

Western Isles, Barra Network Meeting

Date: 20th March 2019

Venue: Castlebay Community School, Castlebay, HS9 5XD.

In attendance: Josh Brown (GWT), Helen Mackinnon ([Cothrom](#) and [Garadh a Bhagh a' Tuath SCIO](#)) & Katherine MacNeil (Volunteer Centre Western Isles). Followed by meetings with four P5 pupils, then a visit to Buth Bharraigh to talk with Sarah MacLean and finally a visit to Garadh a' Tuath to see the project.

- 1. Apologies:** Castlebay Community School gave apologies from several staff members as they were in the midst of an OFSTED inspection – this was obviously not known at the time we scheduled the meeting. Helen also suggested that the weather had recently been so bad that islanders were likely to be suffering from cabin fever and were making good use of the fine weather at the time of the meeting!

2. Discussion

Working closely together (both based at the Cothrom site) HM & KM gave details of the activities going on locally. The community garden (Garadh a Bhagh a' Tuath) has about 30-40 volunteers (across the generations) on its books and invites school groups in to be part of their activities. Selling everything they grow they are a vibrant hub for the community, with a community café running in the hall adjacent. This café gave opportunities to many, including adults with additional support needs. Originally the project received EU funding to help get people into work, but funding was pulled when it became volunteer run. Because of these volunteers though it has kept running and developed even more.

On a visit to the site HM showed JB around. They have wind turbines providing some of the electricity used, a number of 'no dig' beds have been developed (which has helped to make much of the work more accessible to many) and there are plans to create managed allotments, as well a large new building to help them expand the scope of their work.

HM also explains that they're also in collaboration on the Hebridean Horticulture Course which will give young people a certificate (from Lewis Castle College (UHI)) and will become something that can hopefully be copied elsewhere.

The Volunteer Centre helps organisations find volunteers and vice-versa. This includes visiting schools and utilising the Saltire Awards. There's a current project with Eoligarry School, bulb planting at [Cobhair Bharraigh](#) Day Centre.

3. Generations Working Together – national update

New Early Years IG Resource – the new GWT publication for Early Years' practitioners is available for download here:

<https://generationsworkingtogether.org/resources/intergenerational-guide-in-early-learning-and-childcare>) and was launched at the National Conference on March 6th. Details

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of the conference and our Recognition Award winners are here:

<https://generationsworkingtogether.org/news/gwt-conference-2019-26-03-2019>

Training – this is now offered on request and if we can get sufficient numbers we're able to offer a course anywhere. Organisations/individuals are welcome to request a training course and can find details as below:

[Intergenerational Training for Trainers & Practitioners](#) – this 1-day CPD accredited course looks at how to bring generations together, measure and monitor the impact of your project

Plus the next edition of the [International Certificate in Intergenerational Learning \(ICIL\)](#) begins on the 23rd of April. This is a 6-week course run in collaboration with and accredited by, the University of Granada. It also gives students 50 hours of CPD accredited learning.

Dr. Ali Somers, of Apples & Honey Nightingale, has recently [published her report](#) detailing the findings of her research into the benefits that intergenerational work has on the wellbeing of older residents within the care home. A key finding is that IG work can be 'prescribed' as an anti-depressant.

4. Meeting with P5 pupils

JB chatted with four pupils who have been involved in the project with St. Brendan's hospital. 'Armchair Athletics' gives pupils and older people the chance to get to know each other, chat and play games. From tin alley & bowling, to playing with balloons and bean bags, the project involved gentle activities that gave residents the chance to stay/keep active whilst also bringing the generations together.

JB asked what the pupils thought they'd gained from the sessions and they explained it was "good talking to older people", they enjoyed singing songs, listening to local stories. It made them "feel happy", they felt they'd "done something good" and learnt a lot – particularly about what life was like for the older people years ago. One thing that stood out were stories of how Gaelic was banned and how many of the older people had grown up without being able to speak Gaelic – this in comparison to now, when the pupils explained they have 2 lessons a week in English.

They also explained they visited the North Bay Garden Centre (Garadh a Bhagh a' Tuath) and were involved in the activities there too.

There are photos and more details on the [Castlebay Community School Facebook page](#).

5. Conversation with Sarah MacLean at Buth Bharraigh

SM explained she wears several hats but gave details of some of the projects/activities going on. Every Wednesday morning a group of 8 nursery pupils go to St. Brendan's Hospital. Likewise on a Thursday a similar group goes to [Cobhair Bharraigh](#) Day Centre. Activities are fun and involve making something together creatively, often they're activities that the older

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people will remember from their youth. She explained the only funding they've received is a small amount for materials.

Consequently she suggests that more help with finding and accessing funding would be very helpful. Likewise, being able to identify and connect with other similar groups in order to share ideas, experiences etc. would help a lot.

One project which has the potential to involve the whole community and span the generations involves recycling plastic (from that used by island's population itself, plus collected as rubbish from the beaches) and turning it into saleable products. This would engage not only young and old, but could offer opportunities for a wide range of activities; from marketing and product design to litter picking and book-keeping. She cites [Precious Plastic](#) and [Still Life](#) as examples/inspiration for the project.

6. Next meeting – unknown at present.