

“It used to be better than this...”

**...creating opportunities in working
together to build Community Led
Development in Portree**

A Brief Consultation and Scoping Report

Skye and Lochalsh Council for Voluntary Organisations

April 2015

Summary

Many people living in the Portree area are unhappy with the level of community resources and activity currently on offer. Although the evidence is mainly anecdotal, we have no reason to doubt the assertion of many people that there are few opportunities to enjoy community activity in Portree. There appear to be far more things happening in other parts of Skye and Lochalsh.

Our impression is that a lot of community development activity in Portree is fragmented and undertaken by small groups of people who rarely communicate with others. There are good things happening, but often people's efforts are thwarted by red tape, lack of progress and most of all, the fact that most people don't appear to want to get involved.

A frequent response we encountered when speaking to people on this subject was "it used to be better than this..." We believe that this is most probably an accurate statement, rather than just a rose tinted view of the past. A big challenge is to try and understand what factors may have contributed to this decline, and we make a brief analysis of possibilities in our paper. More importantly however, we need to halt further decline and find ways of rebuilding effective community led development.

To this end the paper attempts to address the situation by proposing the following.

- We work together to properly research what the community wants and what the community needs.
- Following this we identify priorities and design and implement a community led action / development plan to achieve our commonly agreed goals.
- The above is preceded by a brief period of feasibility study to assess support for this proposal.

Putting it simply, if we can figure out ways of working more collectively, we can more effectively channel the energy and enthusiasm for change, reduce duplication, competition and frustration and ease the burden on individuals.

Everybody, especially the youngest and oldest in our community here, potentially wins out of this approach.

Introduction

The purpose of this consultation and scoping report is to illustrate the considerable potential benefits to individuals, families, formal and informal community groups, businesses, health and social care providers and other agencies of developing a more integrated approach to community development in Portree.

It provides an outline of the existing situation; some initial thinking and analysis of relevant factors; and a framework of how we might begin to work together to develop solutions. It is essentially a rough plan of how we might collectively undertake research to find out what people really want and need, then get our heads together and develop a comprehensive community plan to re-invigorate the community spirit and improve opportunities and activities which Portree seems to have lost somewhere along the way.

Its main aim is to stimulate interest and engage people in a process of re-awakening what we have been historically very good at up here in the islands, which is essentially about getting together and working things out to everyone's benefit.

How people perceive the existing situation

There are many areas in Skye and Lochalsh which lead the way in successful community development. Raasay is developing sustainable and flourishing community enterprises, Glendale is attracting investment to purchase building for community projects and Sleat is running a very successful community broadband initiative.

However, time and time again we hear people say there is very little to do and no community development in Portree and that *it used to be better back in the day*.

Fed up with hearing constant cries of "there's nothing to do here..." from her three young children, Katrina vented her frustration on Facebook. Within a couple of hours a lot of responses had flooded in and were shared – lots of others families felt the same.

"Why can't we do something about this ourselves?" one friend had said.

"That's what the council is supposed to do", complained another.

"We're not allowed to do anything these days are we?", someone else responded.

After a couple of days a few of them got together over a coffee – Surely if we work together we might be able to make things better they said. Now who do we speak to?

We have found ourselves engaged in discussions with a lot of people on this subject recently and people put forward a number of potential explanations including:

- The development of technology has discouraged community activities.
- Increasing red tape and health and safety concerns prevent events being put on.
- People expect services to be provided for them and are reluctant to contribute to participating in developing and running them.
- There is no money available to pay for things.
- It's always someone else's job to make things happen.
- We're all so busy looking after ourselves and our families that we've no time for community any more.

Current approaches to community development/activities in Portree.

In order to better understand current approaches to community development/activities in Portree we used SWOT and PEST analyses to try and understand some of the issues.

From our initial review it appears:

- There are a number of existing community groups and forums which work collectively at a strategic level however are seen as disconnected from the local community and each other when operating on a local level.
- The Portree community has a history of working well together, this is still seen in periods of crisis or when a "Key Mover" is involved although this tends to be reactive and for one off activities only.
- Local involvement in community development is minimal and it is perceived that there is little opportunity for new people to become involved.
- There are excellent informal community networks in Portree. These are focused around physical places of service such as the barbers, hairdressers, churches or public houses, in "third places", and in groups and gatherings with common interests, and social networks where online local communities are created.

Murdo would never admit it, but he was lonely. He gazed out at the edge of Portree just visible out of his living room window.

A worker all his life, he missed the crack and the companionship from his days on the job. His wife had been great company when she wasn't complaining about him getting under her feet in the house. But she was gone now too and the house felt bereft and empty. The kids phoned regularly and he'd finally got the hang of talking to them on Skype, but in some sense that only made his missing of them more poignant. He wished they lived closer.

He checked the clock on the mantelpiece and watched the hands drag themselves round to show ten in the morning. So what to do with the day he thought....

Table 1: SWOT Analysis of Current Approaches to Community Development in Portree 2015

<p style="text-align: center;">STRENGTHS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High level plans exist • Statutory services, groups and forums groups tend to work reasonably well together • There are some “Key Movers” in the community • Community has a proven record of pulling together in a crisis • Good informal social networks • The innate ability of Highland communities to work together and sort things 	<p style="text-align: center;">WEAKNESSES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ‘Top down’ planning • Minimal engagement with people • ‘Same faces’ syndrome • People tend not to get involved in organising community activity • People and groups operate in ‘silos’ • There is little communication or coordination between groups and organisations • Groups and forums seen as “Talking Shops” with very little visible action or progress therefore community becomes disillusioned
<p style="text-align: center;">OPPORTUNITIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build community resilience and social capital • Opportunities for “Bottom Up” planning • Genuine participation in shaping your community • Ownership of your community • Working together strengthens everybody <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Improved access to funding ○ Avoids duplication ○ Structured pathways created to development 	<p style="text-align: center;">THREATS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Divided and unorganised communities are vulnerable to cuts and reductions to services • Perceived competition – groups and other organisations may see proposals for joint working as a threat to their activities and plans • This could be seen as another ‘paper’ exercise • As public space and activities are reduced they are replaced with commercialised enterprises – which we have to pay for! • Portree is not designated as a fragile area, but may become one

Please note – the above SWOT analysis is intended to give an overall snapshot – there are bound to be factors we have missed!

It’s a dismal grey Skye day. You watch as the coach pulls into the square and disgorges forty assorted tourists on to the streets of Portree. They disperse around the shops, down to the harbour, or head for their accommodation. Some enjoy their meals in the cafes and restaurant, some eat their chips in the street, but many eventually come back to shelter in the bus stop to get out of the rain. I thought there would be more happening here you hear them muttering....

It’s a dismal grey Skye day. You watch as the coach pulls in and disgorges forty assorted tourists who step jauntily to the sound of the pipes playing in the square. They throng round the stalls and sample the local oysters and seafood. They check out the “What’s On Today” board for live music and entertainment, attractions and excursions and pick up the free copies of the Portree What’s On. Some go with the Portree Guides who accompany them on guided tours and direct them to the best places to go. People are smiling, happy to be here and much more likely to come back or recommend it to others...

Okay, it’s a bit idealised, but there might be more than a grain of truth in it.

Table 2: PEST Analysis of Current Approaches to Community Development in Portree 2015

<p>POLITICAL FACTORS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunities which may arise from current Scottish Parliament Community Empowerment Bill • Some community bodies (political or quasi political) are seen as closed groups which are difficult to access – there is low awareness of their role and function, indeed, even their existence... • HIE “Strengthening Communities” policy and “Investing in Community Led Development” offer some hope for action • Community Development seen as someone else’s responsibility – yet no one carries out this function here • Highland Council – perceived as remote, distant and too big. Making attempts to get community councils working together • Four ward councillors (from different parties or independent) who are supportive of area and can work together • Who are the formal and informal community groups? What is their Role and Function? Who makes things happen?
<p>ECONOMIC FACTORS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited pots of money for development – with further cuts anticipated • Potential competition between different bodies / groups for limited resources • Increased community activity and resources has huge potential benefits to Tourist Industry • Visitors (and residents?) often adopt a deficit model of Portree – expectations are not met and they instead focus on everything that’s not happening...or what’s wrong... • There is evidence though of some very entrepreneurial activity led by specific individuals and groups • A lot of business development costs are comparatively high – business in general can be sometimes be portrayed as stale
<p>SOCIAL FACTORS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demographics – up to date details required here, but we are aware of general trends – rising proportion of older adults and falling numbers of young people... • Changes in family lifestyles – support from extended families no longer an option for many people – families are dispersed. • Paradoxically though, a lot of social activity remains family based • Employment figures – characterised by seasonal nature of jobs • Social Trends – IT USED TO BE BETTER!!! Contrast situation today with that 25 years ago! • Reduced community involvement – and yet there are other areas of the island where community involvement is thriving – Is Portree becoming urbanised? Are we losing our community spirit? • Other social changes – reduced communal activity overall, we’re all busy looking after ourselves and our own, part of the neo liberal society – increasingly self-focussed??? • And yet Loneliness and Isolation are reaching epidemic levels and seriously affecting people’s health and well being
<p>TECHNOLOGICAL FACTORS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technology both connects us and isolates us at the same time • We might be increasingly living, shopping and even looking for friendship online and in virtual communities • Soon we may even receive a substantial proportion of our care online! (Telecare) • Communication in the virtual world is often faltering, intermittent and not always clear in intent • Real communities need the personal touch!

Again please note – the above PEST analysis is intended only to give an overall snapshot – there are bound to be factors we have missed!

So What Can We Do - The Next Step?

Before we progress any further we need to determine if the project as described in the initial summary is feasible. To do this we are looking to bring together people who make up Portree's community to share thoughts and address a number of questions including:

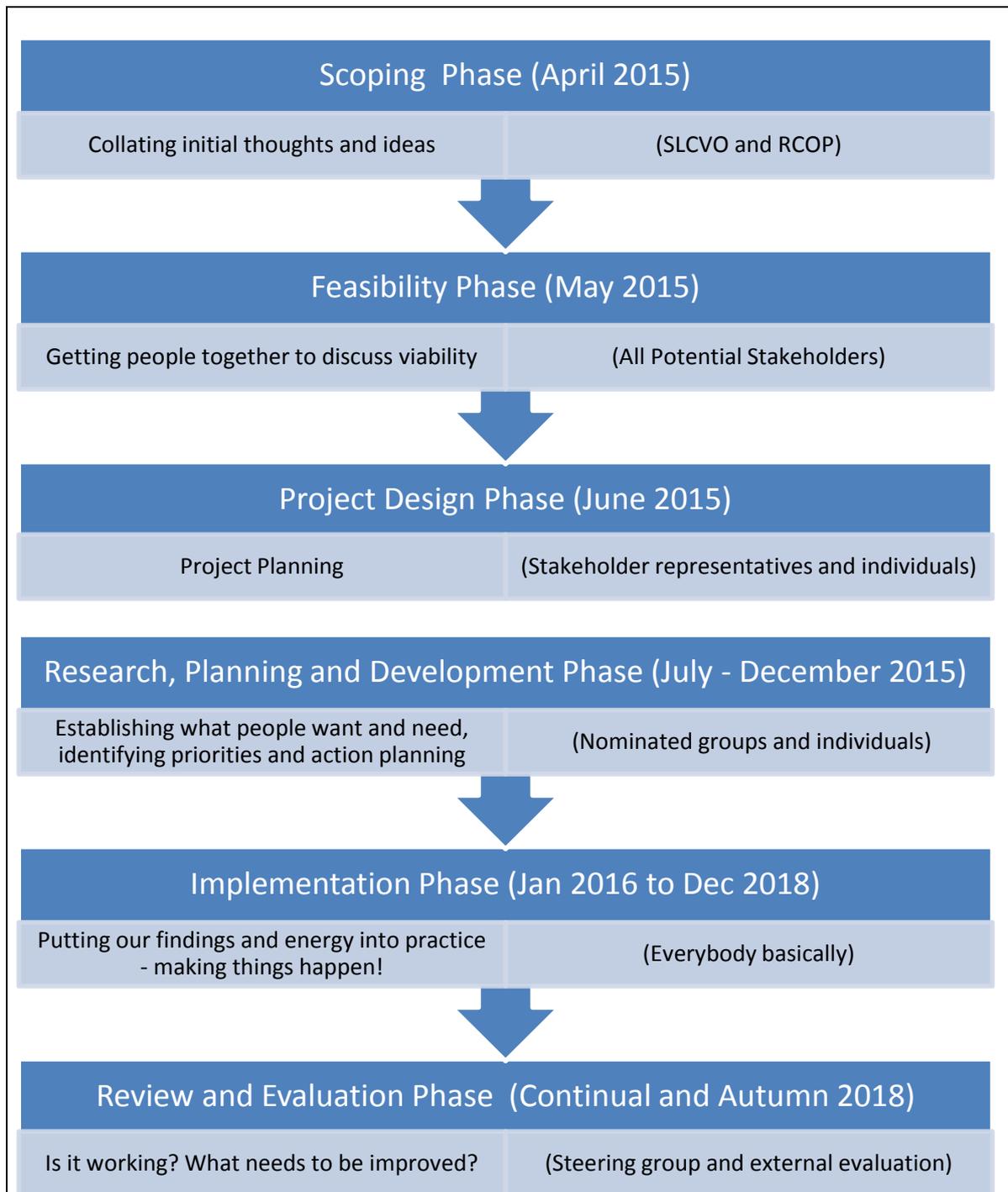
- **Is there interest in us working together to take these initial ideas forward?**
- **Are we prepared to co-operate and work together to carry out the essential research into what the community wants and needs?**
- **Are people prepared to work together to interpret research results and help develop a multi stranded community action plan?**
- **Can we share resources, skills, knowledge and expertise?**
- **Are we willing to make a potentially long term commitment as individuals or groups to this undertaking?**

If we can obtain generally positive responses to the above questions from enough individuals and groups, then our project becomes feasible. We propose to address this in a series of short workshops.

As a member of Portree's community we would like you to take part in and contribute to this feasibility study by joining us and sharing your knowledge and understanding of community life in Portree.

With this end in mind, we intend to run three community workshops on the 14th May 2015 and would love you to come along and join us. These are scheduled for 10.00 -12.00; 13.00 -15.00; and 19.00 – 21.00. If you can't manage along we would still love to hear your views and opinions – preferably by email on or around this date. Please contact us at Skye and Lochalsh CVO to register your interest before Friday 1st May 2015 (email info@slcvo.org.uk or call 01478 612921) to allow us to organise a suitable venue.

Project Outline Flow Chart



Note

This is an illustrative diagram to give an idea of shape of project over projected lifespan. It contains only broad detail to give an idea of stages and objectives.

Appendix 1- Potential Feasibility Study Group Participants

Note this is not a comprehensive list

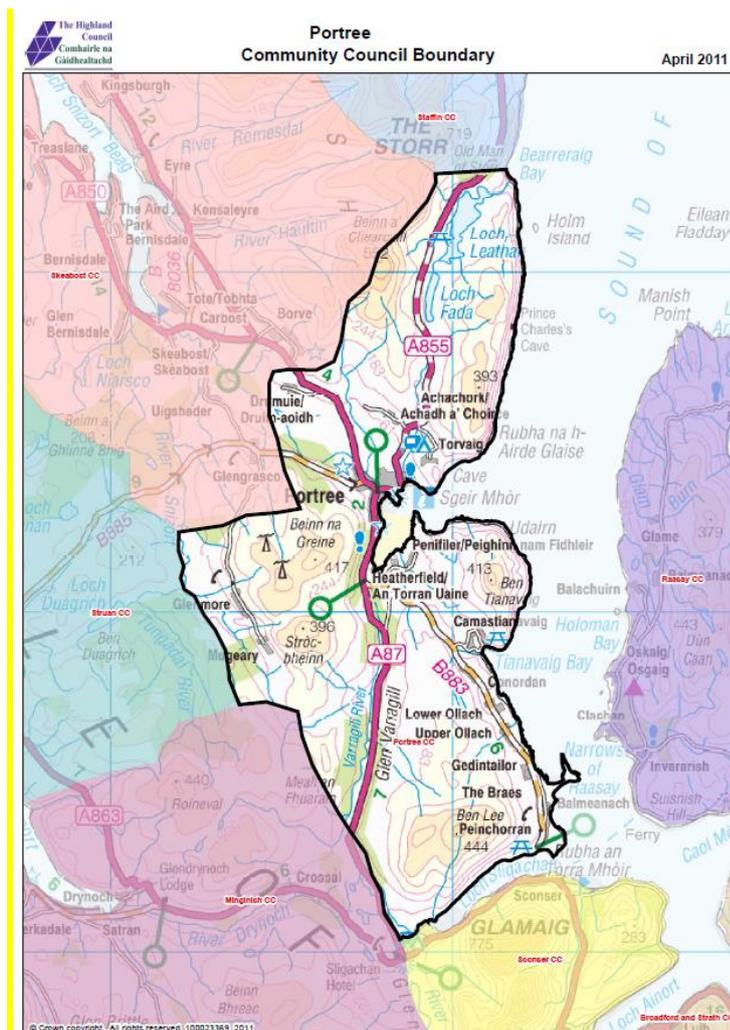
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Portree community <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Informal social media groups ○ Open invitation to anyone from the community • Third sector groups in operation in the area <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Portree Area community Trust ○ Portree Community Centre ○ YMCA ○ Skye Youth Café ○ Viewfield Garden Collective ○ Skye and Lochalsh Mental Health Association ○ Rotary Club ○ Skye and Lochalsh Citizens Advice Bureau ○ Portree Nursery Ltd ○ Portree Lunch Club ○ Portree Indoor Bowling Club ○ Portree Angling Association ○ Portree Community Pantomime Group ○ Feisean Nan Gaidheal ○ Atlas Arts ○ Care and Learning (Family First) – play groups in Portree ○ Skye Agricultural Society ○ Sluggans Woodland Park ○ Isle of Skye Accordion & Fiddle Club ○ SkyeDance ○ Skye Pipe Band ○ Youth Pipe Band ○ Portree Local History Society ○ Highland Hospice charity shop ○ Portree Gaelic Choir • Housing associations and representatives <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Lochalsh & Skye Housing Association • Enterprise organisations in operation in Portree <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Highland and Islands Enterprise • Local businesses <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ AROS ○ Cafes ○ High street shops ○ Bus operators ○ Tourist businesses such as boat trips, historical walks ○ Tourist Information centre 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highland Council <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Archive centre ○ Ward manager ○ Ward 11 councillors ○ Portree and Braes Community Council • Health and Social Care groups and organisations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Tigh na Drochaid ○ Portree Medical Centre ○ Alzheimer Scotland (Skye & Lochalsh Services) ○ Crossroads Care Skye & Lochalsh ○ Skye & Lochalsh Visually Impaired Association ○ Skye & Lochalsh Access Panel ○ Friends of Portree Hospital ○ Friends of Budhmor ○ Skye & Lochalsh Young Carers • Education and learning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Portree High School ○ West Highland College ○ High Life Highland Adult Learning to the Education & Learning • Emergency services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ RNLI ○ Police and Fire service • Sports groups <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ High Life Highland ○ Portree Tennis & Squash Club ○ Skye Camanachd ○ Portree Moorings Association ○ Portree Sailing Association ○ Portree Indoor Bowling • Existing forums <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Skye & Lochalsh Community Care Forum ○ District partnership Forum ○ Drug and Alcohol forum • Faith groups <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Skye Bible Church ○ Portree Church of Scotland ○ St Columba's Episcopal Church ○ Portree Free Church ○ St Mary's Catholic Church ○ XCEL Church ○ Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland ○ Free Church of Scotland (Continuing) ○ Associated Presbyterian Church ○ Others
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Appendix 2- Data sources

Identify and review relevant available data sources used for evaluation purposes.

- Highlands and Islands 2014 Report 'Portree Profile'
- National Records of Scotland <http://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/>
- Scottish neighborhood statistics <http://www.sns.gov.uk/>
- ALISS database - ALISS (A Local Information System for Scotland) is a search and collaboration tool for Health and Wellbeing resources in Scotland. <http://www.aliss.org>
- HTSI Skye and Lochalsh Third Sector Census report 2014
- SLCVO members database and online Health and Social Care Directory
- Live it up Highland website <https://portal.livingitup.org.uk>

Appendix 3 – Map of Area



Report prepared by

Jo-Anne Bertenshaw (SLCVO)

With a background in business analysis and long experience of community work, Jo is currently involved in third sector support and development and social enterprise growth. She also acts in a consultative role in local group development with regard to charity and legal status for groups.

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A former senior lecturer in health and social care, George has experience working in health, social work and further education, as well as familiarity with various research and community building approaches.

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RCOP Highland is a project hosted by the Highland Third Sector Interface in partnership with NHS Highland and others.