



## Rural SEN – 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2023

### Notes

#### **Participants:**

*Fiona Thomson – Outside the Box, Paul Ives – Shopper-aid, Eva Milroy – Dumfries & Galloway College, Thomas Fisher – CoDel, Jane Benson – Outside the Box, Carmen Paputa-Dutu - First Port, Theona Morrison - Scottish Rural Action, Sandy Brunton - Mull and Iona Community Trust, Margaret Simpson - Scottish Borders Social Enterprise Chamber, Dean Fisher - Scottish Borders Social Enterprise Chamber, Helen Armour - Caberfeidh horizons, John Forbes - Communities Housing Trust, Chantel Davies – Equalitree, Lacey Lindsay - Inchinnan Development Trust, Thomasina Glover - South Islay Development, Rachael Canning - Scottish Government, Liz Nicholson - Wester Loch Ewe Trust, Zahraa Shaikh – David Hume Institute, Steven Coutts - COPE Ltd., Tom Henderson - South Ayrshire Council, David Rennie - Argyll and Bute Council, Alex Penley-Martin - Eat Sleep Ride CiC, Diane Smith – SCOTO, Aimee Spence – Inspiralba and Ailsa Clark – Inspiralba.*

After some brief introductions, the group were introduced to our three speakers, Diane Smith from SCOTO and Thomas Fisher & Theona Morrison from CoDeL.

#### *SCOTO ROADSHOW 2023*

We were first joined by Diane Smith from [SCOTO](#). SCOTO is a network of community tourism enterprises located throughout Scotland. Led by a team of dynamic individuals who each have extensive and varied experience in community tourism, SCOTO were established fairly recently back in 2021.

SCOTO's main aim is to “establish community owned and managed tourism as a highly respected and distinct sector within the Scottish tourism offer - dedicated to providing high quality and authentic experiences which derive positive benefits for our visitors and our communities alike.”

SCOTO are currently hosting the SCOTO Roadshow 2023 from January to March. They are on tour to raise awareness of the scale and impact of community led tourism across Scotland. SCOTO are hosting a number of free, face-to-face and virtual workshop events, which aim to stimulate peer-to-peer networking, nurture the collaboration between local enterprises, help individuals and organisations to tell their community story to visitors and explain how SCOTO Network can help.

The Roadshow has been made possible through funding from a Rural & Island Communities Ideas into Action (RICIA) grant, delivered in partnership between The Scottish Government and Inspiring Scotland.

The Roadshow will take place in the following regions of Scotland: North East, South West, Central & East, South East, North & West and Islands. More information about the Roadshow can be found via the [SCOTO website](#).

#### *CODEL: CHANGING NARRATIVES*

We were then joined by Thomas Fisher and Theona Morrison from [CoDeL](#). CoDeL was set up on Uist in 2018, by Thomas Fisher, Theona Morrison and Gemma Steele to:

- Analyse micro-trends on islands and rural areas of Scotland to identify trends that are missed in data aggregated across larger areas.
- Contribute positively to community development based on a deeper understanding of what is actually happening in small communities.

- Create opportunities for younger people to influence and reshape their local communities.

During the Rural SEN session, Thomas & Theona advocated for the removal of distorted urban lenses in order to shine a light on lived experience in rural and island communities and CoDeL's [recent award winning blog post](#) which delved into this topic. CoDeL's blog post titled 'Redefining Periphery' was chosen by the [Regional Studies Association](#) as their best blogpost of 2022.

Thomas and Theona also discussed how CoDeL are trying to change the perception of Uist and rurality through the creation of [Uist Beò](#), a new digital platform celebrating the unique culture and the thriving life of the Outer Hebrides. It was developed by a team of younger islanders in their 20s and 30s in order to provide a vibrant and more dynamic outlook of island life. They showed attendees some of the [Uist Beò TikTok](#) videos which had been created by the team of young islanders in order to illustrate what it's really like to live in the Outer Hebrides.

#### *MENTAL HEALTH PROJECT*

Aimee Spence from Inspiralba then discussed how over the past few months, the Rural Hub has been developing a new project which will centre on creating materials specifically looking at prevention and support for poor mental health, with a focus on young people living in rural areas and the struggles unique to them.

The concept for this came about through some of Inspiralba's employability work with those furthest from the job market. We realised that many of the young people being recommended for the programme were suffering from anxiety and depression. The effect of Covid and lockdown has been monumental, particularly on young people who missed out on crucial social interaction through some of their most formative years.

There are also unique challenges associated with suffering from mental health issues as a young person living in a rural area. Firstly, there is a lot more stigma associated with mental health in rural communities and a severe lack of anonymity which can prevent people from seeking the help they need.

Those living in rural areas are also more isolated due to lack of transport which may cause them to have fewer support networks and social interaction. Drug and alcohol addiction is also rife in rural areas and again, due to the stigma and lack of confidentiality, people suffering from addiction are less likely to seek help.

The project will be developed in association with other organisations and individuals who have experience in this area. Inspiralba took part in some leadership training back in October so the initial plan for the project was developed using the [Groundwork Practice](#).

Aimee said that she is currently in the process of contacting organisations who have a hand in this work in order to inform the project but invited attendees to get in touch if they knew any useful contacts.

#### *COMMUNITY WELLBEING EXCHANGE*

Aimee then gave an update on the [Community Wellbeing Exchange](#) and how it could be a useful tool for community-led organisations. The Community Wellbeing Exchange builds upon the valuable learning of previous work, with the approach based on the fundamental premise that community organisations have access to a small budget to purchase activities and services from social enterprises that contribute towards improved mental health. This enables community organisations who understand the needs of their local community to tap into services they may previously have been unaware of or been unable to afford, whilst also supporting social enterprise suppliers.

We have identified that many rural social enterprises have been working on the frontline in their communities throughout the pandemic and continue to respond to community needs in terms of household and fuel poverty. This has an impact on personal wellbeing and mental health.

There are 20 community organisations that each have an allocation of £1000 to access 100's of brilliant and wide-ranging activities and services being offered by social enterprise suppliers. Inspiralba, for the Rural SE Hub, have

secured a small fund to support the health and wellbeing of staff and volunteers to care for their personal wellbeing to ensure their personal resilience to continue to meet needs.

We have secured £500 through the fund but we will match to make the budget up to £1,000 and organisations can apply for costs to support mindfulness, yoga, breathing techniques, etc. If you'd like some more information about this please contact [aspence@inspiralba.org.uk](mailto:aspence@inspiralba.org.uk). See also this [flyer](#) for info.

#### *UPCOMING LEARNING EXCHANGES*

The Rural SE Hub have some big ideas in terms of Community Learning Exchanges in 2023. It is hoped that more in-person exchanges will be possible as these have proved to be extremely valuable in the past. However, there will still be some learning exchanges which will be virtual as this allows more people to get involved.

At the moment, the Rural SE Hub are looking to hold an exchange which would look at employability schemes led by community organisation and would showcase examples of good practice. The exchange would look at organisations who have a lot of experience in the field of employability, namely Fyne Futures based in Bute and CEIS Ayrshire based in Ayrshire. This exchange is still in the application stage at the moment but the Network will be updated as soon as confirmation is given.

In terms of the mental health project, it was suggested that it would be useful to hold a virtual community learning exchange on this topic to get a little bit more background and prompt some interesting discussion.

The other idea in the pipeline for a future community learning exchange centred around the increasing cost of living and what community-led organisations are doing to help alleviate this crisis. Discussions are currently underway at the moment to hold an exchange which will look into women in social enterprise.

There were a few ideas for future learning exchanges suggested by attendees, ranging from social prescribing to the sourcing of local food.

#### *SE/CORPORATE RELATIONS*

Aimee and Ailsa then let attendees know that they had recently been in discussion with [Social Enterprise Scotland](#) regarding building relations between Social Enterprise and the Corporate Sector. The Rural Hub is currently looking to source some case studies or examples of partnerships with Social Enterprises and the corporate/private sector and ask community organisations: 'What income streams have you got from the private sector?'

#### *'MANAGING FINANCES FOR COMMUNITY LED SOCIAL ENTERPRISE' SESSION*

Attendees were also told about an upcoming workshop hosted by Inspiralba called 'Managing Finances for Community Led Social Enterprise'.

This workshop is specifically developed for those working or volunteering within community led social enterprises and will provide an overview of the range of approaches, systems and tools to make sound financial decisions and manage income and expenditure effectively. There will also be links and information on accessible supplementary resources and tools to support ongoing planning, delivery and development.

This workshop will be delivered virtually over 2 x half day sessions, you must attend both sessions. The workshop will be fully interactive and draw on participants' own experiences. It will be held online on Thursday the 16<sup>th</sup> and Tuesday the 21<sup>st</sup> of March from 9:30am to 12:30pm.

The session can be registered for via the [Just Enterprise website](#).

#### *BI-MONTHLY RURAL SEN*

The Rural SEN session ended with attendees being asked if they thought that holding the network meetings bi-monthly rather than quarter (as it had been) would be beneficial.

It was agreed that going forward, the Rural SEN meetings would be held bi-monthly with the next date TBC.

*The videos for both presentations can be found [here](#).*