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Black Isle Partnership August 20

1 message

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Welcome to the fourth edition of

Black Isle Bulletin

the official newsletter of the Black Isle Partnership

Editor's note

By Asia Cielecka, Community Resilience Coordinator

Summer has blessed children with an eagerly awaited break, while their parents/many local businesses had the busiest time of the year so far. As school starts again in a few days, we have collectively responded with **Back to School** initiative, simultaneously looking a few steps ahead towards a *resilience strategy* fit for the uncertain future.

Our world has gone through a deep transformation, and many are asking how far will it reach. Will we create a greener economy and save the planet for the future generations? Are we to work from home permanently? Is our life to revolve around Zoom? Are we safe under the watchful eye of the data moguls?

The Economist has recently published "Trade without trust", a fascinating analysis of the world's response to Chinese state surveillance and our reliance on 5G network in order to progress green economy. Reading this has made me realise that the diversity of various networks (so beautifully reflected in our Tuesday meetings on zoom) initially may add complexity but in the long run makes communities more resilient and our projects more affordable in the long run.

There isn't a one-size-fits all approach as all communities are diverse in their own ways. To pull together we need to include various (sometimes conflicting) voices, and trust that the equilibrium can be achieved, our economy will be sustainable, grants can be fair and based on self-declaration and that we will grow stronger through embracing change.

All trust starts with self trust, so lets trust ourselves a bit more.



Driftwood alphabet by Nat Wastnidge

A more resilient Black Isle

By Jon Palmer,

Chair of Black Isle Partnership

In the last issue of this Bulletin Vanessa Halhead wrote about the need for the Black Isle to produce a Resilience Strategy. In this issue we begin the process with a survey that we want as many residents as possible to respond to. There is a link to it at the end of this article. By way of an introduction it might be worth exploring what we mean by 'resilience'. These are my personal thoughts.

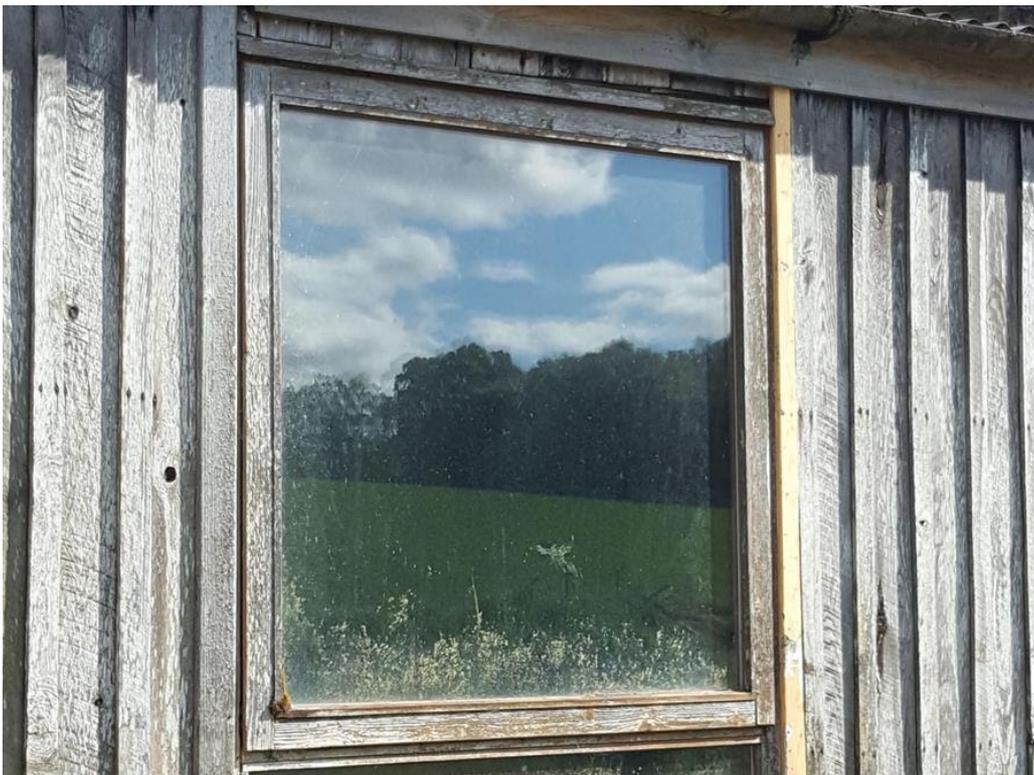
When we talk about an individual being resilient, we normally think of them as strong. Someone who is able to withstand whatever life throws at them. Hardships may be financial or emotional or perhaps to do with one's health. Whatever it is, a resilient person seems to 'get through it'. They survive. Possibly even coming 'out the other side' stronger

and fitter. How? Usually, because they take responsibility for situations they find themselves in. They look to their own abilities to overcome the problems and challenges. They don't see themselves as a victim or look for others to blame for their circumstances. They accept that 'stuff happens'. And try to be objective - to look at how or why it happened. And probably learn from mistakes that were made. As a result, they become better equipped at dealing with other situations or hardships in the future.

The same could be said of communities. And the Black Isle has proved itself pretty robust when it comes to facing challenges. When the pandemic broke, even before the country was put into lockdown, we didn't hold our hands up in horror and wait for someone to tell us what to do. We rolled up our sleeves and got on with it. Hundreds of folk contacted their local self-help groups to volunteer. Neighbours checked in with one another to see what support might be needed. Over time new ways of shopping became the norm, and the local stores came into their own – avoiding unnecessary journeys to Inverness or Dingwall. Community Facebook pages became places for people to swap unwanted items – instead of them ending up in land-fill. Gardens became productive places for growing food. When additional help and finance came from the likes of Highland Council and Scottish Government, whilst essential for those whose livelihoods had been dramatically altered, for the most part the consensus was 'actually we're coping pretty well already'.

But we're not through this yet. The long-term effects are only just beginning to be seen. The coming months, even years, are going to be tough. Many people are having to re-think how they make a living. The emotional strain of coping with change can take its toll. So, what are the lessons we've learnt so far? Where are the frailties that prevent people from leading a fulfilling life on the Black Isle? What schemes or projects can be put in place to shore up some of those weaknesses that have been exposed? We want to hear your ideas. And we want to pool as many of them as possible to create a route map for the future. One where the residents of the Black Isle can be ever more resilient to the challenges life throws at us.

Link to the survey here: https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/?sm=svh6m4nO1tJWFmkKoRsQXA_3D_3D



Picture window by Nat Wastnidge

Community response to pandemic

an update by Asia Cielecka

Reaching the end of third month of my ~6-month part-time engagement with BIP has been a truly reinvigorating experience. I feel extremely grateful to all those who gave their time, expertise, sense of humour and incredible kindness to help me coordinate emergency response and resilience activities. Now that I returned from the holidays in the sunny hometown of Gdansk, it is time to offer an update on the initiatives funded by HIE's Supporting Communities Fund.

The objective of our approach was to engage community organisations (mostly Community Councils) in the emergency response, as all these institutions have an unique insight into the areas that we serve, combined with structure and experience that cannot be substituted. Through our weekly meetings, in which up to 27 different stakeholders were present, we have strengthened the cooperation between the Highland Council, Black Isle Partnership, Community Councils, grassroot organisations and NGOs. Not all the projects that we started have come to a fruition yet, but the overall trend reveals trusting and connected community, bravely addressing problems and expressing needs in a safe environment of mutual support.

A variety of responses to the emerging issues have taken place. Some organisations offered deliveries to those experiencing financial hardship as well as those who were shielding. We supported two main meals providers- Avoch Scouts and Black Isle Cares. We have also financed vouchers for Cromarty Cares Project, which covered shop expenses (apart from alcohol, cigarettes, pet food and lottery) for those in need in Cromarty.

Another strand was the money for the community sheds, allowing residents to access food with dignity, by using a stocked, centrally placed shed. These are financed in Munloch and Culbokie, the next ones will hopefully be built in Rosemarkie and North Kessock. There has been a shared effort to make these happen and new connections established to make sure that sheds reflect a real need. In Avoch, we have paid for the refurbishment of the phone box that is now an exchange spot- a fantastic green initiative!

We have supported volunteers and organisations with expenses - for printing (Venture Safely campaign, BIP Newsletter, CC leaflets), mileage (volunteers' expenses in Resolis and across Black Isle), biodegradable packaging, microwaves, fridges etc. We have received and distributed resources such as hand sanitisers kindly donated by Mr Healy of Invergordon Distillery and Mr Pearson of SMC Cosmetics, with delivery sponsored by Karen Napier Trust.

We also financed digital inclusion initiatives across Black Isle, namely James' Support Group from Cromarty, looking after those affected by suicide, and AbilityNet, specialising in Digital Training for the elderly and disabled. Our application to SCVO resulted in getting iPads and ChromeBooks for children and adults at risk of isolation- there are still some left so please let us know if you know someone in need of those.

Our approach to allocating funds has been diligent and transparent- for example, as a principle we issue only half of the funds upfront. We didn't advertise any funding outside of our Partnership circle, which has enabled the organisations working with us to apply their insights and build projects they have identified as essential.

When allocating funds we have taken great care to promote dignity in food provision. After attending an online training organised by Nourish Scotland to ensure on that topic, I have been engaging with various organisations to promote a more individual approach to the food distribution. At BIP we have also been diligent to avoid double funding, asking each project for a detailed declaration on funding received from other sources. We have already spent over 100% of the first tranche and are waiting for the remainder. We have also applied to a few other funds- eg Wellbeing Fund, SCVO, Ecclesiastical. These applications have strengthened our understanding of the need across Black Isle and brought many organisations together by working towards the same goal.

Within the last two weeks, inspired by community representatives from both Avoch and Cromarty, we have committed to distribute much needed support for parents of children attending local schools as swiftly as possible, acting in trust that has been built through our weekly meetings. Knowing how the pandemic affected many financially, we have worked with local community councils who identified families in need, and distributed £100 per child in Back to School cash grant to allow purchase of the basic necessities.

A fantastic action across the Black Isle has painted an encouraging picture. We believe that trust which has been built in the difficult time will carry on after the emergency, into the resilience phase and beyond.



Seed head, photo by Nat Wastnidge

Community Project in Focus

Please see the invite below for the event hosted by Roots and Growth, an initiative to turn the Munloch Smiddy into Community Space for Black Isle.

With each issue of the Bulletin we want to end by focusing on one of the communities in the Black Isle and find out a bit more of what's been going on locally.



ROOTS & GROWTH

Roots and Growth is a group of Black Isle residents working to turn a site at Littleburn, Munloch, into a holistic health and sustainability centre for our community: a space in nature to grow, cook, eat, heal, share, learn and create.

Online Open Meeting

Wednesday, August 12th
at 5:30pm

**Find out more
and discuss your ideas.**

REGISTER HERE
rootsandgrowth.eventbrite.co.uk

 **Fill in a survey** to help shape our plans:
surveymonkey.co.uk/r/RootsandGrowth



Black Isle organisations have been meeting every week since March (via Zoom). If you have any suggestions or ideas you'd like discussed by this partnership, please contact your local representative, (via your Community Council), or e-mail community@black-isle.info

Litter issues

by Asia Cielecka

Our Venture Safely campaign was delivered by Black Isle Partnership Tourism Board a month ago in anticipation of the influx of visitors, who are hungry for the beauty and atmosphere that Black Isle is famous for. The campaign focused on safety in interactions with our community and mutual mindfulness when enjoying our shared spaces. However the current situation, with litter overflowing many "beauty spots", has led to new initiatives being set up by Community Councils and other organisations, with help of Highlands Council.

Over the last week many people across Black Isle have identified, discussed and taken steps to clean the litter that should not be there in the first place. It can be shocking and upsetting to see how inconsiderate people can spoil it for others. Knowing that no-one sees them, they leave all sorts of rubbish behind, from plastic and food to household and personal waste. The mindset behind it is puzzling and upsetting. It spells disrespect, lack of education and carelessness.

Litter was a main issue highlighted by the lockdown survey which we have conducted in May, before the lockdown was lifted. We acknowledge that rubbish and poo bags are left by both visitors from outside of Black Isle as well as our residents. However, the current numbers of those seeking respite from pandemic stress have exacerbated the issue to the extent that cannot be ignored.

In our Tuesday meetings we discussed this issue extensively. Communities have taken action - RANK has cleaned steps to Harry Gow in North Kessock, Avoch has organised litter picking walks and other organisations have gathered a large number of volunteers who, armed in black bags and litter pickers are willing to address the situation. Avoch and Killen Community Council have created the poster below- please share it freely. In our last meeting we have welcomed Alan McKinnie, Waste Manager at Highlands Council who has shared great ideas and offered further support on behalf of the Council.

Vanessa Halhead, Director at BIP has reminded us in the past about a bigger picture. NC500 has been promoting the route through Black Isle, but have not consulted widely with community organisations from the beginning. The lack of joined communications and shared responsibility can put an additional strain on us. It is important to gather key project stakeholders at the onset, rather than waiting for complaints to arise.

Our thoughts on why people litter vary. Vanessa has also pointed out the behavioural aspect of spatial planning- for example positioning of the litter bins which can have a big impact and need to be assessed. Her thoughts reminded me of the charity that I worked with- hubbub.org.uk. Hubbub employ behavioural "nudges" to effectively help people avoid littering. For example, they created boxes, where you can vote with cigarette butts on issues that are lightweight (eg Ronaldo or Messi?)- this way you dispose of these more eagerly as the good behaviour has been made fun.

Perhaps we can employ a similar principle, and make people willing to play the game. A more serious version of this nudge are machines which turn returned recyclable items into cash or vouchers. Visit Scotland has also opened a fund that addresses infrastructure needs in areas that experience more visitors and issues related to it <https://www.visitscotland.org/supporting-your-business/funding/rural-tourism-infrastructure-fund>.

Whichever strategy our environmental subgroup chooses, it is important that it works, so we can avoid our environment being spoilt and volunteers burning out. If you have any thoughts on that matter please share them with us. We would especially be keen to hear the ideas on how to reuse and recycle to stop creating waste once and for good. Regardless of where we live, we can all contribute to a greener, cleaner environment.



We trust you have found this issue useful. Please share widely. To be sure of receiving further editions ask to be put on the mailing list via [subscribe](#).

This edition of Black Isle Bulletin was edited by Asia Cielecka

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