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Building capacity for a sustainable population in the Outer Hebrides

Final Report

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COM-PÀIRTEACHAS NAN EILEAN SIAR



OUTER HEBRIDES PARTNERSHIP

Table of contents

1	Introduction	4
1.1	Background & objectives	4
1.2	Research questions	5
1.3	National and local outcomes	6
1.4	Methodology	7
1.5	Report Structure	8
2	Perception & image	9
2.1	Introduction	9
2.2	Basis for choice of stories about Outer Hebrides	9
2.3	External perception	11
2.4	Attitudes to enterprise	12
2.5	How do people in Hebrides contribute to their external perception?	13
2.6	How does perception influence confidence?	14
2.7	How do you change the perception?	15
2.8	Conclusions	18
3	Confidence & identity	20
3.1	Perceptions of remote rural communities	20
3.2	Exploring identity	22
3.3	Using images	25
3.4	Magic wand	25
3.5	Unique selling points	26
3.6	Conclusions	26
4	Effective approaches to integration	29
4.1	Building effective community capacity	29
4.2	Tapping into the diaspora	32
4.3	Linking action with the cultural pathfinder	33
4.4	Conclusions	35
5	Taking advantage of community strengths	37
5.1	Existing projects	37
5.2	Future projects to take forward	37
5.3	Barriers	38
5.4	Areas for Support	39
5.5	Developing ideas	39
5.6	Critical success factors	40
5.7	The impact of ideas	41
5.8	Prioritising projects	41
6	Conclusions & Key Action Points	44
6.1	Building bridges	44
6.2	Improving image and perception	46
6.3	Taking forward flagship projects	46
6.4	Key Action points	48
6.5	Summary table of action points	51
6.6	Links to National Outcomes	53
	Appendix A - Forum Theatre Transcripts	55
	Appendix B – Project ideas, Barriers and Support	61
	Appendix C – Outline Specifications for Flagship projects	67
	Appendix D – Glossary	72

Summary of key findings

The Outer Hebrides Community Planning Partnership commissioned research to take forward some of the Outer Hebrides Migration Study (OHMS) recommendations on building community capacity. In particular around:

- Promoting confidence and self-determination;
- Building capacity; and
- Developing proactive engagement.

Improving image and perception

This research identified a strong impression within the media that the Outer Hebrides are frequently portrayed in a negative and stereotypical way. To some extent this has resulted in a self-perpetuating image that damages community confidence. This element of the research highlighted three potential action points:

- Developing a strong positive counter-image that focuses on the unique selling points of quality of life, high quality produce and renewable energy resources.
- Showcasing the positive aspects of the islands to editors and journalists; and
- Taking forward a sustained and coordinated programme of positive stories.

Building bridges

The research found that strong bonds within communities may weaken the links between community groups and with decision-makers. And demographic changes have reduced the pool of available skills at communities' disposal. People moving to the islands do not always feel able to get involved in community-based activities. The research highlighted that integration was a two-way process requiring give and take from existing and new members of the community.

So the research identified two possible actions aimed at promoting integration and widening the pool of available skills.

- A welcome pack for people moving to the islands that would inform people about how history, language and culture influence the way of life in the Outer Hebrides.
- A skills bank enabling new residents to offer their skills to existing community groups.

Promoting inclusion

Our research reinforced the findings from the OHMS that women feel that opportunities and services often do not reflect their needs adequately. This is perhaps a consequence of under-representation in elected and senior management positions. And young people also feel excluded from many aspects of decision-making.

The report highlights two possible action points to help promote inclusion:

- A mentoring programme to help women move into positions of authority; and

- Clear long-term commitment to involving young people in decision-making.

Increasing community capacity

Our research identified a wealth of existing community activity taking place right across the Outer Hebrides. However the fragmented nature of some communities and the lack of bridging links mean that actions are not always well coordinated between groups or with mainstream activity.

The report suggests three ways of improving the effectiveness of community actions:

- A greater focus on coordinating existing community actions and projects;
- Identifying more stable funding streams for actions that support local outcomes; and
- Tapping into the extended Hebridean diaspora, and making use of the knowledge and skills of the Gaelic Business Club.

Taking forward flagship projects

Our research involved prioritising community-based actions based on the potential impact they will have on sustaining island businesses and communities. Two key areas scored highly and these were:

- Developing and marketing local products; and
- Research into renewable and green energy.

Both of these projects are being progressed at the moment. However this research has identified their importance in relation to sustaining the population of the islands and highlighted that they need to be given adequate resourcing and strategic backing.

How actions link to national outcomes

Figure 1 below summarises how the suggested actions would help the partners to achieve the national Objectives set out in the Scottish Government's Performance Management Framework and reflected in the Single Outcome Agreement.

Figure 1 How proposed actions contribute to National Outcomes

National Outcomes/ Action Points	1. Clear vision	2. Publicity visits	3. Positive publicity	4. Welcome pack	5. Skills Bank	6. Supporting women	7. Involving youth	8. Coordinating 3 rd sector	9. Financial sustainability	10. Off island support	11. Energy research	12. developing products
2. We realise our full economic potential with more and better employment opportunities for our people.	✓				✓	✓				✓	✓	✓
3. We are better educated, more skilled and more successful, renowned for our research and innovation.					✓					✓	✓	
4. Our young people are successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens.							✓					
7. We have tackled the significant inequalities in Scottish society.				✓		✓	✓					
10. We live in well-designed, sustainable places where we are able to access the amenities and services we need.	✓							✓				
11. We have strong, resilient and supportive communities where people take responsibility for their own actions and how they affect others.				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			
13. We take pride in a strong, fair and inclusive national identity.	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓			✓		
15. Our public services are high quality, continually improving, efficient and responsive to local people's needs	✓						✓	✓	✓			

1 Introduction

This section sets out the context within which this research has been developed. It outlines the key findings from the Outer Hebrides Migration Study and sets out the specific objectives for this research and the methods used to meet them.

1.1 Background & objectives

Outer Hebrides Migration Study

The Outer Hebrides Migration Study (OHMS) was published in January 2007. It set out key ambitions for where the Outer Hebrides wanted to get to in terms of population and community sustainability over the next 15 years. The study projected the likely impact of recent population trends, which included:

- A long-term decline in the number of women of child-bearing age from around 4,500 in 2004 to around 3,500 in 2019;
- A drop in primary school age children from 2,100 to 1,800 by 2019;
- A drop in the secondary school age population from 2,100 to 1,900 by 2019;
- A small drop in the working age population of around 300 people by 2019 – although a much older age profile in the workforce; and
- Average age of the population increasing from 42.4 to 45.3 between 2004 and 2019.

These projected population changes will have numerous linked social and economic impacts that affect service provision and the economy.

The OHMS concluded that re-balancing the population profile will require radical changes in the numbers of in-migrants combined with reductions in out-migration. It suggests the need to increase in-migration among under 45s by 40% on 2004-05 levels. This would equate to an additional 185 people each year. At the same time the numbers of 16 to 24 year olds leaving the Islands should be reduced by around a third. This would mean trying to retain 40 females and 20 males from this age group who currently leave the Islands each year.

One of the long-term aims that the report set out focused on confidence and self-determination. It set out the following vision¹:

'Proud, confident and forward-looking communities strive for a continuing high quality of life and want to play a greater part in shaping their own future. Communities recognise that change and diversity are essential but want to retain those defining features which make the Outer Hebrides unique: landscape, religion, Gaelic language and heritage.'

The report listed some of the current issues preventing this vision from being realised:

¹ Outer Hebrides Community Planning Partnership (2007); Outer Hebrides Migration Study; Hall Aitken

- There is an in-built fear of failure and an innate lack of confidence among many native Islanders.
- Individuals and communities currently lack the determination and opportunity to become more involved in decision-making.
- There is an established expectation that the public sector always has the solution.
- There is a perception, particularly among those living away from the Islands, that most power rests with a small number of elites.
- The media coverage of the Outer Hebrides is disproportionately negative and presents a gloomy image to the wider world.

Study objectives

Subsequently the Outer Hebrides Community Planning Partnership commissioned further research to take forward some of the OHMS recommendations made on building community capacity. The specific recommendations were to carry out research into:

- Promoting confidence and self-determination;
- Building capacity; and
- Developing proactive engagement.

Ultimately the work will help the partners to identify practical ways of getting more people involved in the decisions that affect their day to day lives and play a greater role in building a sustainable future for their communities.

1.2 Research questions

To address these objectives, we developed a series of research questions which we agreed with the Steering Group. These were:

1. What issues around confidence and perception exist within the populations associated with the Outer Hebrides?

- What levels of confidence in social outcomes and economic opportunities exist in the populations associated with the Outer Hebrides?
- What are the key drivers of confidence in social and economic opportunities among both indigenous Hebrideans and in-migrants?
- How can confidence, optimism and self-determination be supported effectively?
- What are the perceptions of residents, in-migrants, and the diaspora, of themselves and each other; and life in the Outer Hebrides?
- What are the key components of the Outer Hebrides identity and how can these add to competitiveness and support for capacity and growth?

2. What prevents and promotes integration between populations in the Outer Hebrides?

- What are the relationships between indigenous populations and in-migrants?

- What are the aids/barriers to integration between these populations?
- What are the most effective ways to support integration between these populations and overcome any barriers?

3. What effective examples of action exist in the Outer Hebrides and elsewhere in retaining young people, families; attracting migrants?

- What examples exist of effective, community solutions to social and economic issues from within the islands and elsewhere?
- What levers of change which can also be transferred?
- How can the skills of the diaspora be engaged?
- How can the advantages of the Outer Hebrides be best promoted?

4. What are the best ways of communicating and engaging with different communities to promote sustainable social and economic development?

- What are the opportunities for initiating and developing potential?
- What are the barriers and supports?
- What timescales and resources are needed?

1.3 National and local outcomes

Scottish Government

Through its Budget Spending Review, the Scottish Government has clearly stated the overall purpose of the devolved administration, which is to:

'focus government and public services on creating a more successful country, with opportunities for all of Scotland to flourish, through increasing sustainable economic growth.'

The delivery of the government's Purpose is supported by five Strategic Objectives². These are aiming to achieve a Scotland that is:

- **WEALTHIER & FAIRER** - Enabling businesses and people to increase their wealth and more people to share fairly in that wealth;
- **SMARTER** - Expanding opportunities for Scots to succeed from nurture through to lifelong learning, ensuring higher and more widely shared achievements;
- **HEALTHIER** - Helping people to sustain and improve their health, especially in disadvantaged communities, ensuring better, local and faster access to health care;
- **SAFER & STRONGER** - Helping local communities to flourish, becoming stronger, safer places to live, offering improved opportunities and a better quality of life; and
- **GREENER** - Improving Scotland's natural and built environment and the sustainable use and enjoyment of it.

² Scottish Government (2007); Scottish Budget Spending Review 2007; P.2

These are supported by 15 national outcomes which describe in more detail what the government wants to achieve over a ten year period. These outcomes form the basis for the concordat agreement between the Scottish Government and Local Authorities. They will also be used by all publicly funded agencies in Scotland to monitor progress against the Government's strategic objectives.

The suggested action points emerging from this research will make an important contribution to several of these national outcomes.

Single Outcome Agreement

The Comhairle has recently published its draft Single Outcome Agreement (SOA) setting out how it will contribute to achieving the National Outcomes across the Outer Hebrides. Each of the 15 National Outcomes is set in a local context and key challenges, agreed local priorities, actions, indicators and targets are described. The SOA sets out 51 Local Outcomes and the action points emerging from this research will particularly contribute to those around growing and sustaining population:

- 1.6 - an increase in net civilian migration; and
- 1.7 - an increase in working age population.

However they will also contribute to achieving other outcomes around equality, growing businesses and developing a strong national identity.

1.4 Methodology

Our approach combined desk research with several more innovative approaches. These included:

- Using forum theatre workshops to explore how the Outer Hebrides communities perceive themselves;
- Carrying out media interviews with journalists and editors to determine how the Outer Hebrides are perceived from elsewhere;
- Working with community groups and local agencies to identify and develop projects to help identify ways to build capacity within the Outer Hebrides communities.

Forum Theatre workshops

A series of seven forum theatre workshops took place in Balivanich and Stornoway facilitated by Borderline Theatre Company. These built upon previous research undertaken for the OHMS which highlighted some of the key issues affecting communities. These took place with small groups ranging from three to seven participants who were recruited through notices and intermediaries. These workshops aimed to gather in-depth views on different perspectives of the islands. Inevitably these views did not always reflect those of the majority of people but rather reflected the wide range of opinions and perceptions that exist. However we were able to test the views presented against those gathered through the OHMS survey and focus groups which involved over 1,600 respondents.

Media Interviews

Interviews were carried out with Editors, Scottish correspondents and journalists working for all of the major UK and Scottish broadsheets and several tabloids. We conducted a total of 15 interviews either by telephone or face to face. These interviews were taped and transcribed.

Project survey and workshops

We then carried out a survey of community-based projects and organisations which was circulated electronically through email and web-links through public and community sector contacts. We received valid responses from 77 projects.

The final stage of the research involved workshops and consultations to prioritise and take forward the project ideas that were identified through the survey. Three workshops were held in Stornoway with representatives from projects and key executive agencies such as HIE, the Comhairle and Lews Castle College. These were followed up by further consultations and desk research to develop the project ideas and actions.

1.5 Report Structure

Following this introduction the remainder of the report is structured as follows:

- Perception and image;
- Confidence and identity;
- Effective examples of promoting and supporting integration;
- Taking advantage of community strengths; and
- Conclusions and key action points.

2 Perception & image

This chapter explores how the Hebrides and their communities are perceived externally. This explores the factors that contribute to this perception and how these externally portrayed images might affect community confidence. A key element within this strand of research was to find out how the Outer Hebrides were portrayed by the media and the reasons behind this. This was based on interviews with journalists and editors from both local and national newspapers.

2.1 Introduction

There are numerous ways in which community confidence can be influenced. However, the OHMS highlighted the role that external perception of the Islands might play in influencing communities. In particular we wanted to explore the role that image and perception play in influencing in and out-migration. These issues were seen to be influential in migrant groups' motivations to move to and from the islands.

2.2 Basis for choice of stories about Outer Hebrides

We sought to find out how journalists and editors decided on which stories to cover and on how they are covered. Readers should bear in mind that much of the views and statements in this chapter are transcriptions of interviews. They reflect the opinions and perceptions of individuals and are not necessarily founded on accurate information. The content of this section should therefore be viewed, and any conclusions drawn, with this in mind.

A focus on the quirky

Most journalists and editors are clear that media representation of the Hebrides tries to portray a certain stereotype. As one senior journalist explained:

'I think in general a huge proportion of journalism is about stereotypes and the Outer Hebrides are very obvious victims of that. I think there is actually a degree of internal racism about it. You stick labels on places, they're 'wee free', they're hard drinking, and everything is a kind of parody of the Whisky Galore isle.'

'All of these stories are, in one way or another (a) - selected and (b) – presented in order to fit these stereotypes and in the process the news values become distorted and presentation distorted too. Most things don't fit these stereotypes at all.'

A similar view was also put forward by a regional news editor

'The majority of the time it was felt national coverage almost 'mocks' islanders, or portrays important decisions in a condescending manner ("Outer Hebrides closed for business"). Any story which fits this box of 'quaint and naïve' seems to have huge appeal to the national media.'

So news editors and reporters look to fit reality into the pre-conceived image of Hebridean society. One editor outlined how the Molly Campbell story had been twisted to fit this image:

'her home life on Lewis was portrayed as a bit desolate (living in the middle of nowhere in a poor Council house) when in fact she lived in a very acceptable local authority house in a quiet, safe cul-de-sac great for children to play out and only a few miles from town on a regular bus route. In fact Molly had as many amenities available to her as many children the same age on the mainland and probably in a much safer situation than children being brought up in some areas of Glasgow or Edinburgh.'

Some feel that the caricature has become self-fulfilling and that local freelance journalists know the kind of 'context' that newspapers expect from them. They therefore often add the caricature element to the stories before pitching them to news editors.

'There is a preconception that anything from the islands will be quirky in some way and I have often commented that quite strong stories are not picked up unless they have some sort of quirkiness about the remoteness, about religion, about something which seems in some way odd or extreme. There is less interest (from outside media) if you don't have these ingredients for stories from the islands.'

This view was further strengthened in an interview with a tabloid editor who talked about more 'dysfunctional families' in the Outer Hebrides as if this was a firmly documented fact rather than a somewhat prejudiced assertion. He then went on:

'you tend to get the hippy type, running away from it all, loathe to use the term "white settler", non-native islanders. But then the islanders themselves can also throw up quite a lot of quirky tales.'

He also highlighted that people tend to view the Islands as a window into Scotland's rural past, being 'around 20 years behind where the rest of us are'. He also conceded that: 'Whether it is conscious or subconscious I think there probably is a bit of a flavour of that backwardness that comes out.'

More effort to gather stories

One tabloid editor highlighted that to run a story from the Outer Hebrides it had to be something big to justify the expense and effort of getting there:

'while you might go to Falkirk on a whim you wouldn't go to Barra or Lewis on the same sort of hunch. And I think that when you're in these closed communities as well the story is more compact and you are likely to get more strands of it and you make the trip and you make the contacts and things just tend to grow. Whereas if it's in the city it can get lost a little bit.'

There is a similar issue with covering Television news stories in the Islands. To get evening news pictures, there has to be an element of planning, because cameramen would have to leave first thing in the morning. And the times and distances involved mean that only Lewis pictures can reach the evening news. However this may improve with the launch of the Gaelic Digital service, meaning that some pictures can be shared with the news teams for Reporting Scotland.

2.3 External perception

Way of life seen as an oddity

Increasingly many potential visitors rely on the internet in researching potential travel destinations. And the way travel writers and visitors perceive a place can have a strong influence on its wider image. As part of this research we carried out a review of independent travel information. While much of the coverage of the Islands' uniqueness places it in a distinctive light, the opening page of one online resource (undiscovered Scotland.com) focuses again on a more negative interpretation of this uniqueness. The opening page of its coverage of the Outer Hebrides has this information:

'The first thing that any visitor to the Outer Hebrides needs to know is that, on Lewis and Harris in particular, Sunday observance is very strong. Most transport links to the island and within it do not operate on a Sunday. Most shops, petrol stations, cafes, pubs, and visitor attractions are closed. Sunday observance is part of the culture of Lewis and Harris, and part of what makes them unique. However, given the difficulty of accessing services of any kind on a Sunday, our advice would be to ensure you know exactly how your food, drink, transport and accommodation is going to be provided in advance: or plan your visit to the Outer Hebrides in a way that avoids a stay on Lewis or Harris on a Saturday or Sunday night.'

On the page for Stornoway the website has a picture of a bus with 'sorry not in service' on the front, and the caption: 'Sunday bus service'. For good or bad it appears that the issue of Sunday Observance on the islands is a pervasive one.

Stereotyping of Hebrideans

Journalists from within the Isles are acutely aware that external journalists report on the basis of stereotypes. A constant theme in this characterisation is the Bible or the Bottle dichotomy. This is backed up by senior journalists in the national press:

'they tend to think in terms of the bible bashing, sabbatarian, dour, gloomy image or they prefer to think in terms of these whacky islanders who are always drinking too much.'

'What I would say is that possibly the Outer Hebrides tend to suffer from that stereotyping more than most other parts of the UK. I think that is almost certainly true.'

Another interviewee agreed that stories appear as caricatures from the outside and may get tabloid headlines because they are in the Outer Hebrides, but would be of almost of no importance in the Outer Hebrides themselves.

One paper feels that it is almost alone in taking seriously the 'political agenda' of land-ownership and cultural and linguistic distinctiveness in the Outer Hebrides. They feel this is peripheral to most of the rest of the country.

One Scottish broadsheet editor strongly denied that there was any stereotyping among the Scottish papers. He did concede that London-based papers may well portray the bucolic image. However several times he referred to the Outer Hebrides and other parts of rural Scotland as 'the Hinterland'.

A negative perspective

While most interviewees denied that there was a bias towards negative reporting of the Outer Hebrides, they did suggest that there were very few positive features coming out of the islands. However this was seen to be because positive stories were not pushed enough. One editor's comments here were typical:

'the very nature of news stories is that there is normally a negative feel to them. So if the only time that the islands are in the paper is because of a negative news story then by its very nature it is a negative portrayal.'

A freelance journalist pointed out that even with more positive stories (for example about tourism), the newspaper editors would add in negative spin on the story – whether it be poor weather, or things being closed on Sundays.

And when the Muslim community in the Outer Hebrides tried to put forward a more positive view of Island life as a counter-weight to the Molly Campbell story this was not taken up to any great extent by national newspapers.

2.4 Attitudes to enterprise

We asked media representatives about how enterprising they perceived the Outer Hebrides to be.

A culture of dependency

One business editor from a leading paper felt that there was a poor perception of the Outer Hebrides within the business sphere. He commented that:

'there is a perception, whether it is right or wrong, that it is the kind of place where there really isn't much in the way of enterprise and entrepreneurship and it's the kind of place where people have large amounts of public subsidy whether it be from transport to enterprise initiatives and where there isn't much enterprise.'

He particularly focused on the recent Lewis Wind Power decision and the resulting perception that it brought of the Islands not open to change. He accepts that this may not be the reality, but that he has picked up strongly that this is the perception among the business and media community.

He also feels that the delay in UHI achieving University status also damages the perception of the Highlands and Islands generally and reinforces the image that there is a problem in terms of enterprise.

Another local interviewee disagreed that the islands lacked an enterprising culture:

'I think that there is a strong entrepreneurial spirit here, however there is also a sense from islanders that they must also preserve their special way of life and unique environment, they do not want economic success at any price, but instead hope to find a good balance.'

Outer Hebrides versus Shetland

Several interviewees contrasted the image and portrayal of other island groups such as Orkney and Shetland with that of the Outer Hebrides. While these islands perhaps shared many of the characteristics of the Outer Hebrides they do not seem to be portrayed with the same image of fecklessness and dependency. One interviewee concluded that:

'there is a relationship between reality and image and the Outer Hebrides in general hasn't done enough to develop the basis on which perceptions would change.'

A lack of engagement with national media

One editor has questioned the lack of briefing papers coming out of the Outer Hebrides and feels that this could allow agencies to get a more rounded view of what is going on. He feels that there is a greater perceived barrier between local agencies and the national press.

This was backed up by others:

'They're certainly not battering down my door. I think the nature of the islands is that they are quite insular, keep themselves to themselves.'

One news editor had been surprised by the Outer Hebrides when he visited, having expected it to be all crofting, weaving and fishing. He feels it would improve the perception of the media if they were regularly invited to visit and see things for themselves.

2.5 How do people in Hebrides contribute to their external perception?

A self-fulfilling prophecy?

One national broadsheet journalist considered that Hebrideans might, to some extent, be contributing to their own stereo-typing, he stated that:

'I sometimes wonder if it's actually chicken and egg. I don't want to be unfair to the people in Lewis or in the rest of the Outer Hebrides but I just wonder sometimes if we have allowed the image that is portrayed by the media to grow unchecked and whether we ourselves have contributed to that image over the years and over the decades. I think there is an element of that - that we have sometimes been quite happy for ourselves to be portrayed in that caricature way that the media sometimes adopts to the islands. But certainly having said that there is no doubt that the mainland media, in my mind anyway, has taken that caricature and tended to run with it, whatever the circumstances of the story and whatever the value of a story and actually whatever the background of a story. The first response has been to say "Oh it's the islands, lets look for the humour here, lets look for the stereotyp here".'

This suggests an explanation as to why the stereotypical portrayal has been such an enduring one, when people still see a value in deploying it when it suits.

2.6 How does perception influence confidence?

Our interviews with key media representatives also sought to explore how they considered the portrayal of the Outer Hebrides might affect overall community confidence at the grass roots level.

Current confidence dropping

One local journalist has picked up a recent drop in the level of community confidence.

'The confidence of local people on the islands is not very good at the moment. It is probably as bad as I've seen it in the time that I've been covering news and current affairs. I am hearing more and more, from people I wouldn't of dreamed of, saying things are so bad they are thinking of moving away. I don't remember hearing as many people say that as I have probably in the last six months.'

'It would appear to be just that they don't envisage any significant up turn in the general economy, in work opportunities, not just for themselves but also for their sons and daughters coming up behind them.'

Another locally based journalist also identified a current uncertainty:

'I think generally there's a bit of uncertainty in the islands about the way ahead. I think the whole wind farm issue, without coming down on one side or the other, raised the awareness of the doubts about the way ahead and what the islands need to progress the way ahead.'

Confidence affected by negative coverage

Several interviewees identified a link between negative portrayals of the Outer Hebrides and declining confidence. Interviewees felt that a negative view through the external media would damage the confidence of residents in two ways:

- Firstly, it will make them feel bad about themselves; and
- Secondly it may foster resentment towards the external media and make people wary about speaking to journalists. (This may serve to intensify the stereotypical perception of dourness).

One journalist summed this up as:

'I think inevitably if there were a consistent, long running, negative portrayal that would inevitably affect the confidence of people. I think perception and portrayal of one's community is important to people and any community that would be under sustained negative portrayal would be affected by that in a negative way in the same way that a sustained positive portrayal would be very beneficial to any community in the Outer Hebrides or anywhere else.'

And another came to a similar view:

'it can I know be difficult to break out of this cycle of believing that there's really nothing you can do and I think that that's probably one of the things that afflicts the Outer Hebrides for sure.'

However one locally based interviewee disagreed:

'I don't think islanders gain or lose confidence by looking at national media reports I think they are well aware about the reality of living in the islands and it is not such a bad reality.'

This interviewee went on to paint a more optimistic picture of where the islands are than most others:

'There is a real sense that the islands are developing with better transport links, better educational and training opportunities and even better job/ business opportunities as the world becomes an infinitely smaller place due to broadband. I feel islanders believe they will eventually have it all - a good economy, ease of connection to the mainland at an affordable level, good services, generally a nice lifestyle and that all of this is available now or will soon be within reach.'

2.7 How do you change the perception?

One interviewee identified that his newspaper has contributed to challenging the stereotype by:

- Not pandering to it; and
- Taking the mickey out of the way national and international media portray the Hebrides.

One view is that the stereotype has taken a long time to develop and therefore will take a long time to change. It is a similar problem to the way Scotland is perceived – in terms of whisky and kilts.

Confronting the 'stereotypical' perception

Several interviewees have highlighted a need to start taking on the perceived stereotype. There is a realisation that this will not result in a change from negative to positive coverage overnight, but that it might at least start to dilute the negative coverage a little. One interviewee made the following points about countering the traditional stereotypes:

'The people who live in this part of Scotland have as much right as anyone else to be taken seriously, have as much right to avoid caricature as anyone else but on the other hand the people themselves must take the first step in doing that and they must be much more aggressive in countering any incidents or examples they meet. Where they feel that the caricature that they are always confronted with is changed then the people in the media start to treat them with a great deal more seriousness than sometimes has been the case in the past.'

The actual process of carrying out this research with the media has to some extent provided impetus to the process of countering stereotypes. For example one senior editor has indicated a willingness to speak to local agencies and leaders. He suggested that such an approach could be a useful first step in developing a more positive relationship with the media.

And one high profile national tabloid promoted a 'Gaelic Week' with daily features portraying positive achievement of Gaels including Julie Fowlis and Donnie Munro.

This kind of positive coverage is priceless in seeking to counter the pre-existing stereotypes.

Develop alternative perceptions

One interviewee felt that while the stereotype itself cannot be got rid of, it is possible to develop other perceptions which can sit alongside it. For example if the Outer Hebrides were to become the hub of community-based enterprise based around renewable energy.

'If the whole of the Outer Hebrides ends up under community ownership and it became a dynamic hub of community based enterprise and so on I don't think there is any problem in selling that sort of image and it sits alongside it but there has to be a collective will that these things are going to happen before you can sell the image.'

Another local journalist highlighted that (the Outer Hebrides) are:

'beautifully scenic, they are environmentally attractive, they are safe, they have some relatively good schools, they have got a lot of relatively good services and they, in a world of internet and home working, are as connected if not very much more connected to centres of economic opportunity or centres of resource availability than they have ever been in the past.'

He suggested that more could be done to promote these really distinctive and attractive things to a general population who probably are getting tired of the demands and the expenses of town life.

'I think people have to be convinced that, like anywhere, they would have a more attractive life in the islands, that the islands have something to offer them in terms of job, in terms of their economic well being, in terms of their families and building around these kind of strengths.'

Good news stories?

One senior Scottish editor has identified two potential areas where good news stories would be welcomed and could have a positive impact on both community confidence and inward migration:

'if there is a small vibrant company or business that is doing very well, our business page as are other Scottish newspapers is wide open to tell good stories because a lot of business coverage can be negative.'

'a way to focus on that and to tell that story is through the experience of an individual family or families going into a small community. Again newspapers are very receptive to that kind of coverage.'

The business editor also felt that stories of entrepreneurs achievements would be a useful way to improve confidence and the external perception:

'I think maybe there is something, it may be a Scottish thing but also perhaps a Highland thing, where people are slightly reluctant and are a little bit backward in coming forward, a little bit modest when it comes to their achievements which is a very charming quality and admirable in some ways. Perhaps it should be that the

success stories are signalled a bit more and are publicised a bit more because there are some out there.'

A proactive approach by agencies

Several interviewees, both local and national, were surprised at how little the public agencies in the Outer Hebrides engage positively with the media. One local journalist thought that agencies could be more proactive:

'I think they (the local agencies) are failing somewhat in doing that because we don't actually see much in terms of positive promotion of the success stories. They get small mentions in the local press now and again but there doesn't seem to be any active promotion of it.'

And the business editor of one paper also felt there was more of a role for enterprise agencies in promoting the feel-good factor:

'I think also perhaps some of the bodies which are designed to promote enterprise could do themselves a bit better by being a bit more positive and a bit more proactive when it comes to demonstrating some of their successes. But it's a long-term thing. It's not going to happen overnight and achieving a kind of collective feel good factor is not something you can absolutely plan on how you actually do it.'

'I think all these things are important and I can see that all these things need to work together and for these agencies to work together with a concerted approach to making the most of what does happen to instil that confidence in people who may know very little about the islands, sitting in plush offices in the big cities, they need that message to be out there and it needs to put on their desks in front of them, the successes there are, the quality of life that is available. I think all that would work. Once you start to build up their confidence that would probably go a long way to creating job opportunities in themselves, for businesses to have the confidence to move to the islands would be a good move.'

One interviewee highlighted the improvements brought about by the cooperative on Eriskay:

'that's a really good example of something where people have made it happen themselves.'

And another local interviewee suggested that as one of the most reported corners of Scotland, organisations wanting to promote a better image of the islands should tap into that hunger instead of viewing the media 'as the enemy'.

'They need to start putting a far more positive spin on any negative stories and heralding positive achievements much more.'

However part of the problem might be the limited opportunities for promoting genuine good news. One interviewee highlighted the potential problems of using PR without genuine good news and that it would appear purely as 'spin'.

'I think everybody recognises now that PR is an important part of perception and that perception is an important part of moving things forward in a positive way. What they are selling has to be genuine, when they're selling good news it has to be genuine good news and the real positives have to be sold.'

Another interviewee also sounded a note of caution:

'There will always be plucky entrepreneurs who have good idea and there will always be interesting things happening in the micro economy of a place like the Outer Hebrides but unless its underpinned by sufficient internal capital to actually generate substantial, sustainable activity then these will always be one off news stories, they wont be part of a wider transformation.'

2.8 Conclusions

Stereotyping of the islands

Our interviews with key media representatives paint a fairly clear picture of how the Outer Hebrides are portrayed. Even those professionals responsible for covering the area do not deny that the islands suffer from consistent and largely unjustified stereotyping. This stereotyping has led to a greater demand for quirky and unusual stories which local journalists appear happy to provide. The greater effort needed by the mainland press to pursue a story on the islands also makes it more likely that those pursued are 'milked' for all the stereotypical angles they can find.

A label that suits?

There is some evidence that islanders choose to sustain the 'downtrodden' stereotype in order to garner sympathy, support for a cause or particular resources. This makes it particularly difficult to counter the accepted stereotype.

A lack of positive engagement

While interviewees denied that there was a bias towards negative reporting of the Outer Hebrides, they thought there were not enough positive stories being pushed to counterbalance the inevitable negative ones. This was one area where journalists thought the Outer Hebrides contrasted strongly with Orkney and Shetland.

Perception eroding confidence

Several local interviewees felt that the negative portrayal of the Outer Hebrides has eroded community confidence, although this view was not universally shared. One view was that the negative perception made Hebrideans feel bad about themselves and also made them wary about engaging with journalists from outside.

Changing the perceptions

Our research identified three mutually supportive approaches which might help change the stereotypical perception of the Outer Hebrides.

The first was to confront the stereotypical portrayal whenever it emerges. While this will not change the perception overnight it will start to dilute it and will make a difference in the longer term. Islanders must also stop playing up to the image.

Secondly, and developing from the previous issue, the Outer Hebrides needs to develop and promote a strong alternative image. This needs to be based on a clear vision of the islands in the 21st century and gain a wide buy-in from communities. A good example of how this has succeeded elsewhere is in Ireland where the Celtic Tiger image has largely put paid to the stereotype of 15 or 20 years ago.

And thirdly, agencies need to be more proactive in pushing positive messages and stories to the media. Our research suggests that journalists and editors will be receptive to this. However it is important that these stories reinforce the vision being pursued and that they are based on substance rather than simply spin.

3 Confidence & identity

This chapter firstly reflects on existing research into community confidence in rural areas and then explores how Hebrideans perceive themselves and their communities. It builds on the findings from the Forum Theatre workshops carried out in May 2008.

3.1 Perceptions of remote rural communities

Studies on perceptions of rural communities show that different individuals or groups of people can perceive or evaluate these communities differently. Rural communities are, of course, diverse and will vary by their chief characteristics, which may include welcoming and inclusive elements, and more exclusive ones. At the same time, some people may feel a particular community to be friendly and encouraging, while others may view it as suffocating and excluding (Jones and Jamieson, 1997; Jones, 1999).

Young people's perceptions

Similar to other rural research findings, the Outer Hebrides Migration Study (OHMS) noted young people's contrasting views on local attitudes. Both stayers and leavers resented some community members judging others' personal values. However, positive features of community life, such as caring attitudes among neighbours, especially during illness and bereavement, were also mentioned. For leavers, perceptions of a goldfish bowl existence or claustrophobic community were dominant.

Some parents of teenagers reported there was little for them to do. It was felt the wider community could look on youth with suspicion, even if the youngsters engaged in positive activities.

However the majority of parents highlighted the overall safety and security associated with raising a family in the Outer Hebrides and the high quality of life for families.

In-migrants' and returners' perceptions

The OHMS study showed that perceptions of close-knit communities positively influenced decision to in-migrate or to return to the islands. For example, life-style in-migrants identified a 'sense of community' as the fifth most important reason (out of 16) for their move.

For returners, family reasons tended to be the pull factor back to the islands, but this group, too, appreciated a sense of community spirit in the Outer Hebrides.

While a small minority of in-migrants felt they were disrespected on grounds of their nationality (English), others thought that being from elsewhere had given them an increased status. Established community members associated being from outside the Outer Hebrides with specific expertise or high-level skills.

Some in-migrants thought the influence of the church made the Outer Hebrides feel 'foreign' – an impression which only struck them once they had decided to live permanently in the Outer Hebrides (as opposed to holiday experiences).

The OHMS stressed that sustaining the Gaelic language and culture in the Outer Hebrides was important. Preserving this rich heritage is important in itself, but some in-migrants identified Gaelic as an attractive feature of the islands.

Women's perceptions

The OHMS identified a greater number of women out-migrants from the islands, and fewer women of child-rearing age returning. It highlighted that limited training, employment and recreational opportunities for women may contribute to the gender imbalance in the population in the Outer Hebrides. Women often thought that employment and leisure opportunities were more suited to the needs of the male population. And with women's social and economic expectations having changed significantly over the past decade they sometimes felt stifled by the close-knit nature of communities.

Perceptions of 'disrespected' community members

Individuals with a 'bad reputation' or with family members disrespected by the wider community can experience exclusion. For example they may have greater difficulties in accessing jobs or housing. Rural literature in general stresses the important role of informal local networks. Such networks pass on valuable information, for example, about employment opportunities, and can therefore exclude both disrespected members, but also recent incomers, or those without local contacts³.

Perceptions of international migrants

Employers interviewed in the OHMS found that international lifestyle migrants had good contacts and frequently socialised with locals. The local population respected international migrants, and saw them as an important resource for jobs which were difficult to fill. Some international migrants took part in community events or attended church.

The OHMS suggested that clearer information on employment and culture in the Outer Hebrides pre-departure and on arrival could ease immigrants' integration. Such information may also encourage in-migrants to take up Gaelic courses, and to choose Gaelic medium education for their children where possible. Existing successful projects such as *Guthan nan Eilean* (Island Voices) in the Uists, which uses innovative ways of teaching English and Gaelic, can be extended to other parts of the Outer Hebrides.

Integration is understood as a process in which migrants and receiving communities need to change⁴. So far, the policy and practice focus in Scotland has mainly been on preparing migrants for their new destinations. Policy and practice recommendations in the OHMS include providing information to communities about why migrants come, what role migrants may play at community level and for the

³ Jentsch & Shucksmith (2004)

⁴ Jentsch & Shucksmith (2004)

Outer Hebrides in general. The study also promotes community events which encourage contact between immigrants and the receiving communities.

Perceptions specific to the Outer Hebrides

The strong influence of the church was described in the OHMS as a feature of the Outer Hebrides culture which is less distinctive in other rural areas of Scotland. Some (mainly older) individuals have rated this influence positively for example, the day of rest on a Sunday. Others have described it as constraining personal choices and economic growth. A small minority found this influence to foster intolerance. In nearly all cases, however, it was important to respect the religious beliefs of community members, and not to offend through thoughtless behaviour.

3.2 Exploring identity

The Forum Theatre workshops were used as a means of determining what factors contribute to community confidence in the Outer Hebrides, and what issues are most likely to work for and against social integration. These workshops were designed to elicit strong opinions, and in some instances fairly emotive contributions from participants, in order to identify and describe some of the essential issues that affect day to day life on the islands.

One of the first activities in these workshops was to gather people's views on certain statements. These statements were developed by the Theatre Company based on issues identified through the Outer Hebrides Migration Study. They were:

- Life on the island is stuck in the past;
- Life on the island is great;
- There is a good community spirit on the island;
- We can make positive changes together; and
- There are no opportunities here.

Many of these views are those of individuals and should be seen in that context. We have tried to attach weight and draw conclusions only where there is significant triangulation of views between individuals or across different workshop sessions. However it is also important to document and reflect the range of views that were expressed so that the exercise is transparent and inclusive. A more complete transcript of some of these views is included in Appendix A.

The Island is stuck in the past

More than half of all the participants agreed with this statement (55%) and 17% were not sure about it. It appeared that native Hebrideans were more likely to agree with it than those who had moved to the Islands. Those at the Benbecula workshop were less sure about this statement than those taking part in the Workshops held in Stornoway.

A range of comments were made to shed light on this issue, with some of these relating to:

- The insularity of the Islands and key decision-makers who tend to be older;

- The difficulties in expressing views that are contrary to the mainstream; and
- The hold that religion has on some island communities.

The Sunday observance issue in the northern isles and the lack of seven day services were highlighted as an indication of the islands being stuck in the past. The changing age profile within communities made it difficult for people to push for change as younger people often leave.

Some participants considered that people choose to live in the Outer Hebrides because the way of life differs from the rest of the country. There was a suggestion that the strong community spirit and peaceful Sundays were a positive element of the past that some people find attractive.

Some people highlighted that technology was opening up new opportunities for the younger generations. There were several instances highlighted of people working from home in highly skilled or competitive business sectors while able to enjoy the quality of life of the Outer Hebrides.

Life on the Islands is great

Two thirds of participants agreed with this statement and the remaining third all partly agreed with it or were neutral. Several participants highlighted that responses to this statement were strongly based on people's own lifestyles, attitudes and philosophy. The people, environment, culture and sense of community all came across strongly as positive features of Hebridean life. Therefore people who rate these elements highly are likely to have a good quality of life. The outdoor environment, beaches, and recent spells of good weather were also identified.

The culture of the islands and the people were also identified as part of the attraction. People also mention the low levels of crime as a positive factor in wanting to bring up family there. However, others highlighted problems with alcohol abuse and issues about things to do for younger people.

The issues around religious influence in Lewis and Harris were also highlighted by several participants. However views were polarised as to whether the Sunday issues were a positive or negative feature. The fact that people's family could not travel to the Islands on a Sunday if something happened was highlighted as a concern. Some people also thought that many visitors would be disadvantaged by the limited services available on a Sunday.

There is a good community spirit on the island

Overall 83% of those participating agreed that there is a good community spirit. People thought that there was a strong reliance on the community spirit through voluntary work. It is clear that when people need community support they do pull together for each other. However some thought there was an over-reliance on voluntary effort.

Participants in another session identified that people respect each other because most families know one another. The lack of crime means that people don't need to lock their doors.

Participants did not think that there was any strong resentment of people coming from outside of the islands despite a very strong cultural identity. There can be resentment when people come to the Islands expecting an easy life – compared with an historically hard-working crofting community. People considered that community spirit was a two-way process requiring give as well as take. Others highlighted that the extent to which people from elsewhere can integrate very much depends on their own attitude and personality. A lack of respect for the Hebridean culture was the reason given for some negativity towards in-migrants.

Decline in the level of community spirit was attributed to fewer community activities such as gathering sheep or cutting peat. Where these still happen now then it tends to be within the family rather than as a wider community. Also the ageing demographic situation means that there are fewer active people to help with these community tasks. Those people who have moved to the islands from different backgrounds are perhaps less aware of the cultural or historical connections. Overall there seems to be a sense that community spirit is still very strong but perhaps under threat.

We can make positive changes together

Overall 72% of participants agreed with this statement and only 11% disagreed. Several people highlighted that in-migrants added a lot and had kept some organising committees going within local communities. Other participants agreed that positive change was possible but took more time in the Islands than elsewhere.

There is a feeling that things are starting to change, but that this is still happening too slowly for many. The positive aspects that could be promoted more strongly were seen as the uniqueness of the culture, great environment, quality of life, safety and security.

Several participants agreed that as a woman on the islands you have to be very strong to get on. There appears to be a lack of positive role models for women in places of authority; although this is starting to change. Another participant also identified that younger people struggle to have their voices heard although this had been changing for the better recently.

The pace of change is also one area where participants felt there was less cohesion between native Islanders and those who had come to live there. It was reported that in-migrants getting involved in committees often felt frustrated at the slow pace of change. In another group there were mixed views on how the larger numbers of in-migrants were influencing change. There were some antipathetic views expressed about the attitudes of a few lifestyle in-migrants.

It was suggested that only a minority of in-migrants had been problematic and that these problems are usually because they are just difficult people rather than because they are non-native. Other non-native participants were frustrated by being unable to become sufficiently fluent in Gaelic to feel comfortable using it. Differences in attitudes between Stornoway and more rural areas were also highlighted. Some participants thought that Stornoway was more used to a greater mix of backgrounds but that it may be more difficult for in-migrants to integrate in other parts of the islands.

There are no opportunities here

Several participants considered that career progression opportunities were certainly limited in the Islands. There was a perception, disputed by some, that lack of opportunities means that the most talented individuals have to leave. It was agreed that people had to make compromises regarding their careers if they chose to stay in the Outer Hebrides.

Several views were expressed around the kind of people who might be attracted to the Outer Hebrides to pursue a career. Some thought it was important to try and attract back graduates before they become too established on the mainland. Others felt the focus should be on attracting people pursuing lifestyle opportunities to the islands. The quality of life and environment and the excellent education services were considered to be an opportunity.

One person summed up the situation by stating that the opportunities available to you depend on what you are looking for. They will suit some people but not others.

3.3 Using images

The next stage of the workshops was to create images portraying different aspects of island life. The two themes which were depicted and explored were oppression and integration.

Oppression

Those which explored oppression covered several themes including domestic violence, religion and conflict between Gaelic speakers and non-speakers. In particular, several areas were identified which could help to overcome the perceived oppression, including:

- People intervening in domestic abuse situations;
- Women taking a greater role in decision-making;
- Widening the debate around Sunday observance;
- Consulting people more regularly on key decisions; and
- Elected representatives facing up to difficult decisions.

Integration

People identified community music and sporting events as representing integration. One image showed people taking part in the fun run together.

Greater effort to integrate non-Gaelic speaking residents into traditional aspects of community life was highlighted as one way of improving integration.

3.4 Magic wand

Participants were asked what they would change if they had a magic wand and could change one thing. They opted for the following:

- To be able to speak perfect Gaelic;
- Less alcohol (and drugs) on the Islands;
- Better opportunities for young people;
- To be self-sufficient in energy;
- Close pubs on a Sunday;
- Cheaper travel to the mainland;
- Integrated and reliable transport;
- Increased interaction of secular and religious groups; and
- More social gatherings such as ceilidhs.

These issues highlight friction points that impede achieving an integrated and sustainable population on the islands – covering some of the divisive issues such as alcohol and Sunday observance, as well as some of the perceived barriers to social integration, specifically transport and Gaelic ability. A key theme perhaps is increasing links and overcoming divisions.

3.5 Unique selling points

Participants were asked to list the unique selling points of the Outer Hebrides. The things that were identified fell in to some clear groupings around quality of life:

- The natural environment: e.g. fresh air; beautiful beaches; scenery/ hills; wildlife.
- The people; e.g. their politeness and respect.
- The peace and quiet; e.g. slower pace of life; safety for children; the quietness of the Sunday.
- The Heritage: e.g. Callanish stones; Lews Castle Grounds; Uig Chess Men.
- The Culture: e.g. history, Gaelic culture; Hebridean Celtic Festival; music scene.
- Outdoor activities: e.g. Fishing, walking, cycling.
- Quality of health and social services.

One comment perhaps aptly summarised the strength of the Hebridean community and attachment to it:

'Returning here is about your own values and what you are prepared to accept from life, I wasn't prepared to accept the impersonal uncaring values I encountered when I lived in London. No one there seemed to care about anyone else, I wasn't brought up to turn away from someone in need. That motivated me to return.'

3.6 Conclusions

Identity and self-perception

The Outer Hebrides has an identity that can be characterised as both strong and unique. The Gaelic heritage and crofting way of life have combined with a strong religious adherence to shape this identity.

Our research has found that self-perception within the Islands is influenced by several overlapping factors. Among the main elements influencing the way individuals and communities perceive and define themselves are:

- Age group;
- Whether people were born on the Islands, lived away for a long period or were in-migrant;
- Gaelic language proficiency;
- Religious belief; and
- The Island or community people live in.

Often these elements can drive external perception too, so people from a specific community or island are assumed to have a certain view or hold specific religious beliefs.

Issues affecting confidence

Our own research using forum theatre workshops identified some clear issues that affect confidence, cohesion and identity, including:

- A unique culture linking people more closely to a shared history;
- A stronger role for religion in civil society;
- A slower pace of life;
- A high quality of environment; and
- A strong sense of community.

There is an acceptance that life in the Outer Hebrides is more strongly rooted in the past than elsewhere. While this provides a uniqueness and essential qualities that people value, it also frustrates people who would like to see a quicker pace of change. The culture of politeness and respect perhaps limits debate about some of the more divisive issues facing the islands.

It is clear that the role religion plays in civic life affects communities and individuals more directly in Lewis and Harris. This means that those who do not share these beliefs feel somewhat victimised. There is also a minority view, which was also highlighted in the OHMS, that those in authority oppose change and are somewhat out of touch with the wider view. This was often linked to the predominance of older men in prominent roles.

Despite these issues most people agreed that life on the islands is great. The reasons given focus on the quality of the environment, the slower pace of life, strong community spirit and safety. Clearly, those who choose to move to, or remain in, the islands have balanced up these factors and concluded that the positives outweigh the negatives. It was also suggested that those seeking a quicker pace of life, more opportunities or a more progressive attitude to change will decide to leave. However this process tends to reinforce the resistance to change in communities.

Community spirit was frequently identified as a positive attraction in the Outer Hebrides, and the vast majority of participants in the workshops agreed with this. Community spirit is strongly rooted in shared history and the strong inter-dependence linked to the crofting way of life. However many people noted a sharp

decline in many of the community activities that underpin this; such as cutting peats, gathering sheep and making hay. Where these activities still went on this was often done within families rather than by the community as a whole. Others thought that traditional community activities were threatened by the changing demographics.

Community integration

The majority of people agree that there is no overall resentment to people coming from elsewhere to live in the Outer Hebrides. However this was caveated with the view that community integration was a two-way process and that those who do not choose to engage with the community or lack respect can quickly become marginalised. However this was an issue of attitude rather than one of race, language or nationality.

There are also issues around the lack of awareness of community life that some in-migrants have which are sometimes intensified by lack of Gaelic language ability. Non Gaelic speakers can feel excluded from certain community activities and several participants feel that Gaelic learners are not supported enough to improve their confidence in using the language.

Some participants thought that it was easier for in-migrants to become integrated in Stornoway than in more rural parts of the islands.

4 Effective approaches to integration

This section explores effective ways of developing and supporting community capacity and promoting social integration. It looks at successful examples from elsewhere, possible ways of engaging Hebrideans living away from the Islands and lessons from the Cultural Pathfinder project which has recently reported.

4.1 Building effective community capacity

Research carried out in 2007 for the Scottish Consumer Council (SCC)⁵ highlighted factors and components that can assist or hinder the effectiveness of communities' capacity to influence change. This was developed from research⁶ focusing on the role of 'agency' in sustainable local community development. It critically reflected on the role of community networks and the social dynamics of community relationships – aspects that are crucial for engaging with decision-makers. It found that community sustainable development initiatives involve groups that self-organise around certain issues and aim to resolve competing resource conflicts.

Some researchers have assumed in the past that social capital (the density and size of a community's networks) is a key indicator for a community's ability to influence developments. However this research pointed out that social capital can also have hindering effects by limiting links to external players. The SCC research reflected on and developed the following three factors which it identified as crucial in leading to successful local community development:

- Bonding social capital;
- Bridging social capital; and
- Agency (the skills to influence change).

These are explained in more detail in the context of the Outer Hebrides below.

Bonding social capital

'Bonding' social capital in the form of strong social network ties, can reinforce exclusive identities, for example, for religious groups or professional associations. However this form of capital is needed in the beginning to:

- Bring people together (the assumption is that people acting alone will rarely be able to affect change); and
- Foster trust among a network.

However, 'bonding' social capital can also play a negative role. It can hinder innovation or inclusiveness by:

- Cutting off actors from wider sources of information;
- Imposing social norms which prevent innovation; or

⁵ Scottish Consumer Council (2007); Rural Advocacy in Scotland; Hall Aitken

⁶ Newman, L. & Dale, A. (2005) The role of agency in sustainable local community development. Local Environment, Vol 10, No. 5, 477-486, October 2005

- Resisting the acceptance of outsiders to the community.⁷

The communities that make up the Outer Hebrides clearly have strong bonding capital. Much of this has developed through social and economic ties going back centuries. However our research has clearly highlighted that this is sometimes viewed as a barrier to inclusion, particularly among groups or individuals who do not belong to established groupings.

Bridging social capital

Bridging social capital is also needed for effective community development. This involves weaker horizontal and vertical social network ties that provide access to groups beyond the local (or interest) group.

Horizontal connections to other groups:

- Help participants to access outside information, thus overcoming social norms from outside the local network;
- Enable communities to diversify their resource base; and
- Allow for change and realignment.

Vertical networks

- Connect participants to decision makers.

In the Outer Hebrides, the demographic changes of recent years are likely to have weakened bridging capital as younger and more mobile people leave communities. Those coming in to the islands lack the strong bonds that existing communities experience and this requires effort to ensure community cohesion. This has perhaps resulted in smaller and dispersed community groupings which are perhaps less able to network with agencies or other groups. These changes within communities have perhaps tended to focus activity on maintaining the existing strong bonds rather than exploring new relationships.

The skills to influence change

The third requirement is the availability of *agency* at the individual and group level. Agency is people's capacity to transform existing states and affairs to plan and initiate action, or to cause a new state of affairs which would not have come about otherwise.⁸

So, the ability and skills to influence are critical in realising the potential of social capital. In other words, it is one thing to have the networks as described above, and another to use them fully to achieve the desired goal. The belief that change is possible creates empowerment. Important properties of this are:

- Power;
- Access to critical information; and

⁷ Newman, L. & Dale A. (2005) The role of agency in sustainable local community development. *Local Environment*, Vol 10, No. 5, 477-486, October 2005, p. 480.

⁸ Newman, L. & Dale A. (2005) The role of agency in sustainable local community development. *Local Environment*, Vol 10, No. 5, 477-486, October 2005, p. 481.

- Diverse intellectual capital.

Although Newman and Dale originally associated these factors with place-based communities, they appear equally relevant for communities of interest. They conclude that:

*'to optimise a group's agency to use existing social capital, bridging ties should be encouraged and bonding ties kept to the minimum needed to encourage connections between networks and increase access to outside resources.'*⁹

The perceived distance from decision-makers and the ageing profile of communities in the Outer Hebrides limits their ability to influence. While the more recently increasing in-migration brings in new skills and ideas, these individuals are often not well-connected to the established community structures. Where they are well connected to strong established communities they can have a big influence.

The SCC research suggests the most effective role of government is to increase access to diverse capital, especially human capital, by strengthening and improving bridging ties, both horizontal and vertical.¹⁰ This seems to support both the findings of our research and that of the Cultural Pathfinder, in that the key role for the Community Planning Partners should be that of an enabler. To promote stronger community action and empowerment agencies need to:

- encourage and support links between different groups; and
- provide access to expertise and basic support.

Decision-making environment

The research by SCC further developed the model used by Newman and Dale by also focusing on the decision-making environment. It recognised that the process of engaging communities in decision-making is a two-way process in that to succeed it requires organisations and decision-makers who are receptive. They therefore added a fourth heading to explore the institutional and political environment within which the community or interest group works. This was based on several factors:

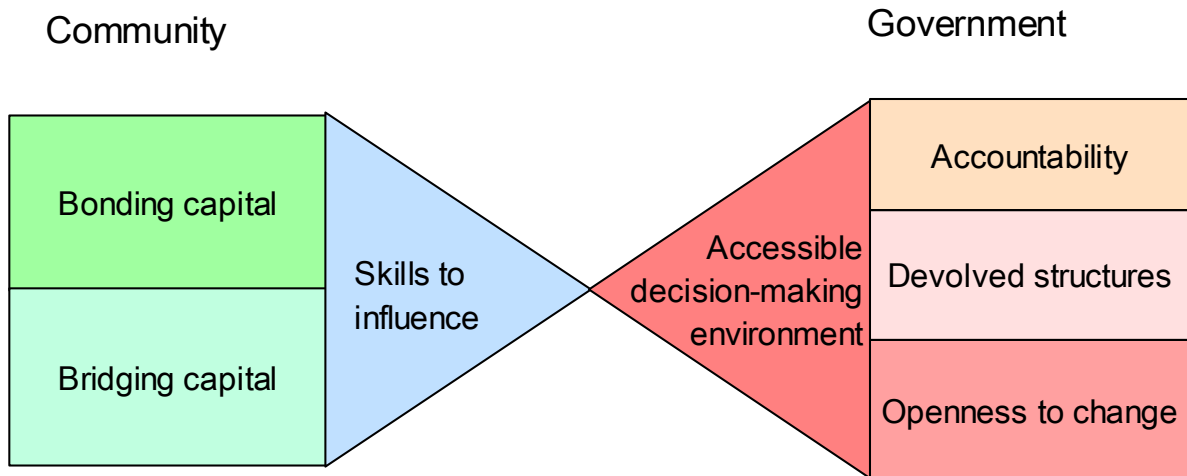
- **Openness to change** – the extent to which structures and organisations associated with decision-making are willing to listen. This will be based on their overall direction, strategies and the extent to which issues are politically sensitive.
- **Devolved structures** – whether organisations associated with decision-making at national level allow for devolved decision-making to a level at which communities or interest groups are likely to be able to influence, for example area-based committees with budgets or regional offices with some autonomy.
- **Accountability** – the extent to which decision-making organisations are directly or indirectly accountable to consumers and the wider public. This will also include the transparency of decision-making and the methods used to make organisations accountable.

This framework is summarised in Figure 2 below.

⁹ Newman, L. & Dale A. (2005) The role of agency in sustainable local community development. Local Environment, Vol 10, No. 5, 477-486, October 2005, p. 485.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 484.

Figure 2 Summary of Community Capacity Infrastructure



Source: Scottish Consumer Council (2007) Rural Advocacy in Scotland

The issues highlighted earlier would suggest that the Outer Hebrides decision-making environment is not as open to change or as transparent as it might be. However there have been several positive steps through multi-agency partnerships and through the Comhairle’s network of community coordinators that suggest a willingness to be more accountable and to devolve some decision-making structures. This process perhaps needs to move forward more quickly.

4.2 Tapping into the diaspora

One issue that emerged from the Outer Hebrides Migration Study was the untapped potential that exists among the Hebridean diaspora to get more involved with their native communities. The barriers to doing this appeared to stem from:

- The lack of an obvious mechanism open to agencies; and
- An unwillingness of those who have left the islands to interfere.

As part of this research we have approached the Gaelic Business Club, which was founded in the late 1980’s but has over recent years been fairly dormant. Over the past 18 months there has been a renewed interest and an increased drive for membership within the organisation. This has resulted in an increase to around 40 members, many of whom are very successful and high-profile members of the Scottish business community.

The Chair of the Gaelic Business Club is enthusiastic about developing a closer link with communities and business on the islands. This group has the advantage of both business expertise and experience as well as a good knowledge of the island context.

We have identified several potential ways that the Outer Hebrides could benefit from strengthening connection with these off-island business-people. These include:

- Offering advice, expertise and support to new businesses;
- Providing mentoring to existing businesses;

- Providing one-to-one support to community projects or enterprises; and
- Providing talks on enterprise to schools.

However this involvement has to be on the basis of being invited by the agencies on the islands or the communities themselves.

4.3 Linking action with the cultural pathfinder

The Outer Hebrides was one of thirteen local authority areas in Scotland selected by the Scottish Government to be national 'pathfinders' for developing culture locally. The overall aim was for each local authority to produce findings and recommendations that could be applied locally, considered nationally and shared with other local authorities. The Pathfinder project involved wide-ranging community consultation involving around 700 people as well as creative and artist-led projects. The final report was published in June 2008.

Key findings

Some key findings to emerge from the pathfinder process were:

- The majority of residents of the Outer Hebrides interpret culture as having a far wider application than arts, sports, heritage and language. Culture is embraced as "the way of life" with cultural resources as key economic drivers (especially the talents and creativity of local people, the landscape and heritage).
- Cultural provision is a key element in the quality of life that attracts people to an area such as the Outer Hebrides, while artists tend to be attracted to communities where other artists are already established.
- Cultural outreach from the main providers is generally through education programmes, however, these practices should be embedded in other public agencies, for example the Health Board.
- The area has extraordinary cultural resources – some unique in Scotland – but has not yet recognised these resources as a key economic driver. Nor has the cultural sector yet developed to be a strong champion of these elements.

Defining culture in the modern setting

'There was a very strong view that people in the Outer Hebrides view culture as a way of life, not in a more limited definition of arts activity. The perception of island culture is broad and pervades many aspects of society and the natural environment. Both indigenous and incomer consultees agreed the importance of preserving the distinctiveness of Hebridean culture – crofting, crafts, Gaelic, religion, but felt that, rather than be limited by the past, it should move those traditions into the 21st century in a new way.'

Culture appears to be more closely aligned with day to day life in the Outer Hebrides – with economic aspects such as gathering sheep, cutting peats, making hay and weaving an important part of it. However the Cultural Pathfinder project found there is much less importance attached to the 'formal' culture of museums, libraries and architecture. Culture is perhaps more a living entity here than elsewhere in Scotland and therefore more closely aligned with community confidence and capacity.

The following quote from the Pathfinder consultation perhaps expresses the role of culture and how fundamental it is to the community.

'Our culture is our activities on the island. Our work, our landscape and how we use it. The fabric and background of society and the interaction of the people within it... How a community and individuals express themselves creatively.'

Valuing culture

The report found that Gaelic, the environment and local heritage are intrinsic elements of the Hebridean culture. And these are often undervalued in terms of the way culture is traditionally funded. Gaelic is a very clear symbol of the distinctiveness of the island culture, with Hebrideans seen as the custodians of the language. The report notes that:

'Support is required to help Gaelic speakers be more aware of the value of their culture, more convinced, for example, that being fluent in Gaelic will enable their children to achieve and be confident enough to welcome learners, so that there is a self generative effect.'

Communication and integration

The report highlighted the need for a single place and format for advertising and marketing events and activities. It also made some more general points about communication and integration. It notes a good example of a communication problem (with those who have very limited English) being overcome by a talent where a Pole whose English is not good, but whose football skill is; giving him the confidence to integrate and play for the Back football team on Lewis despite language difficulties.

This supports the important role that cultural activities such as sport and music have in promoting community integration, as outlined earlier through the forum theatre workshops.

Community Development

Our research has highlighted a significant level of reliance on the voluntary sector for many community activities. This was also recognised in the Cultural Pathfinder report which suggested that the Comhairle needs to identify and support what people are actually doing rather than necessarily looking to create new posts or projects.

Advocacy and leadership

The Cultural Pathfinder Report concluded that issues of attitude, advocacy, leadership, and strategic planning were all considered as, and often more, important than cost. This mirrors the findings from our survey of community groups. However lack of resources is usually the most significant barrier identified to taking forward ideas.

The report concluded that working links could be further developed with arts providers such as Proiseact nan Ealan, Theatre Hebrides and various Comainn Eachdraidh. It identified huge opportunities in existing resources, in particular in:

'trying to maximise the passion of people, the creative sector, local groups – which evidenced itself throughout the process as a commitment to what is best for the area, its future, and its young people.'

The report notes that cultural planning gives the potential methodology for bringing all of the various strategies together – achieving the Regeneration Outcome objectives of the community plan, and fulfilling the agendas of all partners. One way of doing this was to initiate joint working structures that fund and manage Cultural Coordinators working with the community.

Conclusions from the Pathfinder

The principal demands for investment emerging from the Cultural Pathfinder were to do with support services such as:

- Capacity building;
- Business development opportunities;
- Funding for cultural social enterprises;
- Transport links and travel costs;
- Support to allow voluntary committees to employ professional expertise.

The report identifies a good understanding in the public sector of the link between culture and the economy, and between culture and young people staying on the islands.

4.4 Conclusions

Research into effective community capacity highlights the need for three different types of social capital:

- Bonding capital – shared purpose and identity;
- Bridging capital – horizontal and vertical links with other communities and decision-makers;
- The skills to influence – power, information and diverse knowledge.

Our research suggests that while bonding capital is strong within the Outer Hebrides, this can have a negative impact by excluding groups who may not share these bonds. If bonding capital is too dominant it can cut off communities from external players, stifle innovation and resist acceptance of outsiders. Demographic changes – with younger people leaving communities and new people coming in – may entrench these aspects with more focus on internal cohesion and less on external linkages.

The second element – bridging capital – is perhaps weaker in the Outer Hebrides. This may be due to several reasons including:

- The dispersed nature of communities;

- A strong sense of community self-reliance;
- Strong social bonds within decision-making agencies;
- Significant in-migration placing greater demands on existing networks;
- Older and less mobile activists.

The lack of bridging links has perhaps hindered community development to some extent and has contributed to a slow pace of change. In particular, more could be gained by speeding up the integration of those coming into the Outer Hebrides from elsewhere. The need for improved community linkages and networking was also highlighted in the recent Cultural Pathfinder report.

There are also weaknesses in terms of the 'skills to influence' with the changing demographics in communities limiting the range of skills available to groups. In-migrants do not always feel able to get fully involved in community organisations perhaps because of the strength of the existing community bonds. Access to expert advice was one of the key areas of support identified in our survey of community projects.

One potential area where expertise could be accessed is from islanders who have set up businesses on the mainland. The Gaelic Business Club, based in Glasgow, is keen to establish a more formal role in providing expertise, advice and support to communities and businesses on the Islands.

For communities to become more empowered there is also a need for a supportive decision-making environment. The three key facets of this are public agencies that:

- Are accountable;
- Have devolved structures; and
- Are open to change.

Again this is an area where there appears to be scope for improvement. There is a clear enabling role for the Comhairle and its partners in helping to support community action.

These themes are strongly echoed in the recent Cultural Pathfinder report. It highlights that culture is very much steeped in the social and economic life of the Outer Hebrides in a fairly unique way. The key ways that public agencies can grow and support the Outer Hebrides Culture are by providing leadership in implementing the Culture strategy and by providing support through:

- Capacity building;
- Business development opportunities;
- Funding for cultural social enterprises;
- Transport links and travel costs; and
- Allowing voluntary committees to employ professional support.

5 Taking advantage of community strengths

This chapter explores current community-based activity that can be subsequently built on. We carried out a survey of local agencies and community groups to identify what current activity was taking place and what people considered to be the key priorities going forward. The survey was then followed up by workshops to take forward some of the project ideas developed from the survey (and other sources). An Ideas Workshop allowed participants to prioritise projects and develop them in greater detail. Subsequently a smaller number of these areas of action were developed through Action Workshops.

5.1 Existing projects

We carried out a survey of agencies and community groups to determine the level of existing community-based activity and identify areas which needed action or support. Our survey identified a wide range of projects that are contributing to building confidence and capacity within communities. Some of these are projects directly engaging with communities, others are providing infrastructure to improve community access to information or services and others are projects being developed either by or with the community to provide either services or community income. A smaller number of projects directly provide community facilities while one works to raise community capacity among young people.

5.2 Future projects to take forward

We also asked those surveyed about what kinds of projects respondents thought should be taken forward over the next three years. By grouping these under similar themes these projects relate to:

- Tourism accommodation and facilities;
- 7-day services (leisure and transport);
- Renewable energy;
- Culture, creative and language (including Gaelic);
- Local products (food and drink, Harris Tweed, crafts);
- IT/ tele-working projects;
- Environmental projects;
- Community development projects; and
- Social enterprise development.

This list of project ideas generated through the survey formed the starting point for developing ideas in the subsequent workshops.

5.3 Barriers

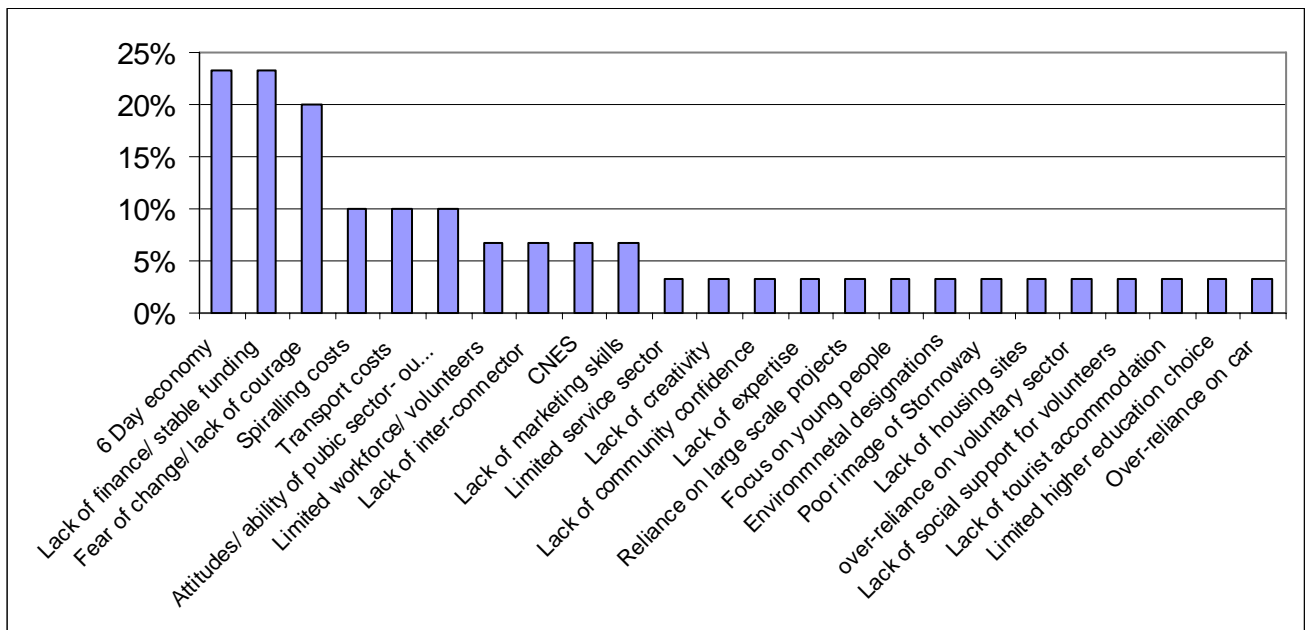
We asked respondents whether they considered there were any barriers to taking these projects forward, and 90% of respondents identified barriers. For the minority who identified no barriers to taking forward their suggestions, the areas for development were:

- Make the most of (the islands’) natural and historic resources for commercial and recreational purposes;
- Provide more visitor attractions for tourists to visit and focus on the community creating opportunities for employment by using natural resources;
- A Festival of Hebridean Food and Drink;
- Activity-based tourism; and
- UHI - research and degree development.

It would appear that a small number of respondents therefore feel that existing opportunities to take commercial advantage of natural resources (produce and environment) have not been fully exploited. Developing research and higher education at UHI will depend to some extent on the demand and on securing the necessary funding.

We then asked those who identified them what the barriers were to the types of projects they would like to see being taken forward. And these are illustrated in Figure 3 below. The two most frequently mentioned barriers were the issues around the six day economy in the Northern Isles (particularly on transport and leisure services) and the lack of funding or limitations of funding. The next most commonly identified issue was the Hebridean mindset which was viewed as either risk-averse, fearing change or lacking a creative outlook.

Figure 3 Barriers to taking forward projects



Source: Project survey n=74

These barriers tend to weigh more heavily against some forms of development – for example the lack of seven day sailings and leisure services is likely to present more of a barrier to tourism and leisure developments. Equally the lack of an electricity inter-connector is clearly a barrier to many community renewable energy projects which require this to sell energy to the grid.

5.4 Areas for Support

We also asked in the survey about what types of support projects or those trying to develop them would require to overcome specific barriers. While many of these are project specific issues, there were several which were more widely identified. Not surprisingly the most frequently identified area of support was access to funding which eight respondents identified in general terms. Many others identified specific areas for subsidy, incentives or grants. The full list of areas of support is attached in Appendix A.

Following on from finance, the next most frequently identified supportive elements were:

- Expert advice (in different specialist areas);
- A supportive Local Authority and public agencies; and
- Improved tourist marketing.

Other aspects identified frequently were business support and entrepreneurship support for small businesses; a directory of funding and advice for community sector projects; mentoring for community sector project staff and volunteer development.

This supports the analysis in the previous chapter suggesting that lack of strong linkages and networks are limiting access to expertise. It also highlights the importance of a supportive local authority to take on the leadership and enabling role.

5.5 Developing ideas

The purpose of the ideas workshop was to narrow down and prioritise areas of activity that will strengthen community capacity or build confidence. These activities include:

- Projects identified as priorities over the next three years;
- Actions that overcome barriers faced by existing projects;
- Actions that will help to enable projects; and
- Specific projects that focus on social integration between different groups in the community.

At the workshop participants developed and agreed the key factors of success that would determine the extent to which projects would make an impact on Outer Hebrides communities. Participants also discussed:

- Outcomes from the e-survey including nature of activities respondents were involved with; barriers and enablers to action; ideas for further work;

- Areas for development; and the
- Potential impact of ideas.

5.6 Critical success factors

Participants at the Ideas workshop identified several critical success factors. These would be key indicators of whether the socio-economic situation in the Outer Hebrides was improving in five to ten years time. The factors which participants considered should apply to activities in the Outer Hebrides are outlined in Figure 4 below.

Figure 4 Critical success factors for the Outer Hebrides

Economic Factors	Social and Community Factors
New industries emerging and making greater contribution to GDP	Appropriate, sustainable, demographic balance
The islands as a 'Centre of Excellence'	Better health and a reduction in substance abuse
Reduction in dependence on national economy	Community centred activities and community centred planning
Rise in GDP	Increase in the number of Gaelic speakers
Acknowledgement of the value of the creative industries	Improved confidence and perception of the Islands
An increase in visitors	
Greater sustainability in energy provision	
Greater synergy between activities	
Accessibility in its widest sense	

Another issue highlighted in the discussion was the need to avoid duplicating activities currently undertaken by the Voluntary Sector and the need for more effective strategic coordination of voluntary and community sector activity.

5.7 The impact of ideas



Participants rated the various ideas in relation to their potential impact on meeting the critical success factors and how easy they were to implement. As the picture shows, all the ideas were considered to be potentially moderate to high impact.

However ideas varied as to how easy participants thought they might be to implement. A summary of these ideas and how they were placed is shown in Figure 5 below.

Figure 5 Potential impact and implementation of project ideas

High Impact/ difficult to implement	High Impact/ Less difficult to implement
Economic benefits through taking advantage of the high quality natural environment	Shout about the positives (PR campaign)
24/7 society	Develop niche markets for tourism
Build the interconnector – alongside developing skills and investment	Use arts as a catalyst for community development and social enterprise
Fuel alternatives/ sustainable energy for all the Islands	A research centre for renewable energy
Broadband support for business	Support services for a growing population
Investment in facilities to encourage small businesses (especially tourism focused businesses)	Community development – especially in rural areas
Local products – support for investment and buying	
Tourism – improvements to quality of service and products	

5.8 Prioritising projects

The action workshops aimed to develop a small number of the higher priority community-based project ideas. They would then start to develop broad specifications for taking forward these ideas to develop the socio-economic potential of the Outer Hebrides with particular respect to sustainable, integrated communities.

Participants reviewed the list of potential project ideas generated at the ideas workshops. This gave them an opportunity to set aside certain issues and to identify any gaps in the list. Projects were set aside for the purposes of this workshop where:

- They were not practical to take forward (the tunnel to Skye and the 24/ 7 society); or

- They were issues that contributed to the wider context (such as Broadband).

Participants in one of the workshops identified two additional areas for potential action:

- Social enterprise support; and
- Leisure and family services.

These were therefore included in the prioritisation exercise for one of the sessions.

Critical success factors

Participants reviewed the critical success factors developed in the earlier workshop. These would determine to what extent projects had been successful in 10 to 15 years time. With some minor amendments the five key criteria were agreed as being:

- Reducing the level of dependence on government;
- Increasing numbers of visitors and their value to the economy;
- Balancing or sustaining the population of the Islands;
- Growing businesses; and
- Improving confidence and developing a more positive perception.

Scoring projects against critical success factors

We then used the five critical success criteria to allow participants to prioritise which projects could potentially have most impact. Participants could give each project a score of up to five. Figure 6 identifies how the projects were ranked comparatively across the two workshops based to the percentage of the maximum score each one received. This approach allows us to capture the perceptions of stakeholders of the likely impact of an intervention on the critical success factors in 10 to 15 years.

Figure 6 Relative potential of projects to contribute to success factors

Project/ criteria	Reduce dependency	Grow Businesses	Increase visitor numbers	Balance population	Raise confidence	Total
Local Products	12%	85%	55%	15%	42%	42%
Tourist niche markets	18%	65%	60%	2%	35%	36%
Improved tourist facilities	40%	25%	58%	20%	32%	35%
Social Enterprise Support*	48%	32%	5%	52%	24%	32%
Leisure/ family services*	20%	8%	32%	52%	48%	32%
Alternative/ sustainable energy*	66%	20%	0%	33%	27%	29%

Arts/ culture	8%	22%	38%	20%	50%	28%
Renewable energy research centre	55%	18%	8%	30%	22%	26%
Small business support	35%	50%	8%	28%	10%	26%
Population Support	0%	5%	5%	48%	42%	20%

* These were only scored by one group

Figure 6 shows that different projects are likely to impact in different ways on the key factors of success. Overall developing and marketing local products was identified as contributing most across all five factors, followed by improving tourism facilities and developing niche tourist markets. Other priorities were supporting social enterprises, developing leisure services and making the most of renewable energy resources. However in terms of the specific factors:

- Renewable energy developments were seen to be most important for reducing the level of dependency on central government;
- Developing local products was most likely to help grow businesses;
- Supporting tourism niche markets was most likely to increase visitor numbers and spend;
- Supporting social enterprises and leisure services were most significant for balancing and sustaining the population; and
- Arts and culture projects were most likely to increase confidence and improve the perception of the Outer Hebrides.

During the workshops we developed two of the highest priority project ideas into more detailed project specifications. These are outlined in Appendix C.

6 Conclusions & Key Action Points

This section draws out the conclusions and sets out key areas for action that will help to address some of the issues around perception, identity and capacity highlighted in this research. These focus on community-based initiatives to promote integration between age groups, long-term residents and in-migrants and different groupings within communities. In addition the research suggests a more proactive and joined up approach from agencies to promoting a positive image of the Outer Hebrides. The Outer Hebrides Community Planning Partnership has a key role to play in this. The section concludes by summarising how the key action points will contribute to meeting the Scottish Government's National Outcomes.

6.1 Building bridges

While the research suggests that community bonds clearly need to be sustained, it has highlighted a key weakness in the bridging capital that links communities to each other and to decision-makers. However demographic changes have reduced the skills that communities can access and many recent in-migrants are not fully engaged in community life.

This research has highlighted that the process of integration is very much a two-way street. So it suggests that action will be needed from both sides to improve integration and improve the diversity of skills that communities can draw upon.

Awareness-raising

The research highlights that there appears to be some naivety about the history, culture and traditional way communities work in the Hebrides among some people choosing to move there. This suggests that there may need to be more effective ways of making people aware of how history, language and culture influence the way of life in the Outer Hebrides.

Some information to address this could be included as part of a 'welcome pack' targeted at new residents. This could be triggered through NHS GP registrations or provided through estate agencies when people from elsewhere buy a property in the Islands.

Widening the pool of community skills

One possible way of initiating integration might be to establish an Outer Hebrides skills bank. There was previously a project (M-ploy) that aimed to match graduates returning to the islands with local job opportunities. However there is an opportunity for a project with a much wider scope encompassing existing residents, people returning and those choosing to live in the Outer Hebrides for the first time. It would also focus primarily on using skills on a voluntary basis in third sector organisations.

The skills bank would be a database of what expertise, skills and capacity people within the islands have and provide a means of accessing or exchanging skills. A similar project exists in the West of Scotland through the Building Blocks Skills Bank Project which aims to both share and develop skills in voluntary sector

organisations. The project is funded through the ESF Objective 3 Programme and the Big Lottery Fund.

New residents to a community could receive a postcard inviting them to join and also highlighting what local services and activities are open to them. This would be a way of welcoming new residents as well as encouraging them to get involved in the local community and could be part of the awareness-raising welcome pack outlined above. It would also promote links between existing communities and individuals and promote a greater awareness of the skills and expertise available in the community and voluntary sector.

Positive action on inclusion

It is clear from our research and consultations that women and younger people find it more difficult to get involved in positions of authority. The views expressed by women participating in the workshops strongly supported the findings of the OHMS in this respect. The slower pace of change in the Outer Hebrides perhaps means the traditional hegemony of middle aged men in positions of power has continued for longer than elsewhere. While the situation is improving the Outer Hebrides still lags behind much of Scotland in this respect. Addressing this imbalance will require positive efforts to enable more women to take on key decision-making roles both in the community and in public agencies.

One example of a model for this type of programme is the Wider Management Mentoring Programme¹¹. This is one of a number of positive actions that the South Bank University in London is taking to address the under-representation of women in management. The mentoring project aims, among other things, to:

- raise the profile of women managers;
- to enable them to reflect on their leadership and management skills in a 'safe environment'; and
- to increase their personal and professional effectiveness and to prepare for higher levels of responsibility.

The programme has attracted and trained sixteen prospective mentees to date and is currently pairing them with external mentors. This may provide a useful model for the Outer Hebrides to build on.

Accessing off-island support

Through this research we have identified that the Gaelic Business Club may provide a potential source of expertise and support for both social enterprises and businesses. This group of entrepreneurs is keen to get involved in projects in the Outer Hebrides and could potentially provide:

- Advice and support to community projects and social enterprises;
- Mentoring for businesses; and
- Enterprise awareness for schools.

¹¹ Leadership Foundation for Higher Education: www.lfhe.ac.uk

There is an opportunity for the Community Planning Partners to make initial contact with the Chair of the club to explore possible opportunities.

Aligning with the Cultural Pathfinder

The recent report from the Cultural Pathfinder recognises how important 'culture' is to both community confidence and to population sustainability in the Outer Hebrides. Because culture is such a fundamental aspect of community life in the Outer Hebrides it will be prudent to align activity emerging from this research with the emerging themes and areas of action from the Cultural Pathfinder project.

One potentially high impact area that the report identifies is through providing greater financial sustainability to small voluntary groups/cultural social enterprises and individual socially engaged artists. Often these groups and individuals require small amounts of funding for small projects but these are becoming increasingly difficult to obtain. The report suggests that these groups represent the local community 'glue' in terms of the economic and social health of the area and play an important role in creating the context for attracting and retaining future generations of the Outer Hebrides population.

6.2 Improving image and perception

There is a clear consensus among editors and journalists that the Outer Hebrides are portrayed in a stereotypical way. This is generally a negative portrayal, although there is some evidence that it has been deployed to the advantage of certain groups. Most local commentators feel that this stereotypical image of the islands has a negative effect on community confidence.

The media interviews suggested the need for a sustained and planned programme of positive press. There appears to be an openness among journalists and news editors to visit the Islands and find things out for themselves. This would need to be planned carefully to support and strengthen the positive messages being developed.

6.3 Taking forward flagship projects

Our ideas and action workshops and our consultations with key stakeholders have identified several strands of activity that can play a major role in:

- Promoting community cohesion;
- Improving self-reliance; and
- Changing the way the Islands are perceived.

In Appendix B there is a longer list of project ideas that emerged from these sessions, along with the barriers to achieving them and the areas of support that would help them to develop. It has not been possible to develop these project ideas to any significant detail, but the most important aspect of this work has been to agree on the key factors of success and to prioritise projects that are most likely to achieve these. Two key areas of activity which have potential to promote community capacity and sustain the population are:

- A renewable energy research centre; and

- Developing local products.

These projects are not new ideas but perhaps provide a more strategic focus for prioritising the resource allocation and political backing required for their success. For the projects to have the level of impact that research participants envisage they will need:

- Clear links to national and regional strategies;
- Strong community involvement;
- Multi-agency support; and
- Long-term funding and commitment.

Energy Research Centre

The research centre is likely to be progressed through the existing partnership: Research Hebrides. This is an inter agency partnership between Lews Castle College, UHI (LCC/UHI), Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, NHS Western Isles, Highlands and Islands Enterprise and Proiseact nan Ealan (PnE). Its objective is to provide an overarching structure for co-ordinating and integrating the support that is available to the research and development sector within Outer Hebrides. It aims to provide a platform for a joined-up, strategic approach in research and development activity in the Outer Hebrides. Research Hebrides will aim to add value to existing activity and promote the islands as a location for research and development ensuring a proactive response to opportunities for the Outer Hebrides.

Research Hebrides will have an initial focus on four key themes where the Outer Hebrides already have an innovative research agenda in place. One of these themes focuses on Renewable Energy Innovation.

Marketing local products

Some progress has been made in the last few years in branding and promoting local products and improving the joint working among producers. The Outer Hebrides brand was developed as part of a partnership project between Visit Scotland, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar and HIE Innse Gall. It has already been used to benefit a number of sectors and other groups in the Outer Hebrides and was to be launched within the food and drink sector. However the ongoing implementation of the branding initiative is currently delayed due to state aid rules.

A survey carried out as part of the project identified that hospitality sector businesses rated seafood and sheep meat products as the highest quality. Another survey among food and drink producers also identified significant ambitions for growth. The interest among producers has led to the first Outer Hebrides Food and Drink conference being held in September 2008 at An Lainntair in Stornoway.

As part of the overall marketing VisitScotland produced an eating out guide to support the development of a food and drink trail. The food and drink trail has been established under the auspices of the Outer Hebrides Speciality Food Producers Association and has a dedicated website: <http://www.outerhebridesfoodtrail.com>. However this will require ongoing development such as signage and further marketing to achieve maximum impact.

There are currently two distilleries being developed in the Outer Hebrides – one on the Isle of Barra and one in Uig on the Westside of Lewis. Whisky production has the opportunity to expand the range of speciality products, add value to primary products and promote tourism.

Outline specifications for these projects that were developed during the workshops are set out in Appendix C.

6.4 Key Action points

This research has highlighted several strands of action that will help to build the capacity of communities across the Outer Hebrides and promote ways of community involvement that can help sustain the islands' population.

The Outer Hebrides Community Planning Partnership will take the lead in coordinating the priority actions. The partnership have recently set up a high level Migration Project Team which will develop an action plan based on realising two key Single Outcome Agreement local outcomes:

- 1.6 - an increase in net civilian migration; and
- 1.7 - an increase in working age population.

Improving Image and Perception

Chapter 2 provided a frank analysis of how the Outer Hebrides are perceived by the regional and national media. It identified several actions that OHCPP partners can initiate to counter the stereotypical perception.

1. Developing a positive counter-image

This strand will require both long-term action and genuine partnership between the key public sector agencies through the Community Planning Partnership. A strong positive and consistent vision should be at the heart of all policy objectives. This needs to focus on key strengths rather than being 'all things to all people'. It should focus on:

- Quality of life and environment;
- High quality local products;
- Leading the way in renewable energy research and development; and
- High quality broadband connections.

2. Arranging visits for journalists and editors

In the short-term there is an opportunity to promote a short visit for editors and journalists. This should showcase the best that the islands have to offer in terms of hospitality, entertainment and recent developments. Again the visit should be aimed at highlighting the components of the longer-term vision being pursued.

3. A sustained, planned programme of positive press

Based on this clear vision the OHCPP partners should work together more closely to identify and promote publicity that supports this counter-image. This may involve fewer but more high profile press releases that present journalists with opportunities for positive features.

Strengthening identity & building bridges

Chapter 3 highlighted that the strong social bonds within communities were threatened by demographic changes. The Cultural Pathfinder set out several recommendations for ways of enhancing community bonds through mainstreaming cultural activities. However there are further ways of potentially strengthening these bonds through widening links between long-term residents and people moving to the islands.

4. Welcome to the Hebrides Pack

Providing information to people moving to the islands is a simple way of making them feel included and also making them aware of the cultural features and traditions of Hebridean life. This would involve developing a short booklet or pack with information on island life, community organisations, services and events. It would also enable new residents to register their skills and interests through the skills bank (see Action Point 5 below).

5. Skills bank

The concept of a (voluntary and community sector) skills bank – where members exchange skills – rather than money is well-established and is being championed by SCVO. This type of project has the potential to both widen involvement in the voluntary and community sector and increase the capacity of the sector to influence change. OHCPP partners should aim to develop a pilot skills bank project in collaboration with the voluntary sector partners.

Promoting inclusion

Our research has identified a need to make sure more people feel involved in community life and decision-making. In particular the OHMS identified the need to get young people and women more involved in decision-making. While several of the actions outlined above will contribute to greater inclusion there are further areas for action that will support this.

6. Supporting the role of women

While the role of women in positions of authority has improved over recent years, women are still under-represented in elected and senior management positions. The OHCPP partners should consider developing a pilot scheme to mentor and support women with potential to progress to more powerful positions.

7. Involving young people

The involvement of young people in community life is critical in promoting inclusion and building longer-term connections between people and place. The OHCPP

should continue to support the role of the Youth Action Team and encourage greater involvement in decision-making by young people through initiatives such as the Scottish Youth Parliament.

Supporting community capacity

Our research into existing community-based projects highlighted a wealth of current activity that can be built on. These action points support those emerging from the Cultural Pathfinder.

8. Improving coordination of community activity

There should be more focus on coordinating the current activities of voluntary and community sector organisations. This will mean that the OHCPP can make better use of its resources in providing central support and adding value to what the sector can achieve. This may require a more strategic role for the sector in helping to deliver the SOA. (See also Action Points 5 (Skills Bank) and 9 (Financial sustainability)).

9. Increasing financial sustainability for small voluntary groups

Lack of sustainable funding is always a major problem for voluntary and community sector organisations. In the medium term it should be possible to develop more sustainable funding streams for these organisations – provided that they are better coordinated and delivering against clear SOA outcomes. More stable funding could only be committed once Action Point 8 on coordination has been implemented.

10. Accessing off-island support

Limited access to sources of expertise is a common problem for small community-based projects and groups. The Gaelic Business Club based in the central belt of Scotland has indicated interest in providing advice and support to island communities and social enterprises. The OHCPP should make initial contact with the Chair of the club to identify ways that members can get involved more in developing island communities.

Short to medium term action on Flagship Projects

Two flagship partnership projects were identified as having significant potential to help develop community capacity and sustain the population of the Outer Hebrides in the longer-term. Each of these requires strong leadership and strategic direction so that they can secure buy-in and resources.

11. Green Energy Research

Significant progress has been made in identifying opportunities for central government research funding for green and renewable energy development through Research Hebrides. OHCPP partners should prioritise support for this project through secondments, in-kind contributions and strategic backing.

12. Developing local products

Developing and marketing local products provide opportunities for adding value to the islands' high quality natural products. This will also help to improve the image of the islands and promote niche tourism opportunities. A stronger partnership and an animator to engage producers will help to make quicker progress in this key area.

6.5 Summary table of action points

Figure 7 below summarises the key action points and identifies their relative priority. Most of these actions will require partnership working to deliver effectively.

Figure 7 Summary of key actions and priorities

Action	Priority	Theme(s)
Develop a clear vision	High	Perception Identity
Mentoring programme for women	High	Inclusion Capacity
Promoting youth involvement	High	Inclusion Capacity
Coordinating community sector activity	High	Capacity
Green energy research centre	High	Capacity Perception
Developing local products	High	Capacity Perception
Piloting Skills Bank	Medium	Capacity Inclusion
Increasing financial sustainability for community and voluntary sector	Medium	Capacity
Positive press programme	Medium	Perception

Accessing off-island support	Medium	Capacity Inclusion
Journalist visit	Low- Medium	Perception
Welcome to Hebrides pack	Low- medium	Inclusion Identity

Figure 8 outlines the main agencies who will be involved in implementing these actions and sets out an indicative budget against these elements. Clearly the resources needed to implement each action will depend on a more detailed specification of the scale and nature of delivery. It will also depend on the in-kind time and staffing contributions that might be available from partner organisations. These costs should therefore be reviewed and amended by the CPP Migration Working Group as actions are developed.

Figure 8 Indicative budgets and lead agencies

Action	Indicative budget (£1,000s)			Lead/Support
	09/10	10/11	11/12	
Develop a clear vision	10	0	0	CPP CNES/HIE/NHS/UHI -
Mentoring programme for women	25	25	25	CoC - Connect
Promoting youth involvement	20	20	20	CPP – CNES/UHI
Coordinating community sector activity	50	40	30	CNES NHS/UHI/HIE -
Green energy research centre	400	450	500	UHI/CNES/HIE
Developing local products	50	75	100	HIE/CNES
Piloting Skills Bank	30	30	30	CNES/SDS/CVS

Increasing financial sustainability for community and voluntary sector	100	90	80	CNES/HIE/CVS
Positive press programme	50	50	50	CPP – all
Accessing off-island support	10	10	10	CNES
Journalist visit	0	10	10	CPP CNES/HIE/NHS/UHI/ VS
Welcome to Hebrides web portal and welcome pack	50	50	50	CPP CNES/VS/CAB

As the figures indicate, for some aspects the level of funding required should reduce over time as the initial investment promotes greater self-reliance (actions to coordinate and support greater community sector sustainability). Other areas for investment will grow as the demand for support increases. This is likely to be the case for the two flagship areas of renewable energy research and local product development and marketing. While their need for support will increase so will their overall value to the local economy and in sustaining communities.

6.6 Links to National Outcomes

As we outlined in the introduction, these action points will help to make progress towards the Government’s national outcomes. There are eight key outcomes where most impact will focus as outlined in Figure 9.

Figure 9 How proposed Actions contribute to National Outcomes

National Outcomes/ Action Points	1. Clear vision	2. Publicity visits	3. Positive publicity	4. Welcome pack	5. Skills Bank	6. Supporting women	7. Involving youth	8. Coordinating 3 rd sector	9. Financial sustainability	10. Off island support	11. Energy research	12. developing products
2. We realise our full economic potential with more and better employment opportunities for our people.	✓				✓	✓				✓	✓	✓
3. We are better educated, more skilled and more successful, renowned for our research and innovation.					✓					✓	✓	
4. Our young people are successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens.							✓					
7. We have tackled the significant inequalities in Scottish society.				✓		✓	✓					
10. We live in well-designed, sustainable places where we are able to access the amenities and services we need.	✓							✓				
11. We have strong, resilient and supportive communities where people take responsibility for their own actions and how they affect others.				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			
13. We take pride in a strong, fair and inclusive national identity.	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓			✓		
15. Our public services are high quality, continually improving, efficient and responsive to local people's needs	✓						✓	✓	✓			

Appendix A - Forum Theatre Transcripts

This Appendix provides more detailed transcripts of some of the views individuals expressed during the Forum Theatre workshops. This includes the sessions on exploring identity and using images to illustrate and explore oppression and integration.

Exploring Identity

The Island is stuck in the past

A range of comments were made to shed light on this issue, with some of these relating to:

- The insularity of the Islands and its 'authority figures' and the fact that it is difficult to 'stick your head above the parapet'.
- The hold that religion has on some island communities was also mentioned. Another person highlighted that: 'there are older people making decisions with ideas that are stuck in the past'.

Another participant stated that:

'A lot of attitudes are stuck in the past an obvious example of this is the six-day ferry, that's seen as something we should be defending.'

The Sunday observance issue was also brought up by another participant in Stornoway as a negative aspect.

One participant highlighted that the changing age profile within communities made it difficult for people to push for change:

'because of demographics, there are fewer young people and more older people particularly in the villages. Changes are difficult and they meet with obstacles.'

They went on to note that young people are encouraged to leave and that it is more common for them not to come back. There is a perception that lack of opportunities means that the most talented individuals have to leave, but that is not accepted. However the same participant agreed that to stay in the Hebrides people had to make compromises regarding their careers.

One participant identified the Council's support for recent wind farm developments as an issue where they considered that the Council was out of touch with the general population.

One participant thought that while some Hebrideans are very progressive, many immigrants come here because they want to live in the past. This was perhaps supported by another participant who considered the lack of trading on a Sunday was a nice and peaceful element of the 'past'. Another person accepted that some things on the islands were old-fashioned but that this was not necessarily negative.

One person thought that the pace of life was slower but that the Islands should make the most of their differences and uniqueness. Travel to work was less stressful and people could combine work with crofting.

'We're unique and always going to be different. That's a good thing.'

Those who disagreed mentioned the relatively good broadband connections which are fairly high speed for a rural area. They highlighted that technology was opening up new opportunities for the younger generations. There were several instances highlighted of people working from home in highly skilled or competitive business sectors while able to enjoy the quality of life of the Outer Hebrides.

Life on the Islands is great

Several participants highlighted that responses to this statement were strongly based on people's own lifestyles, attitudes and philosophy. The people, environment, culture and sense of community all came across strongly as positive features of Hebridean life. Therefore people who rate these elements highly are likely to have a good quality of life. The outdoor environment, beaches, and recent spells of good weather were also identified.

One person mentioned that it is a great place in which to grow up in and a good place in which to grow old in. Another highlighted the importance of the people and the culture:

'The people make it great. The elderly people who are steeped in history are fantastic and they can pass the knowledge on to the kids. It's all about the people and the culture. Everyone gives more thought to old people here, there's always a neighbourly outlook. There's a sense of community still up here.'

People also mention the low levels of crime as a positive factor in wanting to bring up family there. However one person thought that these perceptions masked higher than average levels of domestic violence and rape. This perception however is not backed up by statistics and this highlights the problems with inaccurate perceptions.

Others highlighted problems with alcohol abuse. Participants in one workshop accepted a link between alcohol abuse and domestic violence.

Others identify issues about things to do for younger people:

'It's not bad for oldies, but not so good for young people. There used to be more for young people, dances and stuff. the facilities haven't kept up, there used to be four cafes for young people to meet in now there's only one.'

The issues around religious influence were also highlighted by several participants:

'I don't like being dictated to about what you can and can't do. I like open debate but here things go on behind closed doors, there's a religious influence and a lack of open debate.'

However views were polarised as to whether the Sunday issues were a positive or negative feature. The fact that people's family could not travel to the Islands on a Sunday if something happened was highlighted as a concern. Some people also

thought that many visitors would be disadvantaged by the limited services available on a Sunday.

There is a good community spirit on the island

People thought that there was a strong reliance on the community spirit through voluntary work. However some thought there was an over-reliance on voluntary effort. However when people need community support they do pull together for each other. One example given was where there was a need for local fund-raising for a good cause, another was where there was sickness or personal emergency – ‘you can rely on friends and neighbours to help you’.

Participants in another session identified that people respect each other because most families know one another. The lack of crime means that people don’t need to lock their doors.

Participants did not think that there was any strong resentment of people coming from outside of the islands despite a very strong cultural identity. There can be resentment when people come to the Islands expecting an easy life – compared with an historically hard-working crofting community. One participant at another session made a similar point identifying that community spirit was a two-way process requiring give as well as take. Others highlighted that the extent to which people from elsewhere can integrate very much depends on their own attitude and personality. A lack of respect for the Hebridean culture was the reason given for some negativity towards in-comers.

One participant thought that the level of community spirit had declined compared with 20 or 30 years ago. This was attributed to fewer community activities such as gathering sheep or cutting peat. Where these still happen now then it tends to be within the family rather than as a wider community. Also the ageing demographic situation means that there are fewer active people to help with these community tasks. Those people who have moved to the islands from different backgrounds are perhaps less aware of the cultural or historical connections. Overall there seems to be a sense that community spirit is still very strong but perhaps under threat. One participant said it depends which village you live in as to the level of community spirit.

We can make positive changes together

Several people highlighted that in-migrants added a lot and had kept some organising committees going within local communities. One person suggested that acting as positive role models helped others to get involved and highlighted the need for a ‘gently, gently’ approach. Other participants agreed that positive change was possible but took more time in the Islands than elsewhere. In another session the theme of taking a positive and optimistic attitude also came out:

‘I agree you have to be positive and start with a positive outlook. Keep chipping away, you can make things happen.’

Another participant highlighted that there is a lot of resistance to change and that people are not very good at: ‘shouting about how good the islands are’. There is a feeling that things are starting to change, but that this is still happening too slowly for

many. The positive aspects that could be promoted more strongly were seen as the uniqueness of the culture, great environment, quality of life, safety and security.

Several participants agreed that as a woman on the islands you have to be very strong to get on. There appear to be a lack of positive role models for women in places of authority; although this is starting to change. One person highlighted that:

'A lot of the decision makers are older men who are retired; they don't look at things from the point of view of, say, younger working women.'

Another added that:

'The Local Authority is very male dominated, and that's not a good thing, there are no female departmental heads for instance. There are lots of talented women who could do these jobs, but they don't get the chance.'

Another participant also identified that younger people struggle to have their voices heard although this had been changing for the better recently.

The pace of change is also one area where participants felt there was less cohesion between native Islanders and those who had come to live there. One participant made the following comment:

'There is a split between incomers and people that belong here. There aren't many things that incomers and natives go to. You are always an incomer here, even after many years. What makes a bit of a difference is if you have a family here...but it never really changes.'

Another participant highlighted that in-migrants getting involved in committees often felt frustrated at the slow pace of change. In another group there were mixed views on how the larger numbers of in-migrants were influencing change. There were some antipathetic views expressed about the attitudes of a few lifestyle in-migrants.

In another group one older participant thought that most in-migrants had been very good for the Outer Hebrides and that only a minority had been problematic. And that is usually because they are just difficult people rather than because they are non-native. Other non-native participants were frustrated by being unable to become sufficiently fluent in Gaelic to feel comfortable using it. Differences in attitudes between Stornoway and more rural areas were also highlighted. Some participants thought that Stornoway was more used to a greater mix of backgrounds but that it may be more difficult for in-migrants to integrate in other parts of the islands.

'I would feel I had to conform more if I lived in some rural communities. I don't think I could live far out of town.'

There are no opportunities here

Several participants considered that career progression opportunities were certainly limited in the Islands. They stated that:

'It can restrict your opportunities living here. You can get to a certain point in your career and then you're stuck waiting for someone to die and open up a senior post. I had to go away to do my nursing training now they don't but most of them once they're trained have to go away to get jobs.'

'On the mainland you have the opportunity to move companies to advance. That's not available up here; you'll probably end up doing the same job year after year.'

One person felt that the islands do not take advantage of the economic opportunities. Another highlighted the importance of attracting back graduates to the Islands while they have no strong ties elsewhere and at an early stage in their careers. At this stage returning represents a low risk to graduates who are more likely to be open-minded about careers and they will have fewer relocation expenses to act as a disincentive.

However another participant thought that there were more lifestyle opportunities on the islands than on the mainland. The quality of life and environment and the excellent education services were considered to be an opportunity. But this is not recognised by everyone, one participant noted that:

'My daughter says she couldn't come back because it would bore her to tears.'

One person summed up the situation by stating that the opportunities available to you depend on what you are looking for. They will suit some people but not others. Another thought that Gaelic fragments things when trying to promote opportunities.

Using Images

Depictions of Oppression

The first group portrayed an image of domestic violence with a third party turning their back on the scene. Participants were then asked to change the scene to make it more positive. One person suggested that the third person should turn and confront the incident, while another person thought the picture should portray the female victim fighting back.

The second image was of two men, the first one threatening to attack the other. The second man stood with hands slightly out from sides and palms flat open. The stance of the second man could be interpreted as either confrontational or passive. Participants thought the second man raising his hands to calm down the first one would improve the image. This highlighted to the group that other people's perceptions of us are not always what we want to put across.

Another group produced an image of three people discussing a paper and a fourth person standing apart. One person is being excluded from what is going on. To improve the image the group suggested moving the excluded person closer and adding a thought bubble saying: 'They've asked my opinion, I'm contributing'.

The next group produced an image of a man standing over a woman in a threatening position with hands raised. The woman has her hands clasped and looks cowed. Other participants thought it represented domestic violence but it was portraying womankind being oppressed by the church. The man represented a minister in the pulpit. Participants felt that the scene could be improved by having the man sit down beside the woman or touch her on the shoulder reassuringly.

The next image was one of a woman knocking on the door of a shop while the shopkeeper keeps the door closed. Another woman sat not getting involved. The image portrayed the two sides of the Sunday issue. One person commented that:

'When I went to university I was very defensive of Lewis, then I came back to live and gradually I started thinking that the place wasn't changing as it should. The people in charge here are generally older men and often have strong links with the church. I firmly believe in freedom of thought and religion, but I don't feel that Sunday issues should be affecting my life. The people in charge are afraid of change.'

Another groups also portrayed the Sunday issue with a picture of a woman hanging out washing while two older woman are gossiping her about her. One of the gossiping women is chastising the younger woman while the second one is secretly wishing she was brave enough to get away with doing it.

There was considerable debate about this issue and the influence that respecting other peoples' beliefs had on people's behaviour on the islands. There was a lot of confusion as to why certain services (like pubs) were open on Sundays while the leisure centres (on Lewis and Harris) were shut. Most participants were supportive of both ferries sailings and leisure centres opening on Sundays. One participant highlighted the irony:

'Yes I can't take my daughter swimming on Sunday; maybe I should take her for a pint instead!'

The final Stornoway workshop also focused on the Sunday issue, with an image of a councillor turning his back on a voter. This portrayed the view that councillors are frightened to open leisure centres on a Sunday for fear of losing votes. To make it more positive they turned the councillor round to face the voter. This was to indicate the Council facing the problem.

There was then some discussion about the role of Gaelic. One participant thought that people were putting their children into Gaelic medium education as a means of saving traditions rather than trying to preserve traditions themselves. Some thought that in-migrant families were more likely to put their children into Gaelic medium education than native families. Some thought that the Gaelic Medium classes were popular because they were smaller and there was more attention given to individuals.

Depictions of integration

For the positive integration image participants thought that music events and sporting activities such as the recent charity fun run were both good examples of different people mixing. One person pointed out that:

'Some Gaelic events don't intentionally exclude people but if you don't speak the language you may feel excluded.'

The group produced an image of the fun run with two runners linking arms and other people clapping and taking pictures.

Appendix B – Project ideas, Barriers and Support

This Appendix identifies the main areas where survey respondents would like to see more focus over the next three years in order to build greater community capacity. For each project area it sets out the barriers and enablers that respondents have identified.

Future project themes

Our e-survey identified several areas where respondents would like to see further progress over the next three years. We have grouped these under the following headings:

- Tourism accommodation and facilities;
- Renewable energy;
- Culture, creative, Language (including Gaelic);
- Local products (food and drink, Harris Tweed, crafts);
- IT/ tele-working projects;
- Environmental projects;
- Social development projects; and
- Social enterprise development.

For each of these project areas we have set out some suggested project ideas along with the specific barriers and areas for support that were identified.

Tourism

Project ideas

Respondents identified several areas for development around tourism including:

- Adventure tourism;
- Mountain bike tracks;
- Long-distance paths/ tracks;
- Archaeological tourism;
- Bird hides;
- Improved marketing;
- Hotels and eating places;
- Visitor attractions;
- A marina/ moorings for leisure yachts at Stornoway;
- Facilities catering for children;
- Arts projects;
- Improved customer service;

- Better transport connections.

Barriers

We asked respondents whether they considered there were any barriers to taking these projects forward, and those identified in relation to these were:

- Sunday limitations on leisure/ transport;
- Limited planning/ design control;
- Poor townscape/ lack of investment in Stornoway;
- High travel costs;
- Lack of investment; and
- Poor marketing.

Areas for support

The following are areas where these respondents felt greater support would assist these projects:

- Greater clarity on funding sources;
- Recognition of the value of the creative and cultural sector;
- Training;
- Expert advice;
- Better marketing and coordination;
- Private investment;
- Cheaper public transport;
- Incentives for longer season;
- Funding; and
- Equestrian facilities.

Renewable energy

Project ideas

Numerous respondents highlighted the potential that renewable energy offered for developing communities and supporting community projects. These ideas focused on:

- Community wind farms;
- Offshore/ marine energy;
- Equitable distribution of income from energy projects;
- Developing renewable energy R and D; and
- Developing supply chain links.

Barriers

The barriers identified to developing renewable energy projects were seen as:

- Interconnector link to mainland;
- Limited labour supply;
- Limited service sector industries;
- Lack of information;
- Policy support through energy prices (ROCs);
- Lack of community confidence;
- Access to finance;
- Expertise in developing community-based energy projects;
- Restrictions through environmental designations; and
- Changes in attitude.

Areas for support

The following elements were identified as necessary to support renewable energy development:

- An interconnector to the mainland;
- Business management/ development for small businesses;
- Visits to other community projects;
- A directory of funding and expertise sources;
- Funding advice; and
- Structural funding for renewable energy;

Cultural, Creative and Language initiatives

Project areas:

- Gaelic multi-media and audio-visual materials;
- Music, sport and leisure;
- Arts – participatory and performance based;
- Publishing initiatives;
- ESOL Language school; and
- A portable recording studio for young people.

Barriers

The following barriers have been identified:

- The lack of partnership working between public bodies;
- Lack of funding;

- Sunday limitations on travel; and
- Transport costs/ distance from international airports.

Areas for support

- Training;
- Mentoring;
- Funding;
- Consultation on market for arts;
- 7 day travel;
- International marketing/ advice;
- Affordable classrooms to hire;
- Business start-up advice;
- Links with other projects; and
- Links with mainland recording studio.

Local Products

Project ideas

The following ideas were identified relating to local products:

- Developing and promoting local products - food and drinks/ manufactured produce;
- Local produce markets;
- Developing Harris Tweed sector;
- Supporting a quality crafts sector; and
- Support for growing and marketing vegetable products.

Barriers

Interestingly, two of the five respondents who identified ideas around local products thought there were no barriers to taking these projects forward. Those who identified barriers mentioned:

- Skills and marketing expertise; and
- Promoting uniqueness (Harris Tweed).

Areas for Support

The following areas for support were identified in relation to developing local products:

- Incentives for the retail sector;

- Targeted support for crafts etc.;
- Expert advice;
- Learning from other community's experiences;
- Sympathetic council;
- Sympathetic venues;
- Producers working together;
- Good marketing and publicity; and
- Enthusiastic volunteers.

IT/ Tele-working

Project areas

Projects relating to IT appear to want to attract higher value lifestyle business-people to the Islands by providing suitable IT infrastructure and making remote and home working easier. Ideas include:

- Improved broadband access;
- Tele-working – dispersed home-based employment in IT/ contact centres;
- Greater free internet access in public areas; and
- Training in ICT and related enterprise skills.

Barriers

- High costs.

Support

- Successful case studies of tele-working;
- Public agencies to promote home working;
- Improved IT and telephone infrastructure throughout the Islands;
- Technical support for home-working provided centrally; and
- Childcare support.

Environmental projects

Project ideas

- Improvements to Stornoway townscape;
- Long distance paths;
- Recycling projects; and
- Car sharing projects.

Barriers

- Over-reliance on cars;
- Lack of funding for heritage restoration; and
- Lack of private sector interest in Lews Castle.

Areas for support

- CNES support for car use reduction;
- Grants for solar panels etc.;
- Volunteer development; and
- Encouraging industrial users to move out of Stornoway town centre.

Social Development Projects

Project ideas

- Projects to build community capacity;
- Projects that give a genuine voice to young people;
- Improved social infrastructure;
- Community Education projects;
- Confidence building for young people;
- Building confidence in businesses; and
- Support for community coordinators.

Barriers

- Over-reliance on voluntary sector;
- Lack of support (e.g. youth workers);
- Fear of change in many local people and fear of challenging the status quo. Many local decision making bodies often not representing majority of population and out of touch with local opinion;
- Sunday observance and lack of leisure facilities on Sundays are a barrier to greater social integration; and
- Lack of long-term funding for posts.

Areas for support

- More funding put to community support posts - youth workers, community halls, events coordinators;
- reduction in meetings-for-the-sake-of-meetings and focus on actual outputs; and
- commitment from local authorities to continuing coordinator posts.

Appendix C – Outline Specifications for Flagship projects

Specification for Renewable Energy Research Centre

Objectives

The key objectives of the renewable energy research centre are to create highly skilled job opportunities, develop a national or international profile for the Outer Hebrides and attract additional investment to the Islands. The centre would also help to generate spin-offs for both the private and community sectors and would increase the pool of expertise that was available on the Islands.

Key features

Participants felt that to take advantage of the available opportunities, the Research Centre would need to be up and running within 8 to 10 years. Elements of the centre could be achieved on a virtual basis and there were several existing buildings and facilities that could be used to progress this. The existing Research Hebrides Partnership led by Lews Castle College would coordinate activity.

One of the key features of the research centre should be making the most of the Outer Hebrides' resources, including:

- Natural resources;
- Built heritage; and
- Intellectual capital.

This would involve building a mutually supportive environment between the education, private and community sectors. There will also be important roles for public agencies in supporting research projects through secondments and providing opportunities for innovative pilot projects.

The research centre will focus on:

- Developing new postgraduate opportunities;
- Developing innovative research projects; and
- Promoting business growth through joint ventures and an arms-length trading company.

It would be hoped that the research centre will also lead to more employment opportunities in skilled jobs and a greater rate of business start-ups through spin-offs.

Community Involvement

The community would have an integral part to play in taking forward the research centre. There would be direct project links between the centre and community level renewable energy projects and the wider community sector would benefit from both

access to a wider pool of expertise and more skilled individuals who can play a role in managing community-based enterprises.

Key Players

Aside from the community sector, other key players will be:

- Lews Castle College/ UHI;
- The Comhairle – Sustainable Communities;
- Highland and Islands Enterprise;
- Proseact nan Eilean;
- Highlands and Islands Community Energy Company (HICEC);
- OH Community Planning Partnership;
- Private sector – investors and supply chain businesses;
- Grid/ infrastructure providers;
- Energy companies;
- Elected members;
- Community Trusts; and
- Skills Development Scotland.

Delivering the project

Participants identified key steps to ensure that the project is up and running in 8-10 years. The first critical step is to develop a full business plan based on a robust feasibility study and risk assessment. This would need to happen within two years. This would be coordinated through the existing Research Hebrides partnership. However, the Community Planning Partnership and HICEC were seen as crucial partners in reaching this stage.

Following finalisation of the business plan, sourcing finance for the project is the next critical stage, with participants feeling that this needs to be achieved within four years. Once the funding is in place the project can then be formally implemented and launched with premises and staff put in place.

However participants highlighted the need to ensure a suitable operational plan is in place to sustain the centre once it is up and running. This may require an element of flexibility and conservative estimation of potential income sources.

Specification for Developing Local Products

Objectives

The overall objective is to build a strong recognisable brand, increase the number of producers while driving up quality and promoting greater local use of products. Ultimately, developing local products will increase the value of exports and attract visitors through linking products with themes, places and experiences.

Key features

Developing the market for local products would require two key strands of activity:

- Developing quality standards and ways to drive up overall quality ; and
- Promoting a strong and recognisable brand.

There will be a strong link between developing quality branded produce and developing niche tourism, and there can be synergies developed between these areas. This would include developing themed trails and combined visitor experiences (such as those at distilleries) where people can look at production processes, exhibitions and history as well as tasting/ consuming and buying the products. Products will include food and drink as well as textiles, arts and crafts; and books, films and media.

Developing a strong brand identity is viewed as critical to developing this sector. This should build on the existing work carried out on developing the Outer Hebrides brand and on existing high profile quality products including:

- Harris Tweed;
- Fish and seafood; and
- Stornoway Black Pudding.

Ideas for promoting greater value from the sector include:

- A Food and Drink festival in September involving local producers;
- An Outer Hebrides Food and Drink Trail;
- A food park – perhaps based on the Newton Industrial estate close to Stornoway town centre;
- A visitor gateway facility where local products can be showcased;
- An artists workshop/ studio and combined retail space;
- Encourage artists and craftspeople to work together to develop/ market products; and
- Promoting a distillery on the Islands – such as has happened on Arran and Skye. The market for Whisky is at an all-time high and this would help to strengthen the high-end quality brand of Hebridean products.

Key Players

The key players in developing the opportunities outlined above include:

- Producers;
- The Comhairle;
- Highland and Islands Enterprise – Innse Gall;
- Lews Castle College/ UHI;
- The voluntary sector – promoting the social enterprise model; and
- Visit Hebrides.

Resources & mechanisms

One of the main resources identified to progress the marketing of local products would be an animator with expertise in this field. This person would initially help producers to come together and would help to promote the Hebrides brand more widely.

Other forms of support would include more specialist business support and development expertise targeting these sectors. Links to exemplar projects or companies elsewhere could also help to improve expertise and raise the profile of business in the Outer Hebrides.

A high profile entrepreneur could help to focus action, bring agencies together and also raise the profile of the brand. Some form of producer network linked to quality development and marketing could improve the level of engagement.

Support for developing the proposed Food and Drink festival could be a short-term, easily achievable measure. This might require an initial two year post to develop a festival for 2010. The festival is one way of involving the community by engaging volunteers, running competitions, developing school projects etc. It can also involve people who have come to the Islands from elsewhere, either mainland UK or abroad in promoting food/ recipes from their native country/ region.

Participants highlighted the large number of vacant or underused buildings in Stornoway and elsewhere in the Outer Hebrides and that there was an opportunity for public agencies to incentivise more productive uses for these. Potential uses linked to this idea would include:

- A visitor gateway experience which showcases local produce;
- Artist and craft workshop/ studio space; and
- Developing a food park within an industrial area.

There could also be a stronger and more coordinated focus on ports of entry to the Outer Hebrides for marketing produce and promoting brand awareness.

Short-term goals

Participants considered that relatively quick progress could be made in taking forward the ideas around local products and that within three years there could be:

- A food and drink trail (which is already being developed);
- A food and drink festival;
- An identifiable Outer Hebrides brand for local produce – building on the wider branding exercise; and
- A visitor gateway centre located in central Stornoway showcasing produce.

Appendix D – Glossary

Agency – a term used to describe the ability to use skills to influence others.

Bonding capital – a term used to describe the shared experiences and objectives that bring people together. This can describe the bonds between people living in the same village or township or people who share interests (e.g. crofters).

Bridging capital – a term used to describe the linkages that community groups can make with other similar groups or with decision makers.

Cohesion – the bonds or "glue" between members of a community or society.

Comainn Eachdraidh – Network of Historical Societies

Comhairle nan Eilean Siar – Western Isles Council

Community capacity – a general term that describes a community's overall ability to take action or get involved in decision-making. This will encompass resources (people, money, buildings) as well as skills and agency (the power to influence).

Community integration - integration includes goals such as levelling barriers to association, creating equal opportunity regardless of gender, race or religion, and the development of a culture that draws on diverse traditions, rather than merely bringing a minority into the majority culture.

Community planning – an approach to providing services where the Comhairle works with other public agencies and the voluntary sector to make sure services meet community needs.

Devolved structures – ways of allowing people to have influence on decisions that affect their lives at a more local level.

Diaspora - refers to any population sharing common ethnic identity who were either forced to leave or voluntarily left their original territory and became residents in other areas.

Forum Theatre – A form of participation pioneered in the 1960's by Augusto Boal and used as a means of knowledge and transformation of social reality. The public becomes active to explore, show, analyse and transform the reality in which they are living. The audience are encouraged to not only imagine change but to actually practise that change, reflect collectively on the suggestion, and thereby become empowered to generate social action.

Hegemony - used to describe and explain the dominance of one social group over another, such that the ruling group acquires some degree of consent from the subordinate.

Indigenous – a term describing someone born in the Outer Hebrides.

In-migrant – someone who has chosen to move to the Outer Hebrides.

Long-term resident – someone who was born or brought up in the Outer Hebrides.

Pròiseact nan Ealan - or the Gaelic Arts Agency, is the national development agency for the Scottish Gaelic arts.

Single Outcome Agreement – a recently introduced approach to prioritising Local Government expenditure. The Comhairle sets out a series of local outcomes that will help to achieve the Scottish Government's national outcomes. These are then agreed with the Government and key partners.

Social capital – this is an often misunderstood term that refers to connections within and between social networks as well as connections among individuals. A useful description, by Clay Davies in 1916, describes social capital as comprising: 'those tangible substances [that] count for most in the daily lives of people: namely good will, fellowship, sympathy, and social intercourse among the individuals and families who make up a social unit.'

Social enterprises – are social mission driven organisations which trade in goods or services for a social purpose. Their aim to accomplish targets that are social and environmental as well as financial is often referred to as having a triple bottom line.

Teleworking/ telecommuting – telecommuting is a work arrangement in which employees enjoy flexibility in working location and hours. In other words, the daily commute to a central place of work is replaced by telecommunication links. Many work from home, while others, occasionally also referred to as **nomad workers** or **web commuters** use mobile telecommunications technology to work from coffee shops or other locations. **Telework** is a broader term, referring to substituting telecommunications for any form of work-related travel, thereby eliminating the distance restrictions of telecommuting.

Contact details

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