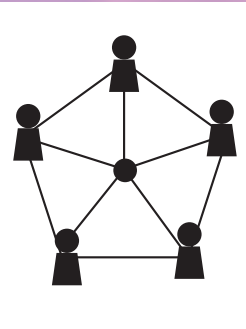


STRATHERRICK & FOYERS NEWS

NEWS SPECIAL

May 2023 Issue Number: 43



SELF SUFFICIENCY –
FACT OR FANTASY?
YOU DECIDE

A VOICE FROM
THE COMMUNITY -
HAVE YOUR SAY



THE GREAT EIGHT -
THE PILLARS THAT
WILL SUPPORT A
BETTER FUTURE

and... watch out for the
'BIG COMMUNITY BARBECUE'...

CHAIR'S BULLETIN

The decision was taken at the March Board of Stratherrick and Foyers Trust to explore with the community a highly ambitious goal that could have huge benefit for future generations. The goal is simply expressed: Achieve Self-Sufficiency by 2030.

This deadline is only seven years away! The place we would like to get to is create the 'platform' that will enable the community to be self-sustaining. In other words, achievement of the goal is being by the community, everyone is working towards it and the resources and facilities are in place to make it possible.

It would be a very long-term plan. For example, one proposal is to buy forest land and plant sufficient trees that meet the needs of the community when they are ready for felling in 50 years' time!

A personal view

This 'Newsletter Special' is devoted to the topic and you will read the personal views of some of the directors who were unanimous in backing the proposal. We hope their thoughts and ideas will kick start a conversation by the community about the proposal.

The next step is to establish what level of enthusiasm there is to pursue the goal. The Trust will provide the administrative support, technical resources, project management etc. However, it will only work if there is a body of people with the knowledge, skills, and enthusiasm to make it happen. We will hold a Community Forum when everyone can come together to discuss the idea and decide whether to give the proposal the 'green light.'

Gareth Jones
Chair, S&FCT

SELF SUFFICIENCY – FACT OR FANTASY. YOU DECIDE

Why now:

Over the last three years, the philosophy of the Trust has been to support our community to take ever greater control over its destiny. This goal has been pursued in a series of linked and at times parallel phases.

PHASE 1 PROFESSIONALISE THE SERVICE

This involved developing a vision and strategy, strengthening the governance, re-writing the organization's policies, improving processes such as project management and recruiting a professional team.

PHASE 2 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

We have spent more than two years in constant dialogue with the community. It began with the Community Action Plan and is now culminating in a Place Plan that captures (in graphic detail) what people want on their doorstep

PHASE 3 BUILDING THE INFRASTRUCTURE

This has been a long, and at times frustrating, process of planning the technology, the buildings and facilities required to provide high quality community services. The underlying approach has been to provide 'doorstep benefits' i.e. facilities that are within walking distance or at the very most a short drive

PHASE 4 LETTING GO OF CONTROL

A significant minority treated the Trust with suspicion. The purse strings were held close to the chest, decision making was opaque, it operated behind closed doors was the criticism. A governing principle has been to be as open as possible. To address this, a significant investment has been made in omni-channel communications, simple CRM tools, supported by feedback loops.

A thread running through out has been to push control over what happens in the local area into the community. The Community Action Plan was supported by community-led groups that have a devolved budget.

The operating model is simple. The full-time staff provide a set of professional services, for example sorting out the insurance, entertainment license for community events, minuting actions from meetings etc., leaving volunteers to get on with the enjoyable stuff.

Next steps:

The success is wholly dependent on your active support. (Thank you to those who have stepped forward so far.). At the risk of tempting fate, it feels as though the foundations are in place. We are now able to move to the next phase which we now want to test with you, the community. There are three elements to embracing the goal of self-sufficiency:

1. Paint a picture of what self-sufficiency would mean in practice. (The Great Eight you will read about overleaf is a start.)
2. Engage you, the community, in the idea – it will only work if you own it
3. If it's a yes, secure the resources to make it happen and build a roadmap to 2023

Call to action:

Watch out for notice of a 'community forum.' If we feel there is support, we will hold the BIG COMMUNITY BARBECUE when we will ask you the simple question: Self-sufficiency 'yes' or 'no'. Do you want to make it a fact of life or is it one fantasy too far! Meanwhile please write to the Directors (admin@sfctrust.org.uk) with your thoughts on what you have heard so far.

A PERSONAL VIEW

Over the next few pages you can read the views of some of the directors when posed with the question self-sufficiency 'yes' or 'no.' They write in a personal capacity and not in their role as a Trust Director.



KIRSTY BALFOUR
MUM & TEACHER.
STAYS IN WHITEBRIDGE

WHAT SUSTAINABILITY MEANS TO ME

For me, becoming a more sustainable community starts with building and maintaining connections with the people who live in it, the businesses and people who work in our community, along with considerations to the environment and landscape that we stay within. It is important that we link up and think about the wider picture, rather than work in isolation. Becoming sustainable would hopefully mean that we can buy local, boost our own little economy and lower our carbon footprint, while also improving our surroundings by enhancing the land and utilising its resources in a sustainable and 'future proof' way.

I think relationships and connecting with people and place play a huge part in becoming sustainable. We need a deeper understanding of who lives here and build up our sense of responsibility

and shared ownership over the actions we can take to empower us to become sustainable. Fuel, food, shelter, education, medicine and a sense of belonging are everyone's basic needs and I think we should focus on how we can enhance these services to work better for our community. Our unique social make-up allows us to find solutions tailor made to suit us and not follow a one-size-fits-all model. Exploring new ways in which we can bring some change to the norm is something which really interests me - perhaps setting up flag-ship intergenerational programs which combine care, education and environmental action, while having a meaningful impact on our overall health and well-being would be a great project! We don't need to start from scratch and re-invent the wheel, there is lots of inspirational community work going on throughout the world - we just need the will and enthusiasm to get on and do it.

MALCOLM STEWART
BUSINESSMAN &
FATHER OF TWO.
STAYS IN FOYERS

A fantastic vision and an amazing opportunity, and something that has in our community been lost through time, sustainability as a community would have been paramount to survival, however through the convenience of modern living this has been lost and with-it certain aspects of community life.

A shared vision with a shared purpose providing the ultimate in community benefit that not only brings a sense of togetherness but provides a legacy for our children and theirs.

With recent global events from coronavirus and the cost-of-living crisis it

is poignant that we now should be focusing on a sustainable self-sufficient future as a community as it will be this that keeps us together, self-sufficient and alive as a community.

Before the recent global crises, the need to be self-sufficient and have self-sustaining resources within a community would most probably depend on your post code or where you live. It is only remote communities that would focus on topics like this, why because they are remote, out of touch and no one else to rely on so they must make it work.

However, we are all now very aware how normal life can be taken away in the blink of an eye and a crisis can affect us all at any time regardless of where you live. This is why it is crucial that as a community we focus on this topic.

I have travelled throughout the world and come across many different

societies, but it we don't have to look across the world for inspiration when it comes to planning for our self-sufficient sustainable future, we have plenty of inspiration to be had here in Scotland.





CHRIS GEHRKE
MARRIED WITH TWO
CHILDREN
STAYS IN INVERFAIRIGAIG

Chris describes what self-reliance could mean in practice.

Gaelic. When the Catholic Church in Whitebridge opened in the 1860's, the priest had to address the congregation in Gaelic, obviously much has been lost since then. My own family in Wales experienced the oppression of their native language so I understand why families let Gaelic go. However, the Trust is blessed with the resources to provide classes, conversation groups and commission research into our own Gaelic heritage. It is incumbent on us to be ambitious about reviving Gaelic in our community, even though the first steps will necessarily be modest.

Peckham Experiment revisited. This was a very forward-thinking project that refused to restrict health provision to reactive treatments. Social contact, exercise and health provision were all combined to the betterment of the population. However, the creation of the

NHS killed this off, as with so many locally controlled health innovations. Imagine, a GP surgery, gym, spa and café combo with a winter garden and outside allotments and herb gardens. Why not go to the surgery to stay well rather than when one loses health?!

Environmental degradation. The Loch Ness Woods SSSI and the Farigaig SSSI are reported to be highly degraded due to overgrazing. Sewage from old septic tanks in Inverfarigaig drain into Loch Ness. The community could lead on protecting these areas and on creating more habitats in suitable areas to enrich our environment. This need not be our land but could simply be us utilizing contracted ecologists to press Forest and Land Scotland the estates to raise their game and create one overarching plan for the Trust's footprint. I want to see Beavers in the Farigaig catchment area before I am pushing up daises!

CATRIONA FRASER
RETIRED TEACHER
STAYS IN GORTHLECK

**SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY –
WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR YOU?**

As a resident of this community for 35 years, it has become apparent that we need to make ourselves more sustainable. For many this means being self-sufficient in food and fuel.

But for me it means people and employment. It's a lovely "dream" to be the community that can provide food and fuel but what is the point if nobody can live and work here?

We need to enable local companies to offer apprenticeships for our young

people who wish to continue the traditional skills of this area – farming, gamekeepers, farriers, fencers, stonemasons - as well as other skills needed, such as plumbers, electricians - I could go on!

And there are the human skills – carers, childminders, hairdressers, window cleaners, chimney sweeps, handy persons etc – who help make the community function and sustainable in its true sense.

We also need to recognise the proximity of Inverness and the job opportunities it provides but we need to ensure we have housing to allow our young people to live here and commute to work. They will still input to the local infrastructure of services and local businesses. We need to provide affordable housing and employment opportunities to make our community truly sustainable. If we want

this wonderful community to continue , let's make sure we can keep our young people and give them a viable future.



Malcolm's job as a marine engineer and consultant takes him all over the world, and to the Scottish west coast in particular. Here he highlights a couple of self-sufficient projects he has experienced first hand.

Morvern Development Company is a Charity and a Company Limited by Guarantee and is managed by a Board of Directors two of which must be Morvern Community Councillors. The Company aims to benefit the community of Morvern, Argyll, Scotland.

Now with three members of staff - including project manager Lilia Dobrokhodova - a skilled volunteer board and the support of the wider community, MCDC has created and delivered a wide range of ambitious multi-million pound infrastructure projects. These include the transformational harbour project, Cala Loch Àlain, creating 32 visitor berths, an allotment scheme on the land leased from Ardtornish Estate, a community amenity woodland project; and most recently the UK's largest community-owned hydro-power scheme.

Sustainable development is at the core of the organisation's work making use of community land and assets; advancing



West Highlands peninsulas including Morvern

education and safeguarding the local environment, culture and heritage; and delivering products and services for the community.

See www.morvern.org to read more about this organisation



Beinn Ghrideag windfarm

Point and Sandwick Trust is a charitable organisation that promotes and funds community projects in Point and Sandwick, and the wider Western Isles.

Governed by a constitution which highlights a focus on community wellbeing, the Trust built and operates the UK's biggest community wind farm, Beinn Ghrideag, a ten year project which is now one of the most successful income generators in the Western Isles. The profits produced by the three wind turbines are invested directly back into the community for the benefit of all.

The Trust is governed by one founding principle, to promote the social, educational, cultural and environmental wellbeing of the people of the Western Isles, with a focus on the communities of Point and Sandwick. Our sole intention is to work for the benefit of community wellbeing and the means of achieving this are outlined in our Constitution

See <http://www.pointandsandwick.co.uk/> to read more about the organisation

A VOICE FROM THE COMMUNITY

To kick off the conversation with the community, we asked Alex Sutherland, a familiar face from Ault Na Goire for his thoughts. He recently gave 100 tonnes of wood to the community and writes about the need for a community forest.

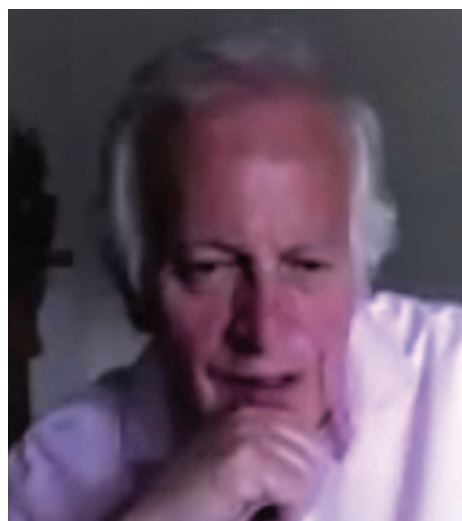
The recent project to distribute firewood to the community has confirmed a genuine community need and demand for this service and there is a demand and potential to possibly do it again by purchasing a load of logs and using a site such as the back of the fire station or next to the old Foyers fish farm to process and distribute the firewood.

I have been saying for some years now that we need to buy some local woodland to manage for timber, amenity and recreation.

We are being compensated for wind and water rushing through our land area but not for the commercial wood which blights our environment and wrecks the roads. I knew several of the landowners who sold their land to the Forestry Commission on the promise of jobs and housing. The houses have been sold and the jobs replaced by outside contractors.

This is obviously a political as well as a practical and domestic problem. We should be able to acquire forest land for the community and take a long-term view of becoming self-sufficient in timber.

Alex Sutherland
Ault Na Goire



GARETH JONES GRANDFATHER OF 3 STAYS IN ERROGIE

A rallying call everyone can get behind

The purpose of this Trust is set out in the articles and was further developed in the Community Action Plan. The stated vision is to create a happy, prosperous, and healthy community. What we really need is a single focused goal that the whole community can rally round. It feels as though we are plunging ever deeper into a troubled world. You may be unfamiliar with the acronym VUCA, coined by the American Army War College and stands for volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous. It applies to us too; volatile refers to the enormous speed of change; uncertainty, the unpredictable twists and turns such as Covid-19 and the Cost-of-

Living crisis; complexity, rapid technological change, polarised politics, and ambiguity; the contradictory information that effects almost every aspect of our lives.

All of this is happening against the background of a collapse in the certainties promised by globalisation (abundance of affordable food from around the world, cheap labour etc.) and of course there is the other global phenomenon causing deep anxiety, climate change. This is an invisible creeping threat that will change our lives in ways we can't define quite yet. Although living in a rural backwater, we are no longer insulated from massive changes that until now rarely reached into the glens of the Highlands.

Declining Government

There is another piece of context I would like to point to, and this is more political. Rural communities are less well served with the public and private amenities that you will find in urban areas. On top of this, we are seeing a progressive deterioration in the services received from local and central government. There is a deterioration in the quality of the education our children are receiving, the roads are potholed and repaired on an ad hoc basis, bins are emptied less often, public transport is less frequent and so on. Productivity, in both manufacturing and services, is poor, contributing to a country that can no longer afford the public services we have become used to. To be fair, the public services in our area are still pretty good, but the general direction of travel is to receive less not more!

Manage Our Future

There is one driving conclusion; our community must become more active in managing our own future. To this end, the Community Benefit Funds provide us with a unique opportunity. Why, as a community, don't we set the goal that Stratherrick and Foyers becomes self-sufficient by 2030?

How this is defined will be a subject for debate. It includes ensuring there is effective local discussion and decision making, access to affordable energy, conservation of resources, affordable homes, reliable food supply sourced locally, local ownership of essential businesses, provision of high quality education and job training, opportunity for creative expression through music and arts and crafts, respect for our heritage, a bio-diverse environment and a community spirit that creates a sense of belonging, a sense of place, and a sense of self-worth.

Set Some Big Hairy Goals!

Now is the time to think about how the infrastructure (and Community Benefit Funds) owned by the community can be used more effectively to support a more successful, thriving, and inclusive community. Lets agree on the areas we want to focus on and set a goal and develop a plan for each that will contribute to making life here sustainable for ourselves and future generations. This type of community action is commonplace on the West Coast. Let's learn from them on how best to use the community funds to create a place that provides a more secure future for our children.

TONY FOSTER, MANAGER, SFCT

If I was to take our Community Development Plan and Place Plan and compare it with our nearest neighbours, a community in the borders and even as far as Lands End they would all be similar. The landscape and heritage of an area in some ways defines our generation but in the greater scheme of things we, as people who live here, should not be defined by it. The Highland Way, however, has always relied on some form of resilience. This was not always with a collective response – it was the survival of the fittest or the richest. Now we have learnt to embrace differing opinions, harness people's strengths and bring people together for a greater good.

All development and community trusts do not consult just to put the findings on a shelf. This is where we differ from statutory organisations. It is to inform what the community does, what direction the community takes, where we put our resources, energy and how we, as a community, make things happen.

The benefit SFCT has is the funds we currently get from windfarms and hydro. That covers our core costs, meaning we can move things forward quite quickly. When we meet with stakeholders there is a level playing field. Everyone around the table is funded. We are not just relying on volunteers and their amazing tenacity. We do not have the facilities other communities do take for granted, but we have the financial backing to change things for the better.

We are at the point where we want to put ideas into action. This is our investment for the long term. It is a regenerative campaign factoring in eight areas of self sufficiency – commerce, heritage and crafts, education, environment, food, fuel, health, well-being and homes. All are connected and provide strength for everyone's life stage.

We are creating a toolkit which should make things slightly easier for us in the short term yet benefit the children who are born here and want to stay here. Like any toolkit we have to factor in changes that impacts what we do. That is something we have learnt over the years. We know the speed of change means nothing lasts forever. Our

funding won't last forever which is why we invest for the legacy fund and need to focus on the eight areas we have identified. We adapt and learn from that change as long as we enhance the capital of community engagement and community spirit. We bring as many people and their skill sets with us as we can. When it comes to self-sufficiency, that is priceless.



SARAH BYRNE, FUNDRAISING OFFICER, SFCT

Rural societies have an opportunity, and enthusiasm to display self-sufficiency

and symbiosis between culture, heritage and the natural environment. Now more than ever communities like ours are assessing economic determinism and consumerist culture with the compassion to protect and secure our natural habitats.

Wind farms provide key electricity generation from fossil fuels, which results in lower total air pollution and carbon dioxide emissions. To the immediate community the payments made to compensate for any cumulative impact can be put to many uses and the cornerstone of which could be our community custodianship of the natural capital and precious eco systems we are a part of.

We have a wealth of biodiversity in our area from mycelium to red kites, important waterways and everything in between.

Now is an opportunity for us to get involved as citizens of science and to

protect this at a critical time. By working together with volunteers, scientists and conservationists we can collect much more information about the species, landscape and eco systems on our doorstep. We can come together, learn and be involved in self-sufficient projects to support our biodiversity for generations to come. Our landscape and environment are dynamic and our community enthusiasm strong and compassionate.

Now is the time for community led action to play a big part in the protection of our environment and look after the spaces and species that make our area unique to us.

THE GREAT EIGHT!

The next step is to explore **what you feel** needs to be done to make us more self-reliant. Ideas include providing a more comprehensive support for our youngster as they move through their education, buying our own wind turbines (common on the west coast), purchase a community saw mill to produce our timber, enabling local trades people to work on large-scale building projects, providing refrigeration and butchery services to process more of the game that lives on our hills, provide routes to market for local craft food and drink suppliers, improve the bio-diversity of our environment, work with the Health Centre to provide a range of sports and fitness amenities to prevent illness.

As a starter we have developed 'The Great Eight,' these are the 'pillars' that would support self-sufficiency. The approach will be to develop a plan under each heading.

SELF SUFFICIENCY BY 2030... THE GREAT EIGHT!							
COMMERCE	HERITAGE & CULTURE	EDUCATION	ENVIRONMENT	FOOD	FUEL	HEALTH & WELLBEING	HOMES
TOURISM RURAL CRAFTS WORKSHOPS COMMUNITY SAWMILL	MUSIC HERITAGE CRAFTS GAELIC	SUPPORT THROUGH ALL KEY STAGES	BIO-DIVERSITY	POLYCRUBS COMMUNITY LAND BUTCHERY SERVICE	WIND TURBINES COMMUNITY FOREST	NUTRITION & COOKERY THERAPIES EXERCISE	AFFORDABLE KEY WORKERS
THRIVING LOCAL BUSINESSES	RICH CULTURAL ENVIRONMENT	SUCCESSFUL YOUNGSTERS	BIO-DIVERSE ENVIRONMENT	REDUCE FOOD MILES	LOW-COST ENERGY	HEALTHY LIVING	HOMES FOR KEY WORKERS & LOCALS
COMMUNITY GROUPS AND THE VOLUNTEER ARMY							
COMMUNITY HUBS							
TRUST CENTRAL SERVICES							

Underpinning the plan will be three elements, the community groups and volunteer army that give their time to the initiatives, the community hubs where some of the activities will be housed and professional services provided by the Trust.

START SMALL – AIM FOR SELF-RELIANCE

The plan will be to start with small steps, for example Polycrubs, sturdy under-cover growing spaces, are already being put in place.

We will become more ambitious depending on the level of support for each one of the pillars.



The Stratherrick & Foyers Newsletter is published monthly – online and a small amount in paper. Any opinions expressed are not the views of the Stratherrick & Foyers Community Trust and any businesses mentioned are not endorsed by the Trust.

MANY THANKS TO OUR FUNDERS... AND PHOTOGRAPHER

