



Annual Report 2013 - 2014

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. It held its first AGM 25 March 2013 when its first board of directors was appointed. It employs a development worker who works 21 hours/week to support the partnership and its members, as well as the wider Garioch community. Recruitment is under way for a second development worker to respond to the steady increase in demand from community organisations for support. It is anticipated the successful candidate will start work on 1 April 2014. Administrative support for TGP is provided through an innovative partnership arrangement with Grampian Employment Opportunities (GO). Membership has grown during 2013/14 and there are currently 50 members, from a wide range of voluntary and community groups. Eight of the Garioch's nine 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 still fairly new, the partnership is confident that it plays 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***"

The partnership plays a key role in achieving many of the outcomes in the local Garioch Community Plan, in particular Priority Outcome 3 "***the communities of Garioch are cohesive and successful with the confidence, capability and capacity to tackle the things that matter to them***".

Funding:

To date the partnership has been fully funded by Aberdeenshire Council. The Council's investment this year (2013/14) was £37k. Most of this came from the Economic Development Service (£34k), 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. Some additional funding for specific pieces of work has been sourced from the Local Community Planning budget and Aberdeenshire Council's European Unit.

Activities and achievements:

Building a strong partnership:

Considerable effort has been made to build on the partnership's successful first year, by continuing to raise awareness of what it can offer and forming a strong network of members. As mentioned above there are now 51 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. Links have been established with many other groups, and a contacts database set up with nearly 200 names. The base in the Wyness Hall in Inverurie has been equipped and is now a fully functioning office. A variety of marketing and publicity techniques, including the social media, have been used to create an identity for TGP. The website has been further developed. There have been regular occasions through our partnership forums 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. Topics for these TGP forums have included presentations on the use of Twitter and FaceBook, inputs and discussion on self-directed support and its implications for voluntary organisations, plus the usual invaluable opportunities to network and showcase

the work of the partnership. Additionally a member's survey was carried out in September 2013 to assess how well the partnership was supporting its members and to look at areas where more support was needed. The feedback from this was extremely positive.

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 80 groups during 2013-14. 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 still 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. Anecdotal feedback from some community members who were initially unsure of the benefits that a rural partnership would bring to the area is that they have changed their minds!

Community action plans:

Another of the keys tasks allocated to TGP through the SLA is to lead on the production of community action plans in areas identified through the community planning process. Two communities in the Garioch were identified in 2013-14 where partners felt that prioritised community action plans would be beneficial, namely Inch and Kingseat. A Community Action Plan for Inch was produced in November 2013 after a successful Planning for Real® process led by TGP and Community Learning & Development. The ***Inside Inch*** project engaged many members of the community, with some new volunteers coming forward to join ICAN, the local community association and the Bennachie Community Council. TGP continues to support ICAN in implementing the plan. Good progress is being made on a number of action points. It is intended that the Kingseat Community Action Plan will be published by the end of March 2014. This is being taken forward by the recently established Kingseat Community Association, which emerged from the community engagement work that TGP and other community planning partners carried out in 2013. The ***Kingseat Matters*** FaceBook page has been useful in keeping the community abreast of the development of KCA as well as contributing to the actions in the plan. TGP will continue to offer support to KCA for the foreseeable future.

Ward forums:

TGP promoted, organised and delivered three rounds of Ward Forums in the Garioch Area in 2013/14. Twelve events took place across the area, in a variety of venues. A review was carried out using Survey Monkey after the first two rounds/eight events, in order to get feedback from participants, and to ensure the

effectiveness of future events. Ward Forums are new to Garioch, having been successfully introduced in some other areas of Aberdeenshire as one way of putting the community into community planning. The partnership was pleased to have been given the opportunity to set up these up in Garioch and to offer something new to the area. Forums can 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 has been well received. Updates from community planning partners have also been welcomed, but there is still work to do to ensure that community members understand the community planning process. As a result of the survey the frequency of these has been reduced to two rounds per annum. The next round will be in May 2014.

Community Initiatives Fund:

The small grants scheme introduced in 2012/13, utilising the underspend in the partnership's budget that had been caused by the delayed appointment of the development worker, was topped up in 2013/14 year by £5k from the Garioch Area Committee's Area Budget. The partnership has continued to use its "grants panel" of volunteer TGP members to assess applications and make recommendations to the Board, thus involving members directly in decision-making. Ten grants have been awarded to date, from eleven applications. Details are shown below.

Group	Project	Award
Echt School PTCA	Echt School & Community Trim Trail	£750
SensationALL	Equipment	£750
Garidge Theatre	Garioch Theatre Festival Technical Training	£750
Westhill & District Men's Shed	Equipment	£600
Action Kintore	The Volunteer Development Project	£750
Newmachar Playgroup	Equipment	£500
Kiddiwinks Kemnay	Welcome to Kiddiwinks	£500
1 st Skene Boy's Brigade	Extra Adventure Activities During Boys Brigade Summer Camp	£500
Spectrum Singers	Equipment	£750
Cornfields Scotland	Start up	£500

A total of £6350 has been invested in these projects. Further information is available on the partnership's website and FaceBook page.

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. The work is progressing albeit slowly, due to a change in circumstances of the volunteer who was taking this forward. A Central Aberdeenshire Village Halls FaceBook page has been created, and an up-to-date contact list is in the making. The development worker has undertaken training in Keystone, SCVO's quality award for village halls, and is encouraging hall committees to register for the award.

The Garioch Gazette:

The work of the partnership continues to be captured quarterly in an electronic newsletter and communicated to members, partners and interested community members. It is also published on the website. 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 and funding opportunities as a direct result of receiving the newsletter.

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 represents the Local Rural Partnerships on the Community Planning Executive and at 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 2013/14 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 community development and administrative support in 2014/15, and is succession planning in regard to its staff and its Board. As mentioned in the introduction another development worker is being recruited. TGP wishes to strengthen its “brand” and plans to review its website and publicity materials in the coming months.

TGP is keen to see the core-funding grant continue in 2014/15 and beyond, in recognition of the benefits that area rural partnership activity brings. The partnership requests that the Garioch Area Committee makes some additional investment from its Area budget to grow the Community Initiative Fund in order to further advance capacity building in the area. The partnership would also like to invite an elected member from the Garioch Area Committee to join its Board in an advisory capacity, to further strengthen the relationship between TGP and Aberdeenshire Council.

John Chapman, Chairperson
Anne Simpson, Development Worker

28 February 2014