

Community Learning Exchange Newsletter November 2016

The Community Learning Exchange (CLE), hosted by the Scottish Community Alliance, is a fantastic opportunity for communities to learn through the exchange of ideas and the sharing of common solutions. When community groups make visits to other communities, the most valuable part is often meeting new people with similar interests and gaining new insights and perspectives on common challenges. Visiting groups come away armed with new ideas and approaches, and host organisations have the opportunity to explain their project to a new and interested audience, often seeing their own projects afresh through new eyes.

During the period October 2015 to November 2016 the CLE has supported 127 applications, with 269 groups benefiting. A key feature of the CLE is its simple application process and proportionate administration. **Kathleen Feeney, Development Manager for Carluke Development Trust confirms this based on her own experience:** *“This is the most straightforward and sensible funding application I have completed - and when you balance the benefits of the actual learning exchange programme – it is a win, win initiative.”*

Other community groups which have benefited from the Community Learning Exchange are:

Community Energy Scotland (CES) arranged a community learning exchange visit to Orkney for a group of their members. The hosts chosen (Rousay, Egilsay and Wyre Development Trust, Eday Partnership, Shapinsay Development Trust, Stronsay Development Trust and the Island of Hoy Development Trust) are community groups at a similar stage to the visiting organisations Urras Oighreachd Ghabhsainn, Point and Sandwick Development Trust and Barra and Vatersay Community Ltd. The organisations were keen to improve processes and procedures, gain information from other groups on distributing income into a community, increase awareness of the issues which may be faced in the future and therefore the ability to deal with it effectively. *“Strong linkages and contacts were made and groups now have a better understanding of what they are all working on and also how they can help each other more. Contacts have already been shared and ideas being progressed for new projects.”*



Forward Coupar Angus, a member of the Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens, chose to visit two complementary sites: Whitmuir Community Farm and Pillars of Hercules. Whitmuir Community Farm is a medium scale organic farm with a shop and strong community involvement. Pillars of Hercules has a large range of different growing settings: field scale polytunnels, chickens and orchards, as well as a café and shop. It also operates a packing shed to process food ready for the shop. *“Tours to both sites were led by the founders of the projects who were able to share their stories, explain the evolutions and what they have learnt (even the really hard stuff!) They gave personal depth to the stories of the farms and both had significant in-depth knowledge around specific (sometimes challenging) questions asked by the visiting group.”*

Perth and Kinross Social Enterprise Network organised a learning visit for its members to Healthy n Happy Community Development Trust in Rutherglen. Because PKSEN members are as diverse in their activities as Healthy n Happy, the choice of host gave each member of the group the opportunity to pursue specific areas of interest. In addition, most of the PKSEN members are involved in activities with a health and wellbeing focus which also made the choice of Healthy n Happy particularly relevant. *“The many tips on how to get funding made an impact on PKSEN members, as did the story of acquiring premises. PKSEN members each took something different away from the visit and vowed to make changes in their own organisations as a result.”*



Wanlockhead Community Trust was formed after a successful Public Meeting, to introduce the idea of the community taking advantage of the Scottish Government’s Land Reform Act 2016 and registering an interest in a community buyout of land around Wanlockhead. They, along with the Leadhills buyout group visited North Harris Trust, Galson Estate Trust and the Mull of Galloway Trust, endorsed by SCA member Community Land Scotland. The group found that their trips helped them energize new supporters for the buyout locally along with helping generate an even more positive image in Wanlockhead. Additionally the media generated from the trip has helped the cause immeasurably. *“Both trips were very positive and helped improve our efforts on any number of levels. These meetings with other buyout groups and communities gave our campaign an invaluable infusion of optimism.”*



To find out how your community based organisation can apply, contact one of the SCA member networks (check www.scottishcommunityalliance.org.uk) or email exchange@scottishcommunityalliance.org.uk or call the Exchange Coordinators (Jane on 07581 216246 or Amanda on 07843 481790)