PRESS RELEASE – *embargoed until Monday 16 Feb noon*

Glenkens & District Community Action Plan Steering Group

Depopulation in Galloway – The Glenkens urges Dumfries and Galloway Council to collaborate on repopulation.

Dumfries and Galloway Council have published reports on depopulation in D&G. The reports contain 26 recommendations to help build sustainable rural communities – so let's make sure Dumfries and Galloway Council acts by working collaboratively with communities across the region. We in the Glenkens know we can make a difference but we also know this needs many parties to work together.

We've all been impacted by it, but we don't always recognise depopulation as the underlying cause of issues as varied as reduced bus services, lack of childcare, cafes closing, deserted villages of empty second homes, rural school closures, digital disconnection, no NHS dentists etc. There are lots of complex reasons behind each of these problems but underlying them all is **depopulation,** and communities across Dumfries and Galloway are ready to engage in addressing this challenge.

Funded by the Scottish Government, Dumfries and Galloway Council commissioned these reports by University of West of Scotland and CoDel consultants which set out the causes, challenges and solutions to depopulation in our region. The Glenkens featured as a case study in the reports, as did Newton Stewart and the Rhinns of Galloway as it is important that the lived experience of our rural communities is heard, to better understand the impact which depopulation is having on those most affected by it. The report on Best Interventions highlights some exciting projects across Scotland and Europe that have delivered solutions to their area and demonstrate that depopulation is not inevitable and can be stemmed.

Some may say: "*So what? Move somewhere that has what you need*". But where does that leave the farmers and food producers who provide the food on your plate, the energy engineers who help keep your homes powered, the foresters who provide construction timber for your affordable housing, or the remaining hospitality workers to feed you on your holidays in our beautiful and increasingly empty landscapes? Without thriving rural communities our whole national economy will suffer.

The reports recommend a number of actions which would deliver tangible benefits. We know Dumfries and Galloway Council faces funding pressures and many demands on their resources, but depopulation requires a long term, strategic, collaborative and community-led approach – not short-term reactive responses to the political pressures of the day.

Recognising that each rural community has different assets and needs, it is important that Dumfries and Galloway Council pulls the right combination of levers of influence for each rural community – it is therefore **essential** that Dumfries and Galloway Council **collaborates** with rural communities to find place-based solutions at a sub-regional level. The Glenkens & District Community Action Plan Steering Group have highlighted the extent of their activity

in their recent annual report and we want to work with the Council to progress the actions in the Depopulation Reports and to build on the work done in the Glenkens.

The Glenkens & District Community Action Plan Steering Group is therefore calling on all our local councillors and political groups to endorse the findings and of these reports and to ensure a plan for delivery is prepared. But most importantly, **we want Dumfries and Galloway Council to work with our rural communities** to address this challenge together. **Let's start there.** We are today writing to the Chief Executive of Dumfries and Galloway Council to start this collaborative process.

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The Depopulation Reports:

Dumfries and Galloway Council Publishes Rural Depopulation Research Reports | Dumfries and Galloway Council

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About the Glenkens and District Community Action Plan Steering Group

The Glenkens & District Community Action Plan Steering Group (CAP SG) plays a pivotal role in realizing the vision outlined in the Glenkens and District Community Action Plan. The CAP encompasses the Balmaghie, New Galloway & Kells, Dalry, Balmaclellan, Corsock & KPD, Parton, and Crossmichael Community Council areas, aiming for this to be a connected, resilient and carbon neutral place, where people will want to live, to work, to bring up their families, and to grow old. It will be somewhere that other places in Scotland will look to for inspiration.

Supported by the Glenkens Community & Arts Trust (GCAT), the Glenkens & District Community Action Plan Steering Group comprises nine individuals from diverse backgrounds and experiences across the communities. Their mandate involves reviewing progress against the Plan, proposing interventions for unmet actions, and ensuring the Plan remains current and relevant amidst evolving community dynamics. For more information, visit Glenkens Hub - Community Action Plan (CAP) Steering Group

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