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Rural and Islands Strategic Stakeholder Workshop 8 November 2022

EVENT REPORT & NEXT STEPS



What was the strategic stakeholder workshop about?

Scotland's rural and island communities are strengthened by hundreds of organisations and their networks. It is a rich landscape which allows the development of expertise in the diverse issues that affect communities, and ensures this expertise and associated resources are available, without barriers, to all communities.

As Peter Block said in [Community: The Structure of Belonging](#), it is small groups and organisations that constitutes the unit of transformation.

On 8th November 2022, in Birnam, we brought together representatives from over 60 different small groups and organisations with government colleagues to talk about **how we collaborate to shape policy**, as part of a wider programme to strengthen the rural movement in Scotland.

A rural movement can be defined as an organised approach to networking rural and island communities and amplifying their diverse voices. Every rural and island resident and organisation can choose to be part of the rural movement and have ownership over it. It is a dynamic movement which organises around many different platforms like the [Scottish Rural & Islands Parliament](#) and the [Rural Exchange](#) portal, and adds capacity to existing networks and partnerships.

Scotland's rural movement has two objectives. The first objective was explored in this workshop - shaping policy through advancing meaningful dialogue and collaboration between communities and decision makers. The second objective is strengthening community mobilisation, enabling communities to share learning, expertise and resources so they can shape their own futures.

The Scottish Government recognises the rural movement as a driver for rural and island development. In its Programme for Government 2019-20, it pledged to support "the development of a rural movement that will engage with communities between rural parliaments to include a more diverse range of voices."

As a first step in furtherance of this aim, the Scottish Government commissioned Scotland's Rural College and Newcastle University to study rural movements from across 10 European countries and identify learning to strengthen a Scottish approach. The resulting report, '[Learning from European Rural Movements: Research to Inform a Scottish Approach](#)' was published in August 2022. Its findings and recommendations shaped the workshop structure.

Fuelled by the energy, expertise and passion of workshop participants, **we engaged in two sessions:**

1. **We shared examples of collaboration under eight thematic areas and explored how the rural movement may further strengthen them;**
2. **We looked at specific questions about the structure and direction of Scotland's rural movement and identified ways of building it.**

This report is an account of these sessions. It does not have all the answers but feeds into a process which guides how we will continue to connect, collaborate and incrementally nudge towards a powerful rural movement which will be driven by grassroots communities.



Rural movement programme of engagement

The workshop was part of a 2022/23 programme of engagement activities to shape and strengthen the rural movement in Scotland, leading to the development of an action plan which will be showcased at the 2023 Scottish Rural & Islands Parliament. The different elements of engagement include:



- **August 2022** - [‘Learning from European Rural Movements: Research to Inform a Scottish Approach’](#)
- **September 2022** - a workshop exploring rural movements and international connections delivered by Scottish organisations at the 4th European Rural Parliament in Kielce, Poland.
- **November 2022** - the Strategic Stakeholder Workshop which is the subject of this report and which focused on collaboration to shape policy, the first objective of a rural movement.
- **January to October 2023**—cross-sectoral thematic working groups on topics to be explored at the Scottish Rural & Islands Parliament (SRIP). Participants in the working groups will come from a mix of public, third, academic and private sector organisations.
- **February 2023** - a youth-led workshop is planned to take place in Orkney in February 2023 with a second to take place in a mainland location later in 2023.
- **April to July 2023**—engagement with grassroots communities linking in to the Community Led Local Development network and exploring community mobilisation, the second objective of a rural movement.
- **September 2023** - a stakeholder synthesis workshop will be held to review the draft rural movement action plan and fill in any gaps.

The small working group of colleagues from the Scottish Government, Scottish Rural Action, Scottish Rural Network, Scotland’s Rural College (SRUC) and Newcastle University, which supported delivery of the 2022 activities in the timeline above, will be expanded to involve the range of stakeholders delivering aspects of the 2023 engagement activities including the 2023 Scottish Rural & Islands Parliament. If you are interested in finding out about these activities and collaborating with others to take them forward, please contact artemis@sra.scot.



Workshop Report - Session 1

In the **first session**, we looked at examples of collaboration under the following thematics and explored how the rural movement may strengthen them:

1. Culture
2. Land & island
3. Infrastructure
4. Sustainable populations
5. Wellbeing
6. Enterprise
7. Participation and
8. Leadership

While there was no dedicated thematic on the climate emergency and biodiversity crisis, addressing these human impacts underpin all our actions.

Culture

Collaboration has to start with culture. Sometimes we talk about a ‘culture change’ or a ‘culture of delivery’ but, mainly, in communities, we talk about *our* culture - the traditions and heritage of our past together with the diversity and creativity of our present. It is the culture that we identify with, that inspires us, that we create together, that we enjoy together and that brings us together. The examples of collaboration below demonstrate the importance of culture in its own right but it is also a means to improve the wellbeing of rural and island communities, to boost local economies and to strengthen our connection to nature and our environment. Furthermore, cultural venues, including mobile facilities, act as multi-functional community hubs, bringing a range of services and benefits to rural and island populations.

Cultural activities and creative industries are, however, marginalised and undervalued compared to those that are framed in the context of economic growth, and there are missed opportunities to align local government, Scottish Government and UK Government funding to invest in heritage and creative industries. The rural movement can contribute to strengthening collaboration by:

1. Supporting the development of a shared narrative and language around culture and community wealth building to firmly integrate it into rural and island development policy and practice.
2. Supporting existing networks for the arts, culture and creative institutions to connect with each other and with the networks of other sectors and industries to make the most of synergies;
3. Supporting the development of an evidence base around the importance of multi-purpose community centres, hubs, pop-up and mobile facilities, and touring projects in rural and island communities.

Examples of collaboration

[Findhorn Bay Festival](#) – set up as a charity, the Findhorn Bay Festival is a volunteer-run collaboration of local artists, businesses and third sector organisations. While its primary purpose is to support the arts and widen local people’s participation and enjoyment in arts and culture, it makes a significant contribution to the local economy (close to £1M per annum) and boosts the local tourism industry.

[Rural Arts Network Scotland](#) - initiated by Queen Margaret University to provide a space to share learning, aid development and advocate for artists and cultural practitioners operating in rural and remote areas of Scotland.

[Scotland Loves Local in South Ayrshire](#) – collaboration between Scotland Loves Local (Scotland’s Towns Partnership) and South Ayrshire Council to make Scotland Loves Local gift vouchers available to people so they can choose how they spend them. The scheme is intended to boost local businesses while at the same time enabling people to purchase food or cultural and recreational opportunities without stigma.

[Connecting Threads](#) – the cultural strand of Destination Tweed, it brings together local residents, businesses and third sector organisations to deliver a 5 year culture programme for the Tweed shaped by its habitats and heritage.

[Creative Carbon’s Springboard](#) is a programme of national and local assemblies for creative climate action, which connect people and organisations working on culture and climate change from the same region so they can learn together, share knowledge and information and collaborate.

[Screen Machine](#) – a long-standing collaboration between rural and island communities and Regional Screen Scotland to bring mobile cinema services to remote populations. The project crosscuts multiple policy areas including providing support for arts and culture, delivering on net zero through enabling 20 minute neighbourhoods and enhancing wellbeing through bringing (affordable) joy into peoples’ lives.

The [SEALL Festival of Small Halls](#) is a touring initiative bringing together remote rural and island communities and traditional musicians. It hosts music events in village halls, venues that normally cannot afford to offer live entertainment.

[The Stove Network](#) - a collaboration of local artists, creatives and community development practitioners resulting in a multifunctional space, including a café, arts initiatives and educational programmes for the people of Dumfries and Galloway.

Located in South Uist, [Cnoc Soilleir](#) is joint venture between Ceòlas and UHI – Outer Hebrides which promotes and celebrates the community’s Gàidhlig language and cultural heritage. It has established a building at Cnoc Soilleir (“the bright hill”) with facilities that meet the needs of the educational programmes at UHI, the Ceòlas artistic programme and community-led activities involving Gàidhlig language learning, heritage, music and dance.

Land and island

Collaboration involves an exploration of shared ideas and values. What do concepts mean to us as a collective? How do we interpret them and use them as a basis of working together but also to disrupt the system where necessary? The examples of collaboration below came from two different groups. One group focused predominantly on 'land' itself - how it is owned, how it is used and how to encourage community cohesion and collaboration at the grassroots level. The other group chose to focus on 'place-based policy and practice' looking at initiatives such as the National Islands Plan at strategic level and Local Place Plans at community level.

The examples recorded by the groups demonstrate that place making and land matters are complex, interconnected issues that require alignment at strategic and grassroots levels. Collaboration can lead to solutions and further to this, sharing people, equipment and resources means projects are more financially viable and result in less individual organising. Collaboration often emerges naturally from creating the right spaces but it also requires up-skilling of people and adding capacity to organisations.

Challenges to collaboration emerge with tensions in different viewpoints. An urbanised perspective of a 'rural idyll' or a vibrant place to live and work? 'Repeopling' or 'rewilding'? Mainland or island? Most of these tensions are managed within communities. At strategic level, however, they are amplified and result in siloes. A second challenge is the reliance on volunteers, compounded by short-term funding. With these in mind, the rural movement can contribute to strengthening collaboration by:

1. Communicating a vision for Scotland's rural and island areas through policy work, media work and other means which captures the diversity of these areas and presents a balanced, progressive narrative to address tensions and siloes.
2. Promoting opportunities for shared learning both within Scotland, such as bringing communities involved in government pilots together, or internationally through an enhanced CLLD (Community Led Local Development) programme.
3. Supporting implementation of Scotland's Volunteering Strategy, particularly focused on volunteers involved on Boards and Committees whose particular needs are not adequately recognised or resourced.

Examples of collaboration

The [Eigg buyout](#), which concluded on 12th June 1997, was a collaboration between the local community and multiple agencies including the Highland Council, the Scottish Wildlife Trust and Highlands & Islands Enterprise. It is regarded as a seminal process in Scotland's approach to land management and community empowerment.

Member-led organisations including the [Scottish Crofting Federation](#), [DTAS](#), the [Community Woodlands Association](#), the [Coastal Communities Network](#) and [Community Land Scotland](#) support collaboration within and across their networks, and channel their networks' views to help shape policy. This model of second-tier support is critical for community mobilisation as well as for responsive policy making.

Similarly, network hubs like [Inspira's Rural Social Enterprise Network](#) support the belt and braces of place-based collaboration, providing platforms for organisations and enterprises across Scotland to connect to one another and share learning.

Supporting the above models are organisations like the [Scottish Community Alliance](#), which amongst various initiatives, offers funding to support community learning exchanges. These have been a critical catalyst to improved place-based collaboration across communities.

[Tattie holidays](#) are a traditional approach to place-based community collaboration with weeks set aside in the calendar year for folk, including school children, to gather and help each other with farming activities. Other approaches to land-based collaboration are [common grazings](#) and initiatives such as the [rotational grazing](#) of Shetland cattle, a native breed, on different farms at different times of the year.

Major place-based pilots led by the Scottish Government, academia and others can strengthen collaboration between communities, businesses, public sector, academia and government, developing solutions to vexed problems but only if they are well resourced and committed to long-term investment. Example of such pilots include:

- [Carbon Neutral Islands Project](#)
- [Regional Land Use Partnerships Project](#)
- [Islands Recovery and Renewal pilot for Arran and Cumbrae](#)
- [Local Marine Asset Management Pilot](#)
- James Hutton Institute 'Living Labs' longitudinal project

[Shetland's proposed tunnels development](#) was mentioned in this group and the Infrastructure group. Details on p.7.

The [Community Led Local Development Network](#) is Scotland's next generation of LEADER Local Action Groups. Each Local Action Group (LAG) is made up of diverse community representatives and supported by paid staff. LAGs promote local community and business animation through the provision of advice and funding, creating a place-based capacity building network across rural and island Scotland. A focus of the network is sharing good practice and engaging in partnership. For example, six LAGs are collaborating to and strengthen a network of Youth LAGs.

The [Food & Agriculture Stakeholders' Taskforce \(FAST\)](#) is an independent group of 19 organisations which represent agriculture and food production in Scotland, including the National Farmers Union and the Scottish Association of Young Farmers Clubs. It is recently launched to provide a collective, sectoral voice in the development of the Scottish Government's Agriculture Bill.

Long term research projects which have academic, sectoral and community dimensions and a strong commitment to both knowledge exchange and policy influence like the James Hutton Institute's [Scottish Land Reform Futures](#) project enable collaboration between academia, policy and community.

The [Royal Highland Show](#) is the biggest annual gathering in Scotland of people involved in food production, farming and rural and island life. While there is a strong focus on agriculture, the Show is an opportunity to bring together and network all sectors and industries within rural and island communities.

National-level partnerships such as the [Scottish Food Coalition](#), coordinated by Nourish Scotland, are incredibly successful in maintaining momentum on campaigns over several years in order to maximise impact on legislation, policy and practice. At a regional level similar structures exist, e.g. the [Highland Good Food Partnership](#), which take on additional grassroots networking functions.

The [National Plan for Scotland's Islands](#) was published in 2019 after a significant programme of grassroots consultation. The Plan is backed by legislation, the Islands (Scotland) Act 2018, and has clear objectives, implementation route maps, and governance structures, with a list of identified partners. It supports place-based action tailored to specific island contexts while at the same time encouraging policy cohesion on island matters across the Scottish Government. Critical to its success has been drawing on international practice and collaborations.

A case study topic that crosscuts all discussion themes from place to infrastructure and wellbeing is that of participative approaches to designing places, both the built and natural environment. The resulting spaces that this enables, in themselves foster increased collaboration and creativity, a virtuous cycle of collaboration giving rise to more collaboration. The focus is both on shared space and shared ownership of space, ensuring spaces are not a financial burden and that they generate an income or attract sufficient investment. Examples include:

- The [grounds](#) around the Forth Valley Royal Hospital, the development of which was supported by the [Scottish Futures Trust](#).
- The development of Local Place Planning approaches such as those used by communities in Aberdeenshire ([Imagine Udney](#)), Highland ([Plan it Applecross](#)) and Argyll ([Live Life Morven](#))
- Internationally, [some islands](#) have purposely marketed themselves as hubs for digital and tech innovation and invested in collaboratively designed co-working spaces.

Linking school education to land and place means younger people can become more confident and empowered custodians. Examples include the [Crofting National Progression Award](#) (NPA) at SCQF level 5 and pilot curriculum materials called [the Quest](#) developed by Community Land Scotland to enable young people explore matters around community land ownership and management. Many qualifications can also be accessed through [Rural Skills Scotland](#), a not-for-profit provider based in Fife .



Infrastructure

The infrastructure of the rural movement is platforms like the Scottish Rural & Islands Parliament. Infrastructure can be physical facilities like roads, the national grid and broadband network. It can be sector-specific like abattoirs and waste management facilities supporting small-scale food producers. It can also be people and the skills they bring, like Development Officers supporting community anchor organisations or the staff of SCVO and Third Sector Interfaces supporting the voluntary sector. The examples of collaboration illustrate different interpretations of the word, and demonstrate the long-term commitment, the detailed planning and the level of investment that is needed to build infrastructure that is fit for purpose and futureproofed.

Challenges arise when the policy, regulatory, procurement and funding environments raise barriers to the aspirations of rural and island communities. The rural movement can contribute to strengthening collaboration by:

1. Engaging proactively with the private sector and bringing it into dialogue on policy collaboration.
2. Engaging the UK Government, sharing grassroots learning on the impacts of [Levelling Up](#) and reserved policy.
3. Shining a light on rural and island technological innovation and overcoming some of the barriers to replicating effective practice thrown up by current procurement processes.
4. Supporting exploration of a model for community-led local development infrastructure that builds on the combined work of the organisations such as DTAS, SCVO, Scottish Community Alliance, Community Land Scotland and others.

Examples of collaboration

Physical infrastructure

A community-led campaign which has gained enormous support from businesses and the local Council, [Shetland's proposed tunnels development](#), connecting islands like Unst and Yell to each other and the mainland, has been described by Highlands & Islands Enterprise Chief Executive as "likely to happen in the next ten years."

Multi-functional built environments— community hubs with space for mobile services —provide infrastructure for sustaining populations and wellbeing. These built environments may also include shared workspace, mobility and enterprise incubator services:

- [Rosewell Community Hub](#) (Midlothian)
- [The Strathdearn](#) (Highland)
- [Rural Mobility Hub](#) in Brechin (Angus)

[Healthier Safer Streets](#) is a collaboration between Living Streets, Perth & Kinross Council, the Centre for Inclusive Living in Perth and Kinross and local communities, taking forward small infrastructure projects that result in more walkable streets.

The [Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund](#) has been a successful catalyst for collaboration between communities, local government and businesses to develop infrastructure - parking, signage, toilets, EV charging points etc. – at visitor pressure points. Examples of projects delivered under the RTIF are:

- Six overnight motorhome bays with electric hook-ups and grey water disposal point as part of the [Urgha Aire project](#) (Outer Hebrides)
- [Isle of Staffa](#) visitor infrastructure (Argyll & Bute)
- The [Fairy Pools visitor facilities](#) and parking (Highland)

A collaboration between [SURF Scotland, the Scottish Rural & Islands Transport Community and Scottish Rural Action](#) to interpret 20minute neighbourhoods for rural and island communities fed into a [major report by Nick Wright for HITRANS and Sustrans](#). This, in turn, has shaped the Scottish Government's position on 20 minute neighbourhoods in the National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4).

Sector infrastructure

Community led tourism: Enabling the communities of [Brechin \(Angus\)](#) and [Girvan \(South Ayrshire\)](#) to develop themselves as community-led tourism destinations involved bringing together stakeholders across the tourism and community regeneration spheres and building their capacity to work together. The projects helped existing infrastructure – community trusts, destination management organisations, local government advice services – to deliver for a model of tourism that has always existed, but its potential has traditionally been overlooked. Local collaboration was mirrored at strategic level through involvement of the Scottish Tourism Alliance, Visit Scotland and Scottish Enterprise. This multi-level approach to creating sector infrastructure requires facilitation which was provided in the first instance by [SENScot](#). Building on SENScot's work, a new national organisation [SCOTO](#) has emerged to support community-led tourism in Scotland.

Community development: Organisations including the [Scottish Community Alliance](#), the [Scottish Community Development Centre](#), the [Development Trusts Association Scotland](#) and [SCVO](#) have all individually through their members, or collectively through their combined networks, developed route maps on strengthening the infrastructure for community development. Such infrastructure includes services to network and build capacity of anchor organisations as well as training and collaboration hubs for practitioners involved in the sector.

Sustainable populations

There is a lot we do know about sustainable rural and island populations, including emerging evidence of population revival linked to community ownership of land and assets, and the importance of local skills and career progression for young people. We have not defined, however, metrics for a sustainable community—what does it look like and how should we know if a community might be 'fragile', a definition that is vexed in itself. Would we truly recognise and value the small green shoots of population revival and community optimism about the future if we saw them?

The examples below have mostly arisen out of the need for action, i.e. on the back of a crisis like a primary school closing. Nevertheless, they demonstrate collaboration across multiple sectors and interests, fuelled by a clear goal and with a strong place-based dimension. Several examples are intergenerational. Two - Uist Beò and the Isle of Gigha - are youth-led. Another two build on the diversity of rural and island places and involve communities of interest—Gaelic speakers and ethnic minority communities— in finding solutions. A further example from the Faroe Islands takes a gendered approach.

Again, short term funding, coupled to short term policy goals work against endeavours to sustain thriving communities, where collaborative population projects need to be profoundly inclusive, locally-tailored in their design and implemented on 10 year + cycle. The rural movement can contribute to strengthening collaboration by:

1. Supporting knowledge exchange between academics, communities and policy makers, both within Scotland and with countries like [Spain](#), [Finland](#) and [Japan](#), starting with a programme of work for the 2023 Scottish Rural Parliament.
2. Creating mechanisms to share learning with administrators of the Scottish Land Fund, the Rural & Island Housing Fund and national funders on an ongoing basis to shape tailored, flexible and long-term investment packages for communities.

Examples of collaboration

The Scottish [national repopulation zone pilot](#), launched in 2021, sees pilot areas taking steps to address their own particular challenges, and their experiences then being used to develop effective repopulation initiatives elsewhere. Argyll & Bute, the Outer Hebrides, Highland and other rural local authorities are taking forward collaborative approaches to housing, childcare, skills development and employment in specific localities or islands. The pilot is supported by three Settlement Officers funded through Highlands & Islands Enterprise. See also [here](#) for additional background.

[Uist Beò](#) is a platform built to highlight the depth and breadth of vibrant Uibhist life. Through the tradition of storytelling, it shines a light on the individuals, businesses and organisations that come together to make the islands the unique and vibrant places they are to live, work and visit. The primary aim of the project is to attract people who might be thinking of settling permanently. It is linked to [Relocate to Uist](#), one of the repopulation zone pilot projects.

[Smart Clachan](#), a concept developed by Rural Housing Scotland, aims to address the existential threat rural communities face as a result of lack of affordable housing and demographic change. They take the build form of a clachan, a traditional Scottish hamlet consisting of several houses, barns, outhouses and growing space, re-imagined in a modern context.

The [rural visa pilot](#) was designed through collaboration between Scottish Government policy makers, local authority officials and third and public sector stakeholders. Its design process resulted in a set of community-driven and employer-based migration proposals which, however, due to the reserved nature of some of the policy areas it deals with, are yet to be implemented.

Langholm, in Dumfries & Galloway, was once a thriving economy with a population of over 4,000. It has seen those numbers decrease to just over 2,000 today, with a significant portion of the population over 65 years old. The community has set up the [Langholm Alliance](#) bringing together local residents with a range of organisations and funders under the auspices of a long-term vision and plan.

Promoting diversity and different cultures is key to sustaining populations. In 2021, Bòrd na Gàidhlig and Community Land Scotland collaborated on a [funding and support programme for Gaelic development](#) by island community landowners, heritage and other trusts wishing to increase the use and promotion of Gaelic in their areas. In Perth & Kinross, [PKAVS](#) supports and empowers the expanding minority ethnic communities, helping hundreds of people to access local services and play an active role in their community.

In 2019, [Brandon Clements](#) became a board member of the Isle of Gigha Heritage Trust at the age of 19 and led a number of different projects to make the island more attractive to young people, including the renovation of a multi-use game area and building four affordable housing units, two specifically for younger people.

Positive community action, taken forward by the community of [Inchbare in Angus](#), in collaboration with a local landowner resulted in the build of six housing units, increasing the population and saving the local primary school from closure. Similar positive community action has been taken forward by the [West Harris Trust](#) which has adopted a strategic local approach to population revival. International examples come from [the Faroe Islands](#) which have focused on improving connectivity (both digital and physical through a tunnel-building programme) and taking a gender lens to migration. The Faroes also stepped away from promoting themselves as a tourism destination to promoting themselves as a great place to live and work where tourists love to visit.

The important role of intergenerational approaches – [co-housing projects](#), [digital connectivity and mobility projects](#), [land management projects](#), even [traditional boat-building](#)! Basically anything where younger and older folk can share wisdom and resources strengthens a web of support for local people, ensuring population retention and also paving the way for a younger generation to gain skills and qualifications and take on assets including privately-owned and community-owned assets.

A collection of case studies looking at population turnaround have been captured on the [Islands Revival website](#), a collaboration between academics from the James Hutton Institute, SRUC and other institutions who form the [SEFARI collective](#).



Wellbeing

Scotland, along with New Zealand, Iceland, Wales and Finland, form the Wellbeing Economy Governments partnership (WEGo), founded on recognition that development policy should focus on delivering human and ecological wellbeing. Against this backdrop, it was interesting to see the wellbeing groups talk less about what policy does for communities but more about what communities do for themselves.

Many examples of collaboration on the next page are delivered, not through government funds, but through community donations and legacies, membership fees, private and social enterprise, and income from renewables projects. This is not necessarily how wellbeing *should* be financed, but the examples demonstrate the importance that communities place on delivery. Covid-19 and now the rising cost of living have created enormous strains, but through collaboration, rural and island people and organisations continue to show resilience. The importance of community hubs, of services that are present in the community, delivered by the community (with caveats around confidentiality) and that allow people to live and remain active in their communities were highlighted. Further to this, the importance of connectors— people and networks like the National Rural Mental Health Forum, RSABI and the Poverty Alliance who facilitate learning and lay grounds for collaboration - was also highlighted.

Despite innovative financing and digital service delivery, balancing levels of resourcing, including the acute shortage of skilled staff, against the level of need within communities, is a constant firefight. Giving frontline practitioners the space to raise their heads above the parapet and communicate their expertise and ideas for positive change is critical. Accordingly, the rural movement can contribute to strengthening collaboration by:

1. Creating and holding space for the frontline; supporting existing networks mentioned above and bringing them together with other networks to encourage synergies and partnership, e.g. between wellbeing, creative and economic sectors.
2. Creating capacity for effective campaigns on a national or UK level in areas such as fuel poverty and childcare. A particular focus is advocating for a degree in flexibility around regulations and standards that disadvantage remote communities, e.g. [Care Inspectorate rules around childcare settings](#) and the newly introduced [PAS2035/2030 retrofit standards](#).

Examples of collaboration

The [Remote & Rural and Rural Festival of Learning](#) on Skye brings together health and social care professionals and community members to deliver and participate in a diverse range of models of health and social care, practice, education, training, and digital innovation. The Festival paves the way for the National Centre for Remote and Rural Health and Social Care which will launch in early spring 2023.

The [National Rural Mental Health Forum](#) (NRMHF), an initiative of Change Mental Health (previously Support in Mind Scotland) brings together hundreds of practitioners and community members on a monthly basis to learn from emerging practice and academic research and discuss matters that are important to them. The NRMHF also acts as an advocacy body, channelling the views of practitioners and communities to shape mental wellbeing policy. The Forum has launched a locality-based pilot Rural Communities Engagement Team, which is dedicated to supporting collaboration between Forum members, and also between Forum members and other organisations in their areas.

The Thrive App is a pilot collaboration between [RSABI](#) and the [Scottish Association of Young Farmers Clubs](#) (SAYFC), reaching out to younger people who are involved in the agricultural sector, including farming and crofting. As well as serving as a wellbeing tracker for mental health, the app provides access to therapists who can engage via text, phone or other means. Similarly, the SAYFC leads a collaboration of multiple providers in the wellbeing sector, from mental health support to sporting activities, under the banner of their "[Are Ewe Okay?](#)" project helping young farmers overcome rural isolation.

[Farmstrong](#) is a New Zealand Initiative which was established in 2015 as an early intervention wellbeing programme for farmers and crofters. It is being introduced in Scotland by a collaboration of many different organisations and grassroots activists in the agriculture sector.

Outside the Box hosts the [Intergenerational National Network](#) which brings together people across Scotland, and further afield, who have an interest in intergenerational and multigenerational working and practices. Outside the Box itself is a member of the Network – it does not have control over it – but shares expertise from its many [community-led projects](#).

Place based approaches to promoting wellbeing, linking people to their heritage and their community, are exemplified by initiatives such as the [Moray Wellbeing Hub Champions programme](#) which offers everyone the opportunity to contribute in a positive way to their local community through raising awareness about wellbeing and, in the process, building confidence and a network of peers and friends.

The [Scottish Men's Shed Association](#) supports the Men's Shed movement in Scotland which promotes men's health and tackles social isolation and loneliness.

[Mull & Iona Community Trust \(MICT\)](#) The Rural Out of School Childcare Pilot is a collaboration between the local Development Trust, parents, schools and childcare practitioners on an island with next to no child-care provision. The pilot aims to test the limits and try to develop a model that could be rolled out to other communities focusing on outdoors and mobile services.

The Plunkett Foundation's [More than Just a Pub](#) initiative is a collaboration between multiple funders, businesses and support agencies to enable communities take ownership of local pubs in England and maximise their potential as [community hubs](#).

The [Care & Wellbeing Collective](#) is a cooperative of self-employed providers working in the field of social care in rural Perth & Kinross. The Collective, which was set up by GrowBiz Scotland, makes it easier for cooperative members to promote their services. It also makes it easier for care recipients, especially those in receipt of Self Directed Care, to identify and contract the range of practitioners who can meet their needs.

The [Island Wellbeing Project](#), coordinated by Voluntary Action Orkney, funds and supports a network of Island Wellbeing Coordinators on Hoy, Sanday, Stronsay, Shapinsay; and Rousay, Egilsay and Wyre. Coordinators have a dual role, providing one-to-one support, and developing new projects and groups for residents.

Communities such as [Fetterangus](#) (Aberdeenshire) and those in [Garnock Valley](#) (North Ayrshire) are using windfarm monies, collaborating with businesses, to take forward health and wellbeing initiatives locally.

Youth work organisations such as those networked by [Youth Scotland](#), youth arts initiatives such as those delivered by [Fèisean nan Gàidheal](#) and youth employability initiatives such as those delivered by [InspirAlba](#) are the frontline for preventing mental ill health.

While communal facilities and services are sparse in rural and island areas, there is creativity around how existing spaces and services are used to promote wellbeing (e.g. the More than Just a Pub initiative). Initiatives like [Dementia Friendly Neighbourhoods](#), offer opportunities for whole-locality redesign to promote wellbeing.

Enterprise

The examples of collaboration below demonstrate how much of rural and island economic activity is delivered on a small scale, through micro-enterprises, sole traders, and social or community enterprises. It is a complex and diverse landscape, and this complexity gives local economies greater resilience as well as generating community wealth and acting as a seedbed for innovation. Enterprise is supported through expert organisations that provide tailored services and promote peer collaboration. Recent developments in remote education enable young people to get a qualification or degree while remaining rooted in their rural community. Increasingly, rural and island enterprises are collaborating to create improved access and progression routes for young people and those looking to re-train, giving them the chance to earn and learn while safeguarding succession.

Challenges for rural and island enterprises arise from structural issues such as entrenched public narratives around what a rural economy looks like (the farming, fishing, tourism paradigm...now with added whisky and carbon sinks) and from institutional barriers, including governments struggling to develop policy that responds to micro-scale economic activity. The rural movement can contribute to strengthening collaboration, in particular on economic policy through:

1. Supporting an evidence-based approach to designing economic policy, including community wealth building, through a rural and island lens. For example, bringing Scotland's Rural College and the University of the Highlands and Islands together with community providers and businesses to examine rural application of the apprenticeship programme model.
2. Supporting the establishment of a collective rural and island economy platform that is independent from government and contributes to policy agenda-setting, policy making processes and, where necessary, to rural proofing and island impact assessments.

Examples of collaboration

The expectation that young people should relocate to urban cities to access employment and education – sometimes known as the 'brain drain' - is a driver of rural depopulation. Multiple rural micro-enterprise and social enterprise support organisations collaborate to [improve access and career progression routes](#) into these organisations for young people, including through modern apprenticeships, graduate apprenticeships, paid internships, work placements, and volunteering opportunities. Coupled to improvements in online learning delivery, these approaches enable younger people to build careers and get quality jobs in sectors that interest them and that contribute to strengthening rural and island economic resilience. The [Communities Housing Trust and South of Scotland Community Housing](#) regularly work in collaboration with communities and contractors to support apprenticeships in construction related trades.

Peer-led and individually tailored [support for rural enterprises](#), a model offered free through organisations such as [Growbiz Scotland](#), [InspiraAlba](#) and the [Impact Hub Inverness](#), enables rural entrepreneurs in the community, private and social enterprise sectors to realise their ambitions for themselves and their communities. Critically, this support is locally rooted, strengthening local connections and collaboration opportunities for the people who access it.

Community Enterprise's [Accelerate](#) programme works with community enterprises who are thinking about generating income and becoming more sustainable. The programme is not about pushing profits and growth but about enabling community enterprises to balance income development streams with their focus on delivering social and environmental outcomes.

One organisation benefiting from the Accelerate programme is [CLIMAVORE](#) – a collaboration between artists, architects, product engineers, marine biologists and local communities, CLIMAVORE builds on traditional knowledge of seaweed and shellfish cultivation to engage local people on questions about food consumption and relationship with the tidal commons. The project develops a number of different, inter-linked activity streams including intertidal farms, education initiatives for schools and circular economy projects using the waste materials from oyster and mussel farming.

The [Community Led Local Development Network](#) is Scotland's next generation of LEADER Local Action Groups. Each Local Action Group (LAG) is made up of diverse community representatives and supported by paid staff. LAGs promote local community and business animation through the provision of advice and funding, creating a place-based capacity building network across rural and island Scotland. A focus of the network is sharing good practice and engaging in partnership, for example the Forth Valley & Lomond LAG and the Argyll & Bute LAG are collaborating with the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park and the Forth Valley Food and Drink network to develop and pilot a comprehensive Employee Well-being and Benefits package which will help the recruitment and retention of people in the hospitality and tourism industries.

Many organisations have, over time, provided platforms for the voice of rural and island communities and micro/ social enterprises to shape the development of Scotland's economic policy. Recent non-exhaustive examples include:

- Engagement process and [report](#) by the National Council of Rural Advisors (2018)
- Engagement process and [report](#) by the Scottish Council for the Development of Industry (2018)
- Engagement process and [report](#) by the Scottish Rural Parliament (2021)
- Engagement process and [report](#) by Scotland's Rural College, Highland & Islands Enterprise and South of Scotland Enterprise on a collaborative Rural Business Panel Survey.
- Engagement process and [report](#) by multiple organisations looking at community wealth building through a rural and island lens (2021)

There is increasing momentum to join up these and similar activities and provide a coordinated and powerful platform led by grassroots expertise.

Coworking spaces are emerging across rural and island Scotland, frequently in community facilities such as the [Town Hall in Forres](#). Co-working spaces provide multiple benefits including lowering overhead costs for small enterprises, connecting likeminded people to further enterprise ideas and helping to address isolation and loneliness that is frequently felt by sole traders working from home. [Research comparing urban and rural co-working spaces](#) found that rural co-working spaces tended to be cross-sectoral rather than single-sector which was the norm in urban centres. This provides additional opportunities for growth and innovation across unrelated variety.

Online platforms like [Isle20](#) and [REDs](#) enable small rural and island enterprises to connect to each other and to wider markets. Physical versions of these platforms also exist. The [Highland Good Food Partnership](#) for example is investigating the potential for farmer/producer clusters in the Highlands and collaborative cluster activity, such as on-farm nature based solutions at a landscape scale and implementing agro-ecological practices for food production which would enable local farm produce to reach local communities.

Rural and island digital innovation is thriving whether it is Shetland-based [Silicon Croft](#), a micro enterprise promoting STEM opportunities to children and young people or [Angus Tourism Cooperative](#) which is exploring their development as a 'Traveltech Collective.' This will include visitor management technologies in Lunan Bay, technologies to help businesses operate when experiencing staff shortages, and technologies to increase revenues from visitor attractions.

The [Skills Action Plan for Rural Scotland](#) sets out the Scottish Government's partnership approach to developing the skills and talent needed to make sure that Scotland's rural economy and communities continue to flourish and grow. Secretariat is provided by Skills Development Scotland.

New ways of financing community projects including through [Community Shares](#) and [Community Bonds](#) also ensure wide buy-in to these projects from geographic communities and communities of interest. The [Isle of Raasay](#) is seeking to use these and other forms of alternative financing, to develop a portfolio of renewable energy projects that will contribute to sustainability targets as well as build a community benefit fund.



Participation

‘Nothing about us without us’ is a foundation of social and environmental justice movements and it is also the cornerstone of effective policy making. Diversity in views and lived expertise is required to understand how a policy might impact in different places and on different groups before it is implemented. Once implemented, that feedback loop remains necessary, as well as people’s own direct involvement— their participation—in the implementation process.

The rural movement itself requires meaningful and inclusive participation. It is the responsibility of those within the movement to ensure there are platforms that enable this. The examples below describe platforms that exist to support participation in various activities — government policy making, Parliamentary enquiries, institutional and community planning. They also describe the processes that underpin those platforms—collaboration between many different organisations, a focus on reaching out to those who struggle most to have their voices heard, investment in training and upskilling people so they are confident to contribute and, critically, a pledge by decision-makers - politicians, officials, Board members etc. - to share power and act on the outputs of the process. The rural movement can contribute to strengthening collaboration on participation through:

1. Aiming to be an exemplar of participation through its own platforms including the Scottish Rural & Islands Parliament, the Rural Exchange and community led local development process, and sharing structured learning from these activities.
2. Creating alliances with equality groups and organisations across rural and island Scotland, co-developing networks and platforms which better enable individuals who face multiple, intersecting barriers to share expertise and participate.
3. Working with the Scottish Government and the Scottish Parliament to improve public participation in policy making and parliamentary processes. A specific priority is to initiate meaningful discussion on the challenges for rural and island organisations and individuals trying to engage with Scottish Government consultations.

Examples of collaboration

The [Participation & Communities Team](#) (PACT) has been set up to support organisations and individuals to have their views and experiences heard by Scottish Parliament committees. PACT is currently facilitating a [Citizen Panel](#) of 21 individuals who are developing recommendations to shape how Parliament engages with the people of Scotland.

The training provided by various organisations to members of the [Citizens Assembly of Scotland](#) around deliberative dialogue, governance and decision making in Scotland, and other aspects of society and politics in Scotland. The Citizen’s Assembly itself, which took place in 2019, was a new approach to Government policy making, harnessing the ideas and vision of a representative group of Scotland’s population. It debated the following three questions:

- What kind of country are we seeking to build?
- How can we best overcome the challenges we face, including those arising from Brexit?
- What further work should be carried out to give people the detail they need to make informed choices about the future of the country?

The [Health Issues in the Community](#) course supports people to see their own lives and health in the context of wider society, including how health is impacted on by inequality. Overseen by the Scottish Centre for Community Development, it is delivered by trained tutors. Participants become more active in volunteering, forming new community groups or participating in decision-making structures.

Regional level community development approaches such as [Northwest 2045](#) which covers from Coigach in the south, north to Durness and east to Bettyhill, are piloting new forms of local democracy to give communities a greater role in decision-making. Northwest Highland is also one of the Regional Land Use Partnership areas.

[Get Heard Scotland](#) (GHS) helps people affected by poverty get their voices heard on the policies and decisions that most impact their lives. The programme is coordinated by the Poverty Alliance and funded by the Scottish Government as part of its Child Poverty Delivery Plan.

[Access Panels](#) are groups of volunteers who work to improve access and inclusion for disabled people in their local community. They do this by raising awareness and helping to change attitudes among the general public about the need for inclusive access.

The [Changing Tides & Making Waves Conference](#) co-delivered by the North Sea Commission and the Northern Alliance brought 80 young people from eight different countries to inform the work of the two organisations. The conference was organised by young people for young people and combined international networking opportunities with fun activities and finding solutions to challenging issues. All the sessions were delivered online.

The [Young Islanders' Network](#) is a young people-led project which provides young islanders the opportunity to connect with one another, have fun and explore their island homes and the things that could make their lives, and the lives of others, better. Building on these initial steps of connecting, having fun and gaining skills, some young people can choose to be involved in strategic work including representing the views of young people on the Scottish Government's National Islands Plan Implementation Steering Group.

[Learning on how to get people involved in their communities](#) has been produced by Outside the Box in collaboration with many of the projects and communities the organisation works with.

The [Community Council Model Scheme Pilot](#) took place in West Lothian and saw extensive community consultation facilitated by the local Community Council Liaison Officer. Community Councils themselves were supported to transition to online meetings.

The [Rural Poverty Network \(no link\)](#) is a network of policy makers across the Scottish Government and local government informed by research recommendations from the SRUC and focusing predominantly on identifying emerging trends and practice on addressing child poverty. Though it started off relatively small, it is now a dynamic and expanding practitioner and academic network, allowing resources to be pooled and shaping pilot interventions.



Leadership

Fostering leadership in people, networks and organisations is a process of dissembling power hierarchies and of inspiring optimism in the fact that change, whether big or small, is possible, especially through collaboration. Leadership is not a solitary pursuit but a compassionate and collective endeavour (it's also more fun that way!). It can be both the driver of participation and the outcome of participation. Unlike the examples of participation listed in the previous section, however, many of the examples below demonstrate how leaders can operate outwith traditional structures. In these examples, people and organisations may benefit from education or training or skills programmes but ultimately they design their own campaigns, push forward their own projects or adapt their business or community practice in the face of challenges and opportunities. They are not invited to participate but they may certainly invite others to join them.

Fostering this kind of leadership requires people to have the time to dedicate to it; an enormous luxury for someone with caring responsibilities, or a busy job or volunteering role. It requires access to support, resources, information and skills. Critically, this support and skills must be place-based and locally-led. It also requires established organisations and networks to hold space for emerging leaders, for new ideas and new ways of thinking, and learn from them without trying to filter or influence the direction of travel. The rural movement may therefore strengthen collaboration on fostering leadership through:

1. Creating supportive spaces for individual leaders and collective leadership to flourish through tailored programmes for rural and island activists, for example, or platforms that are designed to amplify those voices that may not always come through traditional participation routes.
2. Supporting collaborations between academics, education specialists, civil sector, the private and public sector, including Skills Development Scotland, to root wider curriculum and skills programmes within localities both in terms of their relevance and their delivery.

Examples of collaboration

[Daydream believers'](#) mission is to increase creativity in schools, which they do by supporting a qualification created in collaboration with Edinburgh College, Edinburgh Napier University, Ellen MacArthur Foundation, Studio LR, and Acrylicize. Throughout the course, learners are encouraged to think differently, break the rules, fail, collaborate and generate creative, innovative solutions and ideas. Which is of course, exactly what employers and university admission departments are looking for. Pupils (mostly S5/6) work on projects (playlists) involving circular fashion, creating a "Van of Dreams" and their own "Campaign for Kindness".

[Lantra's ALBAS Industry Champions](#), winners of Awards for Land-based and Aquaculture Skills, are positive role models for young people and influence issues affecting their own industry help the next generation of learners and new entrants. Similarly, the [Scottish Food and Drink Federation Skills Ambassadors](#) inspire young people into careers in food and drink manufacturing.

The [Commission for the Review of Land Based Learning](#) is an independent, short-life group established by Scottish Ministers to undertake a root and branch review of learning in Scotland's land-based and aquaculture sectors - from early years to adulthood - to provide opportunities and qualifications through school, college, university and work-based learning, including apprenticeship, for more people, and specifically more women, to work with and on the land, particularly in green skills.

The [Rural Youth Project's Ideas Hacks](#) raise the voice of the younger population, by creating a platform for creative ideas, networking, and mentorship. They are structured to look at the potential of a community and ask the next generation of leaders to share their own ideas about what would make the area an even better place.

[Women in Agriculture Scotland](#) is a grassroots movement for positive change to empower and increase the confidence of their membership to achieve their aspirations and create a more progressive, successful and inclusive industry.

Leadership, visibility, PRIDE! Though as one LGBTQ activist from the Scottish Borders said, there is this phenomenal of the '[rural slow mo](#)' – things take longer to become established...[Pride marches and the movements they facilitate](#) are spreading across rural and island Scotland.

[Scottish Communities Climate Action Network \(SCCAN\)](#) provided micro-grants and storytelling training to support people contribute to the 1000 better stories campaign in the run up to COP26 in Glasgow.

The [Scottish Rural Leadership Programme](#) is a fee paying course for rural entrepreneurs led by Scottish Enterprise, in partnership with Highland and Islands Enterprise and the South of Scotland Enterprise. Highlands and Islands Enterprise also runs the [Communities leading in tourism](#) course in partnership with the Social Enterprise Academy. At a more local level, the Perth & Kinross Third Sector Interface, PKAVS, has developed an accessible, participative and free, values-based [leadership programme for the third sector](#) to empower future generations of community leadership. Finally, the [Rural GP Association of Scotland](#) offers locums and newly qualified GPs the opportunity to research matters, such as housing or skills provision, that affect them and the communities they live and work in.

Leadership is both about individual and about collective endeavour. Rural Parliaments as civil society assemblies, run mainly by volunteers, are collectively empowering. When rural and island people, whose voices can seem small in policy making processes, come together on a national platform such as the [Scottish Rural Parliament](#) or, indeed, on a cross-border platform such as the [European Rural Parliament](#), the synergy brings optimism in strength of numbers, passion and voice.

Leadership comes from unusual synergies. In Norse mythology, the ash tree symbolised life, death and rebirth – so important that the whole world is often depicted as revolving around it. The Scottish Furniture Makers Association's [Ash Rise! Project](#) will see wood from recently felled diseased ash trees, infected with a fungus that causes dieback, used to create a series of handcrafted products to celebrate the wood's distinctive qualities, while also highlighting the human actions that have caused its plight.

The [Junior Ranger programme](#) is an exciting, fun and adventurous outdoor learning programme for young people aged 11–18 years which enables them to gain skills in nature and conservation, participate in International and national camps and achieve a John Muir Explorer Award.

[Inspiring Scotland's Rural Communities Ideas into Action Fund](#) exemplifies a seedcorn funding programme which helps communities to put their ideas into action, trusting them to know what needs to happen at a local level to improve outcomes for people and the environment.





Workshop Report - Session 2

The first session was about the ways a rural movement can add value to the work of organisations. In the **second session**, using the questions below, we explored participants' ideas on how we can continue building the rural movement itself.

1. **SCOTTISH RURAL PARLIAMENT:** How do we get more strategic partners to take ownership of it?
2. **YOUNG PEOPLE:** Young people leading change – what platforms are needed?
3. **COMMUNITY BODIES:** Development Trusts, village halls, community councils, volunteers in general – how do we engage all equally?
4. **ACTIVISM:** How do you create supportive networks for activists?
5. **RESEARCH:** How do we to strengthen the role of academic research in the rural movement?
6. **STRATEGY:** Do we need an overarching Rural & Island Strategy for Scotland?
7. **URBAN/RURAL:** How do we engage urban people on rural issues and vice versa?
8. **INTERNATIONAL:** How do we connect to other countries in the UK and Europe?
9. **MEDIA MESSAGING:** How can we best engage the media on positive and accurate stories about rural and island places?

They were not necessarily the 'right' questions as several participants pointed out, but through dialogue, their exploration gave rise to directions for strengthening what exists already. These directions add a uniquely Scottish perspective to the [international findings](#) reported by Scotland's Rural College (SRUC) and Newcastle University.

1. SCOTTISH RURAL PARLIAMENT: How do we get more strategic partners to take ownership of it?

1. It should be rebranded as the Scottish Rural & Islands Parliament (SRIP). The brand must be linked to a narrative on power— what (if any) powers does the SRIP have and does the word 'Parliament' accurately convey these?
2. It should have a clear communications strategy that is specific to the Scottish Rural & Islands Parliament process, including a website that is separate to SRA's website. The communications strategy must make it clear who the SRIP is trying to reach out to and why, and who the SRIP is trying to influence. The links to the UK Government and international links must be made explicit.
3. Like the Strategic Stakeholder workshop and all major rural movement platforms, it must allow for hybrid (online and in person) participation.
4. It should have a transparent and accessible Secretariat and governance structure (a steering group) which conveys trust in the process of curators identified to different themes, in particular complex themes like the climate emergency, economic development and sustaining populations. The same transparent Secretariat and governance structure need to apply to Scotland's participation in the European Rural Parliament.
5. The Secretariat and steering group should develop a long-term (10 year) plan for the SRIP.
6. It should seek to actively involve the unusual suspects in collaboration with the usual suspects, for example creating curatorial teams of private sector, academia, public and civil society interests.
7. The SRIP's primary and guiding principle and, by association, a principle each curator must adhere to, is shining a light on the strengths of local rural and island communities, not just looking to the challenges, and championing place-based and micro-level activities. These are the activities that do not often get a platform, yet they drive the economy and social and environmental wellbeing of rural and island places, and of Scotland as a whole.
8. The SRIP must seek to combine the two objectives of the rural movement—to inform policy and to enable learning exchange and networking between communities, thereby contributing to community mobilisation.
9. It should seek to align grassroots priorities and government strategic priorities so that dialogue is fruitful and results in tangible actions. Linked to this there must be an evidenced timeline of how the activities of activity past Rural Parliaments have influenced change.
10. It must have a youth led process which is distinct but embedded within the Rural & Island Parliament cycle.
11. It must have Scottish Ministerial advocacy across Cabinet portfolios and cross-party support through strengthened links with Parliamentary Committees and Cross Party Groups.
12. It must support the grassroots to attend through financing travel and subsistence, offering skills-based advocacy training and platforms for activists that are not filtered by institutional viewpoints.
13. It must build bridges between urban and rural communities with such synergies being a strong focus of dialogue around resilience, wellbeing, solidarity and sustainability.
14. The process must be rooted in human rights, particularly Article 11, the universal right to peaceful assembly.



2. YOUNG PEOPLE LEADING CHANGE: what platforms are needed?

1. There must be dedicated and well-resourced youth-led platforms within the rural movement which build on and enhance existing networks and youth organisations. Guiding principles for these platforms must be developed by young people themselves. A potential starting point was suggested to be the CLLD Youth Local Action Groups' (Y-LAGs) principles of *connectivity, accessibility, sustainability, simplicity, diversity and upskilling*.
2. A progression approach best engages with young people, including those that are harder to reach. This involves starting with things that are of direct interest and value to young people, including opportunities to socialise and learn, before moving on to participation and co-production activities, whether these are about policy or service design.
3. Youth-led platforms must have options to link to and shape intergenerational platforms.
4. Youth-led platforms must, as much as possible, be place-based and focused around young people shaping their own environments and communities. Whatever the level, however, whether local or national, decision-makers at that level must make a strong commitment to respond to the views of youth participants and support the actions they chose to take forward. This commitment requires ongoing, two-way relationships to be fostered between young people and decision-makers and youth-led platforms must therefore be built to enable these relationships to evolve and remain meaningful over the long-term.
5. Youth-led platforms must recognise and support the fast-and-slow approach to building youth movements. Some youth movements build overnight using different methods, including social media. Others take time and support, especially to ensure inclusion.



3. **COMMUNITY BODIES:** Development Trusts, village halls, community councils, volunteers in general - how do we engage all equally?

1. It must not be assumed that all community bodies need to be engaged in all platforms of the rural movement. Each community has its own ecology of organisations. It is a complex landscape, made more complex by the fact it is maintained through the efforts of volunteers. It must also not be assumed that what binds or preoccupies organisations and their communities is a perception of rurality. Different identities may be more important to them and a 'rural movement' will therefore have little resonance or functional use.
2. Instead of focusing on engaging "all community bodies equally", focus should be on people themselves, improving the relevance and accessibility of platforms to broaden engagement, mindful that the majority of people are likely to participate as volunteers.
3. Support to map and strengthen existing networks of community bodies should be made available through the rural movement. Some of these networks have a national presence such as development trusts and community land trusts, and others, like village halls, are served by a patchwork of local networks. Community Councils have both a national hub and local networks.
4. The rural movement must help build momentum behind the Scottish Government's review of community empowerment legislation, the local governance review and [democracy matters](#), and within this, the devolution of more powers and resources to community level. Community Councils are critical to this agenda with potential, subject to resourcing and support, to play a positive role in auditing local services and ensuring Local Place Plans guide developments that affect local communities.

4. **ACTIVISM:** How do you create supportive networks for activists?

1. Rural movement platforms should allocate specific resources for activists, including training, networking opportunities and micro-grants. Most people will probably not self-define as 'activists' and it is important to think about how people may engage on their own terms. Positive examples include the [Scottish Communities Climate Action Network \(SCCAN\)](#) 1000 stories campaign, and the Scottish Government's [Pockets and Prospects](#) micro-grant programme which is distributed by the Scottish Community Alliance to its members. Where appropriate, people must be paid for their time.
2. Rural movement platforms must take care not to filter activist's messages beyond applying basic 'community rules' around inclusive and non-abusive language. Platforms like blogs, social media takeovers and podcasts, such as those hosted on [Farmerama radio](#) give people freedom to express their own viewpoints and expertise.
3. Longer term, the rural movement may support the establishment of a national centre (or commission) for lived expertise which ensures there are accessible, non-tokenistic mechanisms for individuals to participate across government and public sector decision-making. Such a centre may also play a role in supporting collaboration between lived experience experts and researchers, both academic and community-based.



5. RESEARCH: How do we to strengthen the role of academic research in the rural movement?

1. There are significant benefits for academia, for communities and for government in strengthening the links between the rural movement and academic research processes. In the short term, it was suggested that a specific event or conference is hosted by the academic institutions in collaboration with the [RESAS team](#) in Government and others to explore this further.
2. There is scope to improve direct lines of communication between academia and communities, establishing a formal protocol that goes beyond the 'do no harm' ethos to ensure research has tangible community benefit, and creating a shared language that can be used both in development of research and in research outputs.
3. Learning about the rural movement, networks, community organisations, the role of volunteers etc should be embedded in academic training for anyone whose research will include rural and island places. Researchers should be visible within their communities so the community understands the expertise available locally, and opportunities for academic placements in community/third sector organisations should be maximised.
4. Research undertaken by students should meet a proven community need, i.e. actively showing this area has not been researched already in that community and that the community welcomes the research. Research carried out for community benefit should be evaluated by the community.
5. There should be clear benefits offered for third sector and community organisations that facilitate or advise on academic research activities including, where appropriate, payment for their input. Future RESAS strategies must allocate budget specifically for community-led (non-academic) research projects with additional budget to SEFARI to support communities in their research.
6. In general both academic and non-academic research should be valued and used more consistently both in policy and in practice development but it can be hard to find documents which are located, online, in many different places. There may be opportunities to develop a centralised space for research, perhaps as an extension of the [Rural Exchange portal](#). The Exchange portal can also act as a mechanism where communities are matched to researchers, e.g. communities can log ideas for a dissertation or a research project.

6. STRATEGY: Do we need an overarching Rural & Island Strategy for Scotland?

1. The lack of policy cohesion around rural and island matters, combined with an ad-hoc approach to government 'rural proofing' actively hampers the rural movement's efforts to guide the development of policy and legislation.
2. A vision and framework for rural and island places which guides agenda-setting and policy-making across silos is required, rather than a specific rural strategy or action plan which sits within one team or portfolio in the Scottish Government. A citizens assembly approach to developing this vision and framework may be adopted, to ensure openness and inclusion. Within this framework, there must be recognition of the rural movement platforms, including those international platforms like the European Rural Parliament, as vehicles to achieve the vision.
3. Linked to this, and already highlighted by the Participation group in Session 1, work must progress with both the Scottish Government and the Scottish Parliament to improve public participation in policy making and parliamentary processes. A specific priority is to initiate meaningful discussion on the challenges for rural and island organisations and individuals trying to engage with Scottish Government consultations. Various solutions have been proposed including increased investment in democratic processes like citizen panels and setting up a Scottish Government equivalent of the [PACT team](#). The development of a Rural & Island Policy Unit which is independent from government and could draw in cross-sectoral expertise to engage with consultation processes was also suggested.

7. **URBAN/RURAL:** How do we engage urban people on rural issues & vice versa?

1. Entrenched narratives prevail across the spectrum with rural places seen as 'empty spaces' that are dependent on urban services, rather than self-sufficient resources that contribute to the wellbeing and sustainability of cities. This narrative must shift, as must other harmful public narratives, including those originating in rural areas such as negative perceptions around incomers.
2. The rural movement will only be effective if it enables dialogue and collaboration across urban and rural communities. Approaches that may support this include, in the short term, school or youth project exchanges, urban/rural school twinning, a focus on STEM projects that build rural/urban understanding e.g. around transport challenges, or a rural/urban programme under the [Youth Philanthropy Initiative](#).
3. Also in the short term, there are opportunities for rural/urban community learning exchanges funded by [Scottish Community Alliance's Learning Exchange](#) grants. Social innovations, like pop-up shops, can play a role bringing a real rural space into urban settings, and vice versa. Further to this, the role of influencers and of community-led tourism in breaking down barriers between urban and rural spaces may be explored.
4. As part of a longer-term, systemic approach, progressive challenging of negative stereotypes and the 'rural idyll' in the media and public sphere is necessary. Suggested actions include training on rural/island contexts for public sector policy officers and for funders; and strengthening the capacity of the press and media to commission, produce and promote materials that portray accurate stories about rural and island life.



8. **INTERNATIONAL:** How do we connect to other countries in the UK and Europe?

1. Through the international rural movement, are opportunities for the Scottish Government and wider civil society to build new cross-border networks and partnerships in the aftermath of Brexit.
2. In the short-term, supporting collaboration through the Community-led Local Development Network, through academic networks, and through the European Rural Parliament should be a priority for all stakeholders, to keep Scotland international. It is important to look beyond Europe to global networks like the Northern Peripheries, the Artic Circle and the World Social Enterprise Forum. Participation in conferences such as the OECD and COP should be actively pursued. Learning and contacts from these events and processes should be shared across Scottish networks.
3. Closer to home, cross-border collaborations with rural movements and organisations in Wales, England, Ireland and Northern Ireland on rural development matters should be supported.
4. Longer term, the replacement of the Erasmus programme will have enormous positive impact for young people, for rural and island places and for Scotland as a whole.

9. **MEDIA MESSAGING:** How can we best engage the media on positive and accurate stories about rural and island places?

1. The rural movement must build relationships with mainstream media to ensure a consistent approach to messaging. A priority is to design a cross-sectoral training programme for rural and island communications practitioners, bringing them together with media experts to develop skills around engaging journalists and getting people's stories heard. Such training, in a condensed format, should also be embedded in any leadership and activist training programmes.
2. The rural movement should focus on collecting positive stories of collaboration, similar to the case studies from session 1, and be able to readily repurpose them for various media angles.
3. Journalists and media experts themselves would benefit from training and opportunities to build rural and island networks. The following actions are suggested:
 - Linking up universities and colleges offering journalism and similar courses with organisations that can offer rural placements. Encourage volunteering from journalists e.g. support for organisations and people to write blogs or create podcasts;
 - Creating a toolkit to be sent to media outlets with a collection of stories and contacts for rural and island Scotland – building better relations with the press and be more collaborative in supporting and sign posting rural and island organisations;
 - Organise press trips which are collaborative and shine a light on multiple different projects and organisations and how they interconnect to build the story of a community;





Thank you, next steps and contact

The workshop methodology and the hybrid approach worked because of the energy, enthusiasm, expertise and willingness to connect that participants brought. Thank you to all of you who attended online or in person. A very special thank you goes to William Roe for his facilitation and to Mairi Gougeon MSP, Jane Atterton from SRUC, Jim Hume from the Rural Mental Health Forum and Naomi Macdonald and Matthew from the Young Islanders Network for their presentations. Thank you also to Hannah Downey, Sheena Boyd, Susan Thomson, Alistair Prior, Theona Morrison, Barbara Grieve, Jenny Milne, Catriona Mallows, Artemis Pana, Claire Taylor, Kirsten Gow and Vanessa Halhead for facilitating breakouts

From January 2023 we will be in touch with all participants of the Strategic Stakeholder Workshop, and those of you unable to make it, to invite you to continue engaging in ways that suit you and your organisation in strengthening the rural movement. As outlined on page 2, the engagement process for 2023 is shaping up as follows:



In the meantime, we would love to have your feedback and comments, both on the report and the engagement process itself. Please contact Artemis from Scottish Rural Action, by email (artemis@sra.scot) or by phone on 0773 059 6842.

Please also visit the [Rural Exchange portal](#) and have a look around. Any comments and feedback on the portal, please contact Jane Atterton from SRUC by email (Jane.Atterton@sruc.ac.uk)

With enormous thanks to [Birnam Arts](#) and [Destiny Productions](#) and all the participants from the following organisations:

Organisation	Areas of interest
Angus CLLD (ex-LEADER) Local Action Group	Community-led local development, economic development
Cairngorms CLLD (ex-LEADER) Local Action Group, Cairngorms National Park Authority	Community- led local development, land management
Coastal Communities Network	Environment, community-led local development, conservation, net zero
CoDEL	Social enterprise, population, island sustainability, health
Community Enterprise	Community-led local development support and capacity building
Community Land Scotland	Community ownership, land reform, Gaelic development
Community Woodlands	Community-led local development, forestry, environment, land management
Confor (Confederation of Forest Industries UK)	Forestry, environment, rural entrepreneurship, skills development
Development Trusts Association Scotland (DTAS)	Community-led local development, community ownership, community infrastructure
Dumfries and Galloway Voice - DG Voice	Equalities, inclusion, advocacy
Elchies Estate	Agriculture, rural and island movement support
European Rural Community Alliance	European, UK and Scottish rural movement support
Farmerama radio	Land reform, land management, vernacular traditions, storytelling
Feisean nan Gaidheal	Culture, Gaelic, community wealth building
Forth Valley and Lomond CLLD (ex-LEADER) Local Action Group	Community- led local development, land management
Glasgow Caledonian University	Research, community-led local development, community ownership
GrowBiz Scotland	Rural enterprise support, community wealth building
Highland Good Food Partnership	Agriculture, land management, good food nation
Highlands & Islands Enterprise	Enterprise and community support
Highlands and Islands Housing Associations Affordable Warmth Group	Fuel poverty, housing, energy security
Improvement Service	Local authorities support, Community Council network
InspirAlba	Social enterprise, employability
Inspiring Scotland	Community-led local development, funding and support
Isle Develop CIC	Rural and island enterprise, sustainability, crofting
James Hutton Institute	Research, rural and island policy
LANTRA Scotland	Agriculture, land management, skills development, equalities
Mull & Iona Community Trust, DTAS	Community-led local development, rural and island movement
National Farmers Union	Trade union, agriculture policy, farmers wellbeing
New Cumnock Development Trust	Community-led local development, community ownership
Newcastle University	Research, rural and island policy, European/UK rural movement networks
North Ayrshire Council – Islands Team	Local authority, National Islands Plan, community wealth building

Organisation	Areas of interest
Northeast Climate Action Network	Community capacity building, net zero
Orkney CLLD (ex-LEADER) Local Action Group	Community-led local development, local authority, youth empowerment
Outside the Box	Community empowerment and development, equalities, wellbeing
Plunkett Foundation	Community ownership, funding and support
Poverty Alliance	Equalities, wellbeing, network support
Regional Screen Scotland	Culture, arts, community wealth building
RSABI Scotland	Wellbeing, land management, skills development
Rural Housing Scotland	Community-led local development, community ownership, housing, planning
Rural Youth Project	Rural enterprise support, youth empowerment
SAOS Agrifood Specialists	Agriculture, sustainable communities
Scotland's Older People's Assembly	Equalities, advocacy
Scotland's Rural College (SRUC)	Academic research, rural and island policy
SCOTO	Community-led local development, tourism
Scottish Association of Young Farmers	Agriculture, farming, skills development, youth empowerment
Scottish Centre for Community Development	Community-led local development, community empowerment, place planning
Scottish Community Alliance	Community-led local development, community empowerment, local democracy
Scottish Council for Development and Industry	Cross-sectoral network for economic development
Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO)	Third sector support and policy development
Scottish Crofting Federation	Crofting, land management, environment, heritage
Scottish Futures Trust	Infrastructure, planning, built environment
Scottish Government, Islands Team	National Islands Plan, island policy
Scottish Government, Rural Communities	Rural and island policy
Scottish Government, Rural Economy	Rural economic policy
Scottish Government, Scottish Rural Network	Community-led local development, agriculture
Scottish Islands Federation	Rural and islands movement support
Scottish Parliament – Participation Team	Community engagement in Parliament processes
Scottish Rural & Islands Transport Community	Transport and mobility, community capacity building
Scottish Rural Action	Rural and island movement support, youth empowerment, grassroots engagement
Scottish Young Farmers Association	Agriculture, farming, skills development, youth empowerment
Shetland CLLD (ex-LEADER) Local Action Group	Community-led local development, local authority, youth empowerment
South of Scotland Enterprise	Enterprise support, including community enterprise
Southern Uplands Partnership, Rural Arts Network Scotland	Environment, community-led local development, heritage
Support in Mind Scotland – the Scottish Rural Mental Health Forum	Community wellbeing, mental wellbeing, skills development, equalities
Third Sector Interface Moray, Social Enterprise Academy Scotland	Third sector support, community empowerment, net zero
University of Aberdeen (also Director of Scottish Islands Federation)	Rural and island movement support, population, sustainability
University of Edinburgh	Youth empowerment, culture, rural development
University of Highlands & Islands	Research, land reform, community-led local development
Young Islanders Network	Island movement support, youth empowerment