

DBT NEWS

Concerns mount over cuts to 501 bus service

The 501 bus service linking Dumfries, Dalbeattie and Castle Douglas has come under increasing scrutiny following changes introduced in September. Since McCalls Coaches took over the contract, passengers have reported overcrowding and reduced frequency, raising questions about the reliability of one of the region's key transport links.

Most buses on the route are now limited to 30 seats. The 7.47am departure from Dalbeattie, which picks up schoolchildren at Cargenbridge, regularly reaches standing-room-only conditions. McCalls has pledged to introduce a larger 46-seater vehicle on this busy run. The timetable itself has also been cut back. Under Stagecoach, the service offered around 16 to 17 weekday journeys each way. The new schedule provides only 12 to 13 journeys each way, with several intermediate evening services withdrawn. The last bus still departs at around 11.30pm, but overall coverage has narrowed compared with the previous timetable. Sunday services continue, albeit at reduced frequency, and certain journeys are now designated "school days only", meaning they do not operate during holidays. The withdrawal of linked services, such as Castle Douglas's 512 town bus, has further reduced local connectivity. For commuters, the cuts mean fewer options for early starts and late returns. For school pupils, overcrowding remains a daily frustration. And for rural residents, the loss of intermediate evening services risks deepening isolation.

Community voices are calling for urgent improvements to ensure the 501 remains a dependable link across Dumfries and Galloway. Campaigners argue that larger buses and reinstated journeys are essential if the route is to serve the needs of those who rely on it most. *The information in this article was provided by Councilor Davie Stitt*

Future of Public Toilets in Dalbeattie

Public toilet provision in Dalbeattie is currently constrained by restricted opening hours. At present, 12½ hours a week are allocated for opening and closing the facilities, but because the staff responsible do not live in the town, much of this time is taken up by travel rather than by keeping the toilets open. The result is very limited availability for residents and visitors, a difficulty shared by many communities across Dumfries and Galloway.

Several possible ways of improving the situation have been identified. The most effective would be to recruit someone who lives in Dalbeattie to open, close and clean the toilets. Removing the need to travel would allow the full 12½ hours to be spent keeping the facilities open. A post was advertised previously but attracted no applicants and will be readvertised. Anyone interested can contact Jim McCrossan for further information at James.McCrossan@dumgal.gov.uk. Another option, already used in some communities, is a volunteer rota, with local people sharing responsibility to extend opening hours and ensure the toilets remain available. A further approach is a key-holder system, under which a trusted local person holds the keys so that volunteers can open the toilets for specific events or busy periods.

Looking further ahead, there is a proposal to convert the old boating shed in Colliston Park into a

permanent toilet block. This would place public toilets directly within the park, making it easier to host events by reducing reliance on hired portaloos. More importantly, it would provide accessible toilet facilities beside the new inclusive play park, giving families and wheelchair users nearby access.

Funding for the installation of fully accessible toilets is available through the Scottish government's Changing Places Toilets Fund, which supports specialist equipment. However, the grant covers only the disabled toilets themselves. The costs of converting the building and carrying out landscaping are not included, and with no funding currently available for these elements, the proposal has not yet been taken forward.

In the meantime, wheelchair users will need to rely on the facilities at Rocks and Wheels. For this to be practical, a dedicated accessible path linking the park to the toilets would be required. Scottish guidance indicates that such a route should ideally be around 1.8 metres wide, with 2 metres preferred to allow comfortable two-way use, and constructed with a firm, non-slip surface. Gradients should be kept as gentle as possible, ideally no steeper than 1 in 30, with regular level resting places provided. Where slopes are above 1 in 20 ramp regulations apply. Creating a route to this

standard would be a significant undertaking. Given the distance between Rocks and Wheels and the playpark, even with an appropriate accessible path is in place, such a route may not offer a practical long-term solution for wheelchair users.

The future of public toilets in Dalbeattie will depend on finding solutions that balance limited resources with the needs of the community. Whether through local recruitment, volunteer support or the longer-term conversion of the boating shed, the aim is to ensure that facilities remain accessible to residents and visitors.



Dalbeattie Community Pantry

Opening Times

Monday: 10am - 2pm

Wednesday:
10am - 2pm and 6pm - 7pm

Friday:
10am - 12noon and 3:30pm - 6:30pm

Food Shops, Crisis Packages and much more.

Open to all!

Dalbeattie's Place Plan

Survey Highlights:

- **Broad Participation:** 148 residents completed the survey, representing a wide geographical and age spread across Dalbeattie.
- **Community Strengths:** Residents consistently valued Dalbeattie's peaceful rural environment, strong sense of community, and access to natural spaces such as Town Wood.
- **Key Concerns:** Issues raised included transport reliability, parking, and accessibility—particularly for those with mobility challenges. There was also a desire for more local job opportunities and support for businesses.
- **Safety and Inclusion:** Most residents feel safe in Dalbeattie, though some concerns about antisocial behaviour were noted. Many expressed a wish for more inclusive engagement in local decision-making.
- **Future Aspirations:** The most common hopes for the future were improved infrastructure (32%), enhanced recreational spaces (25%), and better local services (18%). The importance of preserving green spaces and the town's identity was also strongly emphasised.

Five Proposals that came from the public consultation

- **Curb-Free Design in New Developments:** Safer, more accessible streets with layouts that also support climate resilience by reducing flooding risk.
- **Integrating Alleyways:** Pedestrian links in new housing areas to improve connectivity and encourage walking and cycling.
- **Protecting Green Spaces:** Safeguarding Dalbeattie's woods, parks, and paths for biodiversity, recreation, and identity.
- **A More Accessible High Street:** Plans to remove curbs and create a central civic space, making the town centre more welcoming and supportive of local businesses.
- **Increasing the number of Smaller Residential Units:** Developing affordable flats and compact houses to help younger people and key workers remain in Dalbeattie.

The publication of the Dalbeattie Local Place Plan marks an important step for the town. This plan is the result of considerable input from residents, whose willingness to share their views and experiences has shaped its direction. The Community Council wishes to extend sincere thanks to everyone who participated, whether by completing the Dalbeattie survey, joining discussions, or offering feedback during the public consultation. Your contributions have ensured the plan reflects the priorities and character of Dalbeattie.

Five ideas emerged from the consultation with residents and have been taken forward as proposals in the plan.

The Dalbeattie Local Place Plan has undergone its 28-day consultation, during which surrounding Community Councils and Dumfries and Galloway councillors were invited to comment. These responses have been broadly supportive and will be added as an appendix to the plan.

The plan is available at dbtcc.org and will be displayed at the Town Hall on Monday 12 January 2026, 6-8pm where members of the Community Council will be available to answer questions and receive comments. Any public comments submitted between now and the plan's submission in January will also be included as an appendix to the document.



Pocahontas - The Panto

Birchvale's production of

Pocahontas, written by Stephen Carruthers, has drawn the curtain on a lively 13-performance run that brought full houses and plenty of laughter. The show grossed £6,500, a significant boost for the charity-run theatre. With its mix of slapstick, song and knowing humour, the pantomime proved a welcome winter fixture. Further details — including future performances and updates from Birchvale — can be found at birchvale.scot.

Race Night boosts Pond Regeneration Fund

A lively Race Night held on Saturday 15 November has given a welcome lift to the Pond Regeneration campaign, raising £1,129.60 despite a modest turnout of around 30 supporters. The evening, compered with good humour by Bill McFadzean and backed by bookies David Stitt and Margaret Copp, proved a success thanks to the generosity of local businesses. Donations and raffle prizes came from the Birchtree Hotel, Barry's Butchers, Trends Hair Design, Granite Kitchen and Power Cuts, underlining the strength of community support.

The Race Night forms part of a broader push to restore the pond. Earlier events, including a live music evening, that contributed £2,821 and a generous donation of £1,000 from the Dalbeattie Lions club. Ron Smith, treasurer of Dalbeattie Community Council, said the overall sum required was uncertain — perhaps in the region of £50,000 — but stressed the importance of embarking on urgent repairs, particularly to the banking. He went on to say once the pond is stabilised, further measures for its future can be considered but the tender for these works has not yet been shared, so the exact figures remain unknown.

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