The CADISPA Trust

April 2014

Sunart Community Appraisal - Executive Summary



REGIONAL CENTRE OF EXPERTISE ON EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

ACKNOWLEDGED BY

UNITED NATIONS UNIVERSITY

Dr Geoff Fagan

Kylie Fagan

In association with the Sunart Community Action Plan Working Group

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Introduction:

This research has taken six months to complete. Twenty-one focus groups were held on differing themes and a comprehensive questionnaire was distributed to all residents over the age of eighteen within the Sunart catchment. A bespoke on-line version of the questionnaire was made available to younger people and a special event was held for the children and young people at both the Primary and High schools. In total 49% of all those who received a questionnaire returned them to the CADISPA offices in Paisley. Interviews were held with key stakeholders and many hours of desk research completed to bring forward details of the latest Scottish Parliament legislation and policy directives.

The Final report, now in its final review, will have within it over a hundred pages of statistics; graphs and narratives about Sunart and the vision of the people living there of their preferred future. It will form the basis of a Sunart Community Action Plan.

This Executive Summary lists and very briefly explores the Recommendations of the CADISPA team. There are fifty-five in total. As independent researchers it is our duty to report to you what you have told us over the last six months: in effect, we are now telling you what you told us. Some recommendations are very simple whilst others are controversial and recommend change that may be uncomfortable to consider.

In the list below no recommendation is more important than its neighbour. It wasn't possible for CADISPA to prioritise which recommendations are more important than others. This is for the community of Sunart to decide.

N.B. The words in italics below are direct quotes from residents.

General recommendations:

> *"I think this is a lovely place to live and there are a fair number of events and facilities. Things can always be improved".*

- If it is felt that some of these recommendations fall outside the remit of the Sunart Community Company we recommend that a **Development Trust** is established to take these forward.
- That steps are taken to address **rural isolation, particularly for the elderly**, and that they are fully included in the day-to-day life of the community.

"There is a need to have 'a plan' to tackle isolation and loneliness particularly in the elderly".

- That a **community social hub** feasibility study be completed.
- That Sunart, working with other communities across the peninsula, should investigate the concept of a **local social enterprise owning and running the ferry**.
- That the Sunart community reviews **the NUKA healthcare model** as an alternative system of health care (see: https://www.southcentralfoundation.com/files/Nuka%20Fundraiser%20Brochure-6pg.pdf)
- That a short-term working group looks into the **development of a 'Men's Shed'** and other community workshop concepts in Sunart.
- That the community considers investing resources in a **local Development Worker**.
- That **local childcare provision is improved** to enable parents to rejoin the workforce more easily, addressing both employment needs and rural isolation concerns.

Specific recommendations:

Transport:

"it always comes back to transport"

- That further negotiations take place between Highland Council and the Ardnamurchan communities to **stabilise prices and extend the ferry time-tabled service**.
- That negotiation takes place with **Shiel Buses to bring one or perhaps two extra services to the area per day** allowing access to Fort William earlier in the morning – and travel westwards and then eastwards from and to Sunart the same day.
- That the community considers supplementing normal transport arrangements with a **Community Bus and a car-sharing club**.
- That a **'ferry on/off' alert system** is put in place to advise travellers of disruption as they leave Strontian.

Health:

"We have no proper GP - it's a different one every week"

- That steps be taken to **stabilise and upgrade the present GP arrangements** by working with the Health Board and the GP management practice in Mallaig to better coordinate access to a team of **regularly attending GPs** and for the times of those GPs attending to be available to local people.
- That the **surgery facilities are upgraded**.
- That the Health Board be required to **improve mental health care** and support.
- That **the elderly**, in being encouraged to stay in their own home under 'Care in the Community' **are more adequately and transparently supported**.
- That negotiation takes place with the NHS about the tension of having **testing equipment in the Belford Hospital when the staff who work the equipment are based in Inverness.**
- That the **NUKA health care model be actively debated** within the community as an alternative to the service provision being made available at this time.

"In the NUKA model, healthcare is owned and largely operated by local people"

Recreation:

- That a **swimming pool feasibility study** is carried out**.**
- That **upgrades to the walking and cycling routes** are carried out.
- That **guides are produced to help visitors and local people use walking and cycling paths.**

Land Use:

- That discussion takes place to **solve the lack of access to crofting locally for the younger generation.**

"they won't share or open that opportunity to the younger generations".

- That representation is made to Government in an attempt to **lessen the bureaucratic load of using the Land Reform legislation and working with the Forestry Commission**.
- That the community becomes better informed about the opportunities available to **take woodland – or woodland open space – into community ownership**.
- That the Transfer of Crofting Estates Act (and the Land Reform legislation) is used to **take building land into community ownership** to increase the supply side of land availability with a consequential lowering of local building land prices.
- That **greater use is made of the loch** as a potential contributor to the local economy.
- That **'Core paths' in Sunart are clarified and agreed**, or if this proves contentious, the Highland Council Access Officer should be invited to run a local seminar to clarify rights and responsibilities for all parties
- That the Sunart community considers bringing **land into community ownership**.

Housing:

"the whole village was up in arms when they started giving out the sheltered housing to anybody".

- That Highland Small Communities Housing Trust is invited to **conduct a comprehensive housing needs analysis** in Sunart.
- That a proportion of local housing be 'tied' to allow **key workers to be immediately housed** without the fear of losing housing stock to speculation and forced sale.
- That **Sheltered Housing be built and that these units become reserved** housing stock held for those in need of sheltered accommodation.
- That the position of the NHS Dail Mhor **Residential Home for the Elderly be clarified**.

Education:

- That the **Primary School be substantially upgraded or rebuilt**.
- That the **range of subject choice in the High School is increased** through greater collaboration with both Higher Education and Further Education.

- That the **promotional pathway structure of Highland Council is addressed** to allow for greater flexibility and stability of staffing in the High School.
- That the High School (and Highland Council) considers a **greater integration of non-teacher experts from the locality** to supplement the teaching programme and increase quality and choice for the students.
- That the **impact on students of staff turnover is minimised** and investigations made as to why the turnover rate of the staff appears so high.

> *"At the school the teachers keep coming and going"*

- That **education staff be encouraged to live within the school catchment** to enable the extra-curricular programme to flourish and for the local economy to gain from their salaries.
- That more is done to **encourage intergenerational connection** in Sunart.

Heritage & Tourism:

> *"The development of the mines as a tourist development is a major opportunity to stress the history and industrial archaeology of the area".*

- That the **mine site and access be protected for community use** by being brought into community ownership.
- That a **Heritage Centre feasibility study is conducted**.
- That the Highland Council, Visit Scotland and the NHS are brought into discussions regarding the **perceived 'boundary line' demarcation** that is the Corran Straits and the apparently unfair distribution of resources on the peninsula compared with that of Fort William.
- That **Sunart 'brands' itself more effectively**, perhaps in partnership with other communities on the peninsula.

Business & Employment:

- That every opportunity is identified for **'apprenticeships'**.

- That the community is **proactive in helping business start-ups**.
- That employers and government agencies are encouraged to **support local training**.
- That **business advice** is made more readily available and given by those who know the **constraints of living on the peninsula**.
- That **workshops and small industrial or storage units are made available**.

Young People:

- That a more **effective link is established** to Higher Education and Further Education to increase options.
- That **local skills training** is made available.
- That a more effective knowledge exchange process is put in place to address shortcomings in the **information and counselling services available to young people**, particularly in the area of sexual health.
- That the development of **bursaries** is considered for those attending FE or HE.
- That steps are taken to enable **young people to develop a stronger voice in the community** – particularly in regard to matters on which they are expert.

Environment:

> *"[Some landowners] want to live in the community – but not be a part of us"*

- That the benefit of renewables initiatives on local estates is **fairly shared** with the Sunart community.
- That every opportunity to **decrease Sunart's carbon footprint** is encouraged.
- That **locally-grown food** is encouraged and supported.
- That **wood fuel is encouraged** through a community-owned woodland.

Conclusion.

The next stage of this process asks that the community prioritises these recommendations and chooses which ones they would wish the various community organisations to deliver over the short and longer term.

In the Brief for this research, CADISPA was asked to deliver a 'comprehensive community consultation' which would lay the foundations for a community action-plan. Through the cooperation of local people and the intense support of the local Working Group over many months we believe that a quality piece of work has been delivered. The document will prove significantly useful in guiding the development of this community into the future.

"I like summer time in my village".

The voice of this young person rings out like a clarion call. This is a lovely place to live and it must be helped to stay that way so that it can be quietly passed on to the next generation in vibrant good health. However, a beautiful place to live doesn't pay the bills: much more has to happen to enable people to stay.

A sustainable community is one that is resilient, engaged and caring for both its people who live there and to the environment that embraces them. The 'evidence for change' that is presented in the full report addresses the notion that change is inevitable – it just keeps coming. This community needs to prepare for that. The document seeks to provide unambiguous information on the development and quality of life preferences of the people who live there. With the skills already on show in the community the Report can be used to shape a future to which local people can easily subscribe. Better this, we feel, than the community having to react or respond to changes that others' have designed. This is its key purpose.

As I'm sure you can tell - we too liked our summer in Sunart.

Dr Geoff Fagan

CEO

The CADISPA Trust

INVITATION: *"THE NEXT STEP" – SUNART WORLD CAFÉ EVENTS*

What: ***Join us on Saturday 10th May to discuss what happens next and how you can be a part of it.***

Where: ***Strontian Village Hall***

When: ***2pm and 7pm***