



Annual Report 2012 - 2013

Introduction:

The Garioch Partnership (TGP) was formed in January 2012. It is a community-led organisation that uses its members' networks to build stronger more successful, more sustainable communities in the Garioch Area of Aberdeenshire. It was granted charitable status in November 2012 and is recognised as a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO), Scottish Charity no: SC043548. Its first AGM will be held on 25 March 2013 when the existing steering group will be replaced with a board of directors. It appointed its first development worker in August 2012. She works 28 hours/week to support the partnership and its members, as well as the wider Garioch community. There are currently 32 members, from a wide range of voluntary and community groups. Seven of the Garioch's ten community councils have joined the partnership.

Role:

The role of the partnership is wide-ranging and involves working with community groups, statutory agencies and Community Planning Partners on local and Aberdeenshire wide issues, helping to advance sustainable economic, social and environmental development projects and increasingly helping to identify opportunities within the social economy leading to future sustainability. Although it is fairly new, the partnership is confident that it is already playing an important role in the social and economic development of the many diverse communities in the Garioch area.

TGP's work contributes to the delivery of several of the national outcomes from Aberdeenshire's Single Outcome Agreement, namely 2 "***we realise our full***

economic potential with more and better employment opportunities for our people”, 10 “we live in well-designed, sustainable places where we are able to access the amenities and services we need” and especially 11 “we have strong, resilient and supportive communities where people take responsibilities for their own actions and how they affect others”

Funding:

To date the partnership has been fully funded by Aberdeenshire Council. The Council's investment this year (2012/13) was £27k. Most of this is came from the Economic Development Service (£24k), with the balance from the Area Manager's budget. This budget is monitored through a Service Level Agreement (SLA) between the Council and the Partnership.

Activities and achievements:

Building a strong partnership:

Considerable effort has been put into successfully establishing the partnership, by raising awareness of what it can offer and forming a strong network of members. As mentioned above there are 32 members, from a wide range of community and interest groups, with an extensive range of skills and experience to offer to each other and the wider Garioch area. A base in Inverurie has been identified and set up. A variety of marketing and publicity techniques, including the social media, have been used to create an identity for TGP. A website has been developed. There have been regular opportunities for members and potential members to meet and interact to set the direction of the group and to learn together, as well as to share skills, best practice and information.

Community Initiatives Fund:

A small grants scheme has been introduced, utilising the underspend in the budget that had been caused by the delayed appointment of a development worker, to help build the capacity of community groups. A “grants panel” of volunteer TGP members assesses the applications and makes recommendations to the Board, thus involving members directly in decision-making. Two grants have been awarded to date, one to the Westhill Men's Shed, the other to the Garidge Theatre, with two more at the assessment stage. It is anticipated that these small amounts of money will help to lever in more substantial funding to the area. Certainly that has been the outcome in the other areas of Aberdeenshire with longer running area initiative schemes.

Rural halls network:

Village halls are run by volunteers and are often the hub of community activity. When the need for some mutual support for hall committee members was raised

at a partnership forum, it was agreed to investigate setting up a rural halls network. This work is being taken forward by a volunteer who is the chairperson of one of the rural halls, with support from the development worker and others. This network will be hosted by TGP.

The Garioch Gazette:

The work of the partnership is captured quarterly in an electronic newsletter and communicated to members, partners and interested community members. It is also published on the website. After two editions feedback has been positive, with many readers keen to contribute to future editions. Recipients are encouraged to share the newsletter and other TGP communications with their own networks. There is evidence that a number of individuals have accessed training as a direct result of receiving the newsletter.

Working with community groups:

One of tasks assigned to the partnership via the SLA is to promote community economic development by providing information, advice, and support to community groups and social enterprises. TGP has supported 63 groups since August. For some this interaction has been a single piece of advice or information, often on funding. For others the support has been more extensive and more complex, and is ongoing. It is perhaps too early to see an increased capacity in the area to deliver significant projects, but there is little doubt that the establishment of the partnership will assist in the longer term.

Community action plans:

Another of the keys tasks allocated to TGP is to lead on the production of community action plans in areas identified through the community planning process. Two communities in the Garioch have been pinpointed where partners felt that prioritised community action plans would be beneficial, namely Inch and Kingseat. Work has begun in both communities. In Inch, TGP is working with the local Community Learning & Development team to engage with the many community groups in Inch to take forward a Planning for Real® or similar exercise that will then inform the plan. It is anticipated that the "Inside Inch" project will be completed by autumn 2013. In Kingseat, where there are no local community groups and very few facilities, TGP is working with a sub-group of the Local Community Planning Group which includes the CVS and Grampian Housing Association, to identify community members to take on the ownership of this project and to take it forward. A successful engagement event was carried out utilising the opportunity of the Christmas Fayre held at Newmachar Business Centre in Kingseat in November 2012. This will be followed up by a leaflet drop and another event at the end of February.

Ward forums:

TGP has been charged through the SLA for the development of Ward Forums. Ward Forums are new to Garioch, having been successfully introduced in other areas of Aberdeenshire as one way of putting the community into community planning. The partnership is pleased to have been given the opportunity to set up these up in Garioch and to offer something new to the area. Forums should provide an excellent opportunity for informal learning, networking with other community organisations/representatives and sharing information and experiences. There are many initiatives and projects being run by communities in Garioch, and the opportunity to hear about these and learn from other people's experience will be invaluable. The forums are also intended to ensure that the views of communities and community organisations are fed into the formal community planning process. The first round of forums has been organised for February and March this year, with another round planned for May/June. A community conference is mooted for the autumn.

Community Planning:

TGP is a key partner in the community planning process in the Garioch area, working with communities to build their capacity and to link their identified needs with the relevant delivering agencies. The development worker takes an active part in the Garioch Local Community Planning Group, and will shortly represent the Local Rural Partnerships on the Community Planning Executive and other associated meetings.

Links:

The development worker meets regularly with her counterparts in Aberdeenshire at the Local Rural Partnership Federation meetings where various issues of mutual interest are discussed and progressed. There is also a twice yearly meeting with Community Economic Development Partners to explore future sustainability issues for the partnerships. TGP also maintains regular contact, and has active working links, with people working for the economic and social prosperity of the area including, amongst others, Garioch's Area Manager, DTAS, Community Learning and Development Staff, CVSA, NHS Grampian, the CVS Training Initiative and the Garioch Community Planning Officer.

Conclusion:

TGP is confident that the funding Aberdeenshire has provided in 2012/2013 through the SLA has been used efficiently and effectively to meet the Service Level Agreement. TGP trusts that Aberdeenshire Council and its partners will recognise that the confidence they have placed in the partnership has been well-founded and that the growth of the partnership has had a positive effect on Garioch's communities. TGP is eager to ensure that the high level work

continues and is well-organised in its delivery. It is planning to improve and expand its administrative support in 2013/14 with the assistance of one of its community partners. TGP is keen to see the core-funding grant continue in 2013/14 in recognition of the benefits that area rural partnership activity brings. The partnership has also requested that the Garioch Area Committee makes some additional investment from its Top-up budget to maintain, and perhaps even increase, the Community Initiative Fund in order to further advance capacity building in the area. It would also be helpful if some extra funding was identified within the Community Planning budget to support the further development of Ward Forums, as happens in other areas.

John Chapman, Chairperson
Anne Simpson, Development Worker

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