

A 21st Century Hall?

- 55 people responded to recent questionnaire about the Village Hall
- 95% think the community needs a hall
- 64% attend most/some of the events at the hall
- 49% are prepared to help with hall activities
- But many people feel there's room for improvement -

'nicer toilets, comfier chairs, better kitchen, better heating....'

'disabled access and a cosy room would be an advantage....'

'regular cleaning, better lighting, well organised notice board...'

'a kitchen with modern cooking facilities...'



Village Hall

Brig o' Turk Village Hall has served the Trossachs Community for over 75 years and is a focal point for the community.

Though it's still a valued asset, a recent survey demonstrated that improvements such as a comfortable meeting room for smaller, special interest groups, high quality sports and theatre facilities, plus an information area for the Woodland Trust would be valued.

The capital and running costs of a substantially refurbished Village Hall will be significant, particularly in relation to the small local population. Wider use of the hall is therefore envisaged by outside groups, perhaps for conferences, local craft workshops, or as a meeting place for outdoor activity groups.

Let me in!

The lack of winter maintenance on the Dukes Pass creates the Trossachs cul-de-sac in winter.

Flood warning signs where there are no floods, snow and ice warnings in mid-summer and a lack of direction signs do nothing to inspire public confidence or encourage visitors.

Given that tourism is the major contributor to the local economy and that 60% of the local work force commute to work outside the area, a good roads infrastructure seems essential. It will encourage more year round visitors to the area and in so doing, create more permanent tourist related jobs.



We are....

- Employing a Community Agent to investigate opportunities for localising some jobs
- Exploring the potential for skills sharing and an equipment co-operative
- Conducting a feasibility study for a new/refurbished Village Hall
- Seeking access for local residents on the WOSW minibus
- Seeking changes in the Post Bus schedule to coincide with the Callander to Stirling bus service
- Lobbying Stirling Council for improved signage for Brig o' Turk, flood warnings and snow and ice warnings.
- Lobbying for improved winter maintenance, particularly over the Dukes Pass.
- Discussing the potential for the provision of affordable housing with Rural Stirling Housing Association and Stirling Council.

Care For the Environment

Visitor Pressures

The area is flanked by Ben Venue and Ben Ledi, and is increasingly popular with hill walkers. Ben A'an, with its spectacular views up Loch Katrine, offers probably one of the most popular small hill walks in Scotland.

The creation of Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park is likely to increase visitor numbers in the future.



Trossachs Church & Ben A'an

New Developments

The recently renovated Tigh Mor (formerly the Trossachs Hotel) is open year round, and with up to 300 guests per week has helped to lengthen the season for local tourist outlets. The acquisition and re-forestation of Glen Finglas by the Woodland Trust, whose plans for a network of new footpaths is designed to encourage wider public access, is likely to have a significant impact on the area.

Dwarfing these developments however is the impending National Park status for the area and the massive publicity this will create for the Trossachs.

Footpaths

Surveys suggest that most visitors to the Trossachs come here for the quiet enjoyment of the countryside. While countryside walks are a popular attraction, most visitors walk two miles or less.

The scenery draws people here, and the peace and quiet'

Brig o' Turk is quiet, peaceful, safe, friendly, slow, calming, beautiful, eccentric - and there's no chocolate shop'

Currently the network of footpaths and bike trails is poor, consisting mainly of forest rides or arduous hill walks.

Grays Corner

The vacant site next to the Village Hall, known locally as Gray's Corner, has planning permission for a visitor amenity.

Until relatively recently Gray's Corner was a regular meeting place for the community.

Local opinion seems opposed to a visitor development, the preference being for its retention as a green space.

Fears

While recognising the economic benefit of developments through increased visitor numbers, there is also anxiety about the potential loss of peace and tranquillity, which are major attractions for both visitors and residents.

'I like the landscape, I like the village - especially the way it is.....'

We are.....

- Investigating the potential for reinstating the old Brig o' Turk - Loch Katrine road as a footpath. This is a prime feeder route, linking existing and planned paths, by the Woodland Trust in and around Glen Finglas and West of Scotland Water around Loch Katrine.

This footpath will also provide a safer alternative to the hazardous stretch of road between Brig o' Turk and Loch Katrine.

- Investigating the possibility of purchasing Gray's Corner for the Community.

Celebrate the Heritage

The Trossachs is one of the earliest recognised Scottish tourist destinations, popularised by Sir Walter Scott, in the Lady of the Lake;

*'High in the south, huge Benvenue
Down on the lake in masses threw
Craggs, Knolls and mounds, confusedly hurl'd
The fragments of an earlier world*

The poets Wordsworth and Ruskin and the artist John Everett Millais sought inspiration (and other things) in the Trossachs. Perhaps the most famous of the earlier visitors was Queen Victoria who remarked on seeing Trossachs Kirk, *'the most beautiful Church I have ever seen.'*



The Trossachs contains a number of significant buildings, including Tigh Mor, Lendrick Lodge, Glengyle House and Brenachoile Lodge. Glengyle House, on the site of the home of Rob Roy McGregor, and Brenachoile Lodge, a Victorian shooting lodge, are historically significant, yet both currently stand empty in a semi derelict state in the heart of the future National Park. Perhaps the essence of the heritage of the Trossachs, however, is to be found in the many small, simple artefacts: the vernacular architecture, the bicycle tree, the walls and the bridges which, because they are small scale, also tend to be fragile and easily destroyed.

Demographics

There are few genuinely local people living in the Trossachs today and most residents are incomers. The numerous empty Water Board properties along Loch Katrine, which once housed the many locally employed people and their families, are a testament to changing demographics.

Bicycle tree

Much of the heritage of the Trossachs is captured in the traditions and memories of local people and we have a responsibility to ensure this local knowledge is not lost.



Glengyle House

We are....

- Producing a Heritage map - to publicise the important local symbols so that they can be cherished and enjoyed by both residents and visitors.
- Publicising the plight of and options for restoration of Glengyle House & Brenachoile House, both significant building in the heart of the National Park.

A Diverse Population

Did you know.....?

- that the Trossachs has 165 residents
- there are 31 tied houses (of which 12 are empty)
- over 60% of the working population work outside the area
- 31% of local employment is tourist related
- the main employers are - West of Scotland Water, Tigh Mor, Achray Hotel, Woodland Trust, Byre Inn

Vicious Cycle

The decline in agriculture, forestry, and associated work, combined with a lack of affordable housing has created a vicious cycle - not enough workers to fill vacancies, but not enough affordable homes to house potential workers.

While increasing number of residents commute to work elsewhere, many local jobs are filled by people from outside the area, apparently due to the dearth of a suitable locally based work force.

The overall impact is the loss of a sense of community as commuters pass daily to and from work into and out of the Trossachs.

Not Old but Ageing

While the age profile of the community is representative of Stirling as a whole, there are few young families moving into the area. This seems at least partly due to the lack of affordable housing .

Older residents are less well cared for by the local community than in the past, when a greater sense of interdependence and mutual support prevailed. This, combined with a lack of shops and poor bus service makes it difficult for elderly residents to live independently in the area.

Trossachs Primary School Boom and Bust?

The decline in the indigenous population has affected the school roll which has fluctuated dramatically in recent years. From a low of only eight in the mid 1990's it's now a very healthy 26 pupils, though less than half are local - the remainder commuting from the Callander area.

Trossachs Primary School



Iain Campbell has worked as a shepherd on Loch Katrineside for almost 40 years.

What was it like when you first came?

Most of the people used to be born and bred here, and worked locally...It used to be a Community up here...The families were bigger - we had five, and there were another five at the next house...The bus was full every morning - 20 or 30 kids.

And have there been any changes?

One of the biggest differences is the number of people that have gone and never been replaced...

If you had to move away, what would you miss most?

I'd miss the scenery, and the folk.

So you hope to stay?

If it's possible



The Trossachs Today

For generations, the Trossachs has been recognised as an area of outstanding natural beauty - immortalised in prose and poetry by writers such as Scott and Stevenson, Wordsworth and Keats; and captured in the sketches of artists including Ruskin and Millais. It claims its place in history as the home of Rob Roy, and the heartland of the clan MacGregor. Queen Victoria was just one of the thousands of tourists who continue to visit the Trossachs to this day, to enjoy its rugged landscape of mountains, lochs and forests; and to appreciate its unique heritage.

But while the past is permanent, the future for the Trossachs is less certain. Every year there's an accumulation of small shifts and developments that affect the area, and change the community who live here.

Over the last few decades, there's been a move away from agrarian employment which has resulted in a dramatic decrease in the numbers living in tied housing along Loch Katrineside. Almost a third of the resident workforce is now employed in tourism and hospitality; and these industries also provide employment for others who work in the area but live elsewhere. In contrast to the declining population along Loch Katrine there's been a marked increase in the development of new, private homes in Brig o' Turk - whose population has increased from 74 to 93 in the last 10 years. Many of these new residents commute to work outside the area; while others have chosen to retire here.



The Vision

In the coming years this community aspires:

- to maintain the strong and distinct identity of the Trossachs population;
- to celebrate the heritage of Brig o' Turk and the surrounding area, and preserve its unique character and historic features;
- to enable a diverse population to live and work in the area - accommodating a rich mix of locals and incomers, families and individuals, young and old;
- to create opportunities and occasions for all members of the community to participate in its activities, and to contribute to its development;
- to welcome visitors to the area and help them enjoy and appreciate its distinctive attractions in ways that are compatible with the nature of the Trossachs;
- to care for the environment, enabling access without harm and sustaining the varied land use and landscape
- to keep the area safe for the local community and visitors.

Trossachs Community Futures

Trossachs Community Futures was formed in June 1999 in response to the growing concern about the future of the community. It is an action group whose purpose is to safeguard and enhance the economic, environmental and social well being of the area.

One of the group's first actions was to prepare a Community Profile - to provide a snapshot of the Trossachs community at the end of the millennium. The group has also been working to develop an Action Plan - and the main elements are detailed on the pages that follow.

To help focus its work, the group reached agreement over a set of simple statements that start to define a possible vision for the future of the Trossachs.

Summary

Concerns

- Lack of local jobs for local people
- Loosening social infrastructure
- Declining 'local' population
- Lack of affordable housing
- Loss of local heritage
- Poor public transport
- National Park - people pressure

The Way Ahead

- Community Agent - employed by and working on behalf of the community
- Village Hall refurbishment as the primary meeting place for the community
- Brig o' Turk - Lock Katrine footpath linking a network of footpaths in Glen Finglas and at the head of Loch Achray
- Heritage Map - promoting and preserving important local heritage sites
- Local jobs for local people - creating more local jobs and stimulating community development
- Local housing - creating a local housing resource which will encourage people to move into or to stay in the area.

A Conundrum

We recognise that we're trying to balance a number of competing needs. By encouraging more visitors to come to the area, we hope to create more jobs for local people.



At the same time increased visitor numbers has an impact on the environment which is a concern for many of us.

We're not always going to get it right, but by being conscious of the impact these different needs have on one another, we hope to plot a sensible and productive course towards the future.

We end this report with a poem, written for a wedding ceremony at Trossachs Kirk, which seems to capture the spirit of the Trossachs.

The Primrose Mountain

*Today I climbed my mountain
Announced the groom to be
I asked him for some guidance
And thus he answered me*

*Young love is like the primrose
That blooms in the glen below
With its sweet and delicate petals
Its beauty melts like snow*

*Have faith young man and listen
To the fresh love of the burn
It skips and jokes and sparkles
But drowns in the loch by turn*

*Listen to the forest lad
Those trees have tales to tell
Their love grows strong
one hundred years
Until their time to fell*

*True love you'll find eternal
Like the diamonds and rubies
and gold
That lay deep in my granite heart
Be honest and kind and bold*

Ian Powrie
April 2000

Help

For more information or to get involved contact the following people:

Community Agent -
Liz Maxwell, 01877 - 376363

Newsletter -
an editorial team is needed
to run a regular newsletter.
Contact;
Philip Maughan, 01877 - 376226

Community Map -
artists and historians wanted.
Contact;
Herb Thomas 01877 - 376262
Footpaths -
exploring, walking and generally
checking out possibilities.
Contact; Hugh Dobbins
01877 - 376274

Working in Partnership

Community Futures seeks to work in partnership with all those who have influence in the Trossachs including:

Stirling Council

- roads, social services, public transport

Scottish Enterprise Forth Valley

- economic and social development

Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park Interim Board

- developing the infrastructure for the National Park

Forest Enterprise

- forestry extraction and regeneration, local employment, footpaths

West of Scotland Water

- significant local employer, major tourist attraction at Loch Katrine

Rural Stirling Housing Association

- the provision of affordable homes

Loch Achray Conservation Association (LACA)

- promoting and protecting the environment around Loch Achray

Tigh Mor, Loch Achray Hotel, The Byre

- important local employers

The Woodland Trust

- enhancing Glen Finglas for the enjoyment of the public.

A Message from Our Sponsors

Community Futures for Stirling

Community Futures Stirling is Community Planning in action! It is a programme designed to encourage communities to have greater influence in shaping their own future. In the past 12 months it has assisted four rural communities in:

- preparing plans for their future;
- working to develop priority projects and actions;
- developing Community Futures Groups to champion the plans and projects and to carry them forward at a local level;
- brokering plans with public, private and charitable organisations.

The programme has been funded by: Stirling Council, Scottish Enterprise Forth Valley, Scottish Natural Heritage and Leader II; and has been facilitated by the Small Town and Rural Development Group.

The partners are committed to continuing a sustainable development programme within each of the four communities. They have been supported by the Scottish Executive through Rural Challenge funding to develop Community Futures Stirling over the next three years.



For more details about Community Futures Stirling, contact:

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Building partnerships
for regeneration

Bodies /Organisations /Groups Outside the Trossachs

Want more information? Yes
Want to be on the mailing list? Yes
Want to help us! Yes
(please circle)

Name
Address

Telephone

Send to Caroline Adam, Secretary, The Schoolhouse, Brig o' Turk, Callander
FK17 8HT

Trossachs Community Futures



The Way Ahead?