



Prepared by Voluntary Action Lochaber



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Methodology

Following a decision by SFCT to undertake a community consultation, 400 surveys were delivered to households in the Stratherrick and Foyers area (1 per house hold with more on request or from the Community web site). Having received five quotes for a report to be written on the findings of the consultation, SFCT selected Voluntary Action Lochaber to evaluate and write the report.

Evaluations of the surveys were based on the 5 Scottish Government Strategic Objectives:

- Wealthier and Fairer
- Healthier,
- Safer and Stronger
- Smarter
- Greener

Also, taking into account the Single Outcome Agreement between the Highland Community Planning Partnership and the Scottish Government, sub headings have been included, these are:

- Economic Growth and Recovery
- Employment
- Deprivation/Health inequalities and Physical Activity
- Early years
- Older People
- Safer, Stronger and Reducing Offending
- Community Development/Learning/Capacity
- Environment

Of the 400 surveys delivered to residents, 62 were returned and survey answers used to inform the conclusions on page 8.

A summary of the points raised can be found at Appendices 1 & 2

Background

Stratherrick & Foyers Community Trust (SFCT) was established in 2004 by the Stratherrick and Foyers Community Council. SFCT is a Company Limited by Guarantee, registered with Companies House and Subject to Company Law.

The aim of the company is to help ensure the environmental protection, wellbeing and economic sustainability of all parts of the community area that may be affected by any “Green Energy” developments.

SFCT is governed by a Board of Directors. To be eligible, directors must have been resident in Stratherrick and Foyers for a minimum of five years. The Board is made up of volunteers, one third of who are obliged to resign at each Annual General Meeting but may offer themselves for re-election. No Director can serve for more than a period of nine consecutive years, without at least one year out of office. Directors are appointed for their diverse range of views, skills and knowledge. The Board governs the Company, establishes policy, sets priorities and has responsibility for final grant decisions.

Other similar organisations have been established across the Highland Council region, with a remit to distribute funds known as ‘Community Benefit’. Community benefit is a “goodwill” contribution voluntarily donated by a developer for the benefit of communities affected by development where this will have a long-term impact on local resources and the local environment. There is no legal requirement upon a developer to offer a community benefit donation and Scottish Government planning guidance prevents this type of payment from becoming a condition of planning permission. A local authority therefore has no powers of enforcement if a developer is unwilling to make a contribution.

SFCT is in receipt of income from Glendoe hydro schemes and Dunmaglass wind farm, negotiations are ongoing in respect of Aberchalder and Garrogie hydro, Corriegarth and Dell wind farms, Knockie hydro and Stronelairig.

SFCT's remit involves distributing funds to both individuals and constituted organisations in the Stratherrick and Foyers area. The Trust meets monthly to consider applications for the following grants:

- **Small grants up to £2000** to assist community groups working to improve the quality of life and life chances in the area, especially where funding is particularly hard to find and where a grant can achieve significant impact. These are all one-off awards enabling groups to fulfil their objectives and meet the needs of their members or the people they work with. They do not fund activities for more than 12 months, although groups can reapply in subsequent years.
- **Main grants over £2000** to assist community groups working to improve the quality of life and life chances in the area, especially where funding is particularly hard to find and where a grant can achieve significant impact. These are all one-off awards enabling groups to fulfil their objectives and meet the needs of their members or the people they work with. They do not fund activities for more than 12 months, although groups can reapply in subsequent years.
- **Energy saving grants** to support more efficient domestic consumption of energy within its area, support is initially directed towards dwelling houses which are in permanent occupation. The Trust can offer a grant of 50% of the lowest quote received, up to a maximum of £3,000

Application forms and clear guidance are available on the Trust's website, as are details of what they can and cannot fund.

Full and concise minutes of all the Trust's meetings are posted on their website, displayed on notice boards throughout the area, in the Doctor's surgery and the shop. The minutes are also published in the quarterly Boleskine bulletin, which is available throughout the Stratherrick and Foyers area.

Description of the area

The Stratherrick and Foyers Community Consultation area is situated on the south eastern shore of Loch Ness and stretches approximately from Whitebridge to Torness. It is a rural area with a number of small settlements and these include Whitebridge, Gorthleck, Aberchalder, Errogie, Torness, Inverfarigaig and Foyers.

There are two primary schools, Stratherrick Primary in Gorthleck and Foyers Primary in Foyers. Secondary school pupils travel either to Kilchuimen Academy in Fort Augustus or Inverness Royal Academy in Inverness.

The area is served by one shop/post office and café which is in Foyers. The medical centre for the area is also situated in Foyers.

Most of the resident population are involved in estate management or farming or commute to work in Inverness. Tourism is a key economic driver in the area and there is a range of accommodation types available to visitors.

Work of the Trust

Since its formation in 2004, as well as setting up a Community Website the SFCT has distributed funds to a number of organisations throughout the area of remit, these include:

- The Boleskine Lunch Club
- The Parent and Toddler Group,
- Stratherrick and Foyers Primary School
- Stratherrick Primary Parent Council
- Brownies and Guides
- The Glenlia Residents Community Association
- Stratherrick Public Hall
- Wade Bridge @ Whitebridge Trust
- Jane Fraser Memorial Obelisk
- Destination Loch Ness for the South Loch Ness Trail
- South Loch Ness Heritage Group
- South Loch Ness Access Group
- Boleskine Church
- Stratherrick Clay Target Club

Also funded are one-off events such as:

- Jubilee Party
- Olympic Events
- Community Fireworks
- Children's Christmas Party
- Senior Citizens Christmas Lunch

In addition to this, the Trust set up an Energy and Efficiency Fund for households within the area to enable them to improve the energy efficiency of their homes

including grants towards loft and cavity wall insulation, top energy rated white goods, solar thermal, photo voltaic panels, double glazing and wood pellet stoves.

Conclusions

Responses to the survey were many, long and varied, totally 30 pages once collated. These have been summarised at appendices 1 and 2. In common with surveys of this type, there were comments and requests that were unrealistic, but on the whole the desires and development ideas were very positive. Responses to the questions about Desires and Development have been summarised together in Appendix 2, most people seemed to repeat their answers when answering both questions. The main priorities are shown in Appendix 3

Many of the comments in 'Concerns' indicated issues over the transparency and running of the Trust. The nature of the Trust (being a Company Limited by Guarantee) means that it is not possible to hold open meetings to consider applications for funding (as was suggested by a number of respondents), but it would be good practice in light of these requests, to publish a list each month of the grants that have been made and the money distributed. The Trust might also like to consider a six monthly open meeting, to update the community on progress to date and plans for the following six months. This should not be too onerous as the Trust already has excellent minutes and this solution would offer transparency and would hopefully address the negativity that has built up around some of the issues raised. There is a desire to see the democratic appointment of Directors to the Trust and this can be addressed by increasing the membership of the Trust (Company).

The comments about the transparency and running of the Trust are listed in Appendix 4.

Wealthier and Fairer

Economic Growth and Recovery

Most respondents wanted to see regeneration of the area as a whole, coming up with good ideas to provide a more progressive and vibrant community

Employment

Ideas for local employment could come from suggested business development e.g. apprenticeships with the Forestry Commission and British Waterways, Jobs for young people to retain them in the area. Improved Broadband would allow on-line businesses to be established.

Healthier

Deprivation/Health inequalities and Physical Activity Older People and Early years

In the Highland area, between 2008 – 2023, the population is expected to continue to age, with a 60% increase in the 65 to 74 age group and a 122% increase in the 75+ age group. In view of this there is a definite need for developments in and improvements to the current provision for older people. Many of the comments in the survey called for improved services i.e. home help carers, provision of a handyman service and gardening assistance for older people. Care in the Community featured regularly throughout the surveys, with suggestions being made for Day Care Centres, Sheltered Housing and Community Transport schemes to ease the isolation of older and disabled people.

Indoor sports facilities including a swimming pool and gym were seen as a way to provide opportunities for people to get fit and stay that way. This would be of benefit for all age groups and abilities. For those prepared to brave the elements, existing sports groups include Stratherrick Athletic Club, a group formed for interested runners and joggers, Stratherrick Clay Target Club and Boleskine Shinty club. Glenlia Residents Community Association are also working to improve the Glenlia playpark and providing opportunities for the younger members of the community to enjoy outdoor recreation.

Safer and Stronger

Safer, Stronger and Reducing Offending

Responses to the survey on the whole did not highlight issues over safety in the area with the exception of poor mobile coverage in emergency situations; this was particularly relevant in the case of road traffic accidents. Respondents also

mentioned the issue of single track roads and poor driving, unfortunately there were no solutions suggested to this problem.

Smarter

Community Development/Learning/Capacity

There were many suggestions for training including e.g. first aid courses, courses for unemployed/underemployed, help with technology and a variety of training options for local clubs and these are shown in Appendix 2.

Respondents requested faster broadband in order to allow access to online courses and enable older people to decrease the problem of isolation by learning how to use IT equipment.

Greener

Environment

The Greener section in Appendix 2 has many suggestions from community poly tunnels to renovation of bridges and the pier.

Bibliography

<http://www.highland.gov.uk/livinghere/communityplanning/communitybenefit/>

<http://www.stratherrick.net/Community-Trust/About-the-Trust.php>

<http://www.stratherrick.org.uk/>

<http://www.visitlochness.com/around-loch-ness/>

www.helenstirlingmaps.com

<http://www.southlochnessheritage.co.uk/>

<http://stratherrickprimaryschool.edublogs.org/about/>

The following tables show abbreviated responses to the consultation questionnaires

APPENDIX 1

CONCERNS

Wealthier and Fairer
Need more support for small business to encourage young people to stay and encourage others to move to the area
Need access to better broadband speeds for businesses, on-line shopping, communication
Affordable housing (for and against)
Lack of long term vision for the communities in the area
No job opportunities locally, reliant on tourism which is both seasonal and low paid
Lack of community meeting place
High cost of living in a rural area due to increases in fuel costs, poor and expensive public transport
Lack of village shop in Gorthleck
Healthier
Lack of community services for older and disabled people
Need more sheltered housing
Lack of provision for healthy activities
Fuel poverty, particularly for the elderly
Care in the community, elderly people are not getting enough care
A shortage of affordable home help and palliative care
Insufficient relief carers and district nurses to offer respite for carers
Safer and Stronger
Poor mobile coverage particularly in emergencies e.g. road traffic accidents
Hedges and bushes along the roadside affecting visibility for drivers
Poor drivers unable to drive correctly on single track roads
Require better provision of footpaths for wheelchairs and buggies
Congestion on the roads, especially during the tourist season
Smarter
Need to provide opportunities for older people to learn about IT to reduce loneliness and isolation
Lack of apprenticeships and financial support or bursaries for those who want to re-train or learn new skills
Faster broadband for on-line training courses
Greener
Poor transport services meaning more people need to use own vehicle
No litter bins along roads causing rubbish to be dumped on verges and roadsides

Rising costs of fuel and heating

APPENDIX 2

DESIRES and DEVELOPMENT

Wealthier and Fairer
Community Centre to include provision of hairdresser, chiropodist , day care for the elderly etc.
Buy Foyers School house for community to use as a nursery
Help create jobs e.g. managing community minibus, managing firewood collective, part time handyman
Produce local map/ walking guide
Boating business at Foyers pier
Convert old Aluminium factory into Museum/Heritage Centre (including aluminium heritage and Loch Ness Monster)
Community centre/hall for Foyers
Keep up energy efficient initiatives
Combine village hall with sports/games field for Highland games/fireworks and other events
Invest funds wisely (in wind farms, hydro schemes housing or woodland) to ensure a legacy for future generations
Business development centre, employ a Business development Co-ordinator for the area
Consider business development organisation (Transition Stratherrick)
Re-instate disused fish farm
Encourage existing businesses to employ local young people
Reduce cost of existing business units
Interest free starter loans
Hiring facilities for visitors e.g. Bikes, Mopeds, Boat, Canoe
Proper notices at the pier advertising local businesses with informative map
Business 'start up' grants
Financial help for those on satellite links
Healthier
Appoint a paid worker to encourage sport
Putting green
Day care facility linked to sheltered housing
Ladies walking group
Sports facilities, gym, swimming pool, astro-turf etc. Built and run by local people
Fund existing organisations e.g. Boleskine Shinty club, Stratherrick Clay Target Club
Twenty four hour GP coverage
Safer and Stronger

Improvement/upgrade of road network, make it a better place to visit and live
Help with driving lessons for over 35's
Smarter
Animal Rescue Centre
Grants to help with College/University costs
Set up and run youth clubs
Offer first aid courses to all communities
Promote wildlife tourism
Training courses for unemployed/underemployed people in the area e.g. rural skills
Help with technology: tablets/email, computers to help people keep in touch
Equipment and training for local clubs: arts and crafts, pottery, piping, wood turning
Greener
Community Poly-tunnel, organic vegetable growing scheme, Allotments,
More renewable energy support
Community Car Scheme, using local drivers
Bush/verge maintenance – Japanese Knotweed eradication
Joined up transport including shopping bus, school bus to Kilchumein Academy, car scheme, community minibus
Solar panels on public buildings
Help with heating and power costs
Better recycling systems
Biomass trees (for fuel)
Develop a community owned green energy site
Improve bridges, piers and dry stone walls that need renovation and restoration
Car sharing scheme
Subsidised garden maintenance scheme, rotavator hire
Café/Garden Centre for both locals and visitors
Fencing to stop deer and rabbits
Grants for fox proof hen-houses

**APPENDIX 3
PRIORITIES**

The table below is an analysis of the comments made in the questionnaires.

Nature of comments made
Better/cheaper transport links and community transport
Development e.g. visitor centre, heritage centre, land, local businesses
Renewable initiatives + household energy and white goods grants
Improved care for the elderly in the community
Community facilities e.g. sports and community centre, pool, gym
Better maintenance of roads and paths in the area
Improve broadband speed
Calling for more affordable housing
Against building new housing
Grants for green initiatives e.g. allotments, poly-tunnels etc.
Sheltered housing for the elderly
Improve TV and mobile reception

APPENDIX 4

There were a large number of comments within the questionnaires which made reference to the way in which the Trust is run and the table below lists these – 53 in total.

CONCERNS
We need a Trust which has our best interests at heart, improving life for US NOW – not only thinking about the future. Let us know what you plan to spend the money on BEFORE you commit to something so that we can have some say.
That the Trust be run professionally, accountably, and openly on behalf of the community
That the Trust has a wider membership than the sole member being the Community Council. Adjacent area community trusts have good examples.
Am very concerned about the use of public money on “Smiddy” project. More details please!!
We would like to see every adult in the community automatically become a member of the trust or be given the opportunity to be given the opportunity to become a member. Trust directors should then be nominated, proposed and elected by a vote of all members. This is the proper democratic process and the only way to be representative of and accountable to, the community.
The Trust must be open and transparent in all its finances. For example, all recipients of the grant should be named and published on the website or in the BB.
Funding should be advertised more openly
That the lawyers drafting the original constitution did a quick lazy job and produced a document full of references to Company law clauses that were not transparent.
That the Trust has a wider membership than the sole member being the Community Council. Adjacent area community trusts have good examples.
The money should be spent on people living in the community now. NOT on affordable housing. Projects should be costed before taken on and if over £10,000 put to the community for a vote.
With the £100,000 that’s coming in, it’s important that its put to good use, within the time scale and not held up in indecisiveness.
Fuzzy information regarding what funds can be used for
Unclear information on what money has been spent and where it has been spent
DESIRES

A Trust which is more transparent
Democratic decisions and open meetings
Remember that it is not your money that you are spending
Open meetings of the CT! This would be a big step in building confidence and interest in the CT.
Regular open meetings to discuss projects taken on
Would like to see community being given more information from directors of the trust at an early date and community allowed to put suggestions/ideas to the directors throughout the year(s).
ANY OTHER COMMENTS
The Trust was set up as a separate body from the community council so must be very careful about interference from some of the new councillors about the new constitution, which could hold up projects
Directors democratically voted on to board
More information
How much in the bank?
The committee is doing a great job – keep up the good work! Well done!!
I would appreciate complete transparency about all business conducted by the Stratherrick and foyers community development trust. Everything should be available to the public, easily accessible and the trust needs to be accountable
We feel that this is our money (the communities) and it should be granted to and spent equally on all sections of the community and not on a select few, which has been the perception.
More openness, publication of what is available and details of who can apply for what and when.
Expect SF Comm. Dev. Trust to be transparent, have open meetings and tell us where money is going.
Not to waste our money on play parks on the wrong side of the road in a village with no kids! Smiddy! £28,000 – ridiculous waste of money & for what?!
Ask what we want – don't presume you know what's best.
Our main concern is the undemocratic nature of the Community trust. With only a minority of the directors elected by the community it has, in our view, no mandate whatsoever. This is a grave concern in the light of the vast sums of benefits our community receives from renewable energies the number of communities across Highland with much more democratic Trusts – it would be easy to use them as models for our community and build in their experiences.

<p>It is also important that all the suggestions are known and we need some voting or feedback to check that any decisions are not just made by the Directors of the Trust but by the people of the area as it is public money. A further survey to get reaction to ideas is needed.</p>
<p>We need open meetings the Community Trust to build up Trust within the Community. More often than annually so people feel connected.</p>
<p>The current system of interviews for people applying for grants is inappropriate, off-putting and demoralising for some</p>
<p>All grant applications need careful follow-up so that people who have problems with paperwork are not penalised.</p>
<p>Currently the 7 directors of the Trust have not been elected democratically. This needs to be addressed.</p>
<p>I feel grants that are available should be advertised more. Also some people don't like the idea of going before the trust to ask for money many don't know they even exist. Perhaps application forms should be more available (in shop etc.) the forms should be adequate for the Trust to make a decision.</p>
<p>Meetings should be open to the public</p>
<p>Professional advice should be sought on all development projects instead of wasting nearly £30,000 of OUR money. Accountants/Solicitors etc. can be employed on a retainer so that the best advice is available</p>
<p>The Trust should be open and transparent</p>
<p>Every expenditure should be made accessible to the community i.e. made public. Directors should be democratically voted on, as there is a danger of the Trust being filled by all like-minded people not a representation of the community.</p>
<p>Communication with the community open meetings at all times</p>
<p>I would like to see a constitution that ensures an all community vote to elect directors. To give directors a chance to settle in, elections could be every 3 years, with resignations requiring all community votes to elect a replacement. This would provide openness and accountability and foster a sense of community inclusion. I would like to see this in the near future, given the amounts of money about to become available</p>
<p>I would like to see fuller detail of activities/minutes, the placing of all correspondence on website, with a key for abbreviations.</p>
<p>I have only lived in the community for a year and a half but I have been very impressed by the work of the community trust. As a founder member of the "Lunch Club" I am very grateful for the help given to us to set up. The pleasure given to so many is a joy to see. Thank you for all you do. I hear the criticism you get but I see the results of what you do. Thank you.</p>
<p>All grants, including those to individuals, could be published in detail and put on website</p>

<p>on an annual basis to foster community inclusion.</p>
<p>We do not get enough information from the trust more meetings, more input from public required.</p>
<p>Yearly lists of what grants have been issued, to whom, the cost, details of the work, should be available. A lot of people do not know what they can apply for. This information would help. It is ridiculous to state that this would put people off applying. It is public money. Most people would not object, and if they did, do not apply!</p>
<p>There seems to be a lot of ex-community council members on the trust. Why should they remain on the trust once they are no longer community council members?</p>
<p>The Trust has done well so far and should be proud of their efforts</p>
<p>The trust needs to get feedback from the public more regularly. Any large projects that are considered should be voted on by the public.</p>
<p>I understand that some members of the trust are on there because of their skills, but there should also be some spaces for members to be voted on. How about half and half?</p>