

BIOGRAPHIES

Alan Gemmell OBE MP

Alan Gemmell is the Labour Member of Parliament for Central Ayrshire (2024). Alan was born and brought up in Girdle Toll and attended Irvine Royal Academy. Following this, Alan studied Law at the University of Glasgow.

Prior to being an MP, Alan was the British Trade Commissioner for South Asia from 2020-2023. In this role, he led a team of over 200 people that delivered £4.5 billion of trade and investment deals for the UK as well as securing over 18,000 new jobs.

Alan is the co-founder of FiveFilms4Freedom, an online LGBT film festival promoting LGBT rights with the British Film Institute and the UN Free & Equal Campaign.

In Alan's spare time, he enjoys the theatre, playing piano and has recently written a fiction book that was published by Bloomsbury in July.

Fiona Paton

I am Fiona Paton the Centre Manager at the Rivergate Shopping Centre in Irvine. I have been in my current role for 3 years now and thoroughly enjoying the challenges that this centre brings daily. I have worked in retail for over 20 years and had various management positions throughout the UK & Northern Ireland. This then led me into Shopping Centre Management which I have been doing for past 18 years. I am extremely passionate about Irvine and how we can improve the Town centre to make this an enjoyable & vibrant shopping experience for all that come to the Town.

Chriss Pless – Vice Chair

Chriss Pless is Chairperson of Irvine Community Council. Irvine Community Council covers the area surrounding the town centre of Irvine, North Ayrshire. This area takes in the entirety of the KA12 postcode area as well as all Irvine streets on the west side of the A78 and as far south as Gailes. Community Councils are voluntary organisations that have a role in law to represent the views of the local community on issues that affect its residents. In addition to his voluntary role within the Community Council Chris has over 20 years' experience in technology most notably in senior roles within the energy sector.

Cllr Nairn Angus-McDonald

Nairn McDonald, FRSA, serves as a Councillor for Irvine East in North Ayrshire and as Carers Champion. Nairn advocates for the rights and well-being of carers, ensuring their voices are heard and their needs are met. Additionally, he holds roles as a Board Member, including positions with the Willowacre Trust, Public Health Scotland and works as a Project Manager for the Social Enterprise LeadersUnlocked. With a strong background in politics, youth work and social policy, Nairn combines his knowledge and passion to make impactful contributions to his community and beyond.

Steven Easton

Steven Easton is a business owner and board member at Ayrshire Chamber of Commerce & Industry. Ayrshire Chamber represents over 800 members across business, industry and the third sector, providing opportunities for growth, development and networking. As a board member, Steven is responsible for setting the strategic objectives and policies to guide and support the management team in delivery. Steven also has business interests including Easton Group and Green Home Systems. He is a director at Easton Group, a property and investment business, which owns over 400 properties in and around Irvine and Ayrshire. He is also the Co-founder and Chairman of Green Home Systems, an energy efficiency specialist that installs thermal insulation and renewable energy systems, helping families to lower energy costs while reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Green Home Systems is based in Irvine and employs over 100 staff locally. Steven is married and lives in Dundonald with his wife, children and two dogs.

David Phillips

My name is Davie Phillips, I was medically retired 6 years ago at the age of 45 and decided that while I am unable to work I will volunteer to help around the Irvine community, I would say I am here representing many groups from the Irvine Community Council to the Irvine Seniors Forum to the Locality Partnership to many other groups. I am involved with and am on the committee as treasurer or vice chair dependent on the groups need.

Emma

I asked to join the Long Term Plan group as I can see where regeneration is needed, what the community would like to see in each area and what could be done to bring in business large and small to improve the town centre and more importantly give the people of Irvine a chance at employment to improve their wellbeing, mental health and pride within themselves.

Freya Fitzsimmons

I'm Freya Fitzsimmons and I'm a member of the Scottish Youth Parliament who represents Cunninghame South. I was elected to this position this year and will serve for two years. I am also the Chair of the North Ayrshire Executive Youth Council and in my roles, I aim to represent the views of young people and make Irvine a better place for young people to live.

Scott Morrison

Scott Morrison, Head of Strategic Policy and Development, KA Leisure. I've worked with KA Leisure for over 15 years in various roles starting in the delivery of activities before progressing to programme planning. I've recently moved into a new position having previously focussed on the management of Community Sport. For over 20 years, we have been dedicated to promoting, supporting and inspiring people to lead more active and healthier lives. We offer a wide range of programme that contribute directly to the physical, mental and social well-being of North Ayrshire residents. Our organisation is the driving force of physical activity in the area, with state-of-the-art facilities such as gyms, pools, leisure centres, golf courses, sports pitches and more. This is combined with our dedicated commitment to partnership working which delivers innovative and inclusive initiatives that address the diverse needs and aspirations of our communities.

Barbara Conner

The Ayrshire Community Trust (TACT) form part of the North Ayrshire Third Sector Interface (TSI) along with Arran Community and Voluntary Service. Our mission is: - *To deliver programmes and projects that make a difference to peoples lives by encouraging, supporting, and promoting community action.* Other key areas of support available dependent upon the local context and need required are: -

- Volunteering Development
- Social Enterprise Development
- Charity support including but not limited to setting up, running a charity, funding support.

My role within TACT, as part of the capacity building team, is to support local groups and organisations with training, legal structures, connecting with other groups and services, governance and so much more.

Elaine Baxter – Irvine Locality Officer

I have over 25 years of experience working in community learning & development, delivering youth work, adult learning, capacity building and partnership working across Ayrshire. In my current role as the Locality Officer for Irvine, I coordinate the delivery of the Irvine Locality Team supporting the priorities and supporting the ongoing work of the locality partnership.

My focus is on bringing people together to design and deliver actions that address inequalities and strengthen our communities. I work closely with stakeholders, community groups, and local partners to ensure that local voices shape local solutions. This includes supporting community empowerment, youth work, adult learning, and a wide range of capacity-building activity setting up constitutes groups, SCIO's and

support community organisations with community asset transfer, community funding, and community association development.

I am committed to creating opportunities for residents to participate meaningfully in decisions about their place, and I take a collaborative, strengths-based approach to building confidence and capability within communities.

Matthew Moran

Matthew is Executive Director of the Scottish Maritime Museum, with senior leadership experience across governance, strategy, fundraising, and capital projects in the museum and heritage sector. He is Vice Chair of Museums Galleries Scotland and has developed extensive skills in organisational turnaround, board relations, regulatory compliance, and managing complex stakeholder environments through earlier executive roles in the sector.

As a trustee of the Neighbourhood Board, his motivation lies in supporting strong, accountable local governance and constructive partnership working. He brings strategic judgement, financial and organisational scrutiny, and experience of helping institutions operate effectively in challenging contexts while delivering clear public benefit.

Cllr Chloe Robertson

Councillor Chloe Robertson was elected as an SNP Councillor in the Local Government Elections 2022 and represents the Irvine West Ward. Councillor Robertson is also Young People's Champion for North Ayrshire Council and works to encourage youth participation and support youth voice. Councillor Robertson has always lived in Irvine and is excited to see the community's involvement with Town Board to make the best of the investment received by Irvine.

BILLY DICKSON

I'm delighted to join the Irvine Neighbourhood Board. Irvine is home: I'm a father of two and a grandfather of two, and I've run my accountancy practice from the High Street since 1995 — so I've had a front-row seat to the town centre's ups and downs for three decades, and a real stake in seeing it succeed. I'm looking forward to bringing a local business perspective to the Board and working with the other members and the team to make the most of this investment in the town.

Background

- Director of Dickson & Co Accountants Ltd, a director-led firm of chartered certified accountants based in the heart of Irvine town centre, serving small and medium businesses, contractors and individuals across Ayrshire and beyond.

- Around 30 years advising local businesses on finance, tax, growth and governance — in daily contact with the people and enterprises that make up Irvine's economy.
- My business-recovery background means I'm used to helping struggling businesses get back on their feet — directly relevant to a town centre working to keep and attract enterprise.

I am also the Honorary Treasurer of The Irvine Burns Club.

What I'd like to see from the Board over the next few years

- **A High Street to be proud of.** Get the town centre tidied up and properly cared for — tackling the eyesores and neglect so it's somewhere people are proud of again.
- **Empty properties back in use.** Regenerate the vacant and derelict buildings on the High Street and bring them back into productive use, turning them from a problem into an asset for the town.
- **Make Irvine attractive again.** A town people choose to visit, shop, invest and spend time in — footfall, appeal and civic pride restored.
- **Back local business, and spend wisely.** Help existing firms survive and grow, make it easier for new ones to set up, and make sure the £20m delivers visible, lasting results people can see on the ground."