
NORTH AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

30 November 2021

Cabinet

Title:	Streetscene Volunteering Strategy (2022-2026) and North Ayrshire’s ‘Adopt a Spot’ initiative
Purpose:	To seek Cabinet approval of the proposed Streetscene Volunteering Strategy (2022-2026) and North Ayrshire’s Adopt a Spot initiative.
Recommendation:	That Cabinet approves the Streetscene Volunteering Strategy (2022-2026) and North Ayrshire’s Adopt a Spot initiative.

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 North Ayrshire currently benefits from an impressive network of volunteers across our localities who give willingly of their time to provide valuable services for their communities. One of the most significant areas of volunteer activity is in support of the Council’s Streetscene service where many active volunteers are working to improve and enhance their local natural environment through complementary activities such as litter picking, floral displays and environmental/sand dune management.
- 1.2 Additional factors, including increasing engagement with the climate change agenda and the onset of the pandemic, have stimulated a renewed interest in environmental volunteering.
- 1.3 In recognition of this opportunity, and to complement both the Council’s Open Space Strategy and Open Space Asset Management Plan, a Volunteering Strategy for Streetscene related services has been developed, for the forthcoming five-year period 2022- 2026.
- 1.4 The proposed Streetscene Volunteering Strategy 2022-2026 and the supporting action plan (attached as Appendix 1), sets out the strategic framework for the Council and its partners to support and expand the opportunities for community volunteers across North Ayrshire. This is designed to bring a range of benefits including:
 - Improvement in the appearance and biodiversity of our natural environment
 - Opportunities to increase civic participation and foster civic pride
 - Improvement in alignment between volunteer work and wider statutory Streetscene service delivery to maximise additionality
 - Alignment with the Council’s Tree Planting Strategy, given that a proportion of proposed tree planting is being carried out by community volunteers

- Education opportunities, particularly for young people, by working in partnership with our schools and Countryside Rangers Service in delivery of the Volunteering Strategy

1.5 One of the actions within the proposed Streetscene Volunteering Strategy (2022-2026) is to implement a new approach termed 'Adopt a Spot' (see Appendix 2). This programme has been designed to support and encourage individuals, groups, schools and businesses to carry out voluntary litter picks in the same, specific part of their chosen community space as part of a sustained effort to engage local communities and bring about environmental improvements.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Council has been supporting environmental volunteers through the Streetscene service for many years. An established network of volunteer individuals and groups exists who have been carrying out voluntary activities in their communities to benefit the local natural environment.
- 2.2 The main tasks currently undertaken by volunteers are litter picking and floral bedding, and a new Streetscene Volunteering Strategy has been developed with the aim of building on this work but also expanding the types of volunteering opportunities available in the community to enhance and improve the natural environment.
- 2.3 The intention of the proposed strategy is to outline practical actions through which the Council and its partners can better support existing volunteers and to create opportunities to attract and retain new volunteers. Some of key actions within the proposed strategy include:
- Launch a new 'Adopt a Spot' initiative (see further information below)
 - Create 'volunteer packs' for issue with necessary environmental volunteering equipment
 - Establish a volunteer database to facilitate regular and engaging communications with volunteers
 - Create a 'thank you' scheme to acknowledge the work of volunteers, building on previous recognition events for volunteers which were very well attended and provided opportunities for networking and information exchange
- 2.4 The strategy includes an action to implement a North Ayrshire 'Adopt a Spot' programme. This initiative aims to provide members of the community with an opportunity to voluntarily litter pick in a 'spot' at a mutually agreeable open space area within North Ayrshire. The chosen 'spot' would be within Council ownership, and examples of such 'spots' could be all or part of a street, path, park or beach, or any other suitably agreed open space area that the volunteer(s) would like to help make litter free and keep tidy. The approach will also be promoted to schools and local businesses (e.g. hot food takeaways) to further tackle some of our litter hotspots.
- 2.5 Many of the existing network of volunteers who regularly collect litter have informally 'adopted a spot' or an area in their local community for some time, including as part of the Ayrshire Litter Volunteering Network collective. This new initiative aims to bring some co-ordination to this approach and provide additional features such as providing

a platform for volunteers to pledge their commitment, record their activity and have their work publicly acknowledged.

- 2.6 The spot will be informally adopted by the volunteer(s), and the Council will provide the appropriate equipment required to make the area litter free. To recognise the work of the volunteer, the Council will publicly acknowledge the partnership work through signs located in the area where the volunteer litter picks as well as spotlights on social media.

3. Proposals

- 3.1 That Cabinet approves the Streetscene Volunteering Strategy (2022-2026) and North Ayrshire's Adopt a Spot initiative; attached as Appendix 1 and Appendix 2.

4. Implications/Socio-economic Duty

Financial

- 4.1 Implementation of the proposed Strategy will be delivered from existing resources.

Human Resources

- 4.2 Implementation of the proposed Strategy will be delivered from existing resources.

Legal

- 4.3 Not applicable.

Equality/Socio-economic

- 4.4 Not applicable.

Environmental and Sustainability

- 4.5 The work of the volunteers will provide additionality and complement the Council's Streetscene Service and will make a direct contribution to assisting keeping areas and free of litter.

Volunteers work hard to keep our open space areas litter free as well as undertaking sustainable projects to enhance the natural environment and increase biodiversity, providing a wide range of benefits for local communities and the wider environment.

Key Priorities

- 4.6 The support to a network of volunteers positively contributes to the Council's Aspiring Communities priority of 'North Ayrshire has active and strong communities,' within the Council's Plan, 'A Council that is fair for all, 2019 – 2024.'

Within Streetscene's Operational Plan, a key action of developing and implementing a Volunteering Strategy for Streetscene was included to assist in delivering the outcome priority of 'North Ayrshire has active and strong communities'.

The strategy and Adopt a Spot initiative contributes to the priority of 'A safe North Ayrshire', in the Community Planning Partnership's Local Outcomes Improvement Plan.

The strategy and initiative also play an important role in delivering against Scotland's Public Health Priority 1 of 'A Scotland where we live in vibrant, healthy and safe places and communities.'

Community Wealth Building

- 4.7 The Volunteering Strategy for Streetscene and the Adopt a Spot initiative aligns with the Council's Community Wealth Building mission of 'maximising the potential of all our places through working in partnership with our communities and businesses'.

5. Consultation

- 5.1 The proposed Streetscene Volunteering Strategy (2022-2026) and North Ayrshire's Adopt a Spot initiative has been developed to align with national guidance and Council priorities.
- 5.2 Consultation has taken place with a cross-section of existing volunteers in the North Ayrshire community as well as with various Council services including Streetscene and Connected Communities.
- 5.3 Consultation has also been undertaken with Trade Union representatives to discuss the additionality and complementary nature of the proposed environmental volunteering work to core Streetscene services.
- 5.4 Streetscene carried out an Open Space Satisfaction Survey in Spring 2018 on all aspects of North Ayrshire's parks, green spaces, and open areas. Part of the survey gathered feedback on the potential interest of users of North Ayrshire's open space areas in carrying out volunteering activities, which has informed the proposed strategy.
- 5.5 The proposed Streetscene Volunteering Strategy (2022-2026) and North Ayrshire's Adopt a Spot initiative was also recently considered by the Council's Policy Advisory Panel held on 7 October 2021.

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For further information please contact **David Hammond, Head of Commercial Services**, on **01294 324570**.

Background Papers

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Streetscene

Streetscene Volunteering Strategy 2022 - 2026



Streetscene's Volunteering Strategy

OVERVIEW OF STREETSCENE

Streetscene sits within the Council's Place Directorate and undertakes strategic and operational asset management responsibilities for physical assets and open space within the public realm.

The service maintains approximately 2,410 hectares of public open space, 1 Country Park, 14 local parks, 44 cemeteries and burial grounds, 37 war memorials & monuments, 366 hectares of woodlands, 3 allotments, 75 sports facilities and playing fields, 84 equipped play areas and 12 multi-use games areas, residential greenspace, 38 water courses and open water features, 5 promenades and 16 beaches, three of which are Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI's).

Streetscene is also responsible for street cleaning (including sweeping and litter picking) within the Council's roads infrastructure and programmed cleaning open spaces and beaches including the removal of flytipping and graffiti.

In addition, the service also provides a burials and bereavement service conducting over 800 interments and approximately 16,000 memorial inspections each year.

VISION

Streetscene's Volunteering Strategy identifies how we will contribute to achieving the Council's mission of **'working together to improve wellbeing, prosperity and equity in North Ayrshire.'**

The actions from this Volunteering Strategy for Streetscene contributes to achieving the overarching strategic priorities in North Ayrshire Council's Plan, 'A Council that is fair for all', 2019 - 2024.

Aspiring Communities:

- Active and strong communities
- People enjoy good life-long health and wellbeing
- People and communities are safe

Inspiring Place:

- Vibrant, welcoming, and attractive places
- A sustainable environment

The vision for this strategy is that a framework is put in place to build on the existing network of community volunteers and is in addition to the core maintenance duties carried out by the Streetscene service.

The Climate emergency and Covid pandemic has placed increasing emphasis on the importance of our local communities, green spaces and the natural environment. We recognise and value the hard work, dedication and visible results that are achieved through the current network of community volunteers.

Streetscene's ambition for the next five-year period, from 2022 – 2026, is to support the existing volunteers through a more co-ordinated and efficient approach, as well as increasing the types of volunteering opportunities available and to expand a sustainable network of community volunteers across North Ayrshire.

Streetscene's Vision Statement for Volunteering

'To be a Streetscene service that offers volunteering opportunities across North Ayrshire communities, and to provide the relevant support for a growing, successful and sustainable network of community volunteers.'

CONTEXT

National context

The Scottish Government's 'Volunteering for All: national framework' (2019) aims to embed a robust culture of volunteering in Scotland.

Within the framework's recommendations and implementation section, it states that local authorities should: 'Develop strategies with public sector partners to support volunteering and community involvement, working collaboratively with people to help sustain vital local infrastructure such as transport, and meeting places.'

Local context

Open Space Strategy (2016 – 2026)

Streetscene's Open Space Strategy sets out a clear strategic framework for the development and management of open space. This Strategy acknowledges the importance of engaging and supporting with local volunteers and sets out two distinctive actions relating to as outlined below:

Action 7.4: 'Continue to support local volunteers who litter pick open space areas and beaches with materials, equipment and advice.'

Action 7.5 'Maintain beach cleanliness and ensure beaches retain their award-winning status.'

Locality Partnerships

Locality Partnerships provide support for the identified priorities for communities in the local area.

The Locality Partnerships are represented by a wide range of members and partners in the community, and the Locality Partnerships will help to promote the Streetscene Volunteering Strategy.

North Ayrshire Third Sector Interface

The North Ayrshire Third Sector Interface links the Community Planning Partnerships and the community and voluntary organisations in North Ayrshire. It comprises of the Arran Community and Voluntary Service and The Ayrshire Community Trust.

The North Ayrshire Third Sector Interface Volunteering Strategy was published for 2018 – 2021.

North Ayrshire Council Employee Volunteering Policy

This policy recognises the contribution which volunteers make and supports employees who would like to do volunteer work within the community or for charitable institutions.

‘Supporting volunteers helps North Ayrshire Council to build relationships with the local community and contribute to achieving the aims of the Local Outcome Improvement Plan.’

DEFINITION OF VOLUNTEERING

The Scottish Government has defined volunteering as ‘the giving of time and energy through a third party, which can bring measurable benefits to the volunteer, individual beneficiaries, groups and organisations, communities, environment and society at large.’

‘It is a choice undertaken of one’s own free will and is not motivated primarily for financial gain or for a wage or salary’.

Each person who carries out volunteering work offers their time to help build their communities, help others, the environment and improve their own lives.

Volunteers undertake volunteering work at their own risk, and North Ayrshire Council are unable to accept any liability for any damage to property or injury to persons caused by the volunteer

Types of volunteering opportunities in Streetscene

There are a variety of ways to get involved in Streetscene activities. The majority of the current volunteer community is engaged in litter picking activity.

Volunteers also take part in landscaping activities, painting fences and benches, and maintaining community gardens through gardening and planting activities. The various types of volunteering opportunities available are outlined below:

- Litter picking
- Gardening
- Landscaping
- Bench painting
- Fence painting
- Planting bulbs / wildflower seeds (to create wildflower meadows)
- Carrying out training / mentoring activities

STREETSCENE VOLUNTEERING STRATEGY OVERVIEW

Structure of the Strategy

To achieve the vision, the strategy for enhancing the community volunteer approach for Streetscene related work has been developed around three key areas:

1. To develop the volunteer framework
2. To enhance the support offered to volunteers
3. To grow the network of volunteers and volunteering opportunities

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

We want to support our current network of community volunteers and grow and expand the network of volunteers in a sustainable way to benefit North Ayrshire.

The two key strategic objectives are:

- 1. We want to develop the framework of a Volunteering Programme for Streetscene related services and continue to provide support for community volunteers.**
- 2. We aim to expand and grow the network of community volunteers in a sustainable manner and will seek to attract external funding to maintain the anticipated growth.**

From these strategic objectives, a series of actions have been developed and form an action plan to ensure the strategy is delivered successfully to maximum effect.

STREETSCENE VOLUNTEERING: ACTION PLAN 2022 - 2026

ACTION	OWNER	TIMESCALE
Strategic Objective 1: To develop the framework of Streetscene's Volunteering Programme and continue to provide support for Streetscene volunteers		
1.1 Establish a dedicated point of contact (i.e. 'Volunteer Co-ordinator' function) who will develop and oversee the volunteer database, in addition to developing a process within the Streetscene service to provide the volunteering support and advice required by individual volunteers and groups.	Streetscene Strategy	End March 2022
1.2 Link North Ayrshire's Adopt a Spot (voluntary litter picking) initiative to Streetscene's Volunteering Programme.	Streetscene Strategy	End March 2022
1.3 Produce a community volunteer information leaflet, including guidelines and advice for safe volunteer working.	Streetscene Strategy	End March 2022
1.4 Create volunteer packs with essential equipment required for the environmental works, (e.g. litter pickers, collection bags, hi-vis vests, and gloves, wildflower seeds for habitat creation etc.)	Streetscene Strategy	End March 2022
1.5 Work in partnership with relevant Council services / partner organisations to provide a small but meaningful 'thank you' scheme for volunteering, e.g. hot drink voucher at Tournament Café, Eglinton Park.	Streetscene Strategy / Council services / Partner organisations	Ongoing
1.6 Create a biannual e-newsletter to be sent to all community volunteers.	Streetscene Strategy	Ongoing
1.7 Host a biennial recognition and networking event for community volunteers, e.g. Autumn 2022 and Autumn 2024 (<i>subject to Covid restrictions</i>).	Streetscene Strategy	Autumn 2022 Autumn 2024

Appendix 1

1.8 Identify new pathways for volunteers to plant trees, for example by providing training, resources (i.e. funding, provision of saplings and stakes) or other support as required	Streetscene Strategy	Ongoing
Strategic Objective 2: To expand and grow the network of community volunteers in a sustainable manner and will seek to attract external funding to maintain the anticipated growth		
2.1 Actively recruit volunteers for specific environmental enhancement tasks by developing a communications programme to promote available volunteering opportunities.	Streetscene Strategy	Ongoing
2.2 Work in partnership with local external organisations specialising in volunteering, such as TACT and Arran CVS, to identify and promote volunteering opportunities.	Streetscene Strategy / Partner organisations (e.g. TACT)	Ongoing
2.3 Organise and promote a volunteering day for Council employees to take part in, through the Get Connected programme.	Streetscene Strategy / Get Connected Team (People & ICT)	Ongoing
2.4 Explore the opportunity of working with the Education service to provide opportunities for schools to take part.	Streetscene Strategy / Education	Ongoing
2.5 Create business cards printed with details of how to get involved for volunteers to hand out to interested community members, including details of relevant social media groups.	Streetscene Strategy	End March 2022
2.6 Seek external funding to support the capital costs of providing the essential equipment required in the volunteer packs for the anticipated growing number of volunteers.	Streetscene Strategy / Funding (Connected Communities) / external funding organisations	Ongoing

North Ayrshire's Adopt a Spot Initiative

Proposal

As part of the Council's Streetscene Volunteering Strategy (2022 - 2026), the Council is introducing a North Ayrshire 'Adopt a Spot' initiative. This is a new approach to provide members of the community, local businesses and schools with an opportunity to voluntarily litter pick in an area of their choice within North Ayrshire.

Many of the existing network of volunteers who regularly collect litter have informally 'adopted a spot' or an area in their local community for some time, including as part of the Ayrshire Litter Volunteering Network collective. This new initiative aims to bring some co-ordination to this approach and provide additional features such as providing a platform for volunteers to pledge their commitment, record their activity and have their work publicly acknowledged.

The chosen 'spot' would be in a mutually agreeable area of open space within Council ownership, and examples of such 'spots' could be all or part of a:

- street
- park
- beach
- path
- frontage of a business (especially hot food takeaway businesses)
- route(s) to local schools

or any other suitably agreed open space area that the volunteer(s) would like to make litter free and keep tidy.

The spot will be informally adopted by the volunteer, and the Council will provide the volunteer(s) with the appropriate equipment required, such as litter pickers, plastic bags, along with hi-vis vests and gloves to support the volunteers to make the area litter free.

The spectrum of volunteers working in their communities ranges from individuals who undertake litter picking periodically on an ad-hoc basis, to those who are part of a formal environmental group who undertake regular, structured picks. It is important that those who pick on an ad-hoc basis can continue to do so without feeling any obligation to increase or formalise their current litter picking arrangements if they do not wish to do so.

It is envisaged that, as more 'spots' are adopted, that the Council's mapping portal is used to record areas subject to the adopt-a-spot initiative, and to show areas still available for adoption. Showing litter picking activity in this visual way will act as an encouragement to others who are considering getting involved.

Process:

1. Advertise North Ayrshire's Adopt a Spot initiative

- North Ayrshire's Adopt a Spot initiative will be advertised through the Council's web pages, social media and leaflets/posters in public buildings/areas.
- This volunteering initiative will be open to all members of the community including individuals, community groups, businesses (including hot food takeaways), schools etc.
- It will be communicated as 'complementary' to the existing work that our amazing litter picking volunteers do.

2. Application form/pledge

- A simple application form is supplied either electronically or by post for the volunteer to fill in. This will request information on the following: contact details, area ('spot') that the volunteer would like to litter pick, whether they are volunteering individually or in a group, how much equipment they are requesting, and the method of disposal. A pledge for the volunteer to complete will also be included in the form, and the volunteer and mapping database will be updated accordingly.

3. Assessment of area

- Once the application form is submitted, the Council will review the spot to confirm that it is land within the Council's ownership, and to assess that it is an appropriate and safe area for the volunteer to carry out litter picking.

4. Guidelines issued

- The Council will issue advice and guidelines to the volunteer before any work is undertaken and will cover the following health and safety precautions: safety guidance, site safety and inspection, lifting and handling and safe disposal of waste materials.
- An indemnity statement will also be included to advise that the volunteer undertakes their work at their own risk.
- The guidelines issued will provide a framework to meet expectations of both the Council and the volunteers.

5. Equipment provided

Litter pickers, collection bags, hi-vis vests, and gloves to be supplied to volunteers.

6. Volunteer carries out litter picks

- The volunteer will contact the Council to arrange uplift of materials, if required.
- The volunteer is also provided with contact details for reporting issues they may see while out litter picking/to request extra equipment/helping to arrange a large-scale litter pick (as opposed to day-to-day picking).
- Depending on the scale of the area and size of the volunteer group involved, Environmental Visual Audits (EVA's) may be arranged with Streetscene to discuss litter issues and 'Environmental Quality Indicators' such as graffiti, vandalism and detritus.

7. Mapping portal updated

- The mapping portal is updated to reflect the areas that have been adopted as a 'spot' in the Adopt a Spot initiative.

8. Acknowledged by the Council through social media / signage

- The Council will recognise the litter picking work carried out by the volunteers through social media and/or an appropriate sign in the spot that they have litter picked, to acknowledge the volunteer and to highlight the partnership work.

Signage example – personalised plaque to be attached to appropriate Council asset such as a lighting column:



North Ayrshire's 'Adopt a Spot' Initiative – Pilot proposal

In terms of piloting the North Ayrshire 'Adopt a Spot' initiative, Streetscene will aim to work in partnership with an existing volunteer community group in each locality.

The three Streetscene Strategy Officers for Irvine / North Coast and Garnock Valley / Three Towns and Kilwinning will work with volunteers who already carry out voluntary litter picking work in these localities to showcase some example 'spots' for adoption. North Ayrshire's Adopt a Spot process will be adapted, if necessary, following feedback from the pilot scheme.

In addition to following the proposed process as set out above, the undermentioned will be established to facilitate the pilot:

- One main point of contact within the community group will be established where appropriate, i.e., the head volunteer.
- The Strategy Officer will be their main contact who will arrange supply of basic litter picking equipment (and assess requests for additional equipment, such as litter carts etc.).
- Bags will be supplied by the Streetscene Cleansing teams.
- Periodic pre-arranged 'Environmental Visual Audits' (EVA's) will be arranged to discuss litter issues and evaluation of 'Environmental Quality Indicators', such as graffiti, vandalism, detritus, etc.
- Any action points for Streetscene arising from the EVA's will be relayed to the relevant officer/team and feedback provided to the volunteer group.
- LEAMS audits will also be arranged to gauge improvements/deterioration of litter levels.