

Good Practice in Rural Development



No. 8

Innovative Methods of Service
Delivery in Rural Scotland:
A Good Practice Guide

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Executive Summary

Access to services ties in with opportunity, quality of life, and social justice. People in remote or rural areas are especially vulnerable to social exclusion. Making services more accessible can be seen, therefore, as a positive step towards tackling geographic and social marginalisation.

This report looks at various different ways of providing key services to people living in rural areas. The case studies presented here are sorted into broad categories of shared premises, mobile facilities, the use of new technology and/or community-run services. These categories are not mutually exclusive and many of the projects described use mixed methods of service delivery.

The sharing of premises is useful in reducing costs across service providers and creating a point of focus for the community. However, this could result in a compromise on service quality resulting from a lack of sufficient space. Purpose-built community buildings have higher costs in the short-term but may be more flexible and sustainable over the long-term.

Mobile facilities can be expensive to run but are an effective means of taking services out into remote communities. However, the use of effective advertising is necessary to let people know where and when the service will be visiting.

New technology can be a useful way of reaching many people as well as providing a confidential service for people, for example, internet banking or NHS Direct. Web-sites focussing on the local area have also been recognised not only as a valuable tourism resource providing information on local accommodation and businesses but also a good way of harnessing community spirit and identity.

Often, community-run services work where public and private sector services do not as the incurred costs of staff tends to be less and so the unit cost of provision is lower. Many of the communities can tap into a diverse base of skills existing within the community. Local people who have invested their own time and effort into developing a service are likely to expend even more energy into maintaining the service.

There is a growing recognition of the role that voluntary organisations and communities can play in the provision of services thereby reducing the strain on statutory bodies. However, capacity building takes time, especially with community-run services. Capacity building hinges on building confidence for both individuals and communities.

There is no 'ideal' way of providing services in rural areas – a diverse range of joined-up approaches to service delivery, designed to compliment one another, are required to meet the range of needs in rural Scotland. Whilst there is no one solution to addressing service needs there are numerous examples of good practice, some of which are contained in this report.

1. Introduction

The provision of services is one of the key issues facing people living in rural areas. It is often more difficult to provide services in rural areas due to a combination of economic and geographical factors. It may be economically unsustainable to provide services to small, remote communities due to the lack of scale-effects and high unit cost of provision. Travel costs, in time and money, can be economically preventative for service providers and users.

The benefits of effective service delivery obviously go beyond the realm of economics. Access to services ties in with opportunity, quality of life, and social justice. People in remote or rural areas are vulnerable to marginalisation and, consequently, social injustice. Social exclusion could be exacerbated by a wide dispersal of population, infrequent public transport and/or a lack of social support networks provided by friends and families - particularly in the long-term due to the outward-migration of young people. Making services more accessible can be seen, therefore, as a positive step towards tackling social exclusion. In recognition of this, the Scottish National Rural Partnership (SNRP) set out to:

“identify innovative approaches to providing services in rural areas and to consider how these examples might benefit and be replicated in other parts of rural Scotland... also offer recommendations on how local rural communities might be helped to identify their realistic service needs and to work with providers to achieve these”.¹

In practice, *innovation* is a difficult concept to define. It is often described as the introduction of a new idea, method or device. Innovation can perhaps be interpreted in practice as generating a new idea and making it productive.

This guide does contain some genuinely innovative projects but many case studies presented here are representative of examples of *good practice* throughout rural Scotland. Projects do not stay innovative for long before imitators take note and, subsequently, there is a trade-off between the concepts of innovation and good practice transfer. The report is set out into thematic sections, each containing case studies that illustrate different ways to get funding, consult with local people, meet the needs of local people and provide effective, sustainable services.

Thus, this guide should be seen more as presenting *alternative* ways of delivering services in rural Scotland. Statutory bodies such as Councils and Local Enterprise Companies are no longer seen to be the sole providers of services, there is a growing recognition of the work that voluntary organisations and community groups do. Moreover, more onus is increasingly placed on the third sector as substitutional rather than additional providers of key services. This is due, primarily, to the economic factors outlined above.

¹ SNRP (2000) ‘Services In Rural Scotland’, Report to Ministers by SNRP Sub-group on Rural Services.

This guide will be useful for organisations:

- In the public or private sectors;
- Already providing or developing services in rural areas;
- With little or no rural experience but wish to expand their activities into rural areas; and
- Local rural community groups.

Practical advice is illustrated by using case studies that depict the different methods of providing a service, including the pros and cons of each approach. The thematic sections are based on the key methods of delivery as identified by the SNRP's consultation with people living across rural Scotland. These are:

- Shared premises,
- Mobile facilities,
- The use of new technology,
- Community-run services.

These are not mutually exclusive and case studies more often than not fit into a number of categories. Case studies were selected to illustrate:

- Different types of services,
- Different locations in rural Scotland from small towns to isolated, island communities,
- Different service providers from small village hall committees to local authorities,
- Different delivery mechanisms, from the use of internet facilities to mobile vans.

The case studies were identified by the SNRP working group and also through consultation with local authorities, Social Inclusion Partnerships and CADISPA. Case studies were constructed from documentary sources, web-searches, interviews with representatives of the organisation and, where possible, field visits to the projects.

Whilst there is no first-best solution to providing services in rural areas, the case studies highlight a range of different possibilities to encourage thoughts on how services can be supplied in a range of areas.

This guide does not provide advice on good practice in general management since many guides on this are already available. Of particular interest to readers wishing to learn more about general project development will be the SNRP's *Good Practice in Rural Development No. 6: Project Development and Securing Funding*, as well as other guides in the SNRP series.

2. Different ways of delivering services

Rural communities are vulnerable to the closure of services due to the high unit cost of provision in often geographically remote and isolated areas. Providing a centralised service may generate economies of scale for service providers but not everybody will be able to access those services, for a variety of reasons, such as those who do not have access to transport.

The 1995 report, *'People, Prosperity and Partnership'*, identified access to several key services as paramount to the quality of life for people living in rural areas. These included:

*"The post office, the shop, primary school, doctor's surgery and petrol station are often mentioned as being of importance, with the village shop and primary school chief among them"*².

These were expanded upon in the 2000 SNRP *'Services in Rural Scotland'* report³ with further emphasis on transport, multi-purpose buildings, retail and other business practices, information and advice services, childcare, and services for young people.

The following sections illustrate the diverse range of approaches that can be used to deliver services, as detailed earlier; shared premises, mobile facilities, the use of new technology or community-run services. The case studies are drawn from voluntary, statutory, partnership and community-run services – private sector examples are not used in this report.

² The Scottish Office (1995) *Rural Scotland: People, Prosperity and Partnership*, HMSO, Edinburgh.

³ SNRP (2000) *Services in Rural Scotland*, A report to Ministers by the SNRP sub-group on rural services, The Scottish Executive, Edinburgh.

3. Sharing of premises

Locating a number of different services under one roof has numerous advantages not least the ability to share the costs amongst service providers.

For service users, the opportunity to share premises means that they do not have to travel to different premises, sometimes in different towns, to access key services. Shared premises can often create a 'one-stop shop' for people. Shared premises can provide a platform for more joined-up provision of services with the potential for service-providers to share information and good practice as well as costs.

Support for multi-purpose community buildings - village halls - is available from the Local Capital Grants Scheme, SportsScotland, the New Opportunities Fund, and the Community Fund, for example. Village halls are a valuable resource to house outreach services such as local clubs, childcare, and doctors' surgeries.

3.1 Coigach Community Hall

Method of delivery: shared premises, community-run.

Source of funding: The community; 21st Century Village Halls Fund; Rural Challenge Fund; Highland Council; Ross and Cromarty Enterprise.

Contact: hhassallpb@aol.com (Harry Hassall, 01854 622425)

Coigach Community Hall, located in Achiltibuie, was opened in April 1999. The community is very small and isolated, situated 26 miles from Ullapool with only 310 residents. The Coigach Community Trust has led the project from the outset, with members of the community raising substantial amounts of the funding required themselves, either directly through donations or through community events. This strengthened their case when making applications for funding from statutory bodies.

The services provided at the hall include a doctor's surgery, monthly hairdresser, pensioners' lunches, a Highland Council library, and a daily, pre-school playgroup. The hall also serves as a venue for several other local groups including the angling club, heritage group, and investment club.

The hall represents value for money with a £30,000 turnover, operating in 2002 with a £10,000 surplus. Running costs are low with heating bills amounting to slightly over £1,000 a year due to underfloor heating. The retired people living in the community help with the running of the hall, requiring only a part-time, paid caretaker.

Among the facilities available are a multi-purpose hall, lounge and kitchen, disabled toilet and showers, and a snooker room that also serves as an arts exhibition space during the tourist season. The library has an ISDN connection and public access to an online PC. The hall is recognised as an excellent music venue, having benefited from the advice of a locally based acoustic engineer.

Coigach Community Hall has become the focal point for the community and reinforced the strong sense of community spirit. The old hall has now been renovated and converted into the Achiltibuie Piping School, reinforcing the strong musical identity of the community.

3.2 Dalmellington Industrial Estate Refurbishment

Method of delivery: Sharing Premises, use of new technology.

Source of funding: Scottish Enterprise Ayrshire; East Ayrshire Council; the European Regional Development Fund.

Contact: (Robin Cole 01563 545067)

Dalmellington is a high unemployment area in South Ayrshire, once a hub of coal mining activity. The industrial estate is located not far from the centre of town and, prior to the refurbishment project, was in a state of disrepair. This was highlighted by the facelift programme that East Ayrshire Council and Scottish Enterprise Ayrshire had carried out on the rest of the town, with EU funding.

East Ayrshire Council consulted local people and businesses on how to make best use of the space available at the site. Initially, it was presumed that the project would go on to house purely industrial activities, with the development of a separate tele-cottage within the development footprint. This would compliment the CONDUIT programme, which had delivered ICT training for local people. However, the most interest in the project came not from the industrial sector but from community services.

The Dalmellington Industrial Estate Refurbishment was carried out in partnership between East Ayrshire Council and Scottish Enterprise Ayrshire, and utilised funding through the ERDF RECHAR Programme. The development offers community services such as a health clinic, police, ambulance service, housing office, and business technology centre.

The existing 1800 sq.m development was extensively upgraded and refurbished. The option of developing a 142 sq.m business technology centre was not pursued as it was felt it would be more cost-effective and security-wise to house the centre within the existing development than a separate tele-cottage.

3.3 Dunvegan Community Hall

Method of delivery: Shared premises, community-run

Source of funding: Highlands and Islands Development Board (now Highlands and Islands Enterprise); the former Highland Regional Council; the Scottish Education Department; the Clan MacLeod of the United States; Skye and Lochalsh Enterprise Company; the Foundation for Sports and the Arts; the Gannochy Trust and Lloyds TSB Trust.

Contact: Mrs Mary Ling (01470 521483).

There has been a community hall in Dunvegan since 1904 when the Norman Magnus Hall was originally built. However, in 1985, a group of residents from Dunvegan banded together to extend the Hall and offer a facility to a number of (local and non-local) service providers. The extension provided premises to serve the village and the surrounding area, in which groups - including youth groups, childcare services, and groups of elderly people - could meet.

The hall extension included the addition of several rooms including a large sports hall, a lounge area, a kitchen and toilets and showers downstairs and another lounge, kitchen and a games room upstairs.

The services that run from the hall include a daily pre-school playgroup, a Sunday school, AA meetings, weddings and pensioners lunches. Dunvegan Hall is also used for outreach services such as Jobseekers advice.

The indoor sports hall is used by several different local sports groups, including basketball, football and badminton. The local court and Highland Council use the building's upstairs meeting room. The meeting room is also used by the Community Council and the Crofters Union.

The newly added games room is used for a range of indoor sports and board games, thus providing recreational facilities for young people in the area. Ceilidhs, supported by the Local Enterprise Company, are held every week, these are a valuable source of income for the Hall.

3.4 Firth and Mossbank Enterprise (FAME)

Method of delivery: Sharing Premises, community-run services.

Source of funding: Shetland Childcare Partnership; Shetland Islands Council; Shetland Enterprise; the New Opportunity Healthy Living Centres Scheme;

Contact: projectfame@hotmail.com

The Firth and Mossbank community is located close to the Sullom Voe Oil Terminal, 26 miles north of Lerwick, the main town on Shetland. The community is made up of 500 people, including 180 children. Much of the social housing now lies empty. From a total of 264 houses in the area, 200 are council owned and 50 are unoccupied. It is an isolated area with hardly any local services, very limited transport and few employment opportunities other than those at the Oil Terminal.

Firth and Mossbank Enterprise (FAME) was set up in 1997 following local recognition that a wider partnership approach was necessary to overcome the various obstacles that prevented Firth and Mossbank from being a sustainable community. FAME was officially registered as a Scottish Public Company Limited by Guarantee in 2001.

The partnership approach has been developed with a set of guiding principles, agreed upon by the community. After consulting local people, FAME identified various issues that the community had to address: health and well-being; economic regeneration; community development; community care; and youth facilities.

Having identified the key areas of need, FAME converted three empty houses to form Firth and Mossbank Family Centre, which provides local childcare, peripatetic health and social services, family education and community group facilities.

The aim is to provide primary health care with a visiting GP surgery and other visiting health services. A variety of health related services are available at the centre, with well person clinics, family support services, health education, training, and information and advice. There are also childcare facilities for children aged 2 to 14 years of age.

The Family Centre provides an invaluable local medical service - the nearest alternative is located in Brae, ten miles from the community. The Family Centre has created job opportunities for local people with three full-time and six part-time members of staff, 30 volunteers are also involved in the project.

3.5 Highland Service Point Network

Method of delivery: shared premises, use of new technology.

Source of funding: Rural Challenge Fund; Highland Council; Digital Highland.

Contact: service.point@highland.gov.uk

http://www.highland.gov.uk/cx/service_management/servicepoints.htm

Service Points are multi-functional offices with staff trained and equipped to deal with any enquiry regarding the services provided by the Highland Council.

Prior to local government reorganisation in 1995, it was recognised that Ross and Cromarty's system of locality offices where people could pay rent and council tax, was an example of good practice. Thus, the approach was mainstreamed and applied throughout the Highlands. Twenty of the initial twenty-two Service Points were located in former district council buildings, minimising the start up costs incurred.

A prominent feature of the Service Point Network is the recognition that users of council services are customers, with a subsequent emphasis on customer care. The Service Point Network awarded a Charter Mark in 1999, which was retained in 2002.

Customers are able to pay all of Council-related bills at the Service Points and they also have full access to the Council services. Service Point staff offer local people help and information with filling in forms and advice on local services such as public transport, and other council material. Public access photocopying and fax facilities are also available in many of the Service Points.

The Service Points were further developed in July 2002, with the appointment of the Head of Electronic Government and Customer Services Manager to manage the Digital Highland Project and look at pan-regional service standards. The Digital Highland project, piloted in Ross and Cromarty, is to utilise Customer Relations Management (CRM), Workflow Management and Document Management and Systems Integration across the Service Point Network.

Given the dispersal and remoteness of many settlements in the Highlands, the Council has developed partnerships with other services, such as Highlands of Scotland Tourist Board (HOST), where four premises provide shared access. Seven Service Points also operate as Libraries and this enables integration with the recently established People's Access Network (PAN).

There are registrars at fifteen Service Points across the region, registering births and deaths and conducting civil marriages. The Service Points function as 'one-stop-shops' and are used to promote the activities of all Council services, including the High Life Leisure Cards scheme, for example.

3.6 Voluntary Action Lewis

Method of delivery: shared premises, use of new technology, mobile staff, mobile facilities.

Source of funding: Western Isles Enterprise, the ERDF.

Contact: <http://www.valewis.org.uk>

Voluntary Action Lewis (VAL), formerly the Lewis Council of Social Service, is a member organisation of Councils for Voluntary Service (CVS) Scotland. The aims of Voluntary Action Lewis include supporting the local voluntary sector, giving advice and support on funding, working with the Local Volunteer Development Agency (LVDA) and Active Communities Agenda, promoting community learning and supporting community development. VAL provide computing and library resources from their purpose-built facilities and operate an outreach service for the parents and carers of children with learning difficulties.

The 6000 sq ft building which was finished in 1999 provides facilities for a one-stop shop, caters for over 100 member organisations, meets the needs of local communities and runs complimentary services from one building.

The building houses an ICT centre and a darkroom for use by members of the community. There are 6 PCs networked to a printer including an online 'Holyrood.com' PC. The library room allows the community access to material from the Scottish Executive, voluntary organisations, and the local authority, it is also used as a training area. There is also a videoconferencing facility.

A suite of rooms is under contract with the LEC and Employment Service for the New Deal. Space is leased to the local Chamber of Commerce and a non-profit making careers service.

VAL has used the ICT centre to run a Lifelong Learning training project that is available to anyone from the local community. However, the service is aimed particularly at those people who do not have access to more formal learning opportunities such as the over-50s or people with disabilities. The Lifelong learning project is also delivered via an outreach service provided by VAL.

VAL also run the 'Open Sesame' project, an outreach service providing information for parents and carers who have a child with special educational needs. The Staran Garden and Amenity projects were set up in 1990 with the objective of assisting elderly and disabled people maintain their gardens. VAL are also involved in the Lewis Befriending Project, funded through local trusts, aimed at helping older people and those with mental health problems.

3.7 Lessons Learnt in Practice

Previous research⁴ has pointed out the advantage of multi-purpose buildings is that they help reduce costs across service providers and also create a point of focus for the community. However, the same research also suggests that a drawback of shared premises may be a compromise on the service quality resulting from a lack of space. One way of dealing with this problem is to take into account any future expansion of services when designing purpose-built facilities or renovating existing buildings. Moreover, it would be sensible to consult with other local service providers at the earliest possible stage to avoid useable space sitting empty.

There are, however, other issues to consider, as highlighted by each of the case studies. For example, the *Coigach Hall* case study illustrated how the community raising a significant amount of money made it easier for them when trying to attract funding from a range of statutory bodies.

Dunvegan Community Hall is a good example of a sustainable multi-purpose community building. A regular flow of income is generated from renting the premises to the nursery for pre-school children space 5 days a week. Several local groups including the bowling club, amateur dramatics, church, school and alcoholics anonymous also regularly use the hall.

There are three key lessons here. Firstly, it is necessary to ascertain that there is a local market for using the space available, yet demand is insufficient to support conventional service delivery. Secondly, thorough research should be carried out in the planning stages to ascertain the needs of the potential users. Thirdly, the expertise of local people with specialist knowledge could be drawn on, for example, an architect that lived in the village contributed to the design of the Dunvegan Hall extension.

In addition, the *Dalmellington Industrial Estate Refurbishment Project* illustrated that a large amount of capital is often required to upgrade existing facilities. That said, it was pointed out that economies of scale can be generated by focusing capital in one place rather than spreading resources across various locations.

The *FAME* project staff emphasised that learning about sustainability helped to secure funding as they focused on environmental factors and the long-term viability of the project. Their approach also stressed that effective training is required and it is necessary for support staff to take up new skills and keep learning. It was pointed out that community groups may also have a credibility issue with professionals, credit is not always given where it is due.

“It’s hard work... it’s not for the faint-hearted and you need committed volunteers. Community groups have to persevere, be ‘thick-skinned’ and never give up...setbacks do happen.”

- FAME.

Voluntary Action Lewis emphasised the need to always strive towards providing a quality service utilising rolling evaluations to reflect on how the services are being provided and

⁴ Rural Development Commission, The Joint provision of rural services’, Research Report No. 34.

how improvements could be made. It was also stressed that perseverance is a key quality for personnel and volunteers – “*the need to stick to it and don’t give up*”.

4. Mobile facilities

Living in rural areas often means that car ownership can be a necessity as those people dependent on public transport often find that it can be infrequent. Additionally, relatives or friends who can help may not live nearby to gain access to services.

People with restricted mobility, for example, older people, young children, people with disabilities, those who cannot afford a car or cannot drive are vulnerable to exclusion from key services. If people cannot visit or access the service then, alternatively, the service can come to the people.

Mobile service facilities are not an innovative idea in themselves – mobile shops, fish vans and mobile banks have long been a feature in rural Scotland. Various services can be provided from a mobile facility such as benefits advice, training, library services and childcare facilities.

This type of service delivery can be useful due to its flexibility, cost effectiveness, and ability to reach remote/inaccessible communities.

There are problems with this method of service delivery. For example, mobile facilities still require somewhere to park and often people most at risk of social exclusion may still require transport to and from the facility.

Word of mouth is a good means of advertising for such services as people become aware of the days and times the mobile facility visits their area.

4.1 Buchan Dial-a-Community Bus

Method of delivery: mobile facilities

Source of funding: Rural Community Transport Initiative.

Contact: http://www.buchanweb.org/dialabus/db_pages/welcome.htm

The Buchan Dial-a-bus project was set up in 1993 by a group of volunteers using a borrowed Social Services bus to run a once-weekly service. Volunteers organised the service and acted as escorts for the service-users, whilst off-duty policemen drove the bus.

In 1998, the project merged with the local Community Bus group to create Buchan Dial-a-Community-Bus. The Community Bus was managed initially by volunteers, through the Central Network Development Group.

By joining the two groups together, a much stronger case for funding was put forward as well as providing an extended Dial-a-Bus service and a Community Bus use facility. The buses were operational by July 2000. Both buses are 16-seaters or seat 14 people plus one wheelchair. A third, 9-seater bus was on the road in 2002, providing a patient transport service.

The Dial-a-Bus serves the Central Buchan area and is available for use by any elderly disabled, rurally or socially isolated person who may have difficulty using public transport or

who has no access to public transport, with a nominal charge irrespective of destination. Escorts can be provided for people should they need a little help e.g.; pushing a wheelchair, helping with shopping or simply accompanying the person on the journey. Training in passenger assistance, minibus driving and evacuation from a minibus is available and basic first aid is also covered. A wheelchair is also available if a person does not own one. The Dial-a-Buses all have disabled access and a tail-lift.

A further successful application has been made to the RCTI for an evening youth transport project. This will be integrated with the evening library service that is currently run for elderly people on Wednesday nights. This service will be delivered in partnership with the Community Education Department at Aberdeenshire Council.

4.2 Orkney Blide Trust

Method of delivery: mobile facilities, mobile staff.

Source of funding: Orkney Health Board, Orkney Islands Council

Contact: <http://www.orkney.org/community/VAO/blidetrust.htm>

Orkney Blide Trust aims to provide opportunities for people with mental health problems to meet others with similar difficulties and promote social inclusion. The Trust works with people to find the best way of addressing their own problems, emphasising individual empowerment.

The Orkney Blide Trust operate a Travelling Day Centre which has been running since 1995, with charge-free visitations spread throughout the Orkney mainland and also Stronsay and Hoy. There are plans to expand the service to the Northern isle of Sonsay as well. The visitations target people that cannot easily get to services in Kirkwall, affording them the opportunity to socialise, get information and talk about their problems in a relaxed environment.

The client-groups have the option to either receive care in their own homes or they can visit the travelling day centre in their area. As issues of client confidentiality tend to be more pronounced on the outer islands, people often prefer to access the service in their homes.

The Travelling Day Centre is complimented by floating support carried out by three trained and experienced, part-time, Blide Trust Support Workers. The floating support is aimed at helping people to continue living independently in their communities and also to assist people who do not wish to go through statutory agencies. The Trust is funded to provide up to 24 hours a week, allowing 8 hours a week for 3 clients. Care Plans are drawn up for each client, but the focus is very much on short-term, flexible support that is complimentary, rather than alternative, to the statutory services.

The Support Workers provide a peripatetic service, with the onus on increasing the individual's capacity to function within a normal, day-to-day living environment. Thus, the workers help with practical, household tasks such as washing, cooking and budgeting, as well as providing a valuable information resource on social services and benefits. Most importantly, the Orkney Blide Trust provide a semi-formal support network, this helps the client to re-establish leisure and occupational activities and re-integrate themselves into the community.

4.3 The Screen Machine

Method of delivery: mobile facilities.

Source of funding: The National Lottery; Highlands and Islands Enterprise; Scottish Screen; the Post Office.

Contact: http://www.hi-arts.co.uk/Screen_Machine.html

The Screen Machine is a mobile cinema operated by a partnership between Hi Arts, an independent charitable company, Highlands and Islands Enterprise and The Scottish Arts Council. The main aim is to bring a cinema experience of the highest quality and up-to-date films to remote communities in the Highland area. An initial feasibility study was commissioned in 1994, the vehicle went out on the road for its pilot tour in 1998. There are 3 full-time operational staff.

The Screen Machine is a 17m lorry with a 4 by 2m screen, 101 seats, and its own power supply. The cinema mainly operates from public buildings, such as schools and car parks – places where there is easy access to public toilet facilities. The films shown tend to be mainstream Hollywood films. However, on occasion, the Screen machine does take requests from communities. The Screen Machine is on tour seven weeks at a time from January to July and September to December. The mobile service is available to communities throughout the Highland Council area and villages over one and half-hour's drive from Inverness and Thurso.

4.4 Lessons Learnt in Practice

Mobile facilities can be expensive to run but are an effective means of taking services out into remote communities. However, there is little point in doing this unless there is effective advertising to let people know where and when the service will be visiting. The provision of mobile facilities does not necessarily target vulnerable groups such as people with disabilities, older people, young people, and people with limited access to transport. It would be beneficial if additional transport was provided for people who would still find it difficult to get to the mobile facility.

The case studies highlight additional issues that should be considered when using mobile facilities to visit rural areas. The *Buchan-Dial-a-Community-Bus* serves to illustrate the serious transport and access problems faced by some rural communities. Utilising volunteers as escorts is a further means of helping people retain links with their communities and the project has an intergenerational quality with the transport used simultaneously by the evening library service and the evening youth transport project.

The Orkney Blide Trust pointed out that floating support deals with issues of confidentiality such as mental health difficulties, which are still perceived as a stigma by many people. The outreach services allow people on the outer islands to access mental health services without the need to travel to the mainland. Sometimes, however, people can become dependent on the service and, consequently, moving them on from the service can be difficult.

It is easy for outreach services to become 'stuck in a rut' but the Blide Trust is trying to upgrade the Travelling Day Centre and provide access to information for those who *want* it as well as those who *need* it.

‘Befriending’ schemes not only help the client-groups but the volunteers themselves by providing them with new training and skills. The Orkney Blide Trust also promotes social inclusion by stimulating understanding of mental health issues and bringing people closer together. A key point to note here is that particular attention must be paid to the recruitment, training, motivation and retention of volunteers.

The *Screen Machine* experienced technical problems in the first six months of operation, mainly because spare parts were extremely difficult to procure. Hi Arts had contacted, for example, mobile libraries for advice but this was of limited use due to the differences in the nature of services being provided. There was also limited advice available about practical requirements, such as road or bridge dimensions in the target area when planning the route to follow.

Moreover, Hi Arts were unaware when they applied for Lottery funding that special regulations would apply to the vehicle and that there were special procedures that would have to be followed before it could be mobilised. In hindsight, they feel that more time spent on funding applications would have been beneficial in identifying potential difficulties in providing the service.

It has been noted that mobile facilities do not necessarily reach people living in the more peripheral rural communities. Thus, the provision of mobile staff either through outreach services in community buildings or home-visits can be an invaluable means of providing services and simply giving vulnerable or excluded people someone to talk to, without having to travel.

5. Use of New technology

Many people now have computers in their homes, with an increasing number of people accessing services via the internet and telephone. Many local authorities and Local Enterprise Companies also provide training courses in ICT, in partnership with local FE colleges and universities.

New technology can be a useful way of reaching as many people as possible as well as providing a confidential service. Remote provision of services via the internet and telephone is increasing, particularly in the banking and retail sectors.

Web-sites focussing on local areas have also been recognised not only as a valuable tourism resource providing information on local accommodation and businesses but also a good way of harnessing community spirit and identity.

5.1 Ayrshire Electronic Community (AEC)

Method of delivery: use of new technology

Funding: ERDF, East Ayrshire Council (lead partner)

Contact: <http://www.e-ayrshire.co.uk> (Maureen Walker: 01290 428300).

The AEC project was set up to improve the ICT infrastructure and ICT awareness throughout Ayrshire, particularly in socially excluded communities.

The AEC was borne out of the Information and Advice Project that was run before local authority reorganisation in 1995, through Strathclyde Regional Council's Poverty Action Group.

The Information and Advice Project provided substantial information on community needs, and the outcomes of this consultation was built on in subsequent meetings, ensuring community representation and this approach was adopted and extended by East Ayrshire Council.

The AEC project offers access and support to Internet-linked PCs in over 100 sites in community and public locations such as community centres, GP clinics and shopping precincts. This enables access to public information published online by various different public sector agencies, educational establishments, libraries, businesses and community services. Since January 2002 AEC has:

- Developed, and currently hosts / supports 80 community websites;
- Introduced the benefits of ICT to around 1000 individuals;
- Trained 550 people in basic computer, Internet and email usage;
- Assisted 250 community organisations to make use of ICT; and
- Provided broadband access in 20 AEC supported centres.

The AEC Project has been funded by a number of partnership bodies including Scottish Enterprise Ayrshire, Ayrshire and Arran Primary Care Health Trust, East Ayrshire Coalfield

Area Social Inclusion Partnership, North Ayrshire Council, North Ayrshire Social Inclusion Partnership and the Benefits Agency. The sustainability of AEC beyond the current funding period of 31 December 2004 is currently being assessed and a Social Enterprise Business (not for profit) model is one option for consideration.

5.2 Angus Glens Online Resource Action (AGORA)

Method of delivery: use of new technology

Source of funding: Angus Council; Scottish Enterprise Tayside; the European Regional Development Fund.

Contact: <http://www.angusglens.co.uk/indexie.html> kirriemuir@angus.gov.uk

AGORA started life with the refurbishment of 30 village halls throughout the Angus Council area. Twelve computers were purchased and distributed to 6 of the halls, located in Menmuir, Glenesk, Lethnot, Tannadice, Glenisla, and Memus. This paved the way for subsequent projects aimed at addressing the lack of IT skills in some of the remotest parts of Angus.

The next step in the development of AGORA was established in September 1998 with the 'Building Blocks in the Angus Glens' Project. A Community Education Worker (CEW) was appointed to consult local communities on their thoughts of how to make best use of the newly available technology. This consultation process contributed towards the development of training programmes that catered to the IT needs of local people to be drawn up and implemented. As part of the capacity building process, the CEW helped each of the 6 areas to establish local management groups who would take responsibility for the computers, including running costs. Basic computer education training was provided as was IT support, with the CEW acting as facilitator.

AGORA was established with several key objectives in mind. These included the further development of ICT training, promoting the use and advantages of ICT, utilising the internet as a business tool, and constructing a community web-site for local businesses, E-commerce and community groups.

AGORA seeks to help local businesses and communities build and manage their own web-site, thus developing the education, business and social opportunities in the Glens' remote communities.

5.3 Buchan Community Web

Method of delivery: use of new technology

Source of funding: Objective 1; Grampian Enterprise; Buchan Development Partnership.

Contact: http://www.buchanweb.org/bcw/main_pages/index.htm

(Bill Cottingham 01771 613666).

In September 1996, Aberdeenshire Council launched 15 community Internet groups. Buchan Community Web was one of those groups. The remit of Buchan Community Web was to develop a local web-site that provided information on local services, provided tourist information and news within the community.

Initial funding was secured from the EU and this contributed towards the project start-up costs and also paid for the training of volunteers. Further support and accommodation for the project was provided by Aberdeenshire Council.

An output of the project is the ongoing development of a community toolbox, which will provide an online resource providing examples of best practice on fundraising and how to establish an organisation, for example.

Buchan Community Web operates under the umbrella of Buchan Development Partnership, which also covers Buchan-Dial-A-Bus, the Book of Deer Project and Buchan Tourism Group (see page 12).

The Buchan Development Partnership recently formed a consortium with other public, private and voluntary sector bodies to make an application to the National Lottery Community Fund to purchase Maud Mart, formerly a cattle mart. It is hoped that once the funding is in place Maud Mart can be developed into a purpose-built training centre.

5.4 Information Technology Rural Training Bus

Method of delivery: mobile facilities, use of new technology

Source of funding: Rural Challenge Fund; European Social Fund; Scottish Enterprise Ayrshire.

Contact: Ronnie Sinclair 01292 266171.

In 1996 South Ayrshire Council approved the financing of a customised computer training bus with 8 workstations and an independent power supply. A previous project had delivered computer classes in local community centres and the Rural Training Bus was established to further develop IT training throughout the area. Tutorial support was provided by Ayr College whilst South Ayrshire Council provided the computers used. The Rural Training Bus became operational in August 1998.

The courses offered on the bus provide an introduction to information technology for people with little or no computer experience. Training is provided a half- day per week over 16 weeks. The course covers basic word processing, spreadsheets and database applications. On successful completion of the training course, participants receive an SVQ level 1 certificate.

The bus parks in the grounds of the local school or community centre, with a crèche available for the provision of childcare. The bus is a valuable training resource for people and there is a strong awareness of the bus in South Ayrshire. Initially, students on the training course produced the bus promotional material and, after three years, there continues to be strong demand for the service and there are waiting lists in most villages.

Capacity building is one of the aims of the Rural Training Bus with local people being given the opportunity to acquire IT skills that can then be applied for business or recreational purposes. The informal environment of the bus breaks down perceived barriers to continuing education by building people's confidence towards computer-use and learning in general. The drop out rate is very low and students work at their own pace.

The bus was refurbished in 2002 with the eight workstations upgraded to internet capable laptops. Moreover, the electrical system, which had been problematic in the past, was simplified allowing the service to run more effectively.

5.5 Lessons Learnt in Practice

New technology can allow people to transcend geographical location and enables them to access services they would normally have to travel to. The NHS Direct web-site, for example, offers information and advice on a myriad of medical conditions. Telephone banking services are also increasing in popularity. However, there are two significant preventative checks on the usefulness and appropriateness of new technologies – the purchase of personal computers for many people is cost prohibitive and many people are not proficient or, at least, confident in the use of ICT.

"...internet access, of itself, is of little value. But the imaginative and effective use of modern technologies to help people to participate more effectively in their communities, or to overcome the problems of remoteness or isolation, can be vital⁵."

The **Information Technology Rural Training Bus** allows people to learn at their own pace, with potential concerns about computer-learning overcome by the approachability of staff. Training staff are 'adult sympathetic' which helps to build people's confidence. Furthermore, students are also encouraged to identify their future training needs and encouraged to continue learning at Ayr College or the Carrick buildings in Girvan.

The **Buchan Community Web** consult with all other local organisations that provide ICT training to avoid duplication. For example, Banff and Buchan Technical College provide Buchan Community Web with placement students who build the capacity of the project at no extra cost whilst the students gain valuable practical experience. Common sense dictates that the synergistic approach through collaboration and partnership working reaps benefits for the service providers and the service users. The project takes a softer approach than formalised training as some of the service users have never used computers before.

"we're aware that other organisations deliver similar services to our own so we don't aim to "reinvent the wheel".

- Buchan Community Web

It was pointed out again that, sometimes, the work of volunteers can be overlooked or undervalued by grant administrators. However, the work of volunteers and the voluntary sector as a whole is growing in recognition. Creating a good work environment is essential for the retention of volunteers – the Buchan Community Web was described as being like "a little family" simply because they had worked well together. A major challenge mentioned is the procurement of funding but it was stressed that an optimistic outlook was necessary in retaining voluntary status rather moving towards becoming a profit-making organisation.

⁵ AUDIT OF ICT INITIATIVES: In Social Inclusion Partnerships and Working for Communities Pathfinders in Scotland, Scottish Executive Central Research Unit, May 2000, page 1.

A key lesson pointed out by the **AGORA** project is that hardware and software can only be as effective as the available support - ICT training in itself does not facilitate community-led initiatives.

Furthermore, ICT training reaps 'soft' economic benefits and so the outputs of **AGORA** cannot be measured in terms of SVQ attainment by people or the number of people employed in relevant occupations. It is an 'added-value' project, building the capacity of communities to develop projects by themselves, with further potential e-commerce and tourism-related benefits of web-sites.

“computers are only the ‘McGuffin’, allowing people to come together and work on projects”. The key ingredient of ICT projects are not the computers, but the human resources... and the enthusiasm of local people”.

- AGORA.

The **Ayrshire Electronic Community** pointed out that, whilst they had been very fortunate with the level of funding they had received, the set-up costs of large-scale ICT projects can be prohibitive without the availability of match funding required to lever EU Structural Funds. It was further stressed that the approach to ICT projects had to be people-centred, not equipment-centred.

The Information Technology Rural Training Bus has highlighted the strong demand for ICT training in rural areas. Moreover, it has been particularly effective in allowing women returners to work and young mothers to access training outwith the formalised environment of FE colleges, whilst still having access to adjacent childcare facilities. The bus provides a quality service to rural areas that many people would not have access to normally. However, whilst taking ICT training closer to people's doorsteps, a drawback is that once a course has been delivered it can take up to a year before another course is run in the same area, due to the rota system. The practical side of running such a project is ensuring that the systems are working on the Rural Training Bus, and avoiding long periods off the road. The former problem has been addressed of late with the simplification of the electrical system.

“there is the headache of deciding the where's and when's of training provision due to the high demand for ICT training in South Ayrshire”.

- Information Technology Rural Training Bus

6. Community-run Services

Developing community-run services means that local people are involved in the delivery of services tailored to their own needs and wants. This is often established when the private or public sectors perceive the provision of a service to be uneconomical. Community-run services often work where the public and private sector do not because the community opts to become involved because they recognise that an issue must be addressed - not because they expect to be paid.

Thus, people share their time, skills, experience, knowledge and, quite often, their money to make a service viable. Also, as the community shares ownership of the service, liability for the service can also be spread across the community. There are various methods of setting up a community-run service such as forming a company limited by guarantee, a co-operative or a charitable trust, for example.

There are many examples of community-run projects throughout rural Scotland - such as transport projects and village shops – in these instances there is support available from the Rural Community Transport Initiative and Rate Relief for rural small businesses, respectively. Start up advice on community-run projects is available from various sources such as LECs, local authorities, higher education institutions and non-governmental organisations such as CADISPA⁶.

6.1 Gartmore Village Shop and Post Office

Method of delivery: community-run services.

Source of funding: Stirling Council; European Regional Development Fund; the Co-operative Wholesale Society (loan); the community.

Contact: david@teed.co.uk

The Gartmore Village Shop is a convenience store that sells groceries, home-baking, off-licence beverages, organic produce, newspapers and pharmaceutical products, as well as providing a video rental service and post-office facilities.

The community has run the shop since January 1998. The previous owners wanted to sell the property with the possibility of a residential development. However, the local people were concerned about the possible loss of the village shop and set up a committee to explore their options. A feasibility study was carried out by 8 people from the sub-committee to canvas local opinion on the community-purchase of the shop. Of the 250 adult villagers, 130 subsequently bought shares in a community co-operative.

Gartmore Village Shop has a full-time manager, six part-time staff, four paperboys and a volunteer who works one day a week.

CWS (Co-operative Wholesale Society) provided a loan enabling the purchase of stock whilst the Post Office provided advice. The community set up a Private Company Limited by guarantee, with a 10% cap on dividends if the shop showed an annual profit.

⁶ Conservation and Development in Sparsely Populated Areas.

Initially there were minor problems running the shop as the community learnt on their feet. For example, there was a trade-off between opening times and cost effectiveness, what to stock in the shop versus wastage levels.

The area has a relatively broad demographic makeup and the shop is especially important for elderly and single parents within the community who may have restricted opportunity to access the nearest alternative shops. The Post Office is also essential for those receiving income support, benefits or pensions. Moreover, it serves as a pick-up point for doctor's prescriptions. The shop notice boards also serve as a valuable local information resource.

The shop has had made a small profit during each of the last 3 years and this year, for the first time, paid a dividend to shareholders for the first time. 5% of each member's shareholding is paid by means of a shop voucher - 130 villagers currently own a total of £31,000 worth of shares - between £25 & £2,000 each, that is, whatever each person could afford at the start.

The last loan was paid off this year and the shop and Post Office have expanded the available services every year, for example, this year opening hours were increased, a switch facility was installed and a community PC providing villagers with internet access. Moreover, the Post Office will soon be investing in a partial building refurbishment to improve the layout and structure of the shop and post services available.

6.2 The Grassic Gibbon Centre

Method of delivery: community-run services, shared premises and use of new technology.

Source of project funding: The National Lottery Heritage Fund; Small Business Enterprise Scheme; Rural Challenge Funding; the Friends of the Grassic Gibbon Centre; Scottish Enterprise Grampian; Kincardine & Deeside Arts Forum; SCVO's Direct Grants.

Contact: lgginfo@grassicgibbon.com

The Grassic Gibbon Centre is located in the village of Arbuthnott in Kincardineshire, over 25 miles from Aberdeen. The Centre offers an exhibition on the life and works of the writer, Lewis Grassic Gibbon, and a coffee area. The idea for the Centre was conceived in 1988 when the village was faced with the closure of the local Post Office and the need to upgrade the existing hall. At the same time, the local council were planning to buy Grassic Gibbons' home with plans to run an exhibition about the author in another village nearby. This galvanised the community into developing the existing Parish hall plans into the Grassic Gibbon Centre.

The Grassic Gibbon Centre opened in 1992 as a visitor and information centre that also offered additional services such as ICT training; Post Office facilities; and a shop selling local produce and crafts.

The Grassic Gibbon Centre has a permanent manager, a clerical assistant and eight seasonal staff. The facilities are closed to visitors from November to February. Numerous groups make use of the hall including music workshops and a Reminiscence Group for elderly people. Ceildhs and local concerts are also regularly held at the hall, providing an additional source of income.

An ICT training project received support from Grampian Enterprise to run over three years and delivered by volunteers. The community is also looking to expand from seasonal opening to all-year-round.

6.3 Lochwinnoch Sustainable Community Project

Method of delivery: community run, mobile staff.

Source of funding: Sustainable Action Fund; Landfill Tax Credit Scheme.

Contact: eliznick@yahoo.com

The Lochwinnoch Sustainable Community Project was set up in March 2002. It is a company limited by guarantee, has charitable status and is governed by five board members. The project was established as there was a recognised need to address transport issues that were highlighted during the Millennium Event Group's consultations with the community for the Millennium Eve celebrations.

The project has one full-time Sustainable Communities Development Officer whose remit is to devise and implement a plan on recycling, education, tourism, transport and the social problems associated with rural isolation. In practice, this has meant building the capacity of local people in order to address local economic, environmental and social problems over the next three years. The Development Officer adopts an enabling capacity rather than a providing role, working with local people to address local issues. The Development Officer works on the ground level at various projects throughout the village, rather than being based in a fixed location.

One such example is the Sustainable Lifestyles Garden. Local people carried out door-to-door research and consultation on the design of the garden and how local people wanted to become involved. A house-composting scheme was also implemented with 300 bins given out to villagers.

An advice service has been set up to tackle local economic problems, aimed at supporting unemployed young people aged between sixteen and twenty-three years old. The service is in its infancy but has, thus far, helped 5 people enter employment and 4 people go into further education.

The Development Officer has increased the village residents' capacity in a short space of time. However, local transport remains the major ongoing issue. Lochwinnoch train station is located a mile away from the village and there is no available disabled access. A feasibility study has been carried out on the costs of improving the road between the station and the village. The road is in poor condition and is particularly dangerous for pedestrians to walk along in winter or at night. It is hoped that improving the station road will encourage more people to commute and, moreover, a car-share scheme has been set up to further reduce traffic on the road, with a local directory listing the people involved.

6.4 Portree Nursery

Method of delivery: community-run services.

Source of funding: Skye and Lochalsh Enterprise; the Highland Regional Council Development Department; ERDF; the National Lottery Charities Board.

Contact: <http://www.earlyyearsonline.co.uk/home.asp>

The Portree Nursery provides day care for children between the ages of 6 months and 8 years and currently cares for around 40 children.

Having been commissioned by Highland Council to provide a pre-school class, Portree Nursery has a playroom that is used during school term time for children in their pre-school year. Currently, around 21 children are using this service. There is also a second playroom housing a fully-equipped special needs area with a teaching room, soft play area and relaxation room. This room is mainly used after school and sometimes at weekends, though currently there is only one child using the facility, despite the fact that the nearest alternative special needs facility is located as far away as Inverness.

Parents of children using the different facilities are represented on the voluntary board and the management of the building is shared amongst the different projects. Each of the different facilities play a part in making decisions about changes to the services offered and also to the premises itself.

The Nursery currently employs 12 staff, having started out with only 3 employees, and the occasional New Deal volunteer. Young people from the local school and people from the Resource Centre at Highland Council go to Portree Nursery for work experience.

The Nursery, especially the pre-school service, has strong links with the primary school. Teachers from the school visit the Nursery and, in return, pre-school children go to the school for visits. Following the visit, a report is written on each child. A local doctor, dentist, speech therapist and a health visitor also regularly visit the Nursery.

Portree is Skye's main centre in terms of employment, shopping and other activities. Consequently, the Nursery can be both reached and used by the maximum number of people.

6.5 Uig Community Development Association

Method of delivery: community-run services.

Source of funding: the community; Community Land Unit; Skye and Lochalsh Enterprise; Rural Petrol Stations Scheme; Highland Council.

Contact: andy_a_2000@yahoo.co.uk

<http://uigdevelopment.community.sitekit.net/welcome.asp>

The Uig community first joined together in 1998 in response to the news that CalMac were considering relocating their ferry service to Dunvegan as they argued that Uig Pier was no longer adequate. It was agreed that this would have had a massive effect on the community as their local economy was heavily reliant on the through trade of people travelling on the ferry. Uig Pier Development Ltd was subsequently formed to give the community a voice. The local pressure helped persuade CalMac to extend the ferry contract to Uig Pier by another 10 years.

The Uig Community Development Association was established in Feb 1999 when the community opted to buy the pier filling station, shop and café. The previous owner had gone bankrupt and the community was left with a dearth of services, the nearest alternative petrol station was 26 miles away in Portree.

Anyone who lives, works, or does business in the Uig Community Council Area is entitled to join the Association with a fee of £1 for life membership. The Association currently has 126 members, over a third of the total population of 340 of the village. The Association has four officers serving as directors of the company, elected every year, with a 14-strong management committee. The community raised £30,000 towards the costs of purchasing the petrol station, shop and adjacent café.

The Uig Community Development Association contacted CADISPA who helped the Association apply for funding, offered advice, provided contacts and built their confidence, whilst leaving it to the community to drive the project.

Once the renovations were complete, the committee had six applications from the private sector to lease the petrol station and shop. However, the strict criteria meant that only two applicants got through to the final stages before one withdrew. The committee made decisions regarding the application process and granted the 4 year lease with 6-month option either way. The shop has exceeded initial expectations, due to the level of support from within the community.

The shop sells a range of groceries, papers, and there also a café attached next door for people waiting for the ferry.

The Uig Community Development Association plans to open a new office with the aim of working with the local tourist board to provide tourist information from the premises.

6.6 Lessons Learnt in Practice

There is a growing recognition that effective community involvement is a significant factor in the successful provision of services. Local people are aware of local issues and the popularity of ‘bottom-up’ approach is widespread. Local people are involved in identifying their own needs and determining how best to address them, this creates a sense of ‘local ownership’ or ‘community spirit’.

Community-run services, as noted earlier in this report, work where public and private sector services do not as there are little, if any, staff costs and so the unit cost of provision is significantly lower. Additionally, communities can tap into a diverse base of skills from within the community.

Local people who have invested their own time and effort into developing a service are likely to expend even more energy into maintaining the operation of the service. Thus, community-run services are often seen as inherently sustainable.

The flip-side of this, however, is that quite often community-run services can be unsustainable and, in practice, the ‘bottom-up’ approach is often required to be reinforced by more traditional, top-down support from funding bodies. Conducting a community appraisal

before developing a service would indicate community views, and in some instances illustrate good practice.

Sometimes, community-run services are only as good as the facilitator thus the role of the community development agent is a paramount one.

The main strength of ***Lochwinnoch Sustainable Communities Project*** was the way in which the Development Officer interfaced with local people within the village who were involved in the project. There are instances where local people are given a token role in the development of a project, this can adversely affect the sense of local ownership necessary for making community-run services work.

“I’m based there, providing support from within. It’s a grassroots approach, underpinned by community needs and wants, has visibility and transparency – people can see what the money is being spent on... the project maybe has more impact because you’re there.”

- Lochwinnoch Sustainable Communities Project.

The Lochwinnoch Sustainability Community Project has secured three years funding, however it was questioned whether this was a feasible amount of time in which to build the capacity of the community and achieve tangible outcomes. It is important to achieve a balance between sustainability and sufficient support. The Board was surprised at how much had been achieved after the first year of the project. The project’s success thus far has partly been due to forward planning. Additionally, as there had been no community development worker in the village before the project, it is possible to suggest that with more time, further sustainable outcomes could be generated. The Development Officer noted that one of the benefits of working at a grassroots level is that it afforded people the opportunity to partake in informal consultation, and allowing people with less confidence to have a voice outwith public meetings.

A key lesson, one expounded by many of the other case studies, is the need to stay optimistic even when things are progressing slowly.

The ***Uig Community Development Association*** gained confidence as they negotiated obstacles in their path. However, it did take some time and a lot of patience to overcome the problems they encountered. The group acknowledged that CADISPA had provided significant help regarding funding and they also acted as a sounding post for ideas, whilst continuing to let the community drive the project forward.

“At the start we had only a small committee and had only collected £400 so it was very daunting. We looked at the huge sums of money that were necessary and we went from one place to another for funding, it was like going through a maze.”

- Uig Community Development Association.

The Uig Community Development Association emphasised that community ownership was very important. They retained a degree of control over the petrol station, shop and café as they leased out the premises. Moreover, the liquid paraffin gas could have been installed for free

by CalorGas but the Association opted to enter a contract agreement with BP who, despite requiring payment for installation, had stipulated fewer conditions in supplying the LPG. It is therefore also important to evaluate all the available options before acting.

The ***Gartmore Village Shop and Post Office*** had limited time in which the community had to act as the previous owners had given them only 2 months to raise the funds to purchase the business.

“Time was a major motivational factor for us, we had to act... and act fast”.

- Gartmore Village Shop and Post Office.

The grant administrators were found to be approachable and supportive, allowing the local people flexibility to develop their ideas.

The written Constitution of the shop means that the community cannot apply for National Lottery funding as dividends can be earned, making the shop a profit-making enterprise.

The major factor for the success thus far of the shop and post office has been attributed to local interest in the project and the sense of ownership.

Staff at the ***Grassic Gibbon Centre*** agreed that involving local people creates a sense of local ownership. In fact, the steering group stated that they would far rather rely on local people, Grassic Gibbon enthusiasts and ‘friends of the centre’, than on professionals to develop the centre.

One particularly bad experience was recalled, when the group received money from the Regional Council to pay for a professional to design the layout of the main, ongoing exhibition. The community was not happy with the end result and so the group had to redo the work themselves. The lesson they learnt was to have confidence in their own capabilities and, where work is contracted out, ensure that each party understands fully the aims of the project.

“Get on and do it yourself if you want it done properly”.

- Grassic Gibbon Centre

The Grassic Gibbon Centre is continually monitored by customer questionnaires and the centre carried out a Social Audit with Rural Challenge Funding. The IT training provided at the Grassic Gibbon Centre encourages social interaction highlighting again that ICT need not be an end in itself but a means of promoting social inclusion.

7. Key issues and common themes

The underlying themes of this report correlate with previous research which argued that services to the public have social and information facets as well as primary physical elements⁷. For example, the physical element of a doctor's surgery is primary health care with information available in the form of leaflets. The social element is represented through interaction with the health staff and other waiting patients.

The same research goes on to suggest that mobile facilities and the use of new technology eradicates the social elements inherent in providing services from a fixed location. Therefore, the NREC research, advocates the sharing of premises to enhance the social element.

The case studies have illustrated that the sharing of premises is not always the best option for service delivery. Mobile facilities are expensive to run and do not necessarily reach out to vulnerable people in remote areas. Good practice could be identified, therefore, as linking community transport initiatives with outreach services. Furthermore, floating support can be seen as a complimentary service which provides outreach services to people with restricted mobility.

The use of new technology may be cost-prohibitive to some people but the issue of access is arguably the most important issue for people living in rural areas. New technology does not, as stated earlier, promote social inclusion directly but for those people partaking in ICT with others it does allow for increased social interaction. The value of ICT training for people in rural communities is further recognised given the growth of banking and retail services via the internet. The success of ICT projects are dependent not on the hardware available but on the commitment and approachability of support staff and volunteers.

The onus on statutory bodies as sole service providers has shifted with increased recognition of the work carried out by voluntary organisations, communities and partnership working. However, capacity building takes time and many of the case studies emphasised that three years of funding is not always sufficient⁸. Some community-run services may find the application and monitoring processes for funding onerous. Consequently, local statutory bodies and community development agents must operate in a multiple capacity to provide advice, support and/or encouragement. Capacity building hinges on building confidence for both individuals and communities.

Whilst not all the case studies could best be described as truly innovative they do represent examples of good practice, as many of the projects have proved to be sustainable over the course of time. All of the case studies have significant physical, social and information facets; many utilising mixed methods to deliver services. The case studies have been fitted into thematic categories in this report. In reality, many provide a diverse range of services in various ways as illustrated in the table below. Consequently, the thematic sections overlap and are not mutually exclusive as illustrated below:

⁷ National Rural Enterprise Centre (1998) 'NREC's Vision for the Future of Rural Services', NREC Discussion Paper.

⁸ This was also noted in the SNRP (2002) ;Implementing Services in Rural Scotland' Progress Report, Scottish Executive.

Name of Project	Method of delivery	Local Authority Area	Delivery Approach ⁹
Highland Council Service Points	Sharing Premises, use of new technology	Highlands	Statutory
FAME	Sharing Premises, community-run services.	Shetland	Community
Dunvegan Community hall	Sharing Premises, community-run services.	Highlands	Community
Coigach Hall	Sharing Premises, community-run services.	Highlands	Community
Voluntary Action Lewis	Sharing Premises, use of new technology, mobile staff, mobile facilities.	Western Isles	Voluntary
Dalmellington Industrial Estate Refurbishment	Sharing Premises, use of new technology,	East Ayrshire	Statutory
The Screen Machine	Mobile facilities	Highlands	Partnership
Rural Training Bus	Mobile facilities, use of new technology	South Ayrshire	Partnership
Buchan Dial-a-Bus	Mobile facilities	Aberdeenshire	Partnership
Orkney Blide Trust	Mobile facilities, mobile staff	Orkney	Voluntary
AGORA	Use of new technology	Angus	Statutory
AEC	Use of new technology	East Ayrshire	Statutory
Buchan Community Web	Use of new technology	Aberdeenshire	Partnership
Portree Nursery	Community-run services	Highlands	Community
Uig shop & petrol station	Community-run services	Highlands	Partnership
Gartmore Village Shop and Post Office	Community-run services	Stirling	Community
Lochwinnoch Sustainable Communities project	Community-run services, mobile staff.	Renfrewshire	Partnership
Grassic Gibbon Centre	Community -run services, use of new technology, sharing premises.	Aberdeenshire	Community

A diverse range of joined-up approaches to service delivery, designed to compliment each other, is required to match the diverse range of needs in rural Scotland. There is no best

⁹ Services can be delivered in a number of ways. The *statutory* category is applied if the service is delivered by a local authority or LEC. The *partnership* approach refers to instances where the service is delivered jointly by public sector bodies, voluntary bodies, communities and/or the private sector. Lastly, the *community* category refers to situations with local people acting as the service providers.

solution to addressing service needs of local people but there are numerous examples of good practice, some of which are contained in this report.

Glossary

AEC – Ayrshire Electronic Community.

AGORA – Angus Glens Online Resource Action.

CADISPA – Conservation And Development In Sparsely Populated Areas. A Pan-European project run through the Department of Community Education at Strathclyde University.

Capacity building – can mean building up the capability of community and voluntary groups in order to reach their goals or increasing the skills of individuals through training, for example.

CONDUIT Programme – an Intermediate Labour Market project supporting the development of Information and Community Technology within East Ayrshire.

CRM – Customer Relations management.

CVS - Councils for Voluntary Service.

ERDF – European Regional Development Fund. Available from the European Union to correct economic and social imbalances between regions.

ERDF RECHAR Programme – designed to assist the reconversion of regions heavily dependent of a declining coal-mining industry.

ESF – European Social Fund. Available from the European Union for activities aimed at developing employability and human resources.

FAME – Firth and Mossbank Enterprise.

HOST –Highlands of Scotland Tourist Board.

ICT - Information & Computer Technology.

LEC – Local Enterprise Company.

LVDA - Local Volunteer Development Agency.

NREC – National Rural Enterprise Centre.

PAN – People’s Access Network.

RCF – Rural Challenge Fund.

SALE – Skye and Lochalsh Enterprise.

Social exclusion – income-related and geographic disadvantages are shown as having a detrimental impact on an individual or household’s ability to integrate with their immediate society and therefore do not enjoy the benefits of the developments in wider society.

Social injustice – Unequal access, choice and opportunities for people due to discrimination and prejudice. This can happen for various reasons such as race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, disability or age.

SVQ – Scottish Vocational Qualification.

VAL - Voluntary Action Lewis



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