



A review of rural education in the Glenkens: Appendices

November 2024

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Case study 1: That's how we did it in the Western Isles!

Sources: Direct experience of CoDel's Directors in developing educational opportunities within the Western Isles (Outer Hebrides); also e-Sgoil, Evidence of Impact Report 2024, <https://e-sgoil.com/media/kjij4rf2/impact-report-2024.pdf>

Vocational Educational Strategy and Local Labour Market Intelligence

The Outer Hebrides had amongst the worst population projections: an expected decline of 25% in total population and of one-third in the working age population by 2046.

To address this the Local Authority, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar (CnES), adopted a formal education strategy in 2008 designed to stem population decline. Historically the curriculum was stacked heavily in favour of those going on to Higher Education. In reality this was only relevant for approximately 34% of the school leaver cohort, which left a majority of young people seeking work or Further Education to equip themselves for the world of work post-school, which often still took them away from the islands. It was essentially 'education for export': to 'get-on' in life was to 'get-off' the islands. Universal education for all in the islands had been thoroughly embraced and in the 1980s the islands had the highest university entrance rate per head of population in the country.

This also meant that young people who wanted, for example, to become a mechanical engineer, had to leave to become qualified. When young people reach their adult life, naturally they form social bonds which may last throughout their lives. If those bonds are formed 'away' from home, despite initial intentions, many will not return. This meant the islands were leaching their young and able population.

To address the dire projections, a formal Vocational Educational Strategy was introduced and adopted in 2008. Local Labour Market Intelligence (LLMI) was key to informing decisions around which courses would be introduced into the curriculum based on 'where the jobs would be in the future'. If it was identified that a sector of the economy was struggling with recruitment gaps or predicted to expand, but an appropriate course didn't exist, a writing group was established and the courses were commissioned, written, verified and accredited with parity of esteem to sit within the qualification menu offered to pupils. It was important that courses were not just for the less able, but relevant to all pupils.

Such courses included, at National 5 level, [Harris Tweed](#), [Crofting](#), , [Maritime Skills](#) and, at Higher Level 6, [Local Food Production](#), the last providing opportunities for progression from a number of courses, including the crofting course.

The strategy meant every child had the entitlement to a nationally accredited industry recognised qualification linked to employability within the local economy informed by LLMI.

The delivery of the courses, along with many Skills for Work courses, were delivered, at least in part, by an industry experienced tutor. This gave pupils learning in context and relevance which proved successful and popular with pupils. As examples, we know there are young people who took the Crofting course, perceiving it as being on a par with Biology and in a locally relevant context, who went on to gain their PhD, returned to the islands, have become Vice Chair of the local agricultural committee and office bearer of the livestock committee, all rooted in their community, and contributing to the local community and economy.

Other courses were already available through SQA but were not necessarily offered by the school. In this case any accredited presenting centre could verify and deliver the course. For example, a collaboration between Stirling University and the Western Isles Health Board created a Pre-Nursing Scholarship to address recruitment gaps in the nursing sector. Further collaboration followed with the Education Department of CnES and Cothrom, a local training centre. All this enabled young people to gain relevant work-based experience in the local hospital, clinic and GP practices and gain qualifications, equivalent to at least two Highers, for entry into a nursing degree. Subsequently this was replaced by the Foundation Apprenticeship in Health and Social Care, with the addition of the SVQ2 in social care, which is essential to access employment within the social care sector.

This meant that a range of courses were delivered in collaboration with local businesses and community organisations. Evidence has demonstrated that Work Experience ranks highly in pupil personalisation and choice exercises; whether they like it or not, they gain from the experience it provides. The Skills for Work and other courses increased the collaboration with local sectors such as hospitality, garages, Scottish Water, the veterinary surgery, etc.

The Western Isles were head and shoulders above every Local Authority in Scotland with the number of pupils achieving such a range of employability relevant qualifications. This doesn't count for much if the area still loses its young people, so tracking and checking 'where are they now' was really important.

e-Sgoil

The world was changing, IT connectivity was improving, and there were also teacher recruitment gaps. So in 2016 the e-Sgoil online teaching and learning platform was launched. One of its original purposes specific to the Outer Hebrides was to ensure that (a) all pupils across the islands would be given the same subject offering, not just those in the largest school in Stornoway, and that (b) all pupils would have access to more specialised subjects that might be taught in person in any one of the four secondary schools. Obviously it took significant resources to develop e-Sgoil, which now earns some of its income from providing services beyond the Outer Hebrides. However, offering wider choices through e-Sgoil to pupils across the four secondary schools within the Outer Hebrides is not resource intensive once the technology platform is in place. A key success factor is simply coordinating timetabling across the four schools to allow pupils in different schools to share the same class times.

One of e-Sgoil's stand-out strengths was to satisfy the demand for Gaelic education across Scotland, and this continues today. Covid saw the rapid expansion of such online provision enabling teachers across all curricular areas but geographically dispersed to be able to deliver to equally dispersed pupils. Beyond Covid, ideally teachers spend some face-to-face time with pupils, which builds the rapport which enhances the online experience.

According to the *Evidence of Impact Report*, e-Sgoil's Vision is to provide all learners with equitable access to high-quality teaching and learning, embedded in values of equity, opportunity, innovation and inclusion. e-Sgoil's five aims include:

- provide education characterised by pupil personalisation and choice;
- give learners equitable access to high quality teaching and learning;
- work with partners to create and enhance inclusive learners' experiences.

e-Sgoil continues to deliver to the Scottish Government's National e-Learning Offer (NeLO), working closely alongside Education Scotland, the Northern Alliance and representatives from other Regional Improvement Collaboratives. Partnership working has enabled e-Sgoil to extend its reach allowing more young people to benefit from what is on offer.

The community sector and life-long learning

While the Outer Hebrides were way ahead with qualifications and pathways relevant to the local economy, it is important to recognise other supporting and contributing factors. This included the local college, Lews Castle College (LCC), based in Stornoway, which set up a learning centre in Benbecula just next door to the secondary school. The centre provided opportunities for local young people and adults to engage in further and higher education opportunities, and at times enabled senior phase pupils to take courses not taught in the school.

Within the community sector in Uist two social enterprises in particular emerged to deliver significant education and learning opportunities. First was Cothrom, a charitable adult learning centre, that was initially set up in 1992 to help women back into work, a mission that ensured a long-term commitment to childcare, including eventually the creation of Cothrom's own Gaelic-speaking nursery. Cothrom went on to develop a wide range of life-long learning opportunities for adults, but with a strong focus on delivering learning and support services for young people and adults facing challenges in their lives.

Included within Cothrom's offering was an SQA accredited qualification in horticulture, delivered in partnership with another key community organisation, Tagsa Uibhist, which has contributed to a significant expansion of local horticulture. In fact, the largest community growing project, which is at Tagsa, was for a while managed by three graduates from the first cohort of the horticulture course.¹

Second was Taigh Chearsabhagh, the arts and heritage centre set up in 1994, which collaborated closely with Lews Castle College (which later became part of UHI), to deliver art courses at further and higher education level, recently being able to teach a full BA. The primary inspiration for art at Taigh Chearsabhagh has always been the distinct island environment, which attracted students locally and from off the islands, as well as the community. Taigh Chearsabhagh was in fact a merger of the local historical society and the local arts association, the network of the many artists within Uist.

In addition, the community riding school, established back in 1974, started offering accredited qualifications in equestrian studies.

Building on this long experience of community organisations like Cothrom and Taigh Chearsabhagh, the Gaelic music and culture organisation within the community, Ceòlas, which was first set up in 1996 to run the annual summer school, entered into partnership with the University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI). They jointly built a £7 million cultural centre, Cnoc Soilleir. This was opened in 2022 and now delivers community-based courses and events in Gaelic language, music and culture, as well courses accredited by UHI, including resident academic staff in music and in archaeology.

Gaelic music, dance and culture have in fact long been part of community-based learning, including for young people through the two annual feisean (one in South Uist, one in North Uist targeted at children, with many of the tutors being young people themselves), as well as a range of local dance schools, etc.

¹ For more detail on the emergence of a multi-pronged and integrated strategy, led by Tagsa Uibhist, to start rebuilding a local food economy in Uist, see the CoDeL casestudy at <http://codel.scot/community-actions-in-uist-and-glenkens>, which also includes three casestudies from Glenkens.

Building on long-standing enterprise programmes within schools, Cothrom and the CnES Education Department collaborated on a more innovative non-accredited programme to enable every senior phase young person to experience a day-long workshop, specially designed based on a New Economics Foundation model, to provide them with economic literacy of their place. Local literacy of where pupils live is not traditionally taught in schools. A headteacher of the school once said that pupils could name entrepreneurs of businesses elsewhere, with famous names or brands advertised across shops, buses, businesses and on the internet, but not those entrepreneurs who ran the bus company that took them to school every day or the local construction companies that built local housing.

It was quite literally revelatory to hear the enterprising ideas which every young person who participated in the day-long workshops proposed when they had focussed on, and gained an understanding of where they lived.

Finally, in 2018 CoDeL undertook research to track young adults across the seven inhabited islands from Berneray to Eriskay. During this time an accredited Leadership course was also delivered. In this case, it was not so much the accredited nature of the course which was most valued. This was a cohort of young adults for whom an age range of perhaps 5 to 10 years would have been unworkable during school years, but as adults, with different experiences under their belt, they had one thing in common: they had chosen to return, stay or settle in the islands. Geographically quite dispersed from across seven islands and around 60 miles, it was the coming together as informed adults which gave them voice and confidence to lead, speak and be heard in the community.

Case study 2: Breadalbane Academy in Perthshire

Source: Interview with Dougie Woodrow, Course Lead for rural skills at Breadalbane Academy

There is an existing SQA accredited National Progression Award in Rural Skills, described as “a starting place for candidates pursuing a future in one of the major land-based industries” (see <https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/41752.html>); it also includes a qualification at National 4 level.

The case of [Breadalbane Academy](#) demonstrates just how effective education for rural skills using these SQA qualifications can be. Initially developed with funding from [Lantra](#), delivery of the course builds on significant assets and opportunities, like the many farms and estates within a 10-mile radius of the school. These include, as examples, pupils working on West Park Farm, working with game keepers on estates, learning about conservation at the Crannoch Centre, and learning about brush cutting, chain saws and quodbikes at Dùn Coillich,² a community-owned landscape regeneration and rural skills training project, managed by Highland Perthshire Communities Land Trust. The course lead has access to a minibus which he can use to take pupils around during a double period.

There are so many work opportunities locally, for example on farms, or with forestry expanding so quickly, and so many job opportunities as a result.

Opportunities to learn rural skills are very tangible, and pupils like it, bringing lots of energy. Originally the classes just provided an introduction, now pupils can go through to Nat4 qualifications and a

² “Hugging the eastern shoulder of Schiehallion, Dùn Coillich is a diverse mosaic of precious habitats. Thanks to the efforts of an army of volunteers and rural skills trainees dedicated to restoring this landscape from the remnants of a deer farm, it’s home to an increasing number of species as native trees return, land is sensitively managed and nature flourishes.” <https://www.duncoillich.org/>

National Progression Award, for example. In fact the subject provides opportunities to gain not just qualifications but also specific tickets (e.g. in operating quad bikes and maintaining chainsaws), and significant practical work experience.

There are many different pathways, so it is great for diverse pupils. Previous course leads have involved pupils in horticulture in a community garden and in meat processing. The course delivered at Breadalbane has received glowing SQA reports, not least because of how good many of the local partners are in delivering opportunities for practical experience and learning.

The current course lead at Breadalbane reckons that about 50% of pupils taking rural skills end up in local employment in land-based activities. Many of these might have ended up in the same sectors anyway, as they come from families with similar employment. However, not only does the rural skills course provide opportunities to gain tickets, qualifications and experience, it also values, affirms and accredits skills that some pupils come with already through their family background.

This is hugely important for place-based education in recognising and building on local skills, and valuing pupils for skills they may already have. For example, pupils have explained all about how much money their families made at a sheep sale. As the course lead said, “I have learnt a huge amount myself about sheep, pigs and deer from pupils who could easily deliver a lesson based on knowledge and skills that they are already masterful in”.

The course lead ensures that, for those pupils who bring skills and experience from home, he matches their work and contributions to the needed requirements for SQA qualifications. A few take rural skills on into higher education, for example a pupil who now works in veterinary care locally.

The rural skills programme is part of a commitment by the Academy to provide wider educational opportunities. The Breadalbane Guarantee (see [here](#)) highlights so many assets and opportunities on the school’s doorstep, enabling every pupil, for example, to plant a tree, climb a Munro and engage in water sports.

The SQA qualifications in rural skills are particularly relevant to the Glenkens, where the Rural Skills Training Centre is being developed within the Carsphairn Community Wood with funding from Dumfries and Galloway (D&G) Council and South of Scotland Enterprise (SOSE). This could provide significant opportunities for collaboration between education in schools and within the wider community.

Case study 3: Baltasound Junior High School in Shetland

Source: Interview with Paul Thomson, Headteacher at Baltasound

Baltasound is the most northerly school in Scotland in the island of Unst in Shetland. According to the school website,

We are a fully inclusive school with Nursery to Secondary 4 students all on the same campus. A diverse and enterprising school, we pride ourselves as being part of a dynamic island community with students, staff and parents all working together.

There are 90 pupils across the whole school, aged 2 to 16, with occasional pupils with complex needs who stay beyond 16. Pupils continuing into S5 and S6 go to Lerwick, boarding during the week. The school shares some teachers with neighbouring island schools, for example on Yell; a few teachers, e.g.

in art and music, teach across three schools. Seven teachers and the Headteacher are based on Unst, with an additional four shared teachers who are based on other islands. There are many informal interactions between the school heads in different islands.

The population of Unst is stable at around 650. Some of the teachers at the school are former pupils who have returned. For example, one of the current probationers in the primary school is former pupil, and several former pupils are training as teachers or in childcare through the University of the Highlands and Islands in Shetland.

The new school motto, chosen through a whole school and community competition, is “Peerie School, Big Dreams”. This reflects

that we are a small rural school on the most northerly island in the UK; although we are able to progress through our school and become anyone we dare or dream to be. It also needs all stakeholders in the school (pupils, parents, staff, partner agencies and community) to do all we can to ensure our pupils have all the skills and qualities required for life beyond school. And this will allow those big dreams to come true. The Shetland word ‘peerie’ (which means small) also shows that our dialect, our location on Planet Earth and our history are also a vital part of who we are.

Baltasound Junior High offers English and Maths, 3 sciences, 2 social sciences, music and art, home economics and technical subjects (including IT). Modern languages are only possible through e-learning, but the school rarely uses e-Sgoil, not least because the timetabling, and pupil supervision, are challenging. Pupils start their National 5 courses in S3, allowing a reasonable pace to get through the set curriculum, with time to add other things not formally specified in the curriculum to make their learning a richer experience.

Each year the Head Teacher at Baltasound spends significant time and energy timetabling classes based on pupil choices that year. This is done in a public space, so that pupils can see the HT doing it, and even make suggestions.

Key features of this approach are flexibility and the determination to make things work. When numbers are small, the school may combine classes (e.g. teaching chemistry to S3 and S4 pupils in the same class). One year the school added a computer game development course in computer science, based on the aspirations of the specific cohort of pupils that year.

If there are gaps in teaching provision, then the school will find a way round. Currently they don’t have a teacher trained in Home Economics, but a teacher is delivering the subject supported by other Home Economics teachers elsewhere to ensure alignment with SQA accreditation. When the school was without a technical teacher, they used e-Sgoil (the only time they have done this).

And if a pupil is very keen to do a different subject than those on offer, the school will seek to be really flexible to make it work. This has happened for example in the case of a pupil who wanted to study Modern Studies. On another occasion a subject choice for one pupil could simply not be timetabled, but they had the ability to pursue this choice through self-study, and the school allocated support from a qualified teacher in that subject.

The Headteacher commented,

I have a relative who works in a big secondary school in England, even with some large subjects running identical classes in different rooms at the same time. There is no tailoring, no flexibility, no ability to go off on an interesting tangent. They don’t even know all the names of their pupils.

Many of our former pupils are still in touch with the school. Very few pupils don't do well here, and then excel when they move to Lerwick in S5. Most continue the trajectory from their junior secondary. All the pupils are given a lot of responsibility at a young age. They take personal responsibility and become effective contributors.

With the school so firmly rooted in the local community, there are so many opportunities for local entrepreneurs, businesses or services to come into the school. In the fortnight prior to the interview, the coastguard, the fire service and the local health centre had all visited the school or been visited by pupils. The school even has "Bring your Parent Days", where parents follow their children for the whole day in school. The Headteacher explained, "The parents are absolutely knackered at the end of the day, but they love opportunities to come into the school. We are the hub of community activity. One school, one community." The day includes having school dinners with the pupils. "Complaints about the quality of school dinners tend to stop after this!"

Case study 4: Reflections from Ireland

The case of Inishbofin, small schools and Education for Sustainable Development

Sources:

1. GRETB Report on Inishbofin Community Post-Primary School Application - 18 March 2020
2. The Ombudsman for Children's Office report for Inishbofin Secondary Steering Group, Inishbofin Island, County Galway, June 2020
3. Government of Ireland reports and press releases (see links within text)

The case of Inishbofin

Ireland has only five off-shore island post-primary schools, all of which are Education Training Board (ETB), co-educational, multi-denominational Gaeltacht schools, under the patronage of Galway and Roscommon ETB and Donegal ETB.

Notwithstanding the additional challenges faced by these island schools arising from their off-shore island remote locations, ETB (Education Training Board) island schools have built up a reputation for being well led and managed, academic excellence, resilience, innovation in adopting and adapting teaching and learning methodologies, including experimenting with distance learning to best support their communities. Research in Scotland has had similar findings regarding small rural schools, including island schools citing the high quality of education provision, progression and outcomes. (GRETB, 2020, p21).

The island of Inishbofin experienced a population decrease between 2006 and 2011, yet an increase in the number of children in age range 0 – 19 years. A paradox which indicates that when educational attainment increases people tend to be more likely to be in a position to stay on an island, bring up their children and are actively engaged in employment.

National and international data supports the Inishbofin islander's contention that appropriate education provision on the island increases the sustainability of the community, as stated in their submission to the Department of Education (DES) requesting a post-primary school on the island.

Their attempt to have secondary provision for the children of Inishbofin was turned down: “This submission was refused by the department, on the basis that there were not enough children to warrant the funding.”

This surely becomes a self-fulfilling prophesy as how will families be attracted to move to an area if there isn't a school pathway for their children? This was confirmed by the Ombudsman:

We feel that all children are equal and deserving of their needs being met, no child should be left behind as reinforced by the EEAS, the diplomatic service of the European Union, where they stated that ‘they reinforce its commitment to combating for a fairer world for children, an inclusive world where no child is left behind.’³ If the school was opened the numbers would grow as living on the island would be made viable for families with children or planning to have children, and families who have left ... could now return with their children.

GRETB's recommendation in the submission was that “the proposal be seriously considered by DES with a view to a favourable decision regarding establishing a post-primary school and advises that the school be designated as a Community College.”

Small schools and Education for Sustainable Development

The Secretary of State for Education in Ireland, Minister Foley, announced support for ‘small schools’ (4 teachers or less) very recently in May 2024. Minister Foley said,

Small schools are a support and a beacon for local communities. They are at the heart of educating generations of young people and providing a focal point for families and communities. The project has shown that small schools collaborating and working together offers promise for the future.⁴

The 2nd National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development – ESD to 2030 was published in June 2024 ([here](#)). It is co-sponsored by the Department of Education, Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, and the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth. It brings together education, further and higher education. It also links sustainability into education including links with the wider community.⁵

ESD aims to ensure that all learners have the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development. ESD is a target under the Sustainable Development Goals (Target 4.7) and is acknowledged as a key enabler for the achievement of all 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

ESD to 2030 has five priority areas, in line with UNESCO's framework for ESD for 2030:

- Aligning Policy
- Transforming Learning Environments
- Capacity Building of Educators
- Empowering and Mobilising Youth
- Accelerating Local Level Action

³ the key words ‘an inclusive world where no child is left behind’ have also been adopted by the Scottish Government.

⁴ <https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/36ca7-minister-foley-announces-two-year-extension-of-small-schools-project-to-support-sustainability-of-small-schools-in-rural-ireland/>

⁵ <https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/14f35-minister-for-education-announces-250000-in-funding-for-education-for-sustainable-development-esd-projects-for-organisations/>

The accompanying ESD to 2030 Implementation Plan 2022 – 2026 sets out the roadmap to achieving target 4.7 by 2030 “across the Education Sector from Early Learning and Care to third level and beyond to non-formal and informal education”.

ESD has three interlinked and equally important strands: Environmental, Social and Economic Sustainability.

Funding of €250,000 is being delivered to organisations to support them in carrying out ESD related projects to schools, including, for example, making the school and its grounds more sustainable; teacher training in ESD; student projects; collaborative projects between the school and the local community, etc.

In addition, whilst hosting a consultation symposium on sustaining small schools on 26 June 2019, Minister McHugh stated:

Small schools can and do provide an excellent education to our children, right in the heart of their communities. I went to a small school as a child. I live in an area where small schools are a facet of life and that is replicated up and down the country. They are often the heartbeat and lifeblood of a community.

Almost half of our schools are small schools, and almost 15 per cent of our children attend one. The [Irish] Government is committed to supporting and strengthening these.”

Ní neart go cur le chéile – we need to work together to find new ways of supporting small schools [to ensure their long-term sustainability].

Scotland – as reported in Ireland!

The Irish documents report favourably on the Commission for the Delivery of Rural Education,⁶ which was set up by the Scottish Government to review the Schools Consultation Scotland Act 2010 and its application, and to make recommendations on the delivery of all aspects of education in rural areas. Thirty-eight clear recommendations were made, including:

- The Scottish Government and local authorities should agree a coherent rural regeneration strategy to support economic outcomes for rural areas.
- Local authorities, the Scottish Government, teaching institutions and trade unions should work together to explore innovative solutions to reduce the barriers to teaching in remote areas; and to ensure effective delivery of CPD to teachers in rural schools, learning from international best practice to reduce teachers’ isolation and sustain skills and development.
- **There must be a commitment to resource the curriculum in small rural secondary schools to support the achievement of positive outcomes and destinations for young people.** This will require innovative and flexible arrangements to be developed including use of local primary school teachers and other experts within the local community.⁷
- **Local authorities, together with their health and other Community Planning partners, should consider rural education holistically for their area, from early years to further and higher education, actively seeking solutions to enhance the viability of rural communities.**

⁶ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/commission-delivery-rural-education-report/pages/3/>

⁷ *Experts within the local community were used in the Outer Hebrides to deliver the boatbuilding and crofting courses.*

Casestudy 5: From Denmark to Galloway

Sources:

- Denmark: <https://danishfolkhighschools.com/>, and <https://www.britannica.com/topic/folk-high-school>
- Kilquhanity: Glenkens and District Community Action Plan Steering Group and Glenkens Community and Arts Trust (2024), "Education and Learning in the Glenkens" (11th July 2024), <https://glenkens.scot/reports-resources-archive/education-and-learning-in-the-glenkens-event>

Folk high schools in Denmark

Folk high schools, which originated in Denmark in the mid-19th century as a means of providing the 'common people' with a knowledge of their history, religion and cultural heritage, are residential schools for adults that are common in Scandinavian countries and have been adopted elsewhere in Europe. The first school opened in Denmark in 1844. Following Denmark's military defeat by Prussia in 1864, the folk high schools served as a powerful instrument of national regeneration. There are no entrance qualifications, grades, or leaving examinations. The schools are private but receive state subsidies. Courses are short in duration, lasting from several weeks to one year. Most students are young adults, and many folk high schools also attract an international body of students.

According to <https://danishfolkhighschools.com/>, a folk high school is a non-formal residential school offering learning opportunities in almost any subject. Most students are between 18 and 24 years old and the length of a typical stay is four months. It is a boarding school, so students sleep, eat, study and spend their spare time at the school. During their stay, they live, eat, study, party and clean together with the other students. Everybody has the same duties and the same rights. There are no academic requirements for admittance, and there are no exams - but students do get a diploma as a proof of your attendance.

One of the core-ideas of the folk high schools is equality and mutual learning between teachers and students. The classes are characterised by the free word, dialogue and an open curriculum which can be changed during the course. The main focus is to discover and strengthen the unique skills of each student in a challenging yet supportive social atmosphere. "The task of the schools is to create a climate where culture is a reality."

There are approximately 70 independent folk high schools located all over Denmark, offering learning opportunities in more than 300 different subjects. Every year in Denmark, an average of 40,000 people attend a folk high school for courses of varying lengths.

While there are seven different types of folk high schools in Denmark, they all have the same purpose: to provide life enlightenment, public enlightenment, and democratic education. In other words, folk high schools aim to provide an education that enables individuals "not only to make a living but also to live a meaningful life". Writers on folk high schools have written about communal singing, storytelling, residential schooling, democratic education, life enlightenment, learning through the body, exam free school, social learning and education for humanity.

The seven different types in Denmark are:

1. Christian, bible or spiritual schools;
2. General and Grundtvigian schools: traditional folk high schools with many disciplines where students can immerse themselves in a single topic or choose between multiple topics;

3. Gymnastics and sports schools: about half of the course is dedicated to sports, while the other half will be more general education;
4. Lifestyle schools with a special focus on diet, exercise and personal development, as well as offering general education with a choice of various subjects;
5. Schools for senior citizens that arrange short-term courses only throughout the whole year;
6. Specialised schools, with a specific focus on a single discipline e.g. film, design or arts. However, half of the teaching according to the law for folk high schools must be of a broad general nature;
7. Youth folk high schools (16 to 19 years): there are only two of these schools.

The Global Folk High School Movement was established during the International Folk High School Summit in September 2019. This enables people to join a community from all around the world working professionally as folk high school practitioners, researchers or in other ways working with thoughts surrounding the special pedagogical praxis of the folk high school.

Kilquhanity School, Galloway

We conclude this casestudy with a short comparison with local Kilquhanity School, the first “free school” established in Scotland. While Kilquhanity is for children and the folk high schools focus on young adults, they share some similar ideas and approaches. According to Andrew Pyle, Head of Kilquhanity Children’s Village since 2007, the school is set on a 7-acre estate between the Bridge of Urr and Corsock. It was set up in the 1940s on the principles of Summerhill School.⁸ Unusually for the time, there was no physical punishment, and apart from basic numeracy and literacy, there was no compulsory curriculum. Principles of communal living were also strongly embedded in the way that the school was run, with democracy being an underpinning principle. The whole school community would meet every Thursday afternoon for a council meeting. A pupil would chair the meeting and record the minutes, and there was no restriction on points that could be raised.

Rather than staff being responsible for intervention and punishment in cases of unacceptable behaviour, incidents were discussed in the meeting, with all parties involved giving their view and a collective decision made on how to proceed. Staff and pupils also carried out all the necessary housekeeping and gardening tasks, with every pupil engaging in ‘useful work’ tasks for 45 minutes per day. These included cooking, cleaning, chopping wood, etc. If the tasks were not carried out, the whole community would suffer, including the individual, but there was scope to swap your task with another person. This focus on the community and the individual’s role, as well as the principles of free choice in learning which meant that the students followed the learning that interested them, was conceived to develop pupils with a strong sense of individual responsibility to the community, and educational motivation through the freedom to explore.

⁸ A.S. Neill, who founded Summerhill in Suffolk in 1921, “set out to make a school that would fit the child rather than forcing pupils to do what parents and educators thought might be best for them. Summerhill is as unlike a conventional school as it could possibly be, founded ... to provide a space where children can grow in a ‘free-range’ environment.” (<https://www.summerhillschool.co.uk/>)

Case study 6: Galloway Glens Intern Programme

Source: Galloway Glens Landscape Partnership, Dumfries and Galloway Council and National Lottery Heritage Fund Scotland, *Galloway Glens Intern Programme: Overview + Findings*, 2023

The specific interns project, 'Galloway Rural Skills', included a programme of internship/work experience positions, with 15 roles (over four years) supported in posts hosted by a variety of employers. These were full-time paid internships for six months with 50% funding intervention. Two of the roles supported were subsequently extended for a further six months.

The Galloway Rural Skills project had a number of **aims**:

- to provide work and training opportunities;
- to give young people a chance to see what it was like to work in Dumfries & Galloway;
- to illustrate the range of heritage-related and other careers available in the region;
- addressing the current departure rate of our young people (the population of Dumfries and Galloway continues to be one of the oldest in Scotland);
- to introduce a new range of employers to the benefits of internships/work experience programmes.

Beyond the selected candidates, the approach and overall programme sought to take every opportunity to highlight the merits to young people of working and living in Galloway. Later roles were advertised on *indeed.com* website. This advertised the role but also advertised the concept of working in Galloway, raising the profile of the range of careers available. It was hoped that even people who didn't apply would start to think about Galloway as an attractive place to work

The Galloway Glens Team were keen that the interns weren't simply taken on for basic duties, essentially just at a subsidised rate. Hosts were therefore asked to make the internships as rewarding as possible, with maximum benefit for intern future employment. A strong and active approach to recruitment was vital to the success of the intern programme. The approximate cost of a 6-month internship was £12,800 (excluding employer staff time and project worker time).

Note: The scheme relied on the strong advertising of roles. This usually resulted in a competitive appointment process. This scheme therefore did not provide dedicated support to applicants classed as 'further from the workplace' or needing additional support.

Nine out of the 15 interns have continued working in the sector of their internship:

- 3 secured a permanent role with the host, and 2 more a subsequent role with the host.
- 2 secured a permanent or subsequent role in the sector, but not in D&G.
- 1 entered further education in the sector of the internship, and 1 was able to continue independent self-employed work.

Among the remaining six, two have moved away from D&G or the UK for roles outwith the sectors of the internships (one to Humberside, one to Bolivia), and two are now working in temporary roles in D&G, but not in the sector.

Some ambitions of some of the interns:

I would like to be working for Galloway Fisheries Trust leading a successful freshwater Pearl Mussel Conservation Project among many other projects. Living in a house that I own in the local area.

I'd like to be a lepidopterist doing habitat restoration. To reach my goal I would need to take part in a Moth research project and have worked as a Butterfly Conservation Field Assistant.

both interns at Galloways Fisheries Trust

To travel, work Freelance, and work again for Better Lives Partnership. (Intern at Better Lives Partnership)

Running my own arts space or festival in Glasgow with a programme that centres around connecting people to nature in natural environments in the city. (Intern at Catstrand)

Ambitions of some of those whose subsequent path was not known at the time of writing:

I'd be living in a comfortable apartment shared with friends or living with friends rurally with ease of transport, an enjoyable job, and feeling fulfilled but productive. (Intern at Better Lives Partnership)

I want to be working in forestry or related industry, be financially stable, and live rurally. I want to be feeling successful and accomplished in life. Helping friends and family as much as possible. (Intern at Carsphairn Community Woodland)

Reflections on the employers:

These were the employers who provided internship opportunities:

- Galloway Fisheries Trust (4 interns)
- Better Lives Partnership (2 interns)
- GCAT/Catstrand (2 interns)
- Crichton Carbon Centre (environmental charity)
- Carsphairn Community Woodland
- Czernin-Kinsky Scottish Company Ltd (family forestry company)
- Mr Pooks restaurant
- Drax
- Natural Power

The Intern Programme was 'relationship-led'. They did not advertise for hosts, instead approaching partners or organisations that they had worked with or had already established a relationship with. It was commonly cited that the project was providing impetus to something the host had been meaning to do previously.

Many of the organisations wanted to give an internship to a young person they could keep on and who would become part of their team. The internship was a way of testing them out while offering a nurturing environment of mentorship and training. A number of hosts did keep the interns on after completion of the six-month period.

It is interesting to note the hosts were a range of sizes, from micro businesses through to large organisations. Natural Power used the internship to re-start their intern activities and Drax used it to address historically low local application rates for their established apprenticeship programme. Both of these cases illustrate that the intern model is not restricted to smaller organisations.

It was great to note the near-universal enthusiasm from hosts to undertake similar initiatives in the future. Natural Power won a Green Industry award for their hosting of an intern role.

Conclusions and key learning points

- ✓ There is an appetite from employers to take part in an Intern Scheme, but it will often not be fully realised without support – either financial input or broader partnership backing.
- ✓ There are a number of sectoral/employer employment support schemes in operation but none of these prevent additional work in the sector.
- ✓ The time-limited nature of the Galloway Glens Scheme was often an advantage, resulting in the prioritising and expediting of the internship advertising process by the hosts.
- ✓ However, the five years delivery phase of the Galloway Glens Scheme was not long enough to undertake apprenticeship roles – with ‘shared apprenticeships’ possibly requiring even more lead time and support.
- ✓ Pro-active advertising of roles adds value, using press releases and targeted use of recruitment channels. Accompaniment of professional photos to illustrate the role resulted in an increase in number of applicants.
- ✓ Roles should also be advertised through sector networks/university lecturers.
- ✓ Pro-active advertising also addresses wider challenges such as the general perception that an area has no jobs of interest.
- ✓ Interns require clear a management structure, ideally a single manager, and awareness from the host beforehand that on-the-job mentoring will be required.
- ✓ The Galloway Glens’ limited area of operation allowed closer relationships to be developed with employers.
- ✓ Roles should be advertised with as few restrictions (geography/age) as possible to maximise the number of applicants.

Case Study 7: Natural Power Consultants (NPC)

Source: presentation at the Education and Learning in Glenskens event (see [here](#)) by Richard Nash, who has been the Director of Finance and Board Company Secretary for Natural Power Consultants Limited (NPC) and its subsidiaries for the last 10 years. He has also been a resident of New Galloway and Kells for 10 years now and has two children, both of whom went to Dalry Primary and Secondary schools before completing their Highers at Castle Douglas.

Natural Power Consultants Limited (NPC) is an energy consultant and service operations business headquartered at The Green House in Dalry, with offices across the UK and Ireland as well as a presence in France and the USA. The company employs 500 people globally, providing services to help investors and developers with renewable energy generation projects, from planning to construction, analysis and operations.

NPC does not own renewables assets. It operates the largest independent control centre for renewables in the UK, working with the National Grid to balance power from renewable energy projects into the Grid.

Despite the Green House being NPC's head office, recruiting staff to the Glenkens with the right skills and experience is a challenge. Across the board, the renewables industry is growing rapidly because of the move towards Net Zero, and companies are struggling to recruit from an insufficient pool of potential candidates.

At the same time, young people in the Glenkens struggle to see a future for themselves in the area because of limited job opportunities. Lack of higher education facilities in the area is also a challenge for employers like NPC who normally recruit at graduate level; UWS and the University of Glasgow have campuses in Dumfries, but there is a general perception that people need to leave the area for higher education.

However, NPC is willing to work with local young people to help them to move into the Renewables sector, either through relevant courses at local further and higher education institutions (e.g. the BSc in Environmental Science and Sustainability from the Dumfries Campus of the University of Glasgow) or through the introduction of a skills pathway.

A skills pathway could help young people from the area to study for qualifications which were more directly relevant to the skills needed by local employers. Engaging with local schools is key to this process; NPC has already been in touch with Castle Douglas/Dalry Secondary Schools and Kirkcudbright Academy, and while Kirkcudbright pupils have visited NPC, the company has struggled to engage with the Castle Douglas/Dalry cluster to date.

Richard joined the Dumfries and Galloway College Board in order to help to turn round the college's perceived poor reputation, as his son experienced. It was also to improve the college outcomes with local employers like Natural Power.

As an example of how business and educational institutions can work together and improve outcomes, Richard facilitated meetings between NPC and D&G College tutors in order to tailor the Wind Turbine Technician course already running at the College and make it fit for purpose for local employers. NPC offered an opportunity for three students to do a summer placement at Brockloch/Windy Standard. Two of the students were subsequently recruited into posts at NPC. The College was very positive about the outcome and has named the course after NPC. The Scottish Funding Council also put it into their 'outcome and agreements report' as an example of good practice and economic transformation.

The cornerstone to achieving this type of success is having the connections between education and business to make this work.

Case study 8: Vattenfall Wind Power

Source: presentation at the Education and Learning in Glenkens event (see [here](#)) by Matthew Bacon, a senior project manager in Vattenfall's onshore wind team. He is currently overseeing the site design and planning permission process for the Quantans Hill wind farm near Carsphairn.

Matt outlined his journey into the renewables sector, having come from a rural, agricultural area of Lincolnshire with some of the same issues as the Glenkens. He was inspired to look for a career in renewables because of a personal wish to work towards mitigating the climate crisis when looking for a job as a new graduate. At this point the sector was relatively new and there were not many established routes into the sector, but structured pathways are now available.

Vattenfall has roughly 21,000 employees across the UK and Scandinavia, running hydro and wind generation sites, district heating, electricity network facilities etc. In the Glenkens, Vattenfall has put in an application to construct 14 wind turbines and battery storage at Quantans Hill near Carsphairn. The application includes 250Ha of land managed for biodiversity, interpretation boards and improved access to the site for recreational purposes, and a community benefit package likely to total around £16m over the operational lifespan of the site, as well as scope for apprenticeships and work for local businesses during the construction phase.

Vattenfall Wind Power is committed to the use of local suppliers in its projects and has recently launched an apprenticeship scheme directly associated with all its new developments across Scotland. Matt is keen to explore with local communities how Vattenfall can create an employment pathway into the renewable sector in south-west Scotland.

Onshore wind is a growth area, and the number of qualified employees needs to vastly increase to meet the demands of the 2030 deadline. Most of Vattenfall's renewables developments will be in the Highlands and Dumfries & Galloway, and there are a huge range of roles in the sector, ranging from construction, forestry, turbine construction and maintenance to environmental work and project managers. Matt highlighted the Climate Exchange May 2024 report which reinforced this, showing that operational positions needed on wind farms are predicted to rise by 250% by 2030 in Dumfries and Galloway, from 112 to 395 positions. These are long-term, well-paid roles.

Vattenfall's apprenticeship programme will create 50 new apprenticeships by 2030, working with Developing the Young Workforce. The company is looking to recruit across a wide range of ages to both graduate and early stage apprenticeships. Vattenfall asked consultants to come up with a draft strategy for the community benefit fund from Quantans Hill wind farm if consented, and through this have identified objectives relating to jobs and young people, including access to local economic opportunities. This could lead to training 250-350 young people and providing up to 50 qualified apprentices, although these numbers are currently indicative and the strategy is still a draft. However, this potentially offers huge opportunities for South West Scotland in terms of renewables posts. The benefits of this scheme can potentially be maximised if other wind farm developers work with Vattenfall on supply chains and with schools and colleges to develop a joined-up scheme.

Matt highlighted the following website as a good place to begin for those interested in a career in renewables: <https://www.scottishrenewables.com/our-industry/starting-in-renewables>.

Case study 9: Abi Mordin, Propagate

Source: presentation at the Education and Learning in Glenkens event (see [here](#)) and interview by Abi Mordin, a founder member of Propagate, which launched the Glenkens Food Hub project in 2021 (now Galloway Food Hub; see [here](#)). Abi has been working across community and local food projects for over 20 years, and is an experienced grower, facilitator, practitioner and researcher. She works at local and national level to embed sustainable practice into food production. She lives in Balmaclellan.

Abi focused on land-based skills for the future. Propagate is a worker-led collective based across Central and South Scotland with 18 members working on sustainable food topics.

Farming, tourism, forestry, energy generation and transmission, game and community uses can be seen as competing demands on our land-based resources. However, work is being done to bring together land managers, for example at the South West Scotland (SWS) Future Landscape Conference,

held at SRUC's Barony campus on 1st July, 2024. This event, looking at identifying the skills needed for the future, as well as launching a 'Natural Innovation Partnership' between SRUC and SOSE, highlighted the fact that 'Nature doesn't do silos, and neither should we'.

Focusing on farming and food production, Abi organises the SWS Regenerative Farming Network, a growing group of livestock and vegetable producers with around 250 members, who are focused on the key principles underpinning retaining and improving soil ecosystem quality.

However, the principles of soil function are still not being taught in schools and agricultural colleges, despite the fact that healthy soil is vital for plant growth and nutrition, is more resilient to the impacts of flood and drought, and stores more carbon. The soil food web, where in healthy soil there will be billions of microorganisms in one teaspoon of soil, can be easily disrupted. The understanding of the role played by soil has progressed dramatically in recent years, but information about management for carbon sequestration, soil health, climate change, livestock and people has not yet been incorporated into the curriculum.

Regenerative management is guided by five principles of soil health, three rules of adaptive management and four ecosystem processes (see report on the Education and Learning in Glenkens event). All these principles need to be adapted for each location's microclimate, sometimes even on a field-by-field basis.

The Barony's horticulture course was discontinued eight years ago, reducing the scope for people to learn about commercial vegetable production in the region. The UK imports 70% of its fruit and veg, much of which is grown in places facing severe water scarcity. Young people are not learning about commercial growing; a market garden requires very different management from a school vegetable plot, allotment, or home-grown vegetables.

Most commercial food crops are grown with a high level of chemical inputs (fertiliser and pesticide) which radically disrupt soil ecosystems. Produce not marked as organic will have been grown using those systems.

Propagate has been working to raise awareness of the issues and the solutions, including their film 'Rooted' and accompanying educational resources: <https://www.propagate.org.uk/rooted>.

The Dumfries and Galloway Learning for Sustainability Partnership Group has been set up, having identified big gaps in the provision of education across food, food security and sustainability; the group meets quarterly to share successes and agree strategies to work together on broad sustainability issues.

The Learning for Sustainability Action Plan ([here](#)) highlights the importance of embedding this into the curriculum, but this is not yet being delivered in schools as teachers have not been trained to deliver the subject. However, the Scottish Government have introduced a number of interrelated policies on food (see <https://www.nourishscotland.org/mapping-our-food-policy-landscape/>).

The Scottish Government have committed to producing a Good Food Nation Plan which will need to be implemented at a local level, and the Agriculture Bill has also recently been introduced after years of consultation and engagement – it is still a framework bill, so it is possible to lobby the government to shape the final piece of legislation. The Rural Support Plan will deliver payments on a tiered basis, with Tier 3 focusing on agri-environment schemes. These schemes embody good practice as well as attracting subsidy so it is vital that land workers are prepared and trained to implement these changes and that education provision recognises this need.

The case of Propagate points to opportunities and pathways for young people into work that can also directly address the climate and biodiversity emergencies. The [Galloway Food Hub](#), set up by Propagate, is already stimulating demand and awareness of local food (see detailed case study [here](#)).

Local schools, including Dalry School, have land which could be utilised. In partnership with Propagate a number of programmes could be co-delivered, including, for example,

- *Cultivate* - 'grow your own' programme with eight sessions on learning about organic veg production.
- *Hidden Veg* – Propagate's small market garden can host workshops and training days.
- *Veg Power* - developed to link veg growing with healthier cooking. Profiles a 'veg of the week' each week over 10 weeks, and gives participants the opportunity to share knowledge and lead. Dives into food systems and food justice, and signposts to Food Hygiene training – thereby leading towards a number of progression pathways from growing, preparing, food hygiene and hospitality.
- *Permaculture Design Courses* with experienced and knowledgeable teachers. Also *Growing Food in Small Space* and linked with the UK 'Children in Permaculture' project.

In terms of accreditation, there is a menu of rural skill qualifications at SQA which could be aligned to the skill set and delivery partners in agriculture, horticulture and permaculture in the local area.

Skills around food production are the future: local food production that contributes to sustainability, food security, health & nutrition, and reduces food miles, all addressing the climate crisis.

Case study 10: Bairn Banter, Carsphairn

Source: Case study by CoDeL from April 2024: see [here](#), which includes illustrations also.

Key Insights

- ✓ In rural communities with populations spread over large areas, it is vital to nurture connections. Social opportunities are really important for young children, as they impact significantly on children's development. They are also important for parents and carers.
- ✓ Local services are critical for nurturing positive population trends. Bairn Banter has enabled many young families, including those who have moved into the area, to meet socially on a regular basis, to enable children and families to socialise with each other, a critical investment for the future population, economy and community in the area.
- ✓ The loss of a local school can be a real blow to the sustainability of a local community; schools are often the very heart of a community. While there are frameworks to ensure that local schools are not closed without consultation, local authorities can circumvent community influence over such decisions by mothballing schools (i.e. not officially 'closing' them).
- ✓ Bairn Banter is another example of great things being delivered in rural and island communities by energetic and committed volunteers. This is all part of community resilience and cohesion, but exacts a significant toll on rural and island people. And dependency on volunteering limits how much communities can do. Funding to pay some hours to volunteers who deliver on so

many Scottish Government priorities could have a dramatic impact on services and cohesion within rural and island communities.

- ✓ The '[Community Action in Uist and Glenkens](#)' project clearly demonstrates how even small amounts of funding for locally rooted community initiatives can trigger significant action: the returns on the investment are large when communities are enabled to deliver on their priorities, what they are passionate about. This was demonstrated so clearly in practice during the pandemic, but since then funding has often reverted back to the much more highly controlled and outcome-driven processes, with outcomes so often determined by distant policy-makers or funders, rather by communities themselves.
- ✓ In the case of Bairn Banter a small grant of £2,500 has enabled the group to raise match funding and purchase a trailer to take the group's activities to other areas in Glenkens, and to enhance outdoor educational opportunities for young children, all within a few months.

Case study

Bairn Banter is a volunteer run stay and play children's group based in the rural hill village of Carsphairn in Dumfries & Galloway. The group was established in July 2021 by the founder Melissa Ade and her husband, Ben. Together with their three small children, they continue to provide a welcoming, nurture enriched, inclusive, fun play space for children and their families to attend on a weekly basis for free.

So how did Bairn Banter begin? As the country emerged out of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2021, which caused a detrimental effect on rural communities and young families, it was felt by many local parents and grandparents that there was a lack of social opportunities within the local area for pre-school children. Carsphairn also suffered within the same year with the mothballing of the local primary school, which severed vital connections for young children within the parish. Coupled with the on-going cost of living crisis, social situations seemed to 'dissolve' and many young children began to struggle without their vital socialising needs being met.

Research carried out by the Institute of Education concluded that; *"children's social background impacts the early development of cognitive and social-emotional competences, like verbal skills, self-control and peer relationships, and their subsequent outcomes in adulthood."* (see [here](#))

All these considerations led Melissa to establish Bairn Banter. To aid with local networking and some experienced support she set to work approaching the Carsphairn Community Council who now offer a very helpful 'umbrella' for the group. As well as children, parents/carers also suffered from lack of social interaction with others, with potential knock-on effects on their social and mental wellbeing and, in the longer term, on the overall economics of the rural area.

Bairn Banter has grown into a much loved asset to the Glenkens, as it is the only pre-school/children's group operating in the area. The group offers a wide variety of fun activities and experiences for children ranging from 0-7 years and always welcomes older children including siblings along. Bairn Banter consistently operates every Saturday morning from 10am – 11.45am in Carsphairn and aims to offer a nourishing healthy snack for both children and adults to support families with potential food poverty issues. Many of the snacks are now being sourced through the Galloway Food Hub.

“Two of the four themes of the Glenkens and District Community Action Plan are ‘A Connected Community’ and ‘An Economically Flourishing Community’. We know that to flourish, we need young families living and working in the area, but there are very limited private or statutory facilities to support them.

Bairn Banter’s stay and play sessions on Saturdays offer important socialisation opportunities for ex-Covid babies who are now pre-schoolers and their older siblings, as well as respite and peer support for parents and carers.

The Glenkens Community and Arts Trust, who lead on delivery of the Community Action Plan, see Bairn Banter as a key partner in delivering these priorities in the Plan.”

Helen Keron, Executive Manager, GCAT

As Bairn Banter moves forward into the future, they want to break down the barrier of social exclusion due to transport barriers. Bairn Banter know that they are not reaching all the young families in the area. A particular barrier to attendance is the location of Carsphairn at the top of the Glenkens area. Public transport links to it are basically non-existent. So Bairn Banter is launching a new way of working where they bring Bairn Banter to the other communities in the Glenkens. They did a survey in 2022 that showed that transport was the main barrier to attendance, so they are confident that it will be well received.

With a small amount of funding through the project, quickly matched with funding from the local windfarm, Bairn Banter has now purchased a box trailer that will be used to advertise, store, and transport the group's equipment and resources to occasional free events and other local venues, like Town Halls or outdoor parks, around the wider Glenkens. The first event, outdoors, is booked for 1st June. The word is out that Bairn Banter have the opportunity to be mobile and is sparking interest from other areas.

The group is now awaiting quotes from artists to design and decorate the trailer with a unique mural to help promote Bairn Banter and other aspects of the local area such as farming, renewable energy, local community initiatives, etc. Bairn Banter hopes that when the trailer is 'on tour', many will be drawn to the attractive display and perhaps be encouraged to visit and indeed, down the line, settle in the area.

The trailer will allow Bairn Banter to 'branch out' to offer more outdoor learning opportunities to enhance opportunities for outdoor learning for children, young people and their families, and connect communities together within the beautiful outdoor environment. Melissa is working towards obtaining a Level 3 Forest School Leader qualification this year. The trailer will become Bairn Banter's 'mobile welfare base' as well as vital storage of equipment such as waterproofs, water, tools, safety equipment, etc., whilst travelling to areas of woodlands around the Glenkens.

Delivering on Scottish Government Priorities

Bairn Banter delivers on many Scottish Government Priorities, for example within the National Performance Standards, e.g "we grow up loved, safe and respected so that we realise our full potential", "we live in communities that are inclusive, empowered, resilient and safe", and "we are healthy and active".

While so-called 'remote rural areas' do as well or slightly better than other rural and urban areas in terms of attainment, employment and other positive destinations on leaving secondary school, numeracy and especially literacy levels at primary school are lower in 'remote rural areas' ([Rural Scotland Data Dashboard](#)). This may well reflect the lack of pre-school opportunities in some areas, making community initiatives like Bairn Banter critical for those areas.

Bairn Banter's focus on developing more outdoor education, using the trailer as a mobile facility to take equipment and activities into outdoor spaces, is also delivering on the Scottish Government's commitment, made in *Scotland's National Outdoor Play & Learning Position Statement* (see [here](#)), to value and expand opportunities for playing and learning outdoors.

And not least Bairn Banter contributes directly to the Addressing Depopulation Action Plan (2024), by providing a critical local service that connects local families, to each other and to their locality. Creating opportunities and a positive space for young families is vital to ensure a long-term demographic future. The mix of families that have stayed, returned or newly settled in the Glenkens is a striking feature of the Bairn Banter sessions, and provides an important incentive for them to stay.

The Depopulation Action Plan "endorses the importance of local leadership and seeks to exemplify the maxim 'local by default, national by agreement'. We know that a place-based approach to applying national, regional, and local policies will be essential to sustainably and effectively address depopulation." Bairn Banter is one piece in the local jigsaw to deliver on these, and is integrated into the wider local strategies set out in the Glenkens and District Community Action Plan, which includes delivering on local childcare as a priority for a flourishing local community.

Appendix 11: Creating a vision for Dalry / Glenkens Education: Notes taken of participants' contributions

These notes were recorded by the facilitators based on verbal contributions to the vision from participants at the two community sessions held in Balmaclellan in September. They are in the order in which participants came forward with their ideas.

Participants imagined how things would be in 2030, and many spoke in the present of 2030. So these comments represent how they would like things to be.

Community schools at centre of village, optimising travel

eco-sustainable, open A frame – let's build for next 100 years, not just 25

Campus: cradle to grave, centre of community.

Grow at rate suitable to each child.

Adult learning too, lifelong learning

Cutting edge technology – connect to experts on line

Health and wellbeing

Swimming

Affordable family housing and community land. Local families

Enables children to live successful lives in this area – practical aspects – renewables/forestry vs going away to get work.

Mentorship – enabling – access to knowledgeable people to help guide individuals' pathways (incl. right up to older age)

Not limited – if you want to be a forensic scientist, why not?

How can? Rather than *why not?* Mentality

Self-directed learning

Leadership to help each individual be themselves, to develop which ever way they want.

My children will be challenged, happy to learn.

Acknowledgement from council that education is vital here; they support education centres

Eco-school built from wood from Carsphair community woodland, solar panels, enterprise

Everyone encouraged to learn, but not have to be academic.

E.g. everyone's job is important, non-hierarchical.

Everyone has some variation of training, be up-to-date

Schools don't have hierarchical system. Students can talk "back" to teachers; different relationship.

Choose career they want, not be failures for less academic

Encouraged and inspired to achieve whatever they want.

Rural skills brought back to rural areas, e.g. skilled tradesmen.

Trades academy / hub, not just technical college, also for younger children.

So much going on in area, very busy.

Linked with school. People come into school to explain what they do. Children go out.

After school clubs, sports, handcrafts, growing food, plants

Bus at later times.

Devolution of funding down to community.

E.g. £40,000 per child x 60 pupils in catchment area. Wow, what we could do!

Community ownership of assets.

Nature-based nursery

Teachers qualified, know how to nurture children

Nursery, open longer

Food is brilliant – locally sourced veg, foraging, good soil, children involved in preparing

Big demand for renewable energy → countless jobs

Small holdings, sustainable living

Absentee landlords selling plots.

Internet works, people can work from home.

Children taught tools to manage mental health.

System nurtures them, not stresses them.

Looking today, not stressed by future.

Loads more small farmers; demand for local food.

Educating for wider world.

Quite a lot of former pupils have returned.

For everyone in Glenkens to be able to access the education they need.

Advanced highers (e.g. in maths) on-line, in a hub.

Hub of creative skilled people

Arts and crafts

'vocational' skills

Transport provision.

Childcare to adulthood campus so that people do not have to leave Glenkens.

Centre of intergenerational learning

Work together

Wide range of subjects in the curriculum, with a large pupil cohort

Rented accommodation available

No empty homes

Apprenticeships for water, electricity ...

Self-sufficiency

Good sample of subjects

Music technology / nature stuff / rural skills / farms round about / more than ICT

Education delivered in community woodlands and nurseries

Out in all kinds of weather

So close, and part of heritage

Feeling of ownership / belonging

Rural Skills Centre; Sustainability

Affordable housing has increased

Traditional skills and new emerging subjects

Attracted to area because good place for families

People can choose to leave, but are not forced to by circumstances

Houses for couples to move in, when their children have left

More houses for families, and for working

(Pamela Trust has long waiting list, now in 2024)

Better balance of population

Intergenerational working

Digital art classes available (like centre in DC – Castle Douglas??)

Appendix 12: Creating a Vision for Dalry / Glenkens Education: Writing and drawing by participants

These contributions were made by the participants at the two community sessions held in Balmaclellan in September

local community, locally managed, locally owned, locally produced, locally sourced

Learning 'Hub' offering huge choices for all and
hopefully encouraging new generations to stay here and thrive

Education from baby to adult education / Education from cradle to grave



education
children
young people

- ❖ Education / Development Centre / Hub / Campus
- ❖ All Ages / All Scopes
- ❖ Specialists connected via internet – Remote Learning Facilities

Building sense of ownership, of local decision-making and control

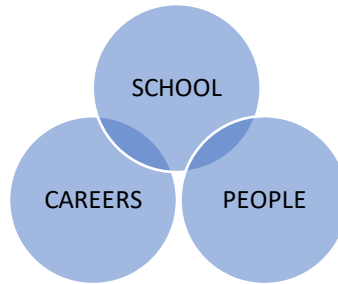
True community inter-generational learning



Mingling among peers in school / children don't have to go to schools outside community

HEALTHY HAPPY COMMUNITY

Wellbeing + learning hub



After school clubs / Transport home / 24 hours / In person

All is considered to make strong, viable, healthy community

Pavements / cycling tracks between Dalry, New Galloway and Balmaclellan

Swimming pool heated by ground source heat pump

Bairn Banter travelling trailer + learning / play → taking it to all communities in Glenkens

Vibrancy: welcoming (Come for a Day Stay!), exciting, interesting, multi-subject

outside learning – environment – non-traditional settings

Integration: generations, multi-skills, inclusive, accessible, for all abilities

“Past skills for future communities”

- ❖ I know that anything is possible
- ❖ I can be who I want to be
- ❖ I’m learning practical skills for life
- ❖ I feel safe and supported and confident in my chosen path

(Young person:)

Digital art introduced to Art & Design Course

Widening skills offered

Technology in music

Proper lessons on using AMPs (as an example)

- ✓ Community-owned land, alternative energy
- ✓ Devolution of Power and Money
- ✓ Resources from windfarms flowing into schools
- ✓ Kids and people learning
- ✓ Suitable opportunities for all
- ✓ Child/person specific mentorship
- ✓ Good selection of subjects – as wide and varied as possible
- ✓ Subjects: broad range to give children wide experience and good basic knowledge
- ✓ Practical skill learning
- ✓ Teach traditional skills mixed with modern
- ✓ Links to community skills teaching
- ✓ Learning outdoors (in all weathers)
- ✓ On-line access to specialists
- ✓ Varied activities within and outside teaching time
- ✓ Young people have opportunities for entertainment, social, learning
- ✓ Good transport / Great transport
- ✓ Use the environment and what is happening already