



Notes from the; Strengthening Communities Conference 2019

27th-28th June 2019

Attended by;

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Sustaining the next generation;

Involving young people in strengthening communities.

This workshop was all about the need to create more self-sufficient, diverse and resilient rural communities. Cairngorms National Park believes this is impossible without engaging young people fully into strengthening communities work. The EUROPARC Youth Manifesto is a source of ideas and inspiration for decision makers and rural communities to ensure the involvement and empowerment of young people. I've pulled out the information and arranged it into what WDT or Westray does/is currently working on and what it could do in future based on the manifesto.

In action in Westray		Future possibilities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> . Young People on the Board. (Thanks Louis!) . Youth Project Fund (Höfn Youth can fundraise via Bargain Box) . Youth Council (5x Youth have formed a committee to work with Höfn Support). . Use online platforms for consultations/ surveys . Enable youth to share achievements & express views via traditional media to reach an older audience. (Auk Talk already does this) 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> . Deliver an induction scheme that enables adult board members to understand youth representation.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> . Housing Scheme for individuals on a low income with short-term and permanent options to cater for different employment opportunities. (Bayview) . Create fun & safe spaces for youth to connect with each other (Höfn) 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> . Improve digital connectivity. . Create active travel networks for cycling & walking to aid health & well-being & off-set climate change. . Promote shared learning to strengthen community and reduce isolation. E.g. Youth teach tech & social media,

		<p>while older people teach youth traditional & rural skills.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> . Collaboratively fund transport throughout the year
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> . Use social media to inspire environmental awareness (Garden Project Facebook page). . Promote more youth-led businesses by providing entrepreneurship courses to learn about self-employment and how to create your own business (WJHS do this). 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> . Create opportunities for youth to learn about their natural & cultural heritage through volunteering, Junior Ranger Programmes and other nature based clubs. . Link rural businesses and higher education establishments to inform young people about rural careers and provide special training and work experience.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> . Realise youth potential through apprenticeships/ internships & jobs tailored for young people (out of school hours). (Work already like this in Westray, ScotGrad). . Youth Entrepreneurship scheme in schools (WJHS does this). . Create partnerships between schools and local businesses to offer jobs to young people. (Westray businesses do this themselves). 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> . Pay the living wage or equivalent to all rural workers at national age of majority. . Employers provide incentives to counteract high living and transport costs e.g. subsidised housing and opportunities for progression/training.

Involve youth in decision making. Their membership onto boards should not be seen as a token gesture. They should be involved in all stages with transparency at all times. Meetings should be in an environment that is not overly formal, to help ensure youth confidence and comfort in their ability to speak out. There should always be an environment of respect so that youth know that their voices and opinions are listened to and are equally as valid. Feedback to youth on what you have done based on what they have said is essential.



Key messages from speakers and panels.



Minimum wage work with little or no progression does not attract people to move to remote rural areas.

Be proactive not re-active!

The multitude of issues that remote communities face snowball into outmigration and decline. Housing, transport, progressive employment opportunities and de-centralisation of services need to be invested in and addressed simultaneously.

Air transport is a life-line not a luxury for remote rural communities. Improvements to flight frequency and affordability is needed.

Organisations shouldn't get bogged down by the past and how things used to be and used to work. Focus on what can work now, consider what you want to see work and find a way to make it possible.

More funding is needed to cover core costs; legal fees, staff salaries etc.

Ensure 'community empowerment' is not a cover for community abandonment.

Mental Health is poorly supported in rural Scotland. More is needed to make the invisible visible, reduce stigma and connect with people before they hit their lowest. More social interaction, connection and a non-clinical focus on well-being in communities is needed as well as medical services. Groups, organisations and businesses need greater

In response to community calls for funding that is not overly restrictive and short-term the Scottish Government have launched the Investing in Communities Fund. This is a single application fund that offers multi-year funding.

Boards need to be less risk-averse in financing new projects and activities. Take a chance.

More support is needed for volunteers to ensure they are not over-worked and their well-being is ensured.

Community groups and public bodies such as the local councils need to work together to understand the boundaries of their work and the role of their organisations.

There is a greater need for more collaboration and joined-up thinking between groups. We're all experiencing funding frustrations and barriers to seeing what communities need come into being. We need to break down professional barriers and pool our funding, resources and skills together to do what our communities need us to do, together.

Succession planning is an issue across organisations in Scotland. This is attracting new members to join Boards, being able to pass along knowledge to keep the group running smoothly and allow long-standing members to step down and hand over the reins to someone new.

Tobermory Harbour recommend strengthening the staff team to be able to induct and support new Board members and title-bearers.

Policy needs to be flexible to place-based approaches.



The UK Government has committed itself to ensure that everyone in the UK will have access to high speed broadband of at least 10Mbps by 2020. The Scottish Government however has committed to superfast broadband reaching 100% of Scotland by the end of 2021. It's currently about 93%. The Scottish Government's R100 (reaching 100%) programme has £600 million to ensure that every part of Scotland will be within reach of accessible fibre, creating new backhaul that will underpin a wide range of technologies, including 4G mobile.

The wording here is important, 'within reach' does not mean there is a commitment to connect every premises to super-fast broadband but for it to be 'within reach' of every premises.

It is also important to note that there is currently no such thing as a right to internet access so the Government/ Councils are not obligated to ensure internet access as they are with water for example. They are doing this because they recognise it is important and essential for the development of Scotland, particularly rural areas. It is not a statutory obligation.

Current stage;

The R100 programme has so far been working to identify the needs of all premises in Scotland identifying who has less than 30mbps currently and where has the greatest needs. The programme effectively went out tender at the end of 2018 for companies to develop the 'main procurement' across Scotland. The 'main procurement' is a wholesale access network that the ScotGov are funding to be built to deliver broadband. Three contracts will be awarded in 2019 to roll out R100 across 'North', 'Centre' and 'South' Scotland.

At the same time as this 'main procurement' roll out 'aligned interventions'... the Scottish Government need to get better at naming things... will be happening as well. Basically where it's trickier for them to set up an access network there will be a side-project to ensure you can access super-fast broadband. A website will be launched once the contract has been awarded where you can input your postcode and find out whether or not you are covered by the 'main procurement' or an 'aligned intervention'.





Complications & Delays

In the usual way of things it has taken longer than expected to get these initial research and tender stages organised as originally the plan had been to start building in early 2019... therefore time-scales are pretty much out the window and we (ScotGov included) have no idea how long things will take.

At the moment if you are over 1.2km from a cabinet you can't get super-fast broadband. (U.K. says 25mbps is fast but Scotland and EU say 30mbps). The existing copper-based infrastructure is not equipped to handle super-fast broadband and speeds drop the further it has to travel. Fibre will still mean improvement to speed (5-15mbps) but it's not superfast. Replacing the copper infrastructure (which is planned) is likely to experience delays especially when you factor in the complications of public vs private land. However they are committed to 100% of Scotland getting 30mbps so it'll happen eventually!

What does it all mean for Westray and Orkney?

Superfast Broadband is coming! We don't know when, we don't know how and we don't know by who but it is coming! ...feeling reassured? No? Well R100 has been working with SSE to incorporate fibre into their existing and planned cables (sub-sea included). They are also in discussion about building on the capacity of cloud-net as well as expanding the Stronsay 5G experiment and ensuring there is a legacy of the project.

In general, places like Orkney appear to be to be the priority areas for R100 as companies are not expanding into the area very much or particularly quickly on their own initiative. It's hard to say what it all means for Westray right now as there are other islands worse off in Orkney. It'll either be that we're easier to build up on what we already have so we'll be among the first in the region or the other islands who are worse-off will be prioritised.

The Scottish Government Stakeholder Director of R100 would be glad to work with us on solution we pursue now (e.g. with cloud-net) as well as advise us if possible.

Networking & Interesting Projects



We met Mark Hull of CES and REW Development Trust. A project is in the works at CES to establish more electric vehicle charging points across Orkney including Westray. Papay also discussed the possibility of collaborating with CES to replace the Golden Mariana with a zero-carbon passenger boat.

Pairc Playgroup in South Lewis has been established for nearly 20 years, providing preschool education for children in the Pairc community. They are a registered charity, run by a voluntary board of trustees and committee members and employ 4



Open from 7.45am – 6.00pm on Monday, Tuesday & Thursdays and from 9am – 4pm on Wednesday & Fridays, they are funded through a new extended hours project with support from Muaitheabhal Trust and HIE for three years.

They offer a breakfast and after school club for the local primary school children as part of this project too, and also offer Summer Clubs for all ages of children during the summer holidays.

Scottish Government funded hours for children aged 3+ are Mon-Thur 9.15am – 1.15pm. All additional hours charged at £3 per child per hour.

The 2016 Donside Hydro project was Scotland's first urban community hydro project which installed the U.K's widest Archimedean screw turbine into the Don river in order to harness its energy. The project is managed by Aberdeen Community Energy, a Community Benefit Society. Profits from electricity sales are used for community development.



In 2014 the Strontian community's primary school building was pronounced to be inadequate for both educational suitability and building condition by the Highland Council. Under a PPP contract which the council could not alter without heavy penalties, the current High School could not be altered until after 2027. It was at this point the primary school was planned to be incorporated into the High School. Solutions until then failed to reassure the community that the replacement facility would provide their children with the education environment they deserve.



An area of land opposite the current High School had been earmarked for housing development by the council. The community came forward with a solution to solve the immediate and long-term community needs in one go. The community and Highland Council collaborated to design and build a primary school fit for the 21st century which also included a community office space. The school is based on the footprint of a terrace of 3 or 4 houses which would allow for the efficient and economical conversion of the school into community owned housing if and when the building is no longer required by the council as a primary school.



Highland Council still provide education service, the community only provide the basic building. This project was funded through community shares and an ethical bank loan.



I can't believe I didn't know about this funder, they have an easy application process and have a broad funding criteria. They are a match funder so a maximum of 50% of total costs. Their representative at the conference was based in the market place where the video of Andrew, Bill & I talking about WDT was on a loop and so we'd been unknowingly and repeatedly pitching the Bargain Box to him for 2 days! As soon as I mentioned it he was keen to be involved – this is definitely one to consider. Their income is from shares in the Edrington company – one of Scotland's largest private companies and owner of several well-known whisky brands

The national rural mental health forum is all about reducing stigma, raising awareness, promoting well-being and supporting other organisations to do the same. This could be supporting organisations to incorporate well-being and awareness of mental health into their projects, work and policies or assisting in campaigning for better mental health provision in the community.

So far they have been working in Mull, Uists & Benbecula. If they are awarded more funding they are hoping to expand to other areas, perhaps even to Orkney. They're a good contact if we pursue any health/well-being projects.

Housing Workshop Notes



The Islands and Rural Housing Fund is fully expected to be continued past 2021 even though this has not yet been announced.



There is scope within housing funding to do joint projects with local councils and housing associations. Housing associations and councils are increasingly underfunded and unable to do new housing projects. Community groups can attract funding and task their council or housing association with constructing the housing. In this way groups with expertise in housing are managing the project and the task does not fall to community volunteers. Communities as the ones with the funding hold control over the project as well as owning the property. Thereby giving the community control over what is built, where it is built and how (e.g. eco-housing or higher quality) as well as control over the allocation policy associated with the property. In this collaboration the community gets the housing it needs while the council housing services or housing association are able to build needed housing that has community support despite budget cuts. The property's maintenance can then also be managed by the council/housing association.



Community-owned housing projects take longer with some projects taking 7 years to complete. This is largely due to difficulty in acquiring land or property as well as delays in acquiring funding.