

Rural SEN Agenda – Tuesday 30th June

Time: 14:00 – 15:30

Introduction and Welcome (Ailsa Clark)

Update from RESET Week (Mary Sinclair)

Follow up with reopening guidance (Ailsa Higgins)

- Recap on Senscot reopening sessions
- Share learning resources from Zero Waste Scotland and Revolve:
<https://www.zerowastepartners.org.uk/revolve-store-coronavirus-guidance/>

Virtual learning exchange project (Ailsa Clark, Jane Churchill)

- This project will include social enterprises from a broad range of thematic and area networks. This project will aim to produce livestream or pre-recorded virtual video learning exchanges, allowing rural social enterprises to share practice, ask questions, and learn from each other.
- What sort of guidance would be useful for putting these videos together? E.g. a tour of premises, sharing hopes or challenges, asking for solutions to an open audience. Can recorded videos be shared on Rural Hub?

Social Enterprise Archive – The Rural Story (Ailsa Clark)

- Sharing activity around Glasgow Caledonian Yunus Centre's [Social Enterprise Archives](#), and how we can collectively ensure that the rural story is heard.

Research Group (Sue Rawcliffe)

- Update on the actions of the Rural SE Hub Research Group.

Future Plans and Conclusion (Ailsa Clark)

- Highlight any points to be acted on.

Apologies: Hazel Smith (Retweed), Julie Young (ACT), Karen Fitzsimmons (Firstport), Mick Eyre (Friends of Glenan Woods), Anna (Firstport)

Attendees: Ailsa Clark (Inspiralba), Ailsa Higgins (Inspiralba), Sue Rawcliffe (Inspiralba), David Bryan (SEA), Sandy Brunton (MICT), Catriona Haston (SA Community Transport), Henrick Micski (HIENT), Mary Sinclair (Senscot), Derek Harper (Food Life), Susan Smith (Growbiz), Sammy Marshall (Argyll and Bute TSI), Marion Lacey (Rock Solid Research), Theona Morrison (Codel), Amanda Thorburn (Kintyre Recycling), Jane Churchill (SCA).

Meeting Notes:

Welcome and introductions

Many community organisations are not able to operate their main revenue-generating service, and are busy supporting local food and welfare initiatives (often to supplement local authority/council efforts).

Being able to get things moving, and begin to re-train staff to reopen is a huge positive, especially for employability services which provide social interaction for vulnerable people, whose mental health has been impacted by Covid-19.

Many attendees were aware of potential conflict in communities around tourism, and between groups of people who are either dependent on tourism for income, or who are opposed to reopening isolated/infrastructurally vulnerable communities. This debate is alive across the Highland and Islands, from Mull to Uist to Argyll. There is growing division in communities about the sense and safety of reopening.

Update from RESET Week

Inspiralba and Senscot wrote up and circulated notes from the Rural SEN meeting held during RESET week, which have been used as a basis for meetings elsewhere, so this is really positive.

There were over 800 participants during the RESET week. An issue highlighted was that given the number of support agencies and public sector organisations involved in some of the sessions, SEN members reported not being able to speak as freely as they might have wanted to. However it was really encouraging to see that there are lots of new members interacting with SENs and Senscot sessions.

Senscot and Social Firms Scotland are working together to determine a work plan which reflects the themes that were highlighted during RESET week and in this subsequent RESET report. This will ensure that all those connections and discussions will be reflected in national policy and dialogue.

Last week Senscot held a number of reopening sessions, which were well attended. These focused on Reopening [for charity shops], Partnerships and Procurement [for sport and community facilities], Reopening [for customers and staff], and the Borders SEN.

There are a number of Senscot sessions coming up in the next few weeks, which will be on topics including Reopening [health and safety], Supporting staff health and wellbeing, and Employability. All requests and suggestions are welcome and open for discussion.

Resources

Previous Senscot Session Resources:

Partnerships and Procurement: Opening Scotland Excel Frameworks to Third Sector and the Benefits for Sport and Community Facilities

<https://senscot.net/sport-sen-partnerships-and-procurement/>

Social Enterprise RESET Report <https://senscot.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Report-SE-Reset-1.pdf>

Revolve Reopening Guidance: <https://www.zerowastepartners.org.uk/revolve-store-coronavirus-guidance/>

Upcoming Senscot Sessions:

Employability SEN meeting via Zoom on Thursday 2nd July (1.30-2.30pm). Rachel Le Noan (SCVO) will be giving an overview of the SCVO/TSEF partnership. Rachel sits on Govt's Employability Covid-19 Response – Operational Group and will provide some background on the group and importantly Govt's current thinking about employability, their priorities and future direction (and how social enterprise might fit with this). Email: jayne.chappell@socialfirms.org.uk

Community Food SEN meeting via Zoom: The value of partnership working in food provision. Wednesday 1st July (10.00-11.30am) Email: mary@senscot.net

Other Resources:

Here is something to consider - <https://commonweal.scot/policy-library/development-councils-proposal-new-system-local-democracy-scotland>

Virtual Learning Exchange Programme

Virtual learning exchanges could be particularly useful in rural areas, where the time, distance and cost of travel can be a barrier to attending in-person learning exchanges. Furthermore, the average size of social enterprises in rural Scotland tends to be smaller, with a lower staff capacity, meaning that there are limited staff to attend learning exchanges.

Would be particularly good to have a small amount of resource to cover the host's expense for taking time to set-up and host a virtual or in-person learning exchange. Learning exchanges may be hosted as 1 on 1 mentoring sessions, where an experienced enterprise has agreed to share learning and mentor a less experienced social enterprise.

However, virtual learning exchanges which would be open to all are still exceedingly useful as a stimulus for people to ask questions and generate discussion.

What themes would be useful to cover?

- Retail/Reopening
- Tourism/Hospitality
- Democratic Voice

- Localism and peri-urban areas

Amanda from KRL is happy to share what they have been doing, and how they are thinking and working in terms of reopening, retraining staff, and how useful the Revolve guidance has been.

Sandy Brunton and Derek Harper willing to be involved in a focus group to continue discussions about the democratic voice of social enterprises in rural communities and wider.

- Potential that the ViSEnet resources around 'Inclusivity' should be shared as a guide for democratic decision making and reaching consensus or majority agreement in communities struggling with whether to reopen or not.

Mary Sinclair will speak to Sarah Cameron with regards to setting up the tourism and hospitality learning exchange focus group. Happy to offer Senscot/SFS input into sessions.

Susan Smith and potentially David Bryan are keen to be involved in a focus group around the importance of localism and empowering rural communities to recognise what they can achieve, and harness the unique qualities of being rural.

- The challenges and opportunities in peri-urban rural areas were highlighted. Lots of people in rural areas (perhaps an hour outside of big cities) have discovered local food suppliers during lockdown, and we need to strike quickly to harness this.
- It has been a real opportunity for people in rural areas to access their rural-ness, and a lesson in what rural areas can do when they're 'allowed to be rural', and not dependent on being located near to big urban centres. Learning should look to islands and remote rural communities, with a focus on localism, rather than look to urban centres.
- Especially in large rural areas, the local authorities are very often not 'local', and don't have the scope or understanding to produce real change in the future. Development Trusts and communities should be encouraged to dream, and create action plans for future development.

Social Enterprise Archives

The Social Enterprise Archives at the Yunus Centre in Glasgow Caledonian University are an existing resource which seeks to capture the story of social enterprise across Scotland. Storytelling and gathering stories from what has happened during Covid times will be very important going forward.

Inspiralba is working with Dr Gillian Murray at the Yunus Centre to create a dedicated archiving position for a young person to gather archival evidence for rural social enterprises. This includes a whole range of stories, audio, video, images and more.

Feedback was that this is an excellent idea, both from the employability and retention of young people stance, and also to balance out the history of social enterprise with rural input. Highlighted that rural and urban social enterprises have completely different starting points, with urban more evolving from social housing, whereas rural motivators are often different.

- Marion is happy to be involved in a focus group on this.

All identified that it is crucially important to gather and tell the stories of people living in areas which have really strong cultural heritage and landscape.

Supporting Young People

Discussion reflected a real need to support young people out of education into sustainable employment, training, graduate, and apprenticeship opportunities. This is crucial for the sustainability of our rural communities.

Even the education opportunities offered to young people through colleges and universities often reflect an urban bias in their teaching, for example business and marketing being taught through a corporate lense, rather than from a grassroots sustainability perspective.

Ailsa Clark has reached out to Skills Development Scotland and other public bodies to discuss how we can input rural element into access and progression routes.

Inspiralba are conducting [a survey](#) to examine previous activity and willingness of social enterprises to support access and progression routes in the future. This area of research is particularly valuable, especially given the current projections of unemployment and youth unemployment as a result of Covid-19.

Social enterprises across Scotland have a proven track record of supporting employability access opportunities, as well as supporting those most distanced from employment. We would like to gain a better understanding of the composition of past and future access and progression opportunities supported across the sector, including volunteering and employability activities, graduate placements and PhD internships.

<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/acessandprogressionroutes>

Update on Research Group

Date set for the 14th of July at 14:00 for an early discussion. Catriona Haston from SA Community Transport would like to be involved, and would also like to contribute staff Masters research to the Hub about community shops.

Next Actions

- Organise focus groups for virtual learning exchanges and circulate guidance.
- Continue to consider how we can increase and leverage opportunities for young people.
- Add Catriona Haston to Research Group.
- Include Marion Lacey in focus group about SE Archives post.
- Share upcoming info on Senscot sessions.
- Sue to connect Mary Sinclair with Rural Mental Health Forum.

Next meeting: Tuesday 18th August