bring up their families and grow old here well looked-after in sustainable ways.

Theme 4: A natural and beautiful place

Strategic Objective: A place where we celebrate and value our natural environment, opening up access to it sensitively for visitors and local people, building resilience to climate change.

Theme 5: A safe place

Strategic Objective: A place where we can get around safely with well-maintained infrastructure.

Theme 6: An enterprising place

Strategic Objective: A place where there is sustainable work and interesting careers for all. It will be an economy that is local by default and works to outcomes that are related to both economic regeneration and wellbeing.



photo by Natasha Williams

Area Context

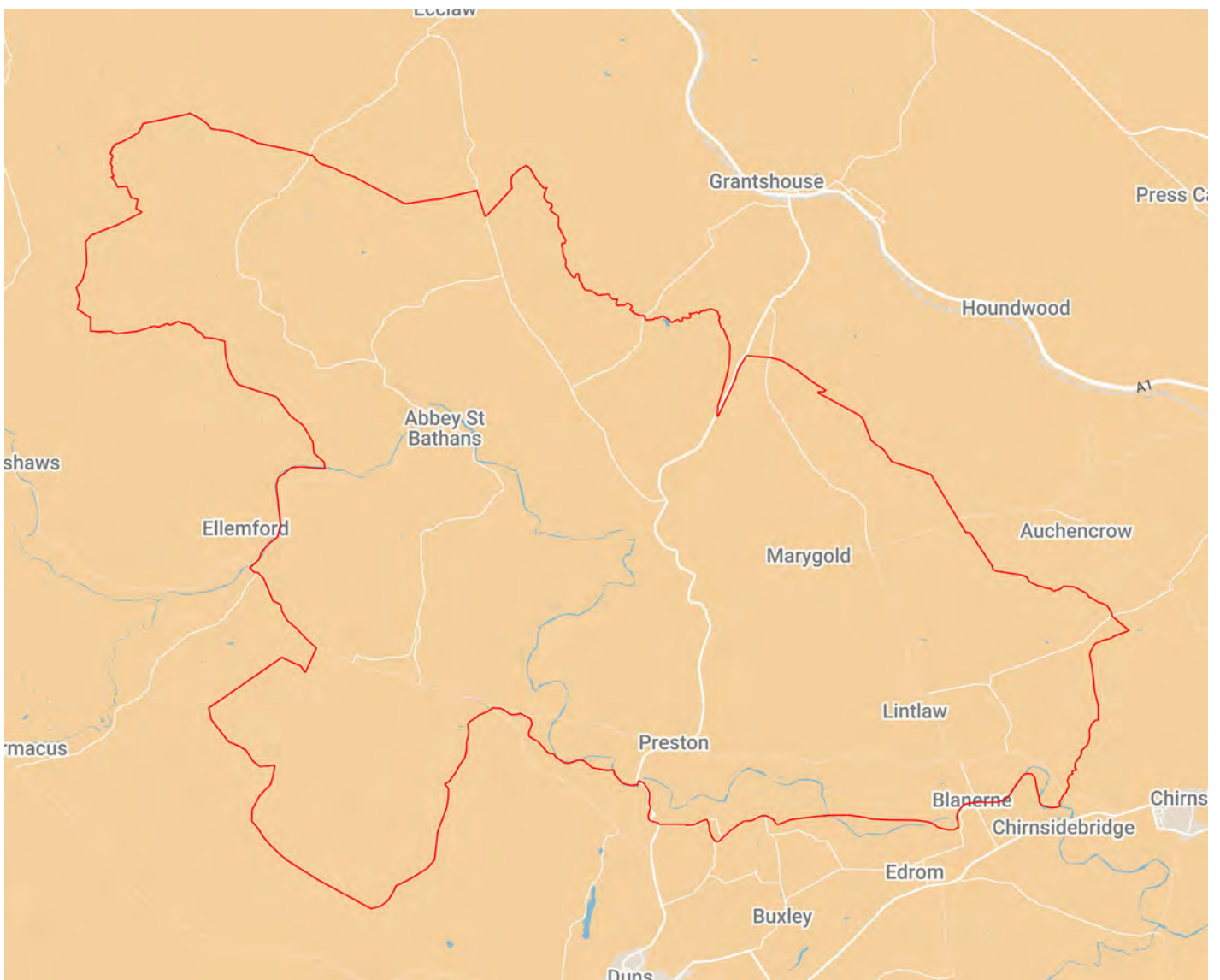
02

2.1 Local Place Plan Area Map

The Abbey St Bathans, Bonkyl and Preston Community Council area includes the communities of Abbey St Bathans, Bonkyl and Preston.

The area is situated 3 miles north of the town of Duns.

Preston is the largest village in the area.



2.2 About the Area

The Abbey St Bathans, Bonkyl and Preston Community Council area is situated in a large, remote rural part of Berwickshire and is one of the most isolated Community Council areas in Scottish Borders. It extends from Nether Monynut and the border with East Lothian in the north to Marygold and Blackhouse in the east and to Blanerne in the southeast.

Road transport is relatively accessible in the eastern half of the area, where the A6112 links Preston with Duns to the south and Grantshouse and the A1 to the north. Several B-class roads link Preston with Chirnside and Marygold with Auchencrow and Reston on the A1. Most of the western side of the area is served by a network of minor roads, which can become hazardous during winter weather.

The main industries in the area are farming and tourism. There is also some windfarm development in the area, including at Quixwood Farm, north of Abbey St Bathans.

Abbey St Bathans is a small community situated in a steep wooded valley of the Whiteadder Water, which is historically prone to flooding. The scenic area is crossed by several long-distance walking routes, including the Southern Upland Way and is on the SBC Core Paths network. Other nearby attractions include the remains of Edin's Hall Broch, which is a rare example of a surviving broch in the south of Scotland. Abbey St Bathans has a village hall that is available to hire and a nearby cafe but has no local shop or accommodation services.



photo by Charlotte Dobie

Preston is the only sizeable village in the community, and also has a village hall, which was recently refurbished and is available for hire. South of the village stands Cumledge Mill and Cumledge House, which is all that remains of what was once the substantial Laidlaw Blanket Mill. In its heyday in the early 20th Century it employed over 100 people and was the biggest employer in the eastern Borders. After the 2nd World War, changing demand, as well as the disastrous 1948 Berwickshire floods, meant that the mill struggled to recover and it ceased trading shortly afterwards.

Bonkyl was an important medieval stronghold and home to the Stewarts of Bonkyl for over 500 years. Now, only the curtain wall of the 12th -Century Bonkyl Castle and the nearby 19th Century Bonkyl Church remain of the settlement, along with the Norman apse marking the original Bonkyl church. The Victorian Bonkyl church sits in an isolated position off the B6438 and serves the Bonkyl and Preston parish. Apart from the hamlet next to the church, the nearest settlement is Marygold.

There are no schools in the Community Council area. Children are bussed to Duns Primary and Berwickshire High Schools.

2.3 Demographics

This demographic report provides a summary of key data on the community in Abbey St Bathans, Bonkyl and Preston for the Local Place Plan.

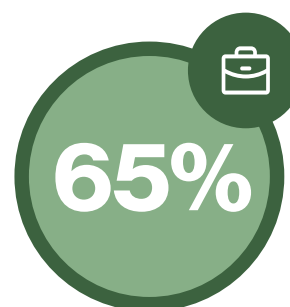
A summary of key points includes:

Population

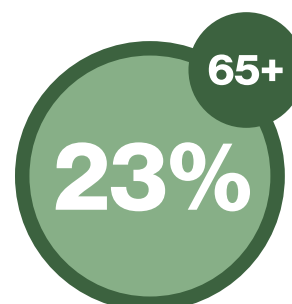
- The total population of Abbey St Bathans, Preston and Bonkyl community council area is 590. Most of the population (64.6%) is of working age (between 16-64 years) which is higher than the averages in both the Scottish Borders (58.1%) and nationally (63.6%). A smaller proportion (13.7%) of the population are aged between 0-15 years which is lower than the averages in both the Scottish Borders (15.6%) and Scotland (16.4%) and 22.7% are aged 65 and over, which is higher than the Scottish average of 18.4%.
- Previous population data from the 2011 Census showed that the Abbey St Bathans, Bonkyl and Preston community council area had 600 people. There has been a slight decrease in the total population since 2011, which differs from trends in the Scottish Borders and nationally, which have both seen a modest increase in the population.
- Household composition in Abbey St Bathans, Bonkyl and Preston reflects the population distribution as there are more households without children and young people. For example, 30.3% of households in the area are one-person households and 26.6% are occupied by couples with no children.
- A smaller proportion of households in the area are occupied by couples with one dependent child and 9.5% of households, by couples with 2 or more dependent children.



Area population is 590



65% of the area's population are working age



23% of the area's population are aged 65+



30% of households in the area are one person households



274 households



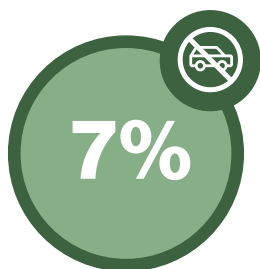
58% of homes in the area are owned by the occupier



57% of people living in the area are economically active



15% of people living in the area provide unpaid care



7% of households in the area do not own their own transport

Housing

- There are 274 households in the Abbey St Bathans, Bonkyl and Preston community council area, most of which are either a house or bungalow (96.4%).
- Most dwellings in the area are owned (58%) rather than rented (34.3%). Only 3.3% of homes in are socially rented and 31% are privately rented, which is higher than the national average of 12.4%.
- Second home data is available by data zone (the Community Council area is included in Cranshaws & Abbey St Bathans Data Zone and Preston & Manderson Data Zone). In these data zones, the percentage of second homes (6.1% in Cranshaws & Abbey and 3.2% in Preston & Manderston) is higher than the Scottish Borders average of 1.7% and the national average of 0.9%.

Economic Activity

- 56.9% of adults over 16 are economically active.
- Of those who are classified as 'economically inactive' the largest proportion (23.7%) are retired.

Health and Care

- Generally, health is good in the Abbey St Bathans, Bonkyl and Preston area, although 19.8% of the population have a long-term health condition- 10.7% have a mental health condition and 9.8% have a physical disability.
- 15.3% of the population in Abbey St Bathans, Bonkyl and Preston are unpaid carers.

Transport

- The vast majority of people living in the area have access to their own vehicle, 7.3% of households in Abbey St Bathans, Bonkyl and Preston do not own a car which is much lower than the national average of 26.4%.

2.4 Assets

For a rural area, Abbey St Bathans, Preston and Bonkyl offers a wide range of community assets, local businesses, scenery and walks and points of historical interest. This section is a snapshot of the some of the key assets across the area.

This section highlights the things in the area which can be preserved and built on over the period of this Local Place Plan.

1. Community Facilities

The two key community facilities in the area are:

- Abbey St Bathans Village Hall, which was re-built and opened in 2021 offering a space for a variety of activities, meetings, community events and is also hired out for weddings and parties.
- Preston Village Hall, which reopened in 2025 following extensive refurbishment. The Hall is used regularly by a number of groups and is used as a venue for monthly community cafes and book exchanges.

2. Attractions and Heritage

The Abbey St Bathans, Bonkyl and Preston area offers a blend of natural beauty and historical significance, making it an ideal destination for those seeking both outdoor activities and cultural exploration. It is a popular holiday destination for walkers, cyclists, and nature lovers, offering beautiful countryside, walks, and access to heritage attractions such as Edin's Hall Broch. Abbey St Bathans Woodland, a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), boasts significant ancient deciduous woodland, rich lichen flora, and several rare and declining species.



photo by Natasha Williams



photo by Natasha Williams

The Southern Upland Way and Sir Walter Scott Way, long-distance paths, pass through Abbey St Bathans, connecting various points across Scotland.

Abbey St Bathans Kirk, originally a Cistercian priory founded around 1200, contains a rare effigy of a prioress. The owners have erected an InfoBoard. It is now in private ownership and has been used to host music and other events open to the public.

Bonkyl Castle, a medieval fortress, is now a scheduled monument with few surviving traces.

3. Local Business

One of the main industries in the area is farming. A number of holiday homes are also in the area and according to the National Records of Scotland⁴, 6.1% of houses are second homes in the Cranshaws datazone, which covers the Preston and Abbey St Bathans area. In addition to farming and holiday lets, there are several other local businesses in the Preston and Abbey St Bathans area including the Woodlands Café.

Abbey St Bathans, Bonkyl and Preston Community Council (ABPCC) and Preston and Abbey Community Trust (PACT) both work hard to improve the quality of life for people living in the area. Abbey St Bathans Village Hall and Preston Village Hall both have active Committees. There are also several clubs which meet in the area including the Table Tennis Club, Indoor Bowling Club, Scottish Rural Women's Institute and Preston Stitchers Sewing Group.



2.5 National and Local Planning Policy Context

This Local Place Plan has been drafted in line with the following:

- National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4)
- Scottish Borders Council Local Development Plan 2 (LDP2)
- Scottish Borders Community Plan 2023/33

⁴<https://scotland.shinyapps.io/nrs-small-area-household-estimates/>

Community Engagement

03

3.1 Overview

Our Local Place Plan has been developed using a variety of different community engagement mechanisms, aimed at giving as many people as possible the opportunity to share their views. We have consulted with our community on a regular basis since the production of our Community Action Plan in 2015, updating our plans in line with the community's views.

With this in mind, we decided to use the wealth of previous community-based research as a basis for the LPP consultation.

The purpose of the consultation for the LPP was to fill any gaps in previous consultation and bring the whole community together to discuss themes and projects, we did this through:

- Consultation meetings in both Abbey and Preston in 2023/24 using the place standard approach,
- A youth survey hosted on All Our Ideas,
- A business owners and farmers focus group,
- A Community Spring dinner and consultation event.



3.2 Youth Survey

Suggestions for projects for the LPP were gathered online through 'All Our Ideas'. This was promoted from January-March 2025 on social media. In total the All Our Ideas survey generated 1,710 votes on 15 ideas.

All Our Ideas presents participants with two ideas. Participants vote on their preferred option or click '*I can't decide*'. Participants can also add new suggestions. The value of the tool is that it enables the most popular ideas to 'bubble up' and enables participants to contribute new ideas while the survey is running.

Based on the votes cast in the youth survey, the following projects are priorities for young people living in the area:

- Better ways to get about
- Play parks
- Local shopping

YOUTH SURVEY

For young people aged 14–25 years old

Who live in Abbey St Bathans, Bonkyl and Preston

A chance to share your opinions and insights on what matters to you!

Opportunity for 1 lucky participant to win a £10 Xbox or Amazon voucher!

CONNECT
Berwickshire Youth Project CLS

XBOX VOUCHER KINDLY DONATED BY CONNECT BERWICKSHIRE YOUTH PROJECT

SCAN ME!

bit.ly/prestonandabbeyyouthsurvey

3.3 Business Owners and Farmers Focus Group

A Business Owners and Farmers focus group was held in February 2024 to provide local businesses with an opportunity to provide feedback and have their views represented in this LLP. There were 3 attendees representing 5/6 different businesses.

Abbey St Bathans has several valuable assets, a good fibre network ensuring connectivity, and some improved energy-efficient housing stock. There are self-build opportunities for young people, and the church serves as a locally owned events space. Abbey Hall supports business and study needs with internet access and is used for various events. Accommodation options are growing, with wellness weekends and tourism on the rise, supported by Airbnb and other accommodations.

However, business owners in the area face several challenges. Issues include difficulty in filling employment gaps, the need for key worker housing, access to college education, and drainage and flooding affecting development. There is a lack of apprenticeship opportunities in the area. Transport is reliant on driving, and there are few paths or walks in Preston. Some specific issues affect business such as the need to manage and support private water supplies, busy schedules preventing joint working in the hospitality business and a shortage of trade and skills like plumbers and technicians.

To address these challenges, the business community has proposed several project suggestions, including attracting young families (working age people) with play parks and activity trails, sustainable lifestyle projects like food growing, and creating paths linking communities. Other ideas include a cycle path linking to Duns, community e-bikes, subsidised power from windfarms, a secure field for dog walkers, and affordable housing for key workers to stimulate the local economy.



photo by Charlotte Dobie

3.4 Community Spring Dinner

A community Spring Dinner event was held on Friday 7th March in Abbey St Bathans Village Hall. The event was attended by 45 people. This event gave people living in the area an opportunity to come together and provide feedback on the draft themes and priorities for the Local Place Plan.

Project Prioritisation

Theme 1: An active place for everyone

Under the theme “An Active Place for Everyone,” the community proposed various project ideas, with **Community Events** receiving the highest number of votes (17), followed by **Community Facilities** (10 votes). Additional suggestions included a range of activities and services such as yoga/pilates, circuits, self-defence classes, ceilidhs, pop-up pub nights, cinema/film nights, live event screenings in village halls, workspaces, a community larder, accessible provisions for local people with learning disabilities, and a bus service for young people to access local youth groups.

Theme 2: A connected place

Under the theme “A Connected Place,” the community proposed several project ideas, with **lobbying for better public transport** receiving the highest number of votes (16), followed by the creation of a **community lift sharing scheme** (11 votes), Local walking/cycling path networks (9 votes), and Improved Broadband (8 votes). Additional suggestions included a lift sharing scheme using WhatsApp, community transport linking to rail connections, various walking and cycling paths, restoring bus services, a bus service connecting Reston Station to local villages, more passing places, and improved 4G signal.



Theme 3: A resilient place where people can stay

Under the theme “A Resilient Place where people can stay,” the community proposed several project ideas, with **Community Energy Projects** receiving the highest number of votes (17), followed closely by **Small eco housing development** (16 votes). Other notable suggestions included off-grid heating options, improving water supply, eco housing for key workers, making sites available for low-cost self-build housing projects using local materials, installing solar panels at Preston Village Hall, more flexible planning to attract enterprising young people, self-build housing, improving energy efficiency of housing, and small-scale community-owned affordable housing.

Theme 4: A natural and beautiful place

Under the theme “A Natural and Beautiful Place,” the community proposed several project ideas, with **better recycling facilities** receiving the highest number of votes (18), followed by **Wildflower planting** (16 votes) and **addressing litter with community clean-ups** (14 votes). Other suggestions included creating a reuse hub, repair workshops, a tool library/swap, linking to a reuse scheme at Chirnside, converting an area on B6353 west of the bridge for parking and recreation, installing bottle banks at Preston or the Abbey Village Hall, adding grit bins, and increasing the number of dog poo bins.

Theme 5: A safe place

Under the theme “A Safe Place,” the community proposed several project ideas, with **lobbying to fix potholes receiving the highest number of votes** (23), followed by **parking at Preston Graveyard** (15 votes), reduced speed limits and

traffic calming measures (8 votes), and Addressing flooding (7 votes). Additional suggestions included implementing speed limits in Burnhouses, resurfacing potholes at Preston, reducing car speeds through Preston, improving road maintenance, adding more passing places on the road to Abbey, and better maintenance and signage of Preston graveyard.

Theme 6: An enterprising place

Under the theme “An Enterprising Place,” the community proposed several project ideas, with **apprenticeships for young people** receiving the highest number of votes (19), followed by **nature-based tourism** and **traditional skills** (both with 12 votes), and Rural enterprise hub (11 votes). Additional suggestions included creating hubs for businesses to gain information on apprenticeship grants and establishing artist workshop spaces.



3.5 South of Scotland Community Housing – Housing Needs and Demand Assessment (2024)

The HNDA process has revealed that there is a need for affordable housing in Mid-Berwickshire area (postcodes TD10 &11). The consultation for this research received a high response rate from Abbey St Bathans, Bonkyl, and Preston areas, 42 households were identified as living in these areas.

To provide a more focused view on results, a sub report for these areas was produced, the key findings of this consultation were:

- There is a large majority in support of affordable housing in the Abbey St Bathans, Bonkyl and Preston area. 82% of total respondents from the area feel there is a need for more affordable housing.
- 9 households in the dataset had identifiable housing need, either now, or in the next 5 years.
- Housing need across the three areas reflects a mix of working-age individuals and older adults nearing retirement. Notably, 8 of the 9 households who have identified as being in housing need specifically state that there are 3 or more individuals in the household, suggesting a significant demand from families.

Those in housing need are highly interested in remaining in the area. When given an open choice, most respondents indicated a preference to remain in either Duns, Abbey St Bathans, Bonkyl or Preston.



photo by Wendy Reid

3.6 Statutory Consultation

As a final stage, the 28-day statutory consultation on the draft Local Place Plan launched on June 18th 2025. The draft Plan was circulated using the Scottish Borders Council's Information Notice Template to the surrounding Community Council areas of Allanton, Cockburnspath and Cove, Duns, East Lammermuir, Edrom, Fogo and Polwarth, Gavinton, Reston and Auchencrow, Grantshouse, Lammermuir and Whitsome and Chirnside. The draft Plan was also available online at coabp.org, with a feedback form.

The Community of Abbey St Bathans, Bonkyl and Preston Facebook page was used to encourage people to visit the website and comment. Word of mouth was also an important part of the process.

The following elected representatives were also contacted as part of the statutory consultation:

- » Mid-Berwickshire Elected Members: Donald Moffat, John Greenwell & Mark Rowley
- » East Berwickshire Elected Members: James Anderson, Carol Hamilton and Aileen Orr
- » MP John Lamont and MSP Rachel Hamilton

4 written responses were received, and amendments have been made to the draft plan based on the views and comments provided at this stage. These are summarised below:

The paragraph on Local Business under Area Context now recognises the work of the Abbey St Bathans Village Hall and Preston Village Hall Committees.

The draft version of the plan included a potential project to enhance digital connectivity. On further consultation, PACT drew attention to the R100 rural broadband programme which is expected to bring high speed broadband to more of the area. The paragraph on Connectivity under Assets, Opportunities, Needs and Challenges now references this programme.

The paragraph on Connectivity under Assets, Opportunities, Needs and Challenges also includes reference to the Borders Greenway, which was highlighted in the responses.

A correction has been made in the same section to the name of the train line serving the area, which is the East Coast Mainline.

Multiple supporting organisations have been added to the Themes and Projects in the Local Place Plan, following further discussion with the organisations in question.

The Map of Projects section has been updated to use project names rather than numbers, for easier reference.

One comment highlighted a need for paths to be accessible for older people. Project 2.4 in the draft highlighted the need to create safe and accessible walking and cycling routes and networks across the local area, and this remains unchanged in this final version.

One comment called for more specific locations to be identified for some of the projects, and for maps to show a close-up view of the villages where necessary to make project locations clear. Additional map views have been added to the document. On some of the project proposals, the lead organisations intend to undertake further consultation before determining the exact location or route of a project.



Abbey St Bathans, Bonkyl & Preston Local Place Plan

photo by Wendy Reid

Assets, Opportunities, Needs and Challenges

04

4.1 Overview

Abbey St Bathans, Preston, and Bonkyl offer a diverse range of community assets, local businesses, scenic walks, and historical points of interest for both locals and visitors. Key community facilities include Abbey St Bathans Village Hall, rebuilt in 2021, and Preston Village Hall, reopened after refurbishment in 2025.

The area is rich in natural beauty and heritage, featuring attractions like Edin's Hall Broch, Abbey St Bathans Woodland (an SSSI), and long-distance paths such as the Southern Upland Way and Sir Walter Scott Way. Historical sites include Abbey St Bathans Parish Church and Bonkyl Castle.

There are a range of small and medium sized businesses operating in the area, with farming being a primary industry, alongside holiday homes and other enterprises like Woodlands Café.

Active community groups and clubs further enhance the area's vibrant community life.

4.2 Housing

Over the past decade, the limited housing supply in the area has resulted in stagnating population growth. Despite the higher-than-average number of rental properties available, only 3% of these are designated as social housing.

South of Scotland Community Housing community consultation in 2024 revealed that there is a large majority in support of affordable housing in the Abbey St Bathans, Bonkyl and Preston area. 82% of total survey respondents from the area feel there is a need for more affordable housing.

Local business owners have expressed significant concerns regarding the shortage of housing for key workers, highlighting it as a major issue that adversely affects their operations. There is a widespread consensus on the urgent need for more affordable housing options to attract young families and, consequently, working-age individuals to the area.

There is also the need to improve existing housing stock in the area, looking at sustainable heating sources and improving insulation.

4.3 Services

Water Supply:

Properties in and around Preston are serviced by Scottish Water while Abbey St Bathans and outlying farms rely on numerous different private supplies. Issues relating to water supply have been frequently raised in community consultations since the 2015 Community Action Plan. Issues around the water supply and drainage in the village of Preston has caused constraints around further housing development in Preston.



4.4 Connectivity

Residents of Abbey St Bathans and Preston in the Scottish Borders have few transport options to connect with nearby towns and transport hubs:

Bus Services:

Neither Abbey nor Preston are served by a public bus service. The 34 used to run through Preston but this was withdrawn around a year ago. There is now limited access to a demand responsive taxi bus service, but feedback is that this is not well advertised and is expensive.

Train Services:

The East Coast Mainline offers connections from nearby stations like Reston and Berwick-upon-Tweed to Edinburgh and other major destinations.

Digital Connectivity:

Digital connectivity is poor in some parts of the LPP area, particularly for those outwith villages and settlements, which has implications for those studying or working from home. However, research done by PACT into this issue in 2019/2020 indicated that the R100 programme rollout in the area rendered any additional community intervention difficult, not viable and potentially unnecessary.

Walking and Cycling:

The proposed Borders Greenway runs along the boundary of the community with Chirnside Community Council Area and could be used by residents of both areas to access facilities in both Chirnside and Reston, including the new railway station. It could also be used to travel to Duns or Eyemouth along a safe, well designed active travel route. Links to the Borders Greenway could be developed in the future. Full information is available at bit.ly/bordersgreenway.

4.5 Opportunities for Young People

There are few activities for young people in the area. The nearest specific youth work initiatives are in Duns where young people can access sports like swimming, football, tennis and gym. The Connect Berwickshire Youth Project also offers drop in sessions and activities in Duns. However, reaching these activities with limited public transport options is a challenge. When asked what they would like to see in the future, the number one suggestion from young people was 'better ways to get about'.

There are lower numbers of children and young people aged 16 and under living in the area than the national average. Those who do grow up in the area tend to leave to pursue work, training and education opportunities after leaving school.

Low numbers of young people and students living in the area also has a knock-on impact for local businesses, which struggle to find local people for part time and seasonal jobs.

4.6 Community Assets

Abbey St Bathans Village Hall and Preston Village Hall are both key assets and community spaces in the area. Abbey St Bathans Village Hall is used as a venue for community meetings, events and clubs. Preston Village Hall is currently undergoing refurbishment until Spring 2025 and is used for monthly community cafes, events and meetings. Both venues are equipped with full equipped kitchens and high speed Wi-Fi.

While the area has adequate community facilities, there are no outdoor play or recreation facilities for children and young people. Parks and play areas was one of the top ideas for the future put forwards by young people and are likely to appeal to families with young children looking to move to the area.



photo by Wendy Reid

Proposals

05

5.1 Overview

Our vision is for a vibrant, active, supportive, caring community, with great community facilities that are well used. It will be a sustainable place to live with the appropriate services, infrastructure and housing.

The responses and engagement with the community in our area, have helped us to identify the challenges faced by the community, and the actions we should undertake to work towards achieving that vision.

They require combinations of actions by Scottish Borders Council, partnership working with other agencies, by local organisations, and the community itself. In many areas, funding will need to be secured to deliver these actions.



photo by Wendy Reid

The Scottish Borders Local Development Plan (LDP2) was adopted on 22 August 2024.⁶

Preston has a settlement profile, while the other settlements are too small to be profiled. The settlement profile states that ‘any future development to the West of Preston will be resisted. Potential constraints to the expansion of the village are flood risk to the southwest and surrounding prime agricultural land.’

The below table demonstrates how the thematic areas and projects in this LPP align with the aims set out in LDP2.

| Scottish Borders Council Local Development Plan 2 (LDP2) | |
|---|--|
| Aim | LPP alignment |
| <p>Communities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide adequate land for mainstream and affordable housing• Build sustainable communities which are attractive and distinctive• Create places to live in accordance with good placemaking and design principles• Encourage better connectivity by transport and improve digital networks⁵ | <p>Theme 3 places a focus on building a sustainable and resilient community with appropriate housing to attract newcomers to the area and improve sustainability of living for existing residents.</p> |
| <p>Growing Economy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide an adequate range of sites and premises for business/industrial uses• Promote economic development opportunities along the railway corridor• Promote the regeneration of town centres to make them vibrant and viable focal points within our communities• Maximise and promote the Scottish Borders’ tourism potential and build a strong visitor economy• Ensure the delivery of adequate infrastructure to satisfactorily serve developments | <p>Theme 6 focuses on promoting nature based tourism opportunities and improving the visitor economy in the area.</p> |

⁵ Scottish Borders Council Adopted Local Development Plan 2

| | |
|---|---|
| <p>Sustainability and Climate Change</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect and enhance the built and natural environment • Promote development of brownfield sites • Make provision for waste management • Deliver climate change mitigation while ensuring climate change adaptation • Protect key greenspaces within built up areas • Encourage better connectivity • Extend and improve green network opportunities and links | <p>Theme 4 centres around protecting and enhancing the natural environment, which includes improving local waste management services.</p> <p>Theme 2 sets out the ambition to improve local connectivity by restoring local public transport networks in the area to help reduce overall reliance on private transportation.</p> |
| <p>Rural Environment</p> <p>In remote rural locations improved transport modes and the need for first class digital connectivity must continue to be addressed.</p> | <p>Theme 2 sets out the ambition to improve local connectivity by restoring local public transport networks in the area to help reduce overall reliance on private transportation. This theme also include a project aimed at ensuring all households, especially those in the rural area, have access to high speed broadband.</p> |

This Local Place Plan does not propose any changes to the Scottish Borders Council Local Development Plan 2.



photo by Natasha Williams

Fit with National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4)

The Abbey St Bathans, Bonkyl & Preston Local Place Plan (LPP) has been developed in accordance with the principles and priorities of **NPF4**, Scotland's national spatial strategy. The LPP reflects NPF4's overarching goals of creating sustainable, liveable, and productive places through the following thematic alignments:

- **Sustainable Places:** The LPP promotes climate resilience and environmental stewardship through projects such as wildflower planting, community growing, and improved recycling services. These directly support NPF4's goals for biodiversity, nature restoration, and climate adaptation.
- **Liveable Places:** The plan prioritises inclusive infrastructure, affordable housing, and improved connectivity. Projects such as community transport schemes, pedestrian walkways, and accessible play parks align with NPF4's emphasis on health, wellbeing, and placemaking.
- **Productive Places:** The LPP supports local economic development through nature-based tourism, apprenticeships, and rural enterprise hubs. These initiatives reflect NPF4's commitment to community wealth building and rural revitalisation.

The plan also supports NPF4's spatial principles, including:

- **Local Living:** By enhancing local services and facilities, the plan supports the 20-minute neighbourhood concept.
- **Just Transition:** The plan includes projects for sustainable housing and energy, ensuring equitable access to climate solutions.
- **Rural Revitalisation:** The LPP addresses depopulation and economic challenges in remote areas through housing, transport, and enterprise initiatives.

Fit with the Scottish Borders Community Plan 2023–2033

The LPP supports the **Scottish Borders Community Planning Partnership's** vision to improve quality of life through targeted partnership action. Key areas of alignment include:

- **Reducing Inequalities:** The LPP addresses housing need, transport access, and youth opportunities—key inequality drivers in rural areas.

- **Community Wealth Building:** The plan promotes local enterprise, apprenticeships, and sustainable tourism, contributing to inclusive economic growth.
- **Place Planning:** The LPP exemplifies place-based planning, empowering the community to shape its future in line with the Community Plan's emphasis on local leadership and collaboration.

Fit with the Berwickshire Locality Plan

The LPP complements the **Berwickshire Locality Plan**, which focuses on four themes: Economy, Skills & Learning; Health, Care & Wellbeing; Quality of Life; and Environment & Place. The LPP contributes to these themes through:

- **Economy, Skills & Learning:** Apprenticeships, enterprise hubs, and support for traditional skills directly support local economic development.
- **Health, Care & Wellbeing:** Improved transport, community events, and inclusive infrastructure enhance wellbeing and access to services.
- **Quality of Life:** Projects such as play parks, nature trails, and community dinners foster social cohesion and local pride.
- **Environment & Place:** Biodiversity initiatives, recycling improvements, and flood mitigation align with environmental priorities.

The LPP also supports the Berwickshire Area Partnership's goal of reducing inequalities and improving outcomes through collaborative planning and shared resources.

5.3 Themes, Priorities and Projects

| | Project Lead Organisation(s) | Supporting Organisation(s) |
|---|---|--|
| Theme 1: An active place for everyone | | |
| A place that has services and facilities for all local people, regardless of age and circumstances. A place where people feel cared for with good support and affordable things to do. | | |
| Priority areas <i>Community Facilities</i> <i>Community Events</i> <i>Green Spaces</i> | | |
| Projects 1.1) Support and develop the existing programme of year-round community events and festivals, so that these are sustainable for the long-term future. 1.2) Support and promote current and future community owned assets, including the village halls in Abbey St Bathans and Preston. 1.3) Provide pop up pub nights and community dinners as a way to bring people together. | Community Council PACT Other local groups – for example, Preston Stitchers, WRI, Village Hall Committee's and any potential new community groups. | Scottish Borders Council Borders Community Action DTA Scotland |
| 1.4) Provide inclusive and fully accessible children's play park and activities in Preston. | Community Council | Scottish Borders Council |
| 1.5) Investigate the possibility of creating a nature trail walk suitable for families and children. | PACT Local Business Owners | Scottish Borders Council |
| Theme 2: A Connected Place | | |
| A place that has better public transport, accessible community vehicles, good active travel routes and well maintained pathways and so people can get about effectively and with minimal impact on climate. Good broadband will connect people to each other and the world. | | |
| Priority areas <i>Public and Community Based Transport options</i> <i>Digital connectivity</i> <i>Walking and cycling paths connecting communities</i> | | |
| Projects 2.1) Advocate for public transport services, in particular restoring the route from Preston to Duns. 2.2) Provide accessible and sustainable community based transportation options for residents including a potential community car scheme, with a particular focus on connecting to rail links. 2.3) Create safe and accessible walking and cycling routes and networks across the local area. 2.4) Develop an E-bike hire scheme with discounted and/or free access for local young people. | Community Council PACT | Scottish Borders Council Sustrans Sustainable Borders Neighbouring Community Councils including Duns Borders Wheels Community Transport Association Borders Active Travel Network Paths for All Borders Greenway Project A Heart for Duns Sea the Change |

| Theme 3: A Resilient Place where people can stay | | |
|--|--|--|
| A place where there is appropriate, accessible and affordable housing so people can stay here, bring up their families and grow old here well-looked after in sustainable ways. | | |
| Priority areas <i>Housing</i> <i>Home energy</i> <i>Services including water supply</i> | | |
| Projects 3.1) Investigate the possibility of developing a sustainable eco-housing development that is affordable and accessible. 3.2) Identify potential sites for low cost, self-build housing projects using local materials. 3.3) Research and identify sustainable and off-grid heating solutions for residents in the rural parts of the Community Council area. 3.4) Identify and assess potential renewable energy sources for community energy projects. 3.5) Take steps to ensure a reliable and sustainable water supply for all residents. 3.6) Ensure existing community facilities are as energy efficient as possible by installing solar panels. | Community Council PACT Private water supply managers | Scottish Borders Council South of Scotland Community Housing Local windfarms Scottish Water Local Energy Scotland Community Energy Scotland Heat Network Project in East Lothian South of Scotland Enterprise DTAS Democratic Finance |
| Theme 4: A Natural and Beautiful Place | | |
| A place where we celebrate and value our natural environment opening up access to it sensitively for visitors and local people, building resilience to climate change. | | |
| Priority areas <i>Community Growing</i> <i>Recycling Services</i> <i>Area Upkeep</i> | | |
| Projects: 4.1) Identify suitable land for community allotments, orchard and/or other growing projects. 4.2) Provide convenient and accessible recycling facilities locally, including bottle recycling at community facilities. 4.3) Maintain and enhance the natural environment by organising a regular programme of litter clear ups. 4.4) Enhance biodiversity through wildflower planting initiatives including along roadsides. | Community Council PACT | Scottish Borders Council Nature Scot Sustainable Borders Abundant Borders |
| Theme 5: A Safe place | | |
| A place where we can get around safely with well-maintained infrastructure | | |
| Priority areas <i>Roads and Traffic</i> <i>Pathways and Pavements</i> <i>Parking</i> <i>Flooding</i> | | |

| | | |
|---|--|---|
| Projects 5.1) Lobbying to improve road safety by fixing potholes. 5.2) Work with Scottish Borders Council to mitigate flooding risks in the area. 5.3) Work with Scottish Borders Council to investigate the possibility of pavements and pedestrian walkways in Preston, including linking to the cemetery. 5.4) Identify high risk areas where speed reduction and traffic calming are required. 5.5) Provide adequate and safe parking facilities at Preston graveyard. 5.6) Work to identify key points where more passing places are required on the road between Abbey and Burnhouses. | Community Council PACT Local business owners | Scottish Borders Council SEPA Police Scotland |
| Theme 6: An Enterprising Place | | |
| A place where there is sustainable work and interesting careers. It will be an economy that is local by default and works to outcomes that are related to both economic regeneration and wellbeing. | | |
| Priority Areas <i>Nature based tourism</i> <i>Skills and employment</i> <i>Supporting local business</i> | | |
| Projects 6.1) Identify and promote key natural attractions and activities and develop sustainable tourism initiatives. 6.2) Work with local partners to preserve and promote traditional skills and crafts. 6.3) Establish a rural enterprise hub to support local entrepreneurs and small businesses. 6.4) Partner with local businesses and industries to identify possible apprenticeships and bursary opportunities for local young people. 6.5) Support local food producers by setting up a community-based food mobile van or farm shop. | Community Council PACT Business Gateway Local business owners | South of Scotland Enterprise Scottish Borders Council Developing the Young Borders Workforce South of Scotland Destination Alliance Visit Scotland Scottish Community Tourism Other community councils Historic Environment Scotland |

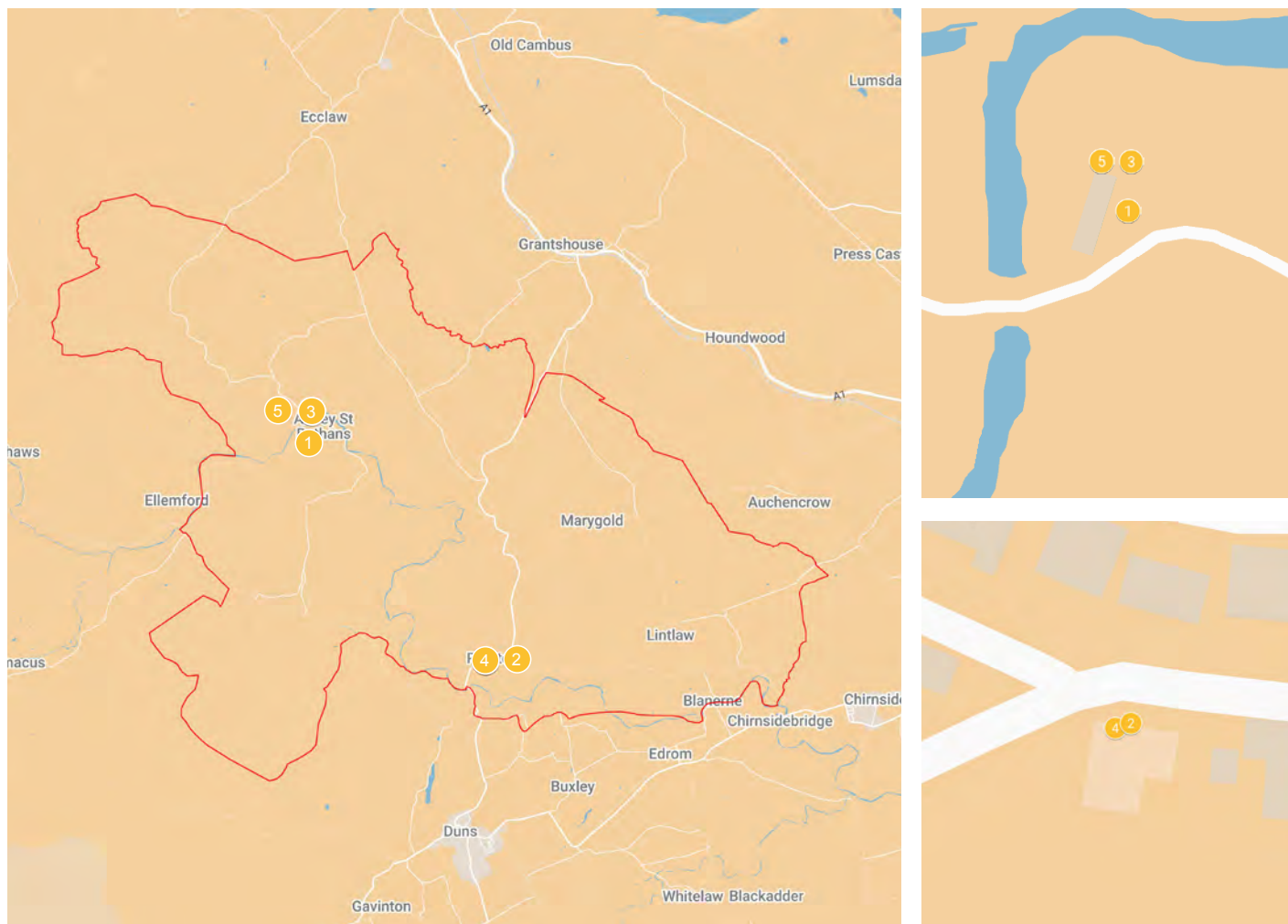


photo by Gavin Yuill, CSY Architects

5.4 Map of Projects

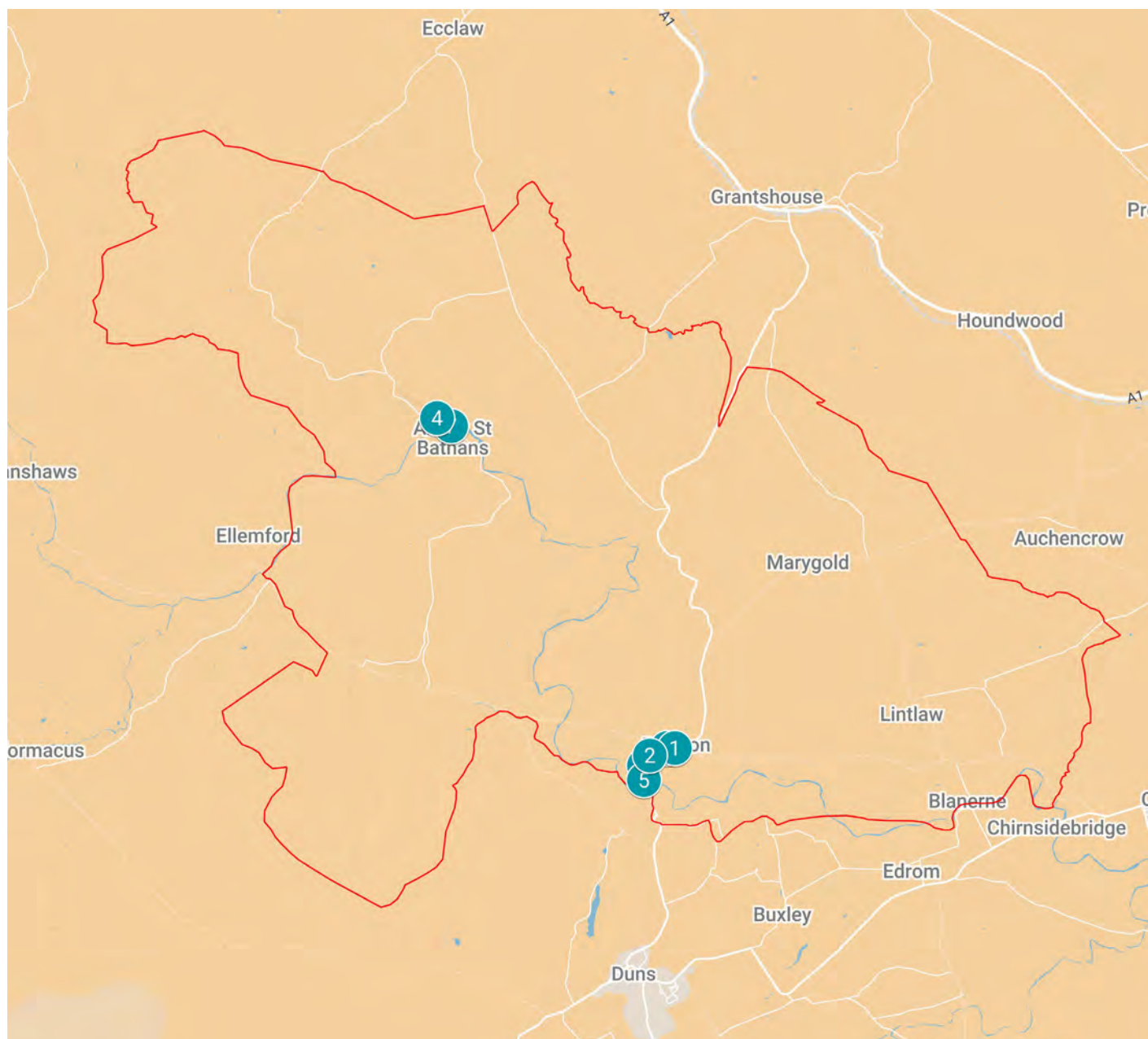
An overview of all identified projects within the Community Council area (red boundary), with zoomed in views for Abbey St Bathans and Preston projects are shown below, followed by the map/project key. It should be noted that these are potential project locations still to be discussed with the relevant stakeholders before progressing. In many cases there is more than one potential project location.

Theme 1: An active place for everyone



| Theme 1: An active place for everyone | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|--|
| Map Pin Number | Project Number | Location Description |
| 1 | 1.2 – Support and promote community-owned assets | Abbey Village Hall |
| 2 | 1.2 – Support and promote community-owned assets | Preston Village Hall |
| 3 | 1.3 – Pop-up pub nights and community dinners | Abbey Village Hall |
| 4 | 1.4 – Inclusive and accessible play park/activities | Preston Village Hall (exact location still to be considered) |
| 5 | 1.5 – Possibility of family-friendly nature trail | Starting point at Abbey Village Hall (exact location still to be considered) |

Theme 2: A Connected Place

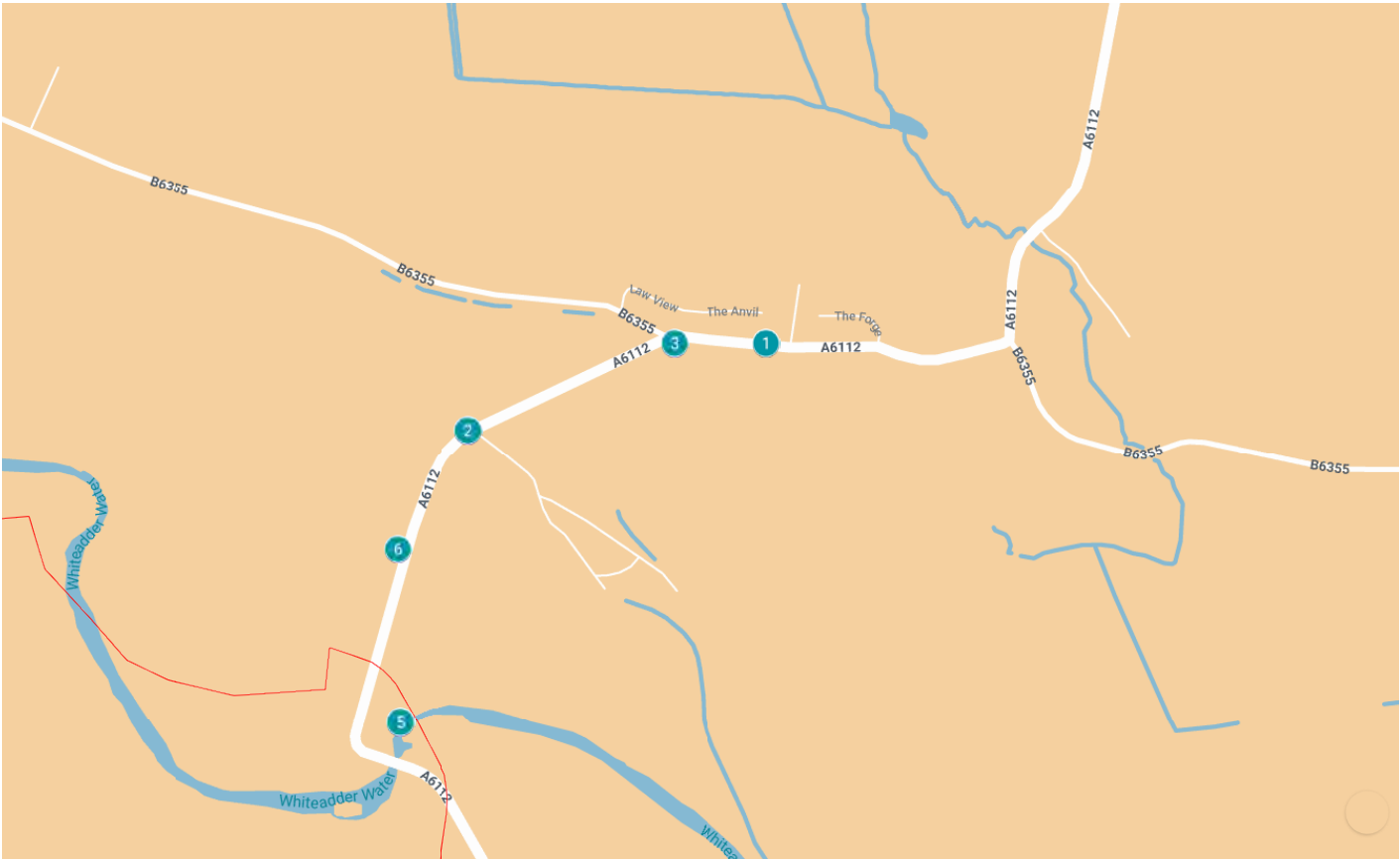


Map 2a - Whole area showing all Theme 2 projects.

| Theme 2: A Connected Place | | |
|----------------------------|---|---|
| Map Pin Number | Project Number | Location Description |
| 1 | 2.1 – Public transport, particularly Preston-Duns route | Preston Bus Stop Village Centre |
| 2 | 2.1 – Public transport, particularly Preston-Duns route | Preston Bus Stop (option 2) on the A6122 North of Preston Graveyard |
| 3 | 2.2 – Community transportation | Preston Village Hall |
| 4 | 2.2 – Community transportation | Abbey Village Hall |
| 5 | 2.4 – Safe and accessible walking/cycling | Riverside walk starting from Preston Bridge |
| 6 | 2.4 – Safe and accessible walking/cycling | Cumledge Mill road end to Preston Bridge |
| 7 | 2.4 – Safe and accessible walking/cycling | Ellemford to Abbey along river (existing route that needs improved) |



Map 2b - Abbey St Bathans area showing Theme 2.4 and 2.7 projects.



Map 2c - Preston area showing Theme 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.5 and 2.6 projects.

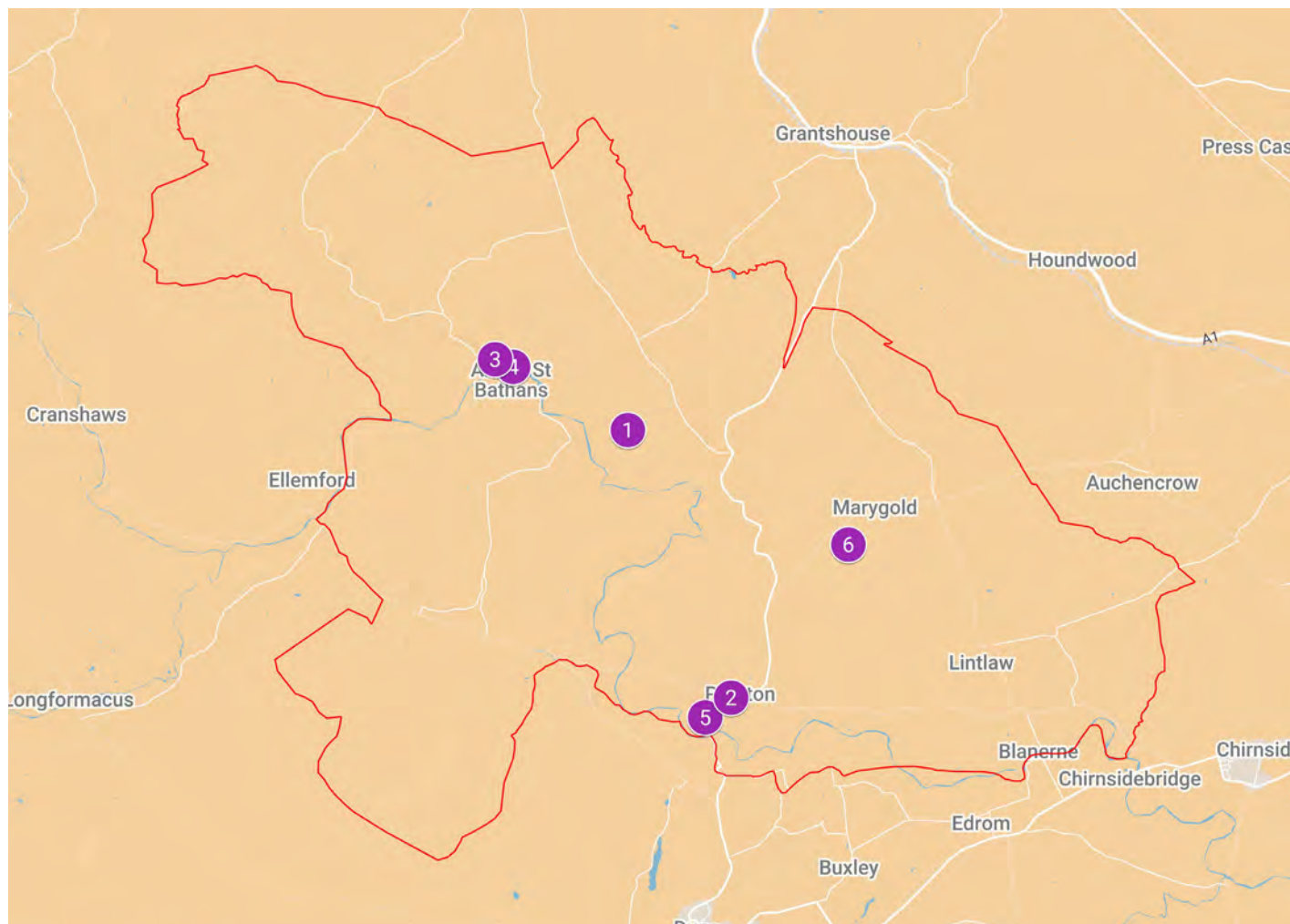
Theme 3: A Resilient Place where people can stay



Map 3a - Whole area showing all Theme 3 projects.

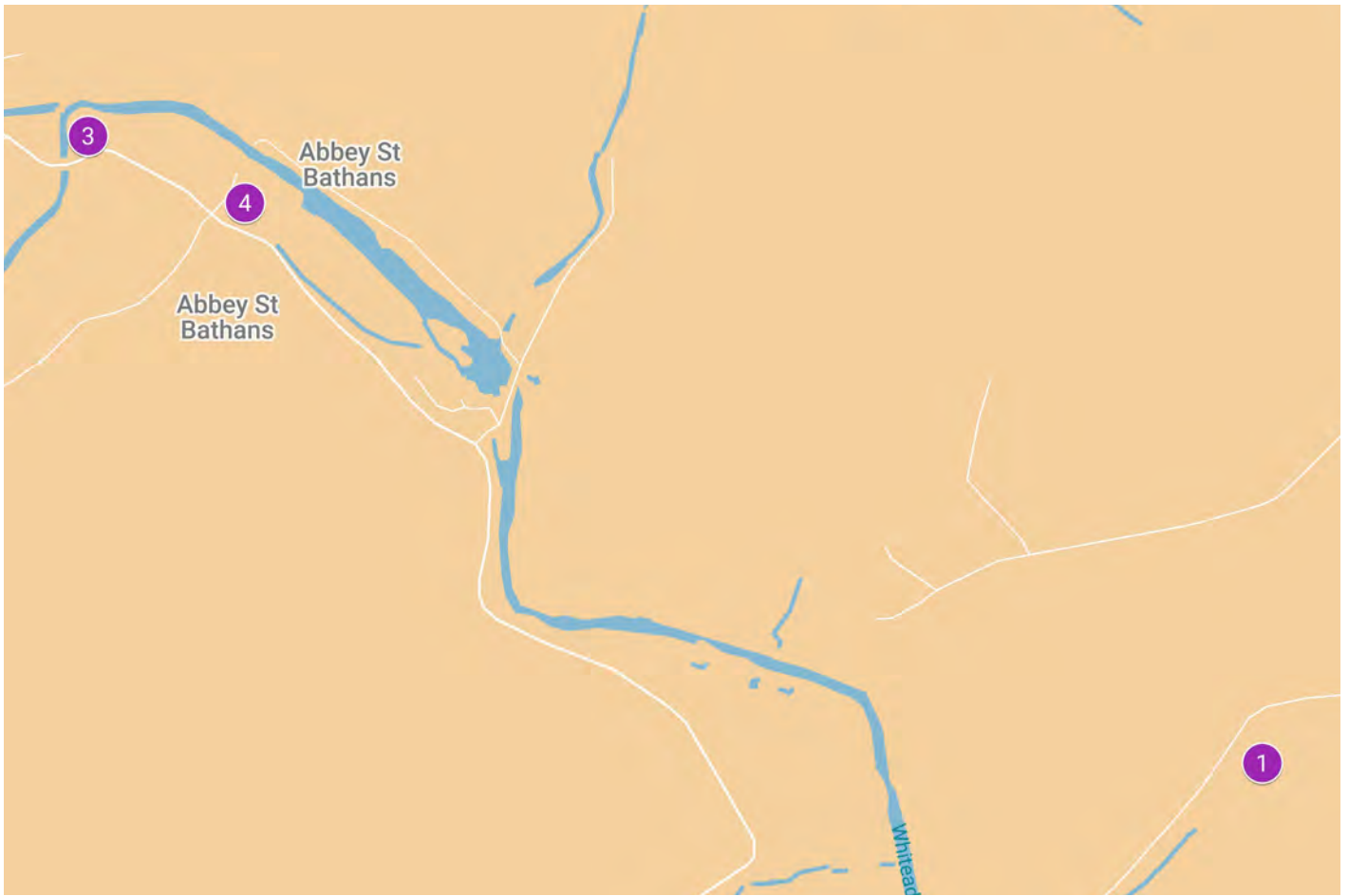
| Theme 3: A Resilient Place where people can stay | | |
|--|--|----------------------|
| Map Pin Number | Project Number | Location Description |
| 1 | 3.6 – Energy efficiency of existing community facilities | Preston Village Hall |

Theme 4: A Natural and Beautiful Place

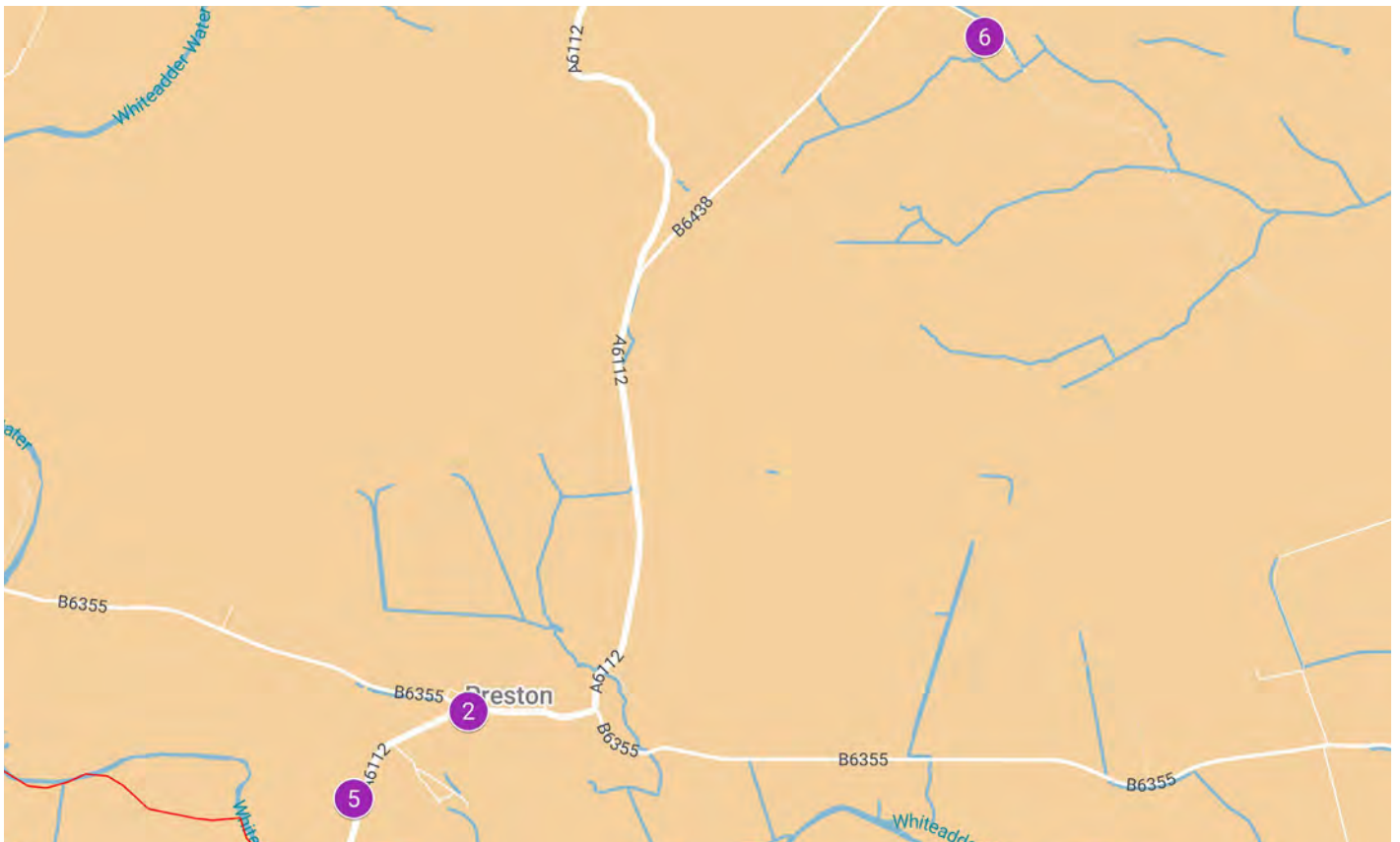


Map 4a - Whole area showing all Theme 4 projects. Magnified areas on next page.

| 4.4 – Biodiversity through roadside wildflower planting | | |
|---|---|----------------------------|
| Map Pin Number | Project Number | Location Description |
| 1 | 4.1 – Community allotments, orchard or growing | Blackerstone Farm Steading |
| 2 | 4.2 – Local recycling including bottles | Preston Village Hall |
| 3 | 4.2 – Local recycling including bottles | Abbey Village Hall |
| 4 | 4.4 – Biodiversity through roadside wildflower planting | Abbey Cemetery |
| 5 | 4.4 – Biodiversity through roadside wildflower planting | Preston Cemetery |
| 6 | 4.4 – Biodiversity through roadside wildflower planting | Bonkyl Cemetery |

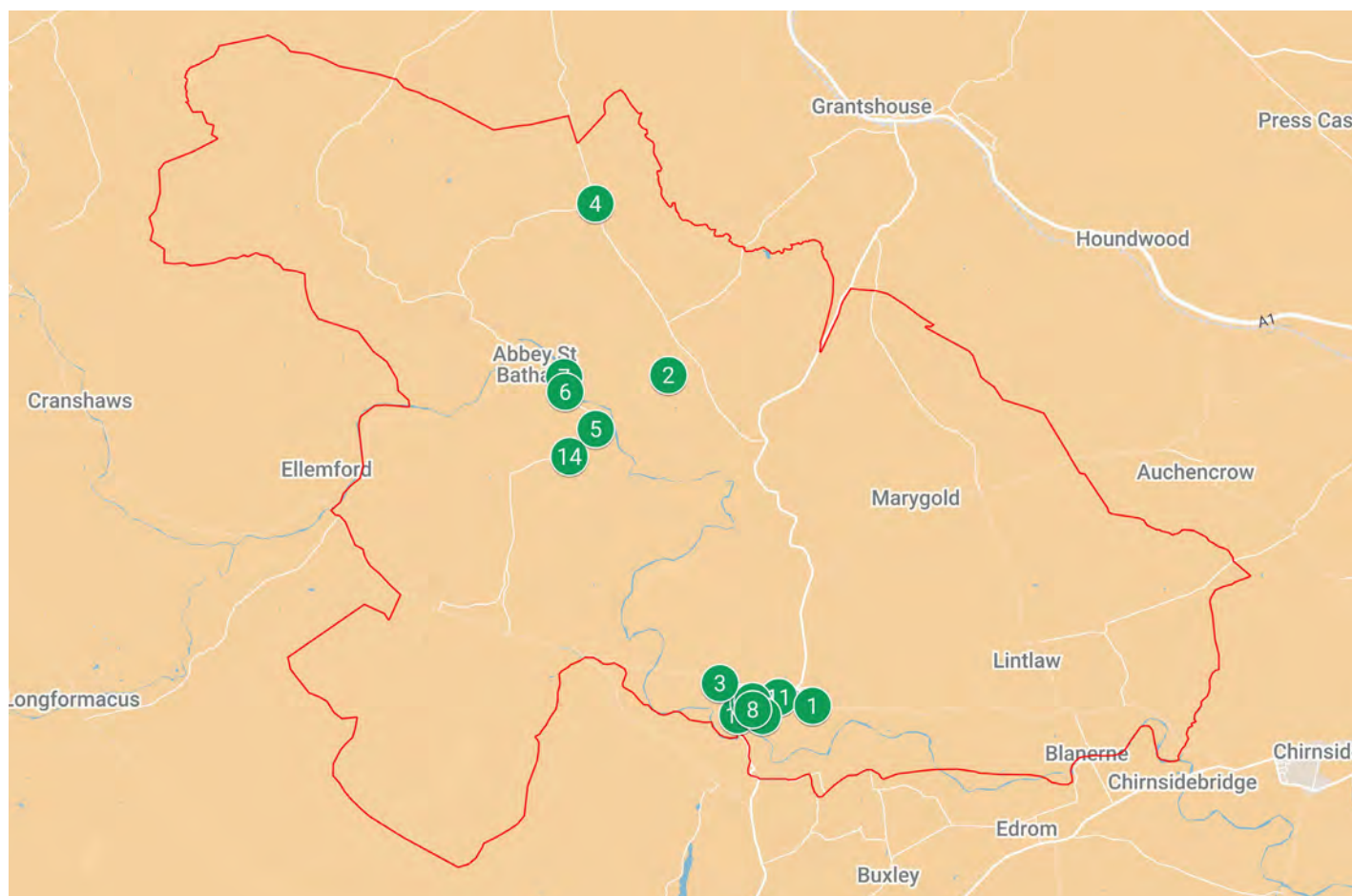


Map 4b.



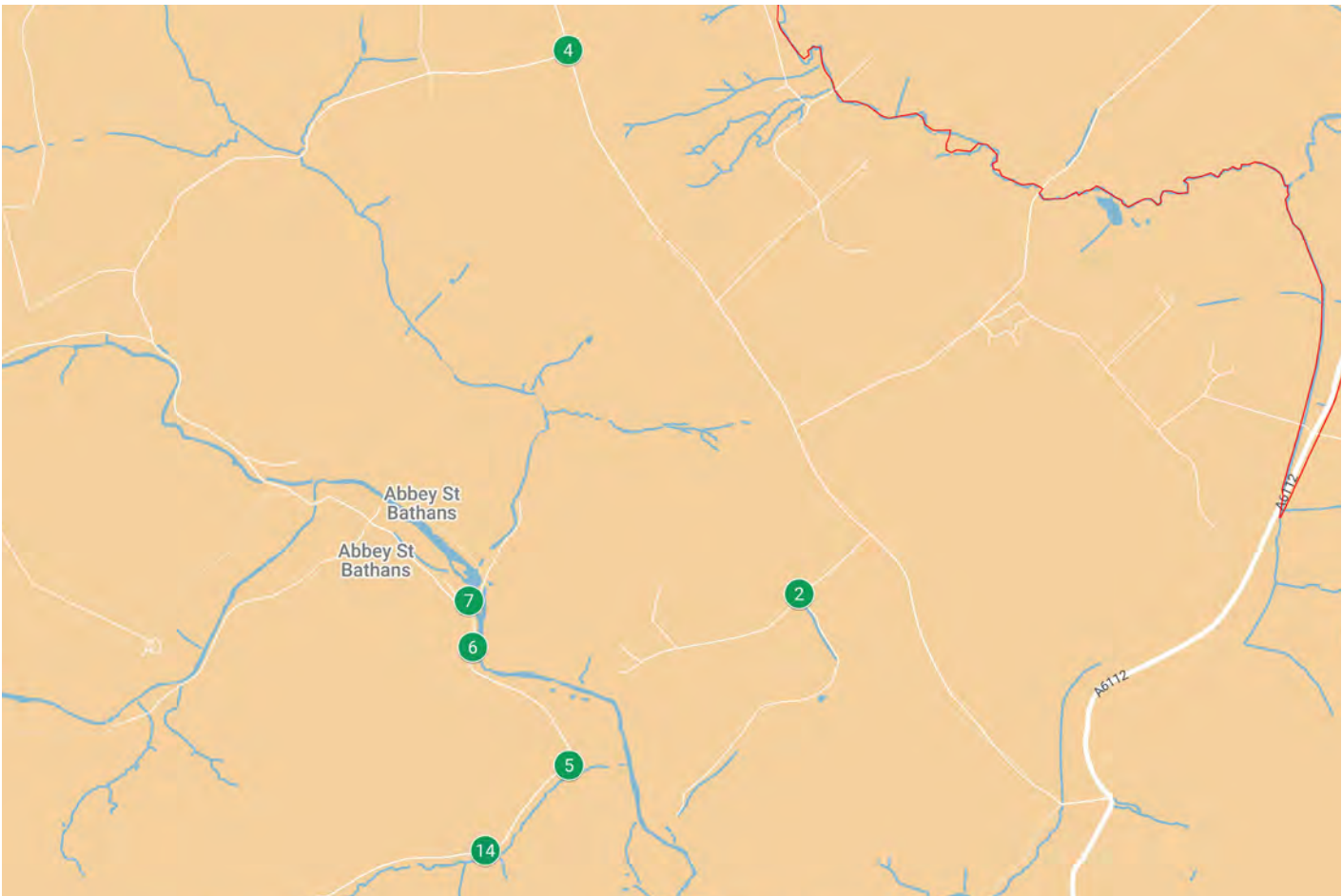
Map 4c

Theme 5: A Safe place

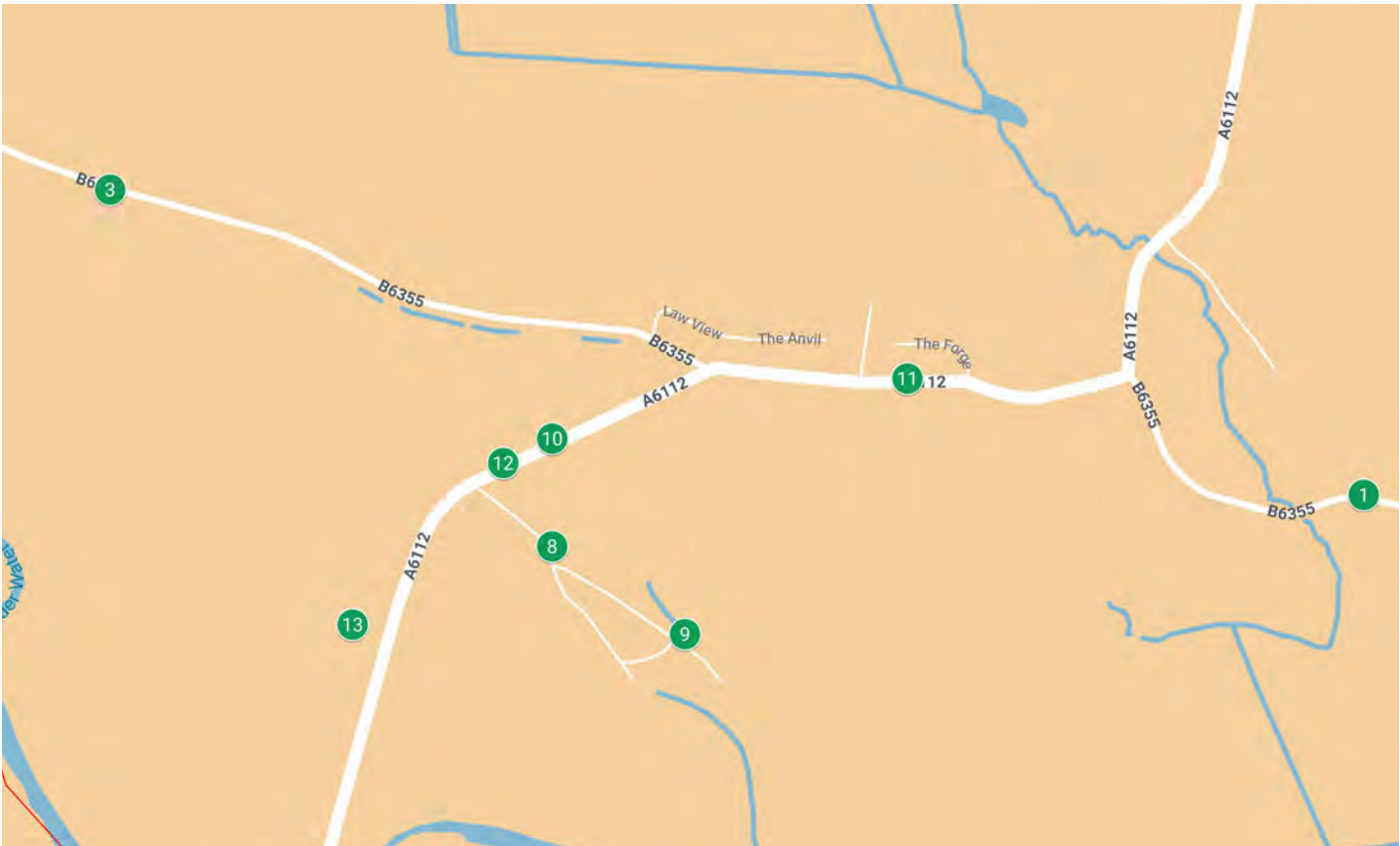


Map 5a - Whole area showing all Theme 5 projects. Magnified areas on next page.

| Theme 5: A Safe place | | |
|-----------------------|---|--|
| Map Pin Number | Project Number | Location Description |
| 1 | 5.1 – Lobby for road safety improvements | Unnamed road North East of Blackerston |
| 2 | 5.1 – Lobby for road safety improvements | B6355 leaving/entering Preston |
| 3 | 5.1 – Lobby for road safety improvements | Unnamed road junction East of Whiteburn Farm |
| 4 | 5.1 – Lobby for road safety improvements | B6355 leaving/entering Preston |
| 5 | 5.1 – Lobby for road safety improvements | Unnamed Road near Toot Corner (Abbey) |
| 6 | 5.1 – Lobby for road safety improvements | Unnamed Road near Abbey Timber (Abbey) |
| 7 | 5.2 – Flood risk mitigation with SBC | Abbey near Abbey Timber |
| 8 | 5.2 – Flood risk mitigation with SBC | Cumledge Mill |
| 9 | 5.2 – Flood risk mitigation with SBC | Cumledge Mill |
| 10 | 5.3 – Pedestrian walkways in Preston, including cemetery link | A6112 from Preston to Preston Graveyard |
| 11 | 5.4 – High risk areas for traffic calming and speed reduction | A6112 through Preston village centre |
| 12 | 5.4 – High risk areas for traffic calming and speed reduction | A6112 passing by Cumledge Mill |
| 13 | 5.5 – Parking at Preston graveyard | Preston Graveyard |
| 14 | 5.6 – Passing places on Abbey - Burnhouses road | Unnamed road between Abbey and Burnhouses |

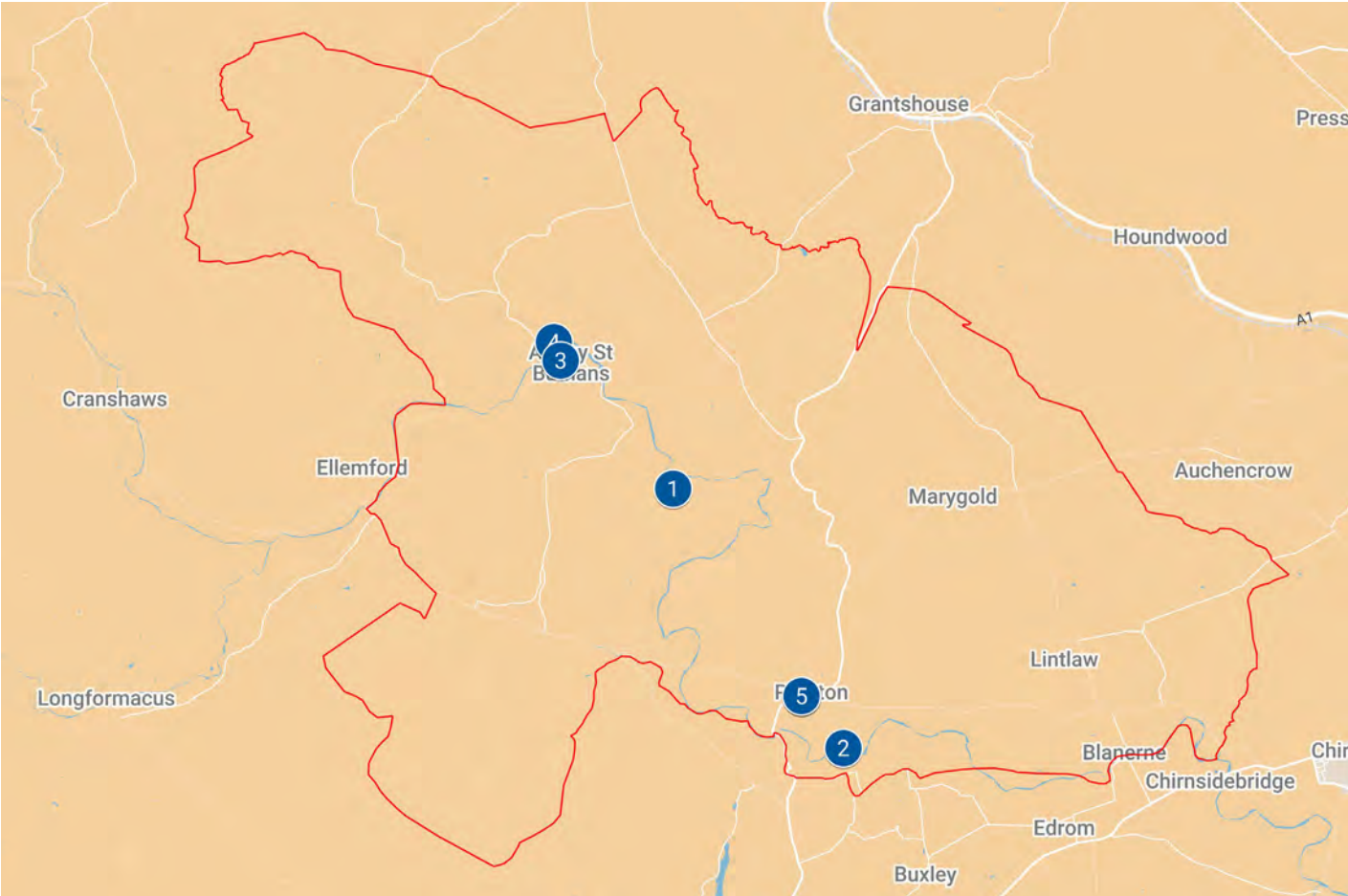


Map 5b.



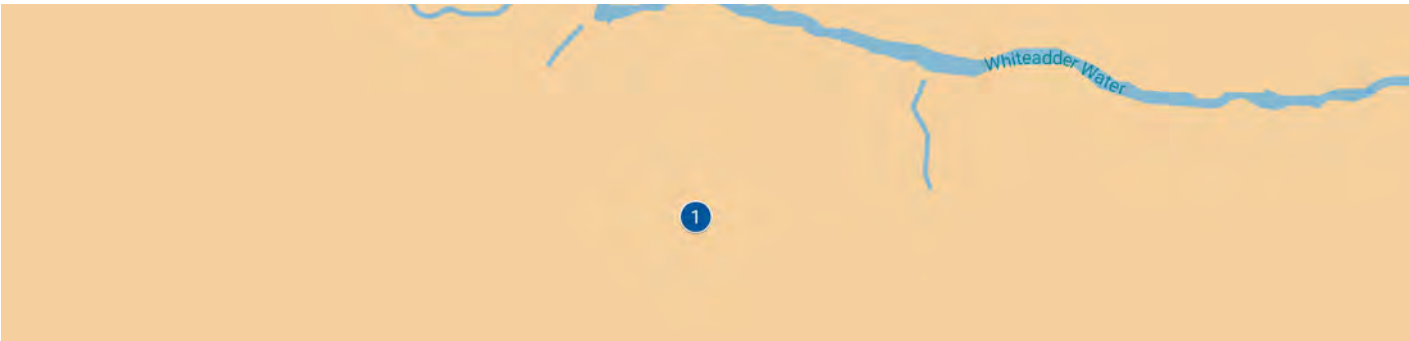
Map 5c

Theme 6: An Enterprising Place

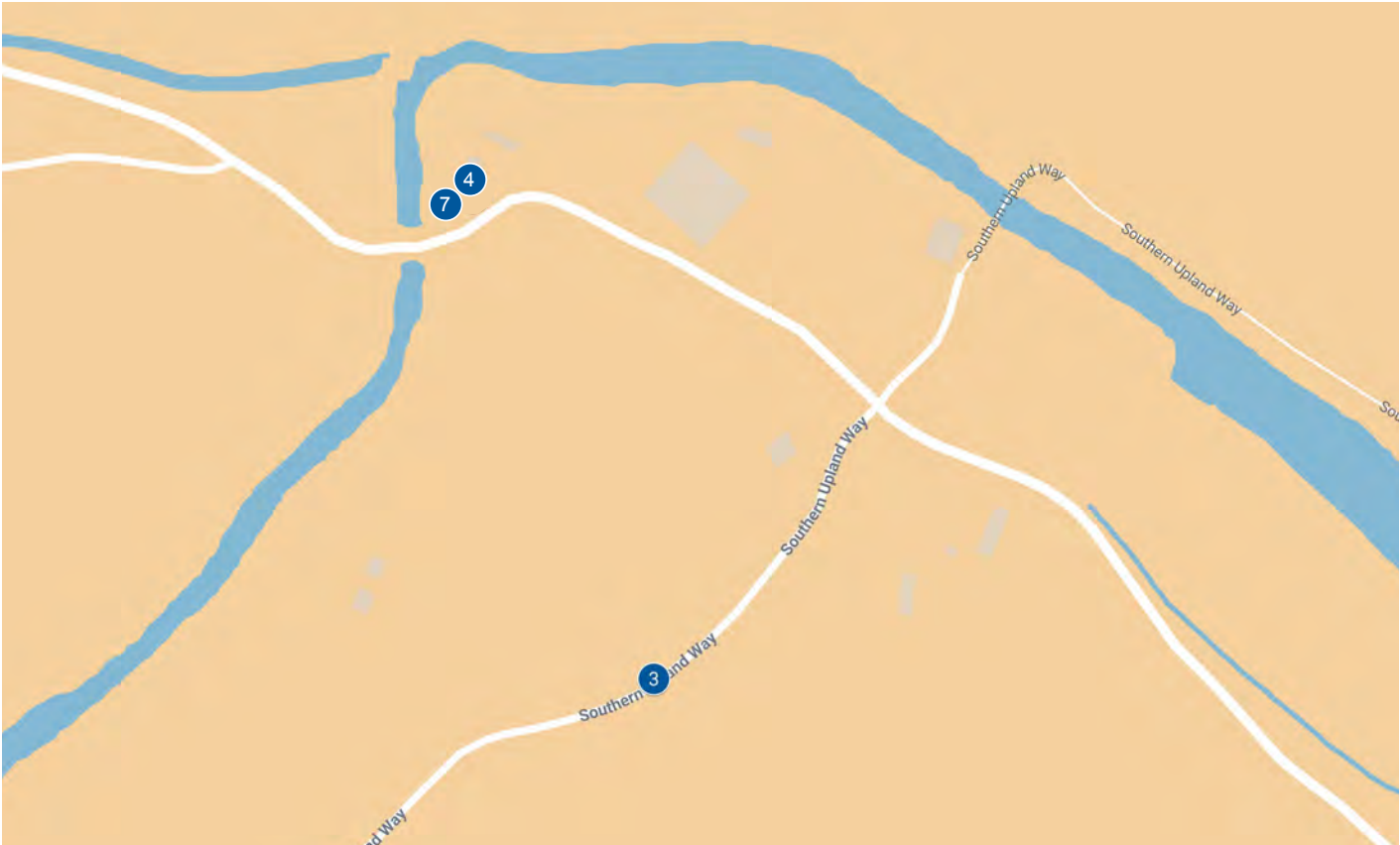


Map 6a - Whole area showing all Theme 6 projects. Magnified areas on next page.

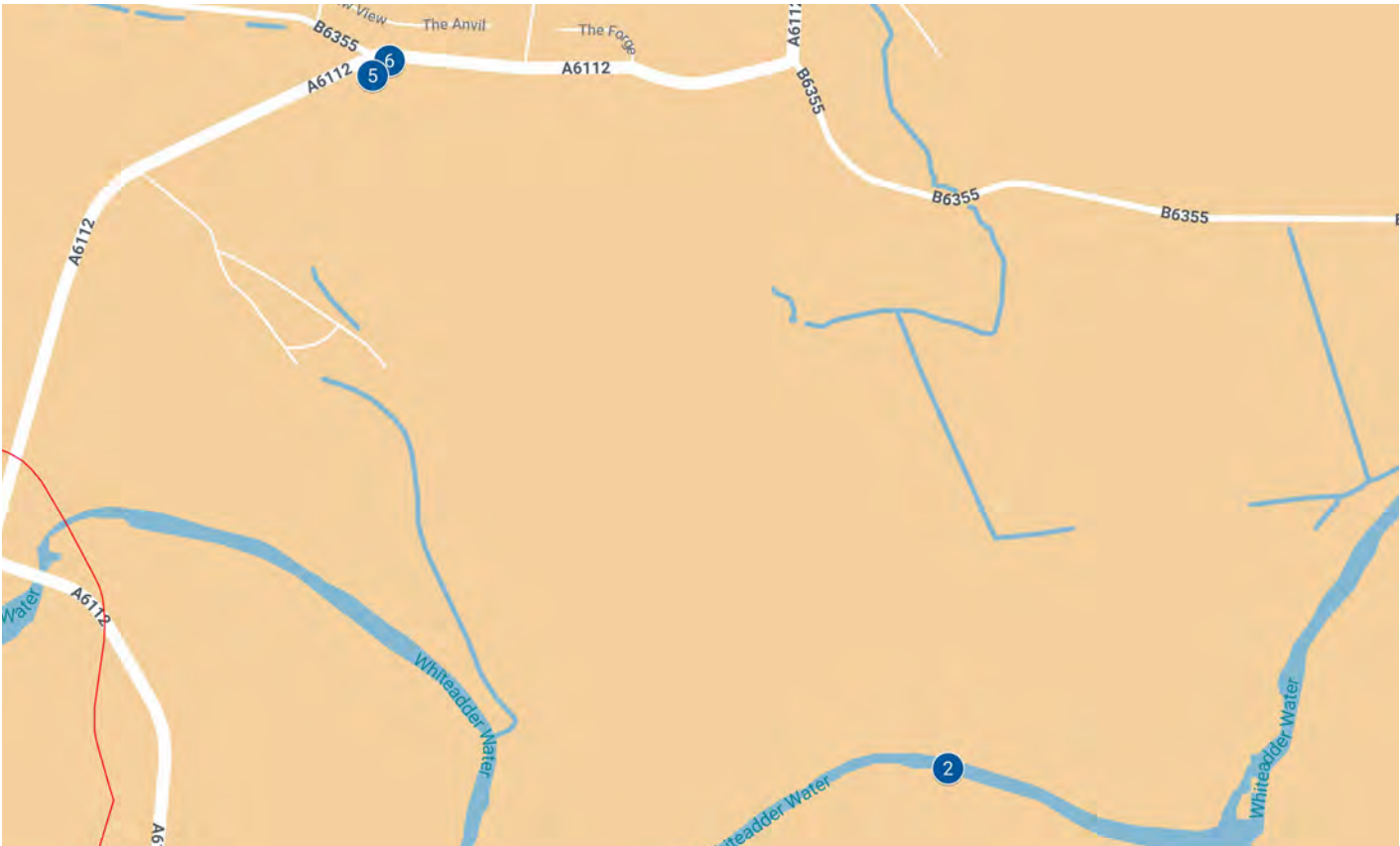
| Theme 6: An Enterprising Place | | |
|--------------------------------|---|----------------------|
| Map Pin Number | Project Number | Location Description |
| 1 | 6.1 – Natural attractions for sustainable tourism | Edens Hall Broch |
| 2 | 6.1 – Natural attractions for sustainable tourism | Riverside |
| 3 | 6.1 – Natural attractions for sustainable tourism | Southern Upland Way |
| 4 | 6.2 – Preservation of traditional skills and crafts | Abbey Village Hall |
| 5 | 6.2 – Preservation of traditional skills and crafts | Preston Village Hall |
| 6 | 6.5 – Community food van or farm shop | Preston Village Hall |
| 7 | 6.5 – Community food van or farm shop | Abbey Village Hall |



Map 6b



Map 6c



Map 6d

5.5 Management and Governance

Abbey St Bathans, Bonkyl and Preston Community Council will be the lead body to retain a watching brief over the implementation of this Local Place Plan.

This includes ensuring that Scottish Borders Council responsibilities are undertaken, and supporting the delivery of projects the community and local agencies are responsible for.

The Community Council will oversee the success of the Local Place Plan, but will also be responsible for reviewing it periodically to respond to changes in the local environment, many of which we will not be able to envisage just now.

We want the plan to be clear and agreed, but there may be opportunities that emerge that will require the leadership of local community groups, encouraging on-going community involvement, volunteering and activism.

The Community Council will:

- Keep this Local Place Plan up to date and amend it where required;
- Liaise with Scottish Borders Council about planning related implementation;
- Stimulate / support organisations to take on the actions identified in the Local Place Plan;
- Promote the Local Place Plan;
- Review progress;
- Monitor the impact of the Local Place Plan, potentially through (commissioning) external impact assessors.



photo by Charlotte Dobie

Afterword

06

We are proud that we have developed this Local Place Plan, alongside our nearby Community Councils, contributing to the next Local Development Plan of Scottish Borders Council, and influencing decisions about the land and assets that are important to us.

We want to thank the residents, businesses and organisations of our community who gave their time and ideas.

Keep an eye on our website for more developments:

www.coabp.org

If you want to contact us directly, you can email us at:

secretary@abpcc.org

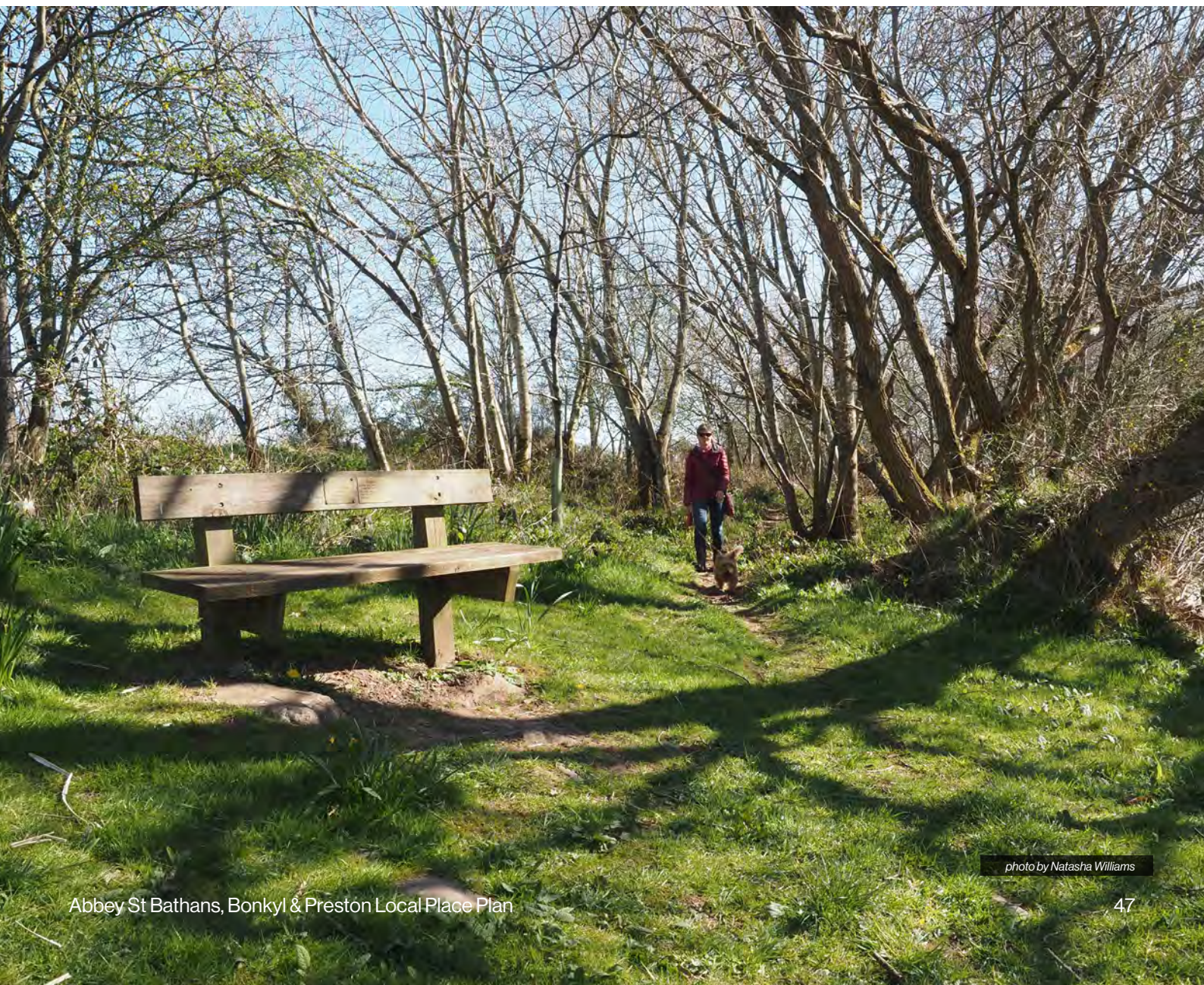


photo by Natasha Williams

