

Place workshop | Cheviot Area Partnership

Issues

Communication is the most vital part of working together. We must have this from the off. If we all go in and are able to speak to each other, we can get to the outcomes.

“Review existing community risk assessments”

Covid has caught the world out. Scottish Borders have good risk assessments for winter resilience. But what wasn't covered was a global pandemic. What would we do in the event of one of these issues in the future? For example, in some places the village hall as the emergency point occupies the lowest point in the village, not useful in a major flood event. Review priorities based on local insights on high level risk events.

“audit people's skills and experience in the community”

Find out what people can do, the skills we have in communities. Use the skills as a form of citizen panel. Help people realise the capabilities they have. There are people often worrying about minor things that can be solved easily through a conversation with someone local who has the skills.

Hobbies and skills offer a safe space to try things, another path way to opportunity.

Some areas have looked at a skills bartering system, like a Local Exchange Trading System [LETS. No money changes hands. It helps value the skills people have. And, it offers people time and support, a way of getting a night off from caring duties.

The key is to build confidentiality. And trust, so people overcome fears about talking about 'secrets'. This is community empowerment in a direct sense, not a technical sense. It is about building confidence in relationships. And, helping people discover what exists locally.

“build confidentiality and trust”

In the pandemic, resilience groups self organised and swung into action, making a big difference. However, a lot of organisations who provide lunch clubs and other activities to mitigate social isolation have been missed. Many activities couldn't happen because of lockdown. Often, these activities were organised by older people for older people and are not quick coming back.

Some halls are now open. But, there are no Live Borders venues open until the end of August. Spaces are not available to get started again. More needs to be done to support community taking over premises to meet the needs of people, not mega structures. And there is a need for more guidance and support on re-entry to physical spaces for community groups.

“Some activities don't have the space to come back”

Young people often mention the importance of broadband for school work, and home work. It is a catalyst for young people to stay for good green jobs. So, we need connectivity to be improved, and we need to be connected in a better way.

And young people are already doing a lot in our communities. But, often, people don't know. Young people often feel they need space for a blether or to do a craft, and wonder why it isn't offered to them. The need space to be. And improved connectivity to support school, home and work.

“connectivity is a catalyst for young people to stay for good green jobs”

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Success

“If you value it, invest in it”

Success is about improved opportunities for youth, more spaces, and improved premises to meet for a bit of craic and fun together. Youth facilities don't get a lot of funding locally. We need greater investment in youth provision of all ages. It always gets cut, so youth organisations spend a lot of time chasing funding to cover costs. Success would be more support.

And, harness the skills of the older generation. Many people are lonely in our communities. Young people talk about loneliness and isolation too. Encourage talking. Demonstrate old skills like working out the square root of 27 without computer. Support girls to do woodwork. And boys to knit. Bring generations together, sharing skills and companionship for free to create good.

“we want local facilities to be more multi functional spaces”

Villages and smaller communities thrive where there are local institutions like shops, pubs, schools, spaces that provide meeting points where people can interact. Sometimes, these spaces are in community ownership, like the community shop. Support local spaces in local places.

Schools can be spaces to bring people together. And using local skills does not cost as much as bringing in professional people. So, we want local facilities to be more multi functional spaces. Schools as community building at the centre of the community, supporting lots of other activities as well as being a school during the day. But often schools out of hours use have hefty charges.

And, when activities take place out of a formal space like schools, you need people with PVG so everybody knows everybody is safe. This adds to cost. We are looking at reduced cost as opposed to no cost. And flexibility in the use of indoor and outdoor spaces.

“build a culture of support and challenge amongst ourselves”

'Aye been' drags communities down. Be more flexible in the approach to change and resilience in ourselves. Those who adapt quicker are on the ball quicker.