

Place workshop | Berwickshire Area Partnership

Issues

“set overarching priorities from the bottom up rather than national policy”

How you define what a place is in geographic terms and community terms matters. It affects how we plan where we live, and plan for areas beyond where we live. There will be some communities who feel like a community, like a place. But that experience will be completely different in different places.

Priorities will be different for sub sets of Berwickshire, big towns, villages, rural farming community. And there are overarching priorities across all areas. But, these priorities seem to be set only at the top level of decision making.

“natural networks need to be fostered”

The Resilient communities model for flooding and winter maintenance has worked well for the Covid response. Neighbourliness and informal networks matter. Covid has shown what resilient communities can be if support is provided at the right time. Red tape was removed. Communities responded and responded well. People had needs met before formal social work referrals were needed. At times, the phone lines in community assistance hubs were not being used because people were being supported locally.

But natural networks need to be fostered. The risk now is that the voluntary sector gets forgotten, and is only used ‘as and when required’.

“the risk now is that the voluntary sector gets forgotten”

We need to think about everybody in our communities, including the younger generation, especially those without vehicles who can’t get around. Connectivity is important for young people. And, they often have a better grasp of digital things, with confidence. So, it is important to ensure that everybody has good broadband. Sometimes, now, it is clunky.

Access to transport is also important. New rail investment and new stations are welcome in the Borders. But we need more stops, more frequency. And more connections to the stations for more people.

“opening up the Borders offers people new choices”

There is a unique opportunity post covid for people to re-write contracts so staff only need to attend offices some of the time, providing more opportunities to work locally. We can use this to bring Edinburgh wages and more work back to the Borders. Support more people working here. So, capitalise on the beauty of the landscape, the quality of the place. Attract and retain more people.

Strengthen the Borders as somewhere that innovation and development happens, This is the land of David Hume, not a backwater. It has fantastic connections to England and beyond, with great opportunities around the HS2 and future connections to Carlisle.

Covid has thrown up phenomenal examples of collaboration. More neighbours are talking, more folk seeing eye to eye. Build on the collaboration across the South of Scotland. It is why we are living here.

“build on the collaboration across the South of Scotland”

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Success

“blended experiences, linking digital and localism, offer new opportunities”

We are concerned about the rise of Amazon, the impact of digital on high streets. And in Covid, some older customers are no longer comfortable going out.

But we need to see digital as an opportunity. Build on the experience of local businesses making local and serving UK Markets with excellent food, and produce and pies. Connect markets. Get the digital infrastructure right. Position the Borders as a great place to live. A lot of good companies offering blended working can locate and work here. There are fantastic opportunities.

Buying more from Amazon is not a success. This kind of purchasing is a moral and economic decision. So, build on the value of what we have locally. Show that this is a place where people can set up a business cheaper than Edinburgh, with footfall and markets, in a fantastic landscape, with digital connections.

“more young people staying in the Borders for work of study”

At the moment, study beyond school is limited. We need more options around this. Use digital to extend experiences for higher and further education, so more people can access more of these experiences more locally.

Success is more young people feeling represented, having a say over local policy and things that matter to them. Build more opportunities across communities. for school pupils and young people to have a voice, to have a say on decisions. Build skills. Support mental health. And fair work.

“connectivity choices”

Young people now and in the past have had the same problems with connectivity. Many people still rely on hitchhiking or taking a bike to travel miles. E-bikes are an exciting future. They enable more connections to new rail stations and travel points, facilitating choices for commuting and working locally.

A big issue is population. Every single organisation struggles for members, consultancies, voluntary group. Often, people are volunteers on many groups. And the area is fairly mono cultural and ageing. So, bring population into the area. We need critical mass of individuals and families with sufficient income to support new emerging businesses.

So, we need more homes. Tiny villages and sizeable villages need a proportion of more homes to support local services. There will be different reasons for more homes in different places. And we need more decentralisation, with more local places working better with more local services.

“grow a more diverse population”