

Briefing Note

Community Conversation: UK Government Long Term Plan for Towns – Dumfries

February 2024

Background

In September 2023 the UK Government launched its 'Long-Term Plan for Towns', supporting 55 UK towns including seven in Scotland as part of the Levelling-Up programme. Dumfries has been selected and will receive £20 million in endowment-style funding over 10 years from 2024/25. Detailed guidance was published in December 2023 on the process for establishing a Town Board to develop and deliver a Long-Term Plan for each town.

The Town Board is to be independently chaired and be formed to represent community interests, business perspectives and public organisations. The Long-Term Plan they will develop must include a 10-year vision, and an initial 3-year investment plan.

The UK Government sets out the following expectations and timescales in its guidance –

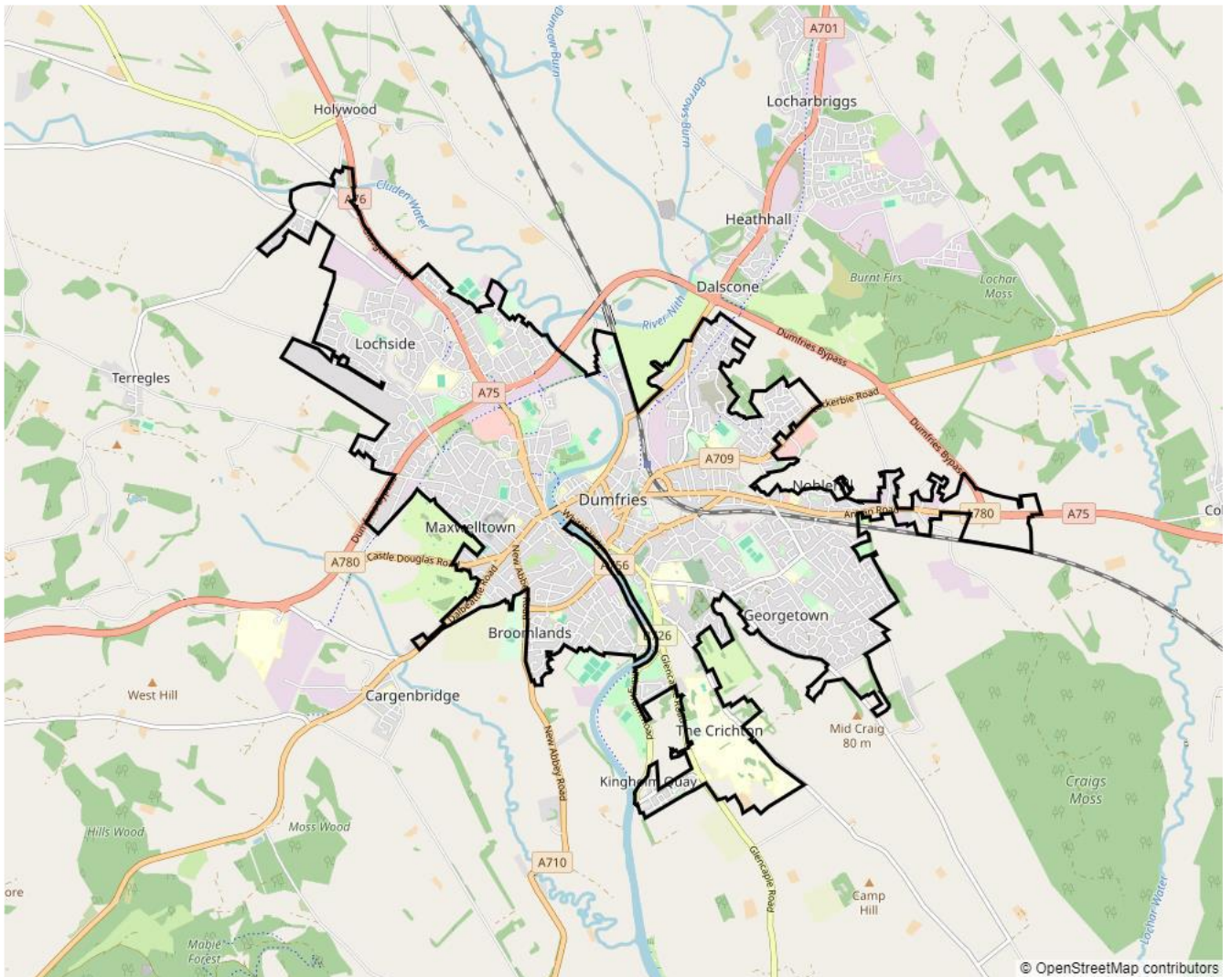
- As early as possible the Council to appoint a Chair for the Town Board, doing so in consultation with local MPs.
- The Council to work with the Chair to form the Town Board and for it to have its first meeting no later than 1 April 2024.
- The UK Government has asked that the Long-Term Plan for Dumfries be submitted by 1 August 2024, the practicalities of this are being discussed.

At its meeting of 30 January 2024, the Council's Economy and Resources Committee agreed on a way forward to making this appointment. This includes the canvassing of wider community views in addition to the UK Government requirement to consult with MPs, prior to making a recommendation on this appointment to Full Council on the 27 February.

A community conversation both online and in-person will be held on Thursday 15th February to give information and take perspectives from the community. A variety of mechanisms will be available for submitting nominations for the position of Town Board Chair.

What the UK Government mean by ‘Dumfries’

In February the Department for Levelling-Up, Housing and Communities issued this map and an accompanying statistical analysis/baseline for Dumfries.



There is a process for varying this boundary that the Town Board, rather than the Council, can make representations to the Government on.

The Town Board chairperson

The chairperson should act as a champion for the town and provide leadership for the Town Board, ensuring it is community-led and embedded within the local area. They can be anyone who holds a prominent role such as:

- a local charitable organisation
- a philanthropist
- the head of a Further Education College
- a director for the NHS Board or Trust
- a director of a football club

The chairperson will work with the Council to appoint the Town Board.

The Town Board

The Board is responsible for developing the Long-Term Plan, working closely with local people.

The Board will comprise of:

- The local MPs with local MSPs at the invitation of the Council
- Two local councillors
- A senior police representative

Other membership is at the Chair's discretion but might comprise:

- Community partners
- Local businesses and social enterprises
- Cultural, arts, heritage and sporting organisations
- Public agencies and anchor institutions

The local authority or alternative community group will provide a secretariat function.

The role of the Council

The primary role of the Council is as an enabler to the establishment of the Town Board and is thereafter the accountable body (to the UK Government) for funding and executing the Long-Term Plan.

The Council as accountable body requires to support the Chair and the Town Board with guidance and information in forming the Long-Term-Plan and thereafter in investment plan delivery. The UK Government will require ongoing monitoring of delivery within the legal requirements of public finance and governance and for the reporting of project progress and outcome realisation. It is not expected that the Town Board will be an implementing body therefore actions arising within the investment plan would require direct deliver or project sponsor support from the Council.