



Volunteering Pays Off!



Volunteers and their role in sustaining social and economic activity through management of community resources within the Mearns Area Partnership locus

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Author David L Nelson

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1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Volunteering is an essential part of community life and spirit and it is widely recognised by Local and Central Government as a “central keystone in the pursuit of economic vibrancy, social justice, active citizenship and a stronger society” (G. Malone 2008). Participative and judicial citizenship actively demonstrated through volunteering is increasingly located at the top table of Social and Economic Policy Setting in Scotland and it is widely held that no other country in Europe can boast such an enriched, dynamic and efficient volunteer infrastructure as Scotland. The role and ethos of volunteering must be protected and promoted in these changing and challenging times if the Scottish Government’s key strategic priorities are to be met. These are stated as: Wealthier and Fairer; Healthier and Safer; Stronger and Greener people of Scotland.

These priorities are intended to support the development of responsible citizens who are effective contributors, confident individuals and successful learners and who participate in global citizenship at a personal, participative and judicial level. The social and economic benefits derived by the communities of the Mearns from the active volunteering of groups of individuals are immense and help build social capital which contributes to enhancing the quality of life of our resident population.

Community engagement and community empowerment are at the centre of the delivery of so many services, from childcare to planning, that Local Government must ensure a vibrant, informed and supported voluntary sector is properly recognised and has recourse to financial assistance wherever possible. Recognising where and when scarce financial resources can best be deployed is an issue that can at best often rest on a ‘first come first served’ basis or

on the determined argument of a single-minded group focussed entirely on its own objectives.

This report will attempt to identify the gaps that exist within communities that cannot be resolved entirely by their own endeavours and where promotion and financial support can create a multiplier effect¹ that far exceeds the capital input. It will “value” volunteering and put a price on the Social Capital² of the many individuals who contribute to our community life. The view of the existing facilities managed by community groups will clearly show the core strength of the volunteering effort and highlight what can and could be achieved with some additional financial input.

¹**Reference Source:** *Social Audit Network © 2006 (SAN)*

²**Social Capital definition** – *the interaction that allows people to build communities, commit themselves to each other and knit the social fabric bringing greater benefit to people.*

2 OVERVIEW

The Mearns Area Partnership (MAP) covers a large rural area in South Kincardineshire and serves a population of approximately 5,500 living in the main settlements. The central town of Laurencekirk and the satellite villages of Arbuthnott, Auchenblae, Drumlithie & Glenbervie, Edzell Woods, Fettercairn, Fordoun, Luthermuir, Marykirk and St Cyrus provide a wide range of facilities and activities that are managed and run largely by volunteers.

Within the MAP communities the level of provision of activity and ownership of venues and events varies from the high levels of St Cyrus (with over 20 individual groups and user bodies of the village hall) to Edzell Woods with no specific community centre and a very low level of overall community activity.

The most important physical resource within each community is its village hall and associated parks and pitches. Many of these halls were over time (circa 1900's onwards) gifted to the communities by wealthy land owners and "belong" to their respective communities while others have been built with considerable local financial input and leased to the community associations by the Local Authority. They are in the main managed by a voluntary board of people who are motivated by a sense of belonging to a community to which they want to contribute time and effort and help retain the heart of their village.

This social capital is of tremendous importance and affects the quality of life of many of the residents. It cannot be over-estimated and could not be replaced by statutory bodies paid for out of local taxes. It contributes diversely and addresses many of the key priorities of the Scottish Government, contributing to community care, employment sustainability, extending education, health and wellbeing, and raised environmental and social awareness.

The employment created for tradespeople to maintain and service community facilities, the cleaner required and paid for out of the hall funds, ensures that income generated locally, stays local. Nationally, there may be income distribution by holding fundraisers for certain charities, eg cancer care, Red Cross etc. The most common distribution of income is, however, local and there is a considerable multiplier effect in procuring goods and services from local suppliers.

Local trading discounts for local groups, ie lower hall rates for youth clubs or senior citizen usage, mean there is a direct measurable impact on local users.

Training of volunteers is often undertaken to ensure they satisfy legal requirements, eg in Health and Safety assessments, or in book keeping skills. This increases community capacity and adds value in real terms to the communities' ability to thrive.

Volunteering time and effort can be counted and valued, and proportional rates for expertise and ability factored into the equation to derive an estimate of the opportunity cost of their efforts. The benefits of volunteers and their activities running our community resources are huge:

- They save on labour cost, ie no wages are paid
- They bring a variety of skills and disciplines to the table
- Improved communications
- Improved health and wellbeing of volunteers and the people they serve
- They save on Local Government resources and therefore save on tax
- They allow others to work or receive further education
- They generate cash that is spent locally
- They generate purchasing power with local tradespeople and the service sector
- They are capable of sourcing outside funding into communities, eg. LEADER
- They manage resources for the benefit of other groups
- They make up membership of Community Councils who are statutory Planning consultees
- They increase the social capital of the communities they serve.

The economic impact of voluntary bodies that run the village halls and sports facilities within our rural communities will, when measured, demonstrate the real time value of this social capital asset.

Research Methodology

All data is based on empirical evidence using personal interviews with hall convenors and research around current Government policy. The information is collated into sessions of activity, and a measure of the level of activity of each group of users is tabled and used to determine capacity and opportunity to deliver, if support was provided.

3 VOLUNTEERING ACTIVITY IN COMMUNITY HALLS

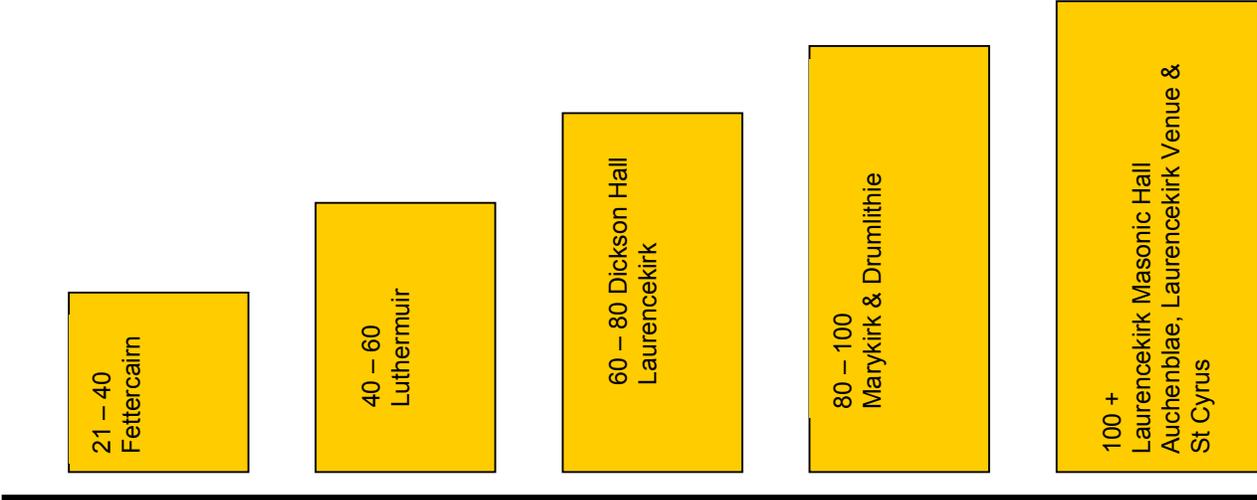
All the halls in the Mearns Area Partnership locus (with the exception of the St Laurence Hall, Laurencekirk) are run by a management committee of volunteers. Represented on these committees are many retired people who bring a wide range of skills to the table, as well as those who are in active employment. Some committees are extremely active and innovative in bringing new events to the halls and others are happy to manage the resources for regular lettings to other groups.

Communication between the hall committees is fairly limited. Few have websites or newsletters and several do not advertise other than on notice boards both within and outside the halls. There is an established Kincardine & Mearns Halls Association and this appears to be used mainly to facilitate insurance cover for hall buildings and associated activities.

The levels of activity within the village halls vary from five days per week to occasional daily lets with several spare sessions, ie morning, afternoon and evening, being available on most days. Weekend use is good at Arbuthnott and Fettercairn. The Masonic Hall in Laurencekirk is used by many organisations regularly on Saturdays for “coffee morning” fundraising activity.

The activities encouraged and promoted within our community halls appeal particularly to two age groups. Firstly, the pre-school and infant age groups with their attending parents and secondly, the older age groups (50 years +) who participate in a wide variety of activities. There is a big gap in the 18 – 40 year age group and their involvement in either the activities on offer or on the committees that run the various halls. Many more women than men are actively involved in hall activities and their committees.

Many cultural events are held during the calendar year, with dance, music, theatre, art and heritage activities being provided at a range of venues. Sports, particularly during the winter months, include bowling, badminton, keep fit and yoga and all help to promote physical activity, health and wellbeing within the communities. The number of people attending these events on a weekly basis varies in each locus.



Source: Rainmaker Project 2008 Arts and Crafts in Village Halls (no statistics available for Fordoun and Arbuthnott)

Community Activity within the Village Halls

The full range of activities undertaken at the village halls and community facilities within Laurencekirk are shown in the under-noted tables. To allow comparisons between the centres, the activities have been categorised under 7 descriptors and a summary of these is shown at Table 2.

Activities 2008

- 1 Pre School & Play Group
- 2 Mothers & Toddlers
- 3 Out of School Club
- 4 Youth Group
- 5 Guides/Brownies
- 6 Indoor Bowling
- 7 Tennis Club/Badminton/Football
- 8 Fitness Club
- 9 Yoga/Aerobics/Tai Chi
- 10 Tea Dances
- 11 Country Dancing
- 12 Friendship Group
- 13 Whist Drive
- 14 Drama Group
- 15 Church Group
- 16 WRI

- 17 Hall Committee
- 18 Community Council
- 19 Gardening
- 20 Gala Committee
- 21 Newsletter Group
- 22 Art Show/Club
- 23 Burns Supper
- 24 Post Office
- 25 Parties - Children's
- 26 Wedding Reception/Dinners
- 27 Funeral Teas
- 28 Church Guild/Fashion Show/Panto
- 29 Commercial Lets
- 30 Lunch Club
- 31 Full catering/spillover for T/room
- 32 Other Activity

St Cyrus		Drumlithie/Glenbervie		Auchenblae		Fettercairn Hall	
Sessions	Demographic	Sessions	Demographic	Sessions	Demographic	Sessions	Demographic
4day/wk		5day/wk		5day/week			
1day/wk							
5day/wk							
1day/wk							
2day/wk(w)		1day/wk(w)				1day/wk(w)	
				2day/wk(w)			
1day/wk		1day/wk		1day/wk		1day/wk	
1day/wk						1day/wk	
1day/wk							
1day/wk						2day/wk	
1day/wk							
1day/wk		1/mth					
				1day/wk			
1/mth		1/mth					
1/mth		2/mth		1/mth			
				1/mth+1 Sports Committee			
1/mth		1/mth					
1/mth							
1/mth		4/Anm					
1/mth							
1/mth							
		1/wk(term time)		3/Anm			
1/Anm		1/Anm		1 / 2 years			
		2.5hrs/wk					
10/Anm		6/Anm		6/Anm			
2/Anm				2/Anm			
				2/Anm			
				1/Anm			

Activity 2008		Luthermuir		Arbuthnott		Fordoun		Edzell Woods		Marykirk	
	Sessions	Demographic	Sessions	Demographic	Sessions	Demographic	Sessions	Demographic	Sessions	Demographic	
1	Pre School & Play Group	4day/week		.5day/wk					1/wk	School	
2	Mothers & Toddlers								1/wk	School	
3	Out of School Club										
4	Youth Group	1/month									
5	Guides/Brownies	1/week (40)									
6	Indoor Bowling	1/week(28)				1/week(22)			1/wk		
7	Tennis Club/Badminton/Football	3/week(40)							1/wk		
8	Fitness Club										
9	Yoga/Aerobics/Tai Chi	1/week(40)									
10	Tea Dances										
11	Country Dancing										
12	Friendship Group	2/month		1/mth	songwriters						
13	Whist Drive										
14	Drama Group			1/mth	reading						
15	Church Group										
16	WRI								2/mth		
17	Hall Committee	1/month				6/year			1/mth		
18	Community Council			1/mth							
19	Gardening										
20	Gala Committee	6/year				1 week					
21	Newsletter Group										
22	Art Show/Club			10/Anm							
23	Burns Supper			1/Anm							
24	Post Office	.5days/week							2/wk		
25	Parties - Children's					8/year					
26	Wedding Reception/ Dinners			2/Anm							
27	Funeral Teas			3/Anm							
28	Church Guild/FashionShow/panto	6/year				1/year					
29	Commercial Lets			4/Anm					6/anm		
30	Lunch Club								1/wk		
31	Full catering/spill over for T/room			84 days							
32	Other Activity	2/year							1/wk	Dog training	

Activity 2008	St Laurence Hall Laurecekirk		Dickson Hall Laurecekirk		Masonic Hall Laurecekirk		The Venue Laurecekirk	
	Sessions	Demographic	Sessions	Demographic	Sessions	Demographic	Sessions	Demographic
1 Pre School & Play Group								
2 Mothers & Toddlers			2/wk					
3 Out of School Club								
4 Youth Group							5/wk	2 school, 2 info
5 Guides/Brownies								
6 Indoor Bowling								
7 Tennis Club/Badminton/Football								
8 Fitness Club	1/wk		1/wk				1/wk	Slimming Belly dance
9 Yoga/Aerobics/Tai Chi			1/wk				15 weeks	
10 Tea Dances							1/ftnght	
11 Country Dancing			1/wk		1/wk			
12 Friendship Group								
13 Whist Drive								
14 Drama Group								
15 Church Group			1/mth				1/wk	Pillar
16 WRI					1/mth			
17 Hall Committee					2/mth			
18 Community Council								
19 Gardening								
20 Gala Committee								
21 Newsletter Group								
22 Art Show/Club								
23 Burns Supper			1/year					
24 Post Office								
25 Parties - Children's			3/year					
26 Wedding Reception/Dinners								
27 Funeral Teas								
28 Church Guild/FashionShow/panto					1/wk			
29 Commercial Lets	12/anm		5/year		40		2/week	
30 Lunch Club								
31 Full catering/spill over for T/room								
32 Other Activity								

Table 2

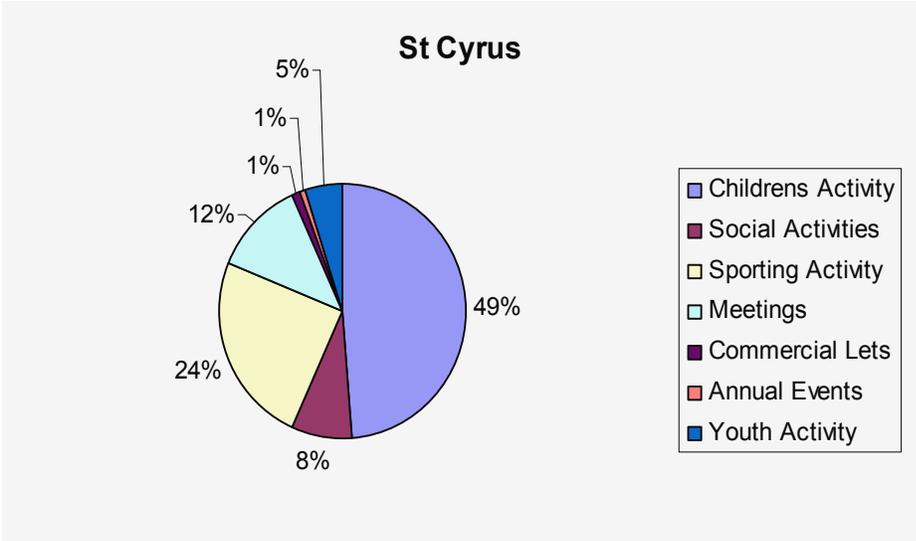
Detailed below is the range of activity grouped within the 7 descriptors that are carried out in village halls over a 12 month period (2008) within the Mearns Area Partnership locus - full details of data are included in Appendix 1

	Children's Activity	Social Activities	Sporting Activity	Meetings	Commercial Lets	Annual Events	Youth Activity	Total Sessions per annum	
St Cyrus	400	64	200	88	10	5	40	807	
Drumlithie/Glenbervie	200	92	60	12	56	3	0	423	
Auchenblae	200	45	80	22	10	5	0	362	
Fettercairn	0	40	180	10	7	9	20	266	All pre school activity takes place in primary school
Lutherrmuir	120	30	168	18	50	5	52	443	
Arbuthnott	40	34	0	12	90	3	0	179	Hall is an integral part of the Grassic Gibbon Facility
Fordoun	10	10	22	12	11	2	0	67	Separate facilities for football team
Edzell Woods	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	No hall facility/play park football pitch used by community
Marykirk	80	104	80	12	106	2	0	384	
Laurencekirk	80	164	185	24	137	12	200	802	Most children's activity takes place at CLD premises
TOTAL sessions	1130	583	975	210	477	46	312	3733	

- NOTE 1 All data is based on empirical evidence using personal interviews with hall convenors
- NOTE 2 Sessions vary from .5 hour to 1 day/evening
- NOTE 3 Assumes 40 week sessions for social and 20 week sessions for winter activity unless otherwise stated
- NOTE 4 Marykirk, Lutherrmuir and Drumlithie Halls host a Post Office facility which bolsters commercial activity
- NOTE 5 A range of hotels, schools, clubs, community centres, etc add activity to the community of Mearns Area Partnership and are not included in the data

Summary of this Data is represented for each Community Hall

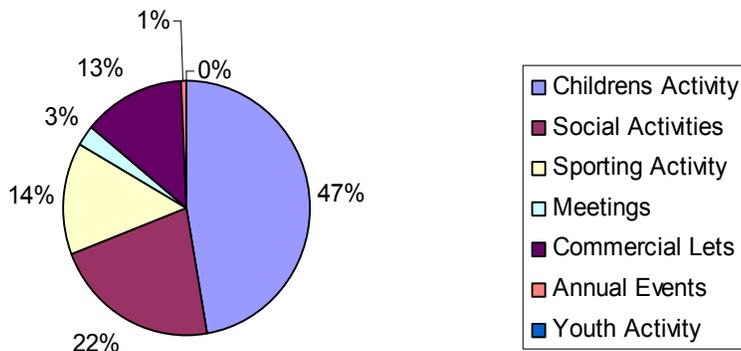
Classifying this activity portfolio into 7 main groups – children’s activities, social activities, sports activities, meetings, commercial lets, annual events and youth activities – allows some comparison between the community halls to be made and an overall capacity study to be investigated further.



- Population 1100.
 This Village Hall is by far the most used facility within the MAP locus. Some 20 or more different activities take place within the hall during

a normal year. The Hall Committee employs a cleaner and key holder who takes bookings for the village hall. 50% of the sessions used within the hall are children’s activities which are run 5 days/week and out-of-school activities which are run 5 days/week during term times. The Youth Group meets weekly during term time, sports activities account for 24% of the activities and social groups, eg friendship groups, whist players, for 8%. Monthly meetings account for 12% of the sessions with church, WRI, Community Council, hall and gardening clubs regular users. Extensive renovations have been completed and there are immediate plans for further refurbishments (floor fund). The hall funds are substantial and the rents received for the various lets meet the annual running costs of the hall. The hall belongs to the community of St Cyrus village and is a registered charity.

Drumlithie/Glenbervie

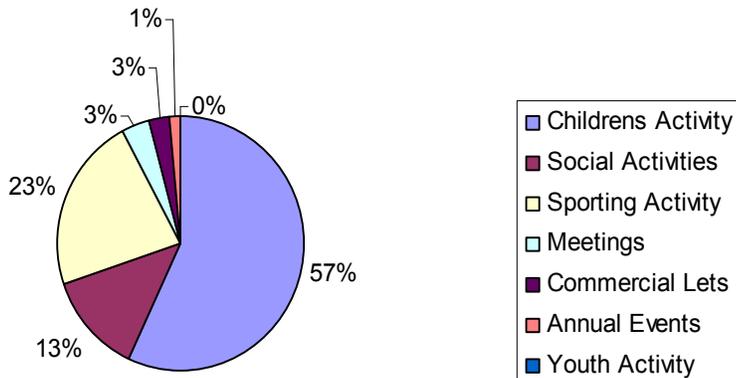


- Population 346.

This Village Hall has been extensively refurbished over several years and is used on a daily basis during term time for children's activities,

playgroups etc. Social activities include arts clubs, whist drives, and exercise classes and account for 22% of usage. Indoor bowling is the main sport activity during the winter months. The main commercial let is to the Post Office (2.5 hours/week in one session) which has recently relocated there. No youth activities appear to take place at this hall. One-off events, like the Burns Supper and treasure hunt, are extremely well supported and contribute significantly to hall funds. The Hall Committee does not employ a keeper or cleaner. However, 1/month contract cleaners come into the hall and this is fully covered by letting revenues which also cover all annual running costs. Significant reserves are held by the hall committee and the hall is a registered charity and belongs to the community of Drumlithie.

Auchenblae

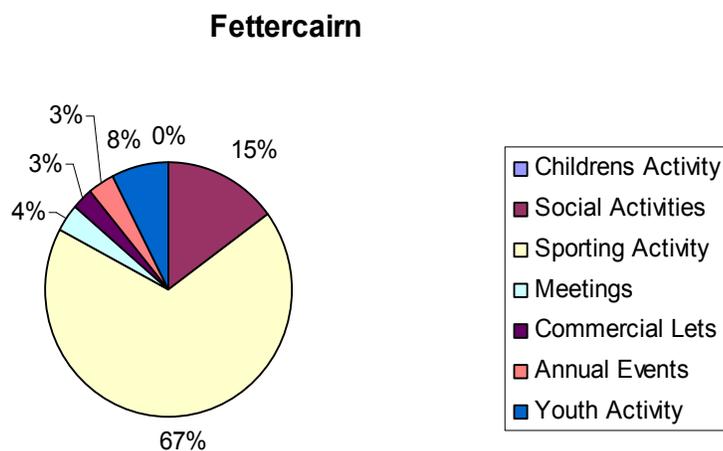


- Population 523.

The Village Hall is managed by Auchenblae Community Association and is a registered charity

belonging to the village community. The hall has a daily usage by pre-school children's groups, accounting for 57% of activity, and active tennis and bowling club for 23%. The hall is used regularly for senior citizen fitness sessions and a very active drama group that puts on two to three productions per year. Art shows, fashion shows, and Burns Suppers are all well attended and provide valuable one-off funds. Gala Week activities and catering for local Highland Games provide substantial funding streams that have facilitated extensive renovations of the hall and improved facilities, allowing commercial lets for weddings, funeral teas and Planning enquiries. A cleaner is employed on a part-time basis for the hall. There are no specific youth group activities other than tennis coaching sessions held during the winter months.

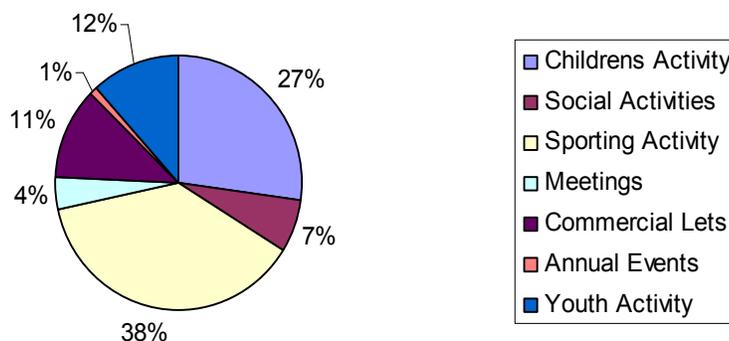
Auchenblae Parks Committee runs an extremely successful golf club, tennis courts, bowling green and play area within the village. It employs a full-time greenkeeper and part-time groundsman who also look after a football pitch and area of woodland walks in the "Den". All this activity is funded entirely by voluntary contribution and membership fees. Members of the board of trustees receive no financial remuneration. Details of finance and levels of commercial activity are not included within this report.



- Population 444. The Village Hall in Fettercairn belongs to the community and is managed by Fettercairn Public Property Committee, a registered charity.

This voluntary group of 20 people represents all the organisations that use both the hall and sports facilities within the village. There are no pre- or post-school activities for children taking place within the community hall as the Primary School has spare capacity and can accommodate all children’s activities. The Church Hall accommodates WRI, Guild and Church group meetings along with a weekly Youth Forum. The main activities in the village hall are sports related, dance and keep fit classes. Annual events range from Church auctions, Burns Suppers and New Year dances to flower and craft shows and pensioner parties. The hall can be hired for private weddings and funeral teas. The annual running costs are only met because of Gala revenues and a “500” club draw. The new sports pavillion, part funded through Lottery grants of £85K and Aberdeenshire Council grants, contributes significantly to the level of activity, supporting two football teams, tennis and bowling clubs. Regular fundraising to support the income from the hall/pavillion lets is required to cover annual costs. The Public Property Committee does employ a part-time cleaner. Essential renovation work is now required in the village hall to bring it up to standards required for Council Licensing for Entertainment. The capital funds have been successfully built up over years by the Gala Committee. Funds are supplemented by profits from the Fettercairn Agricultural Show Dance and the occasional legacy and bequest from residents.

Luthermuir

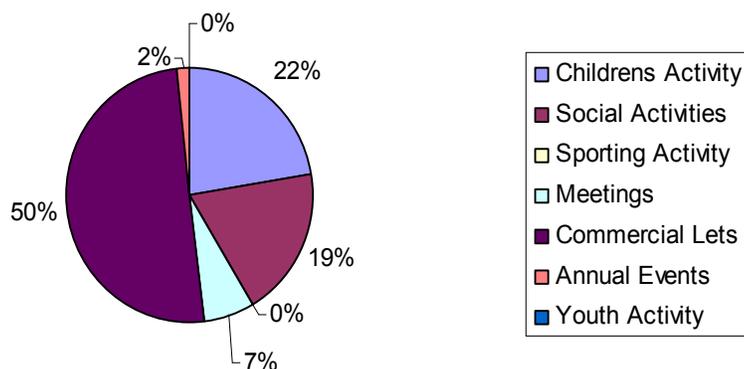


- Population 305.

Luthermuir Hall and Parks Committee is a registered charity and manages the Village Hall and associated football pitch and play

park. The hall was built on ground now belonging to Aberdeenshire Council but the facility belongs to the Luthermuir community. A part-time hall cleaner and keeper is employed and responsible for taking all bookings. The hall is an important resource for Luthermuir football club, providing changing and training facilities as well as a venue for fundraising, indoor bowling and badminton. The use by children’s playgroups is an important activity and the hall provides a venue for Guides meetings, senior citizens clubs and a youth club. The Post Office now provides a facility there ½ day/week. Annual events prove major money spinners and make a significant contribution to the success of the hall’s finances ensuring all costs are covered and any surpluses can be accumulated to cover repair, maintenance and legal requirements. Bulb and flower shows, craft fair, an industrial exhibition and the annual “Saint and Sinners” motorcycle rally all bring a wide range of activities and voluntary groups to Luthermuir.

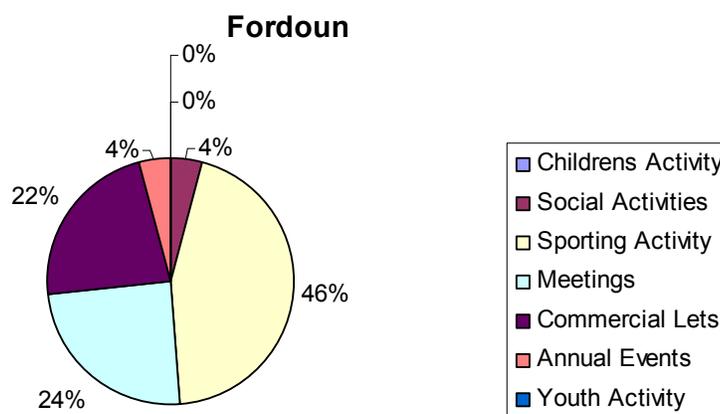
Arbuthnott



- Population 53.
Arbuthnott Village Hall is run as a registered charity by Arbuthnott Community Enterprises. This consists of a committee of the main

hall users and several local independent members who hold a deed of trust. Ownership is by the community. The Grassic Gibbon Centre is a company limited by guarantee with a board of nine directors and one full-time employee. It provides part-time employment for up to six persons locally. The village hall is used as overspill for catering for Grassic Gibbon Centre events including art shows and workshops, Friends of the Grassic Gibbon Centre suppers and music and heritage events.

Commercially it is in demand for training events, business meetings and Local Authority-sponsored events. The hall has regular pre-school children's activities. No direct labour is paid to run the hall, as the close relationship with the Grassic Gibbon Centre means staff employed there can service hall requirements. Income and expenditure (approximately £3k/annum each) are bolstered by operating profit from the Grassic Gibbon Centre (turnover of approximately £50K). No detailed accounts were made available for this report.

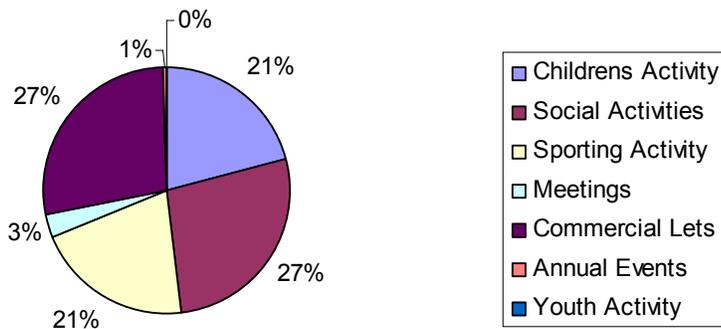


- Population 305.

The Memorial Hall in Fordoun was rebuilt in 1923 and gifted to the community. It stands alongside a football pitch and tennis courts which are served by a

changing pavillion under the control of Aberdeenshire Council. The hall has been refurbished in some areas and plans are in hand to continue refurbishments with £10k raised and held ready for this work. Relatively little regular weekly activity takes place with no pre-school events, and only carpet bowling taking place weekly through the winter months. The hall is used for private parties, race nights and during Gala Week. The local Primary School makes use of the main hall for Christmas parties. No personnel are paid to provide any cleaning services. Volunteers (5 in number) run the hall and provide all the labour inputs. No youth activities other than football club fundraisers take place in the hall.

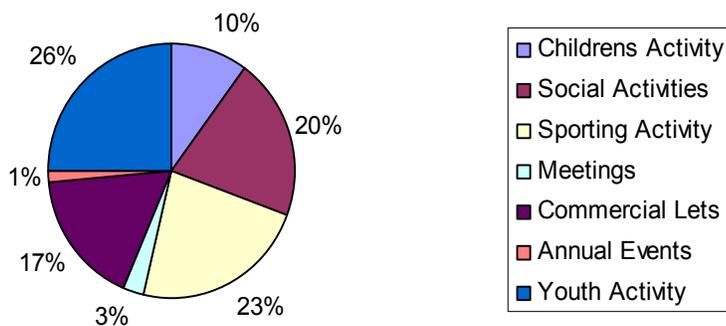
Marykirk



- Population 274.
 Marykirk Village Hall
 Committee act as
 trustees of the hall
 which belongs to the
 community of
 Marykirk. It is a
 registered charity.

The hall is used regularly by pre-school groups and by the Primary School for PE classes throughout term time. Social activities, WRI, and lunch clubs are major users of the facilities as indeed is the very active indoor Bowling Club. Commercial lets for a variety of activities from yoga to dog training classes are undertaken as well as private parties and fundraisers. A part-time cleaner is employed and the revenues from hall lets cover the on-costs of running the hall with a small annual surplus.

Laurencekirk



- Population 2150.
 Laurencekirk, the
 principal town within
 the MAP area, is
 served by a variety of
 facilities both owned
 and operated by the

community and its volunteers as well as the Local Authority and its professional staff.

St Laurence Hall Local Authority owned and managed. A venue for charity dances, race nights, concerts and auctions held commercially or by voluntary organisations, with exercise and dance classes being held on a weekly basis.

Mearns Academy Hall Local Authority owned and managed and increasingly used for concerts, harvest festival celebrations, Burns Suppers, etc by voluntary organisations, Church groups and for local fundraising, mainly at weekends.

Mearns Community Centre Local Authority owned and managed. A busy locus for pre-school, breakfast and after school clubs and associated activities, lunch clubs, coffee mornings, activity groups, Brownies, Duke of Edinburgh award meetings and administrative base for Community Learning and Development staff.

Masonic Hall Owned by the local Masonic Lodge and made available for a wide range of community fundraising activity, coffee mornings, bring and buy sales, craft fairs, bottle stalls, Burns Suppers, etc. In addition, there is commercial use by building developers, planners and dance groups.

Dickson Hall Owned and managed by the Dickson Hall Trust. This venue is available for a wide range of activities and all the management and cleaning is done by volunteers who commit extensively to the success of the venue. Pre-school children's activities, exercise classes, music nights as well as annual fundraisers for other voluntary groups, eg Rotary, darts clubs, etc are carried out. Essential major renovations are forecast to be undertaken once grant aid is approved.

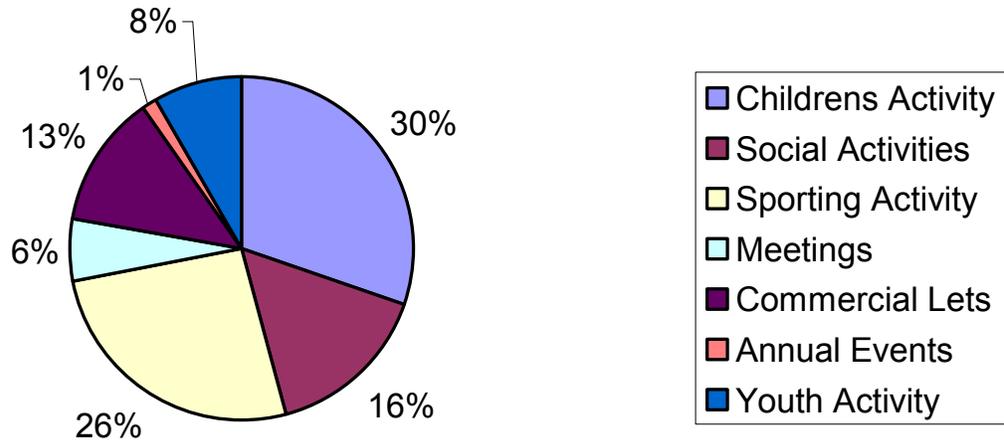
The Venue Opened within the last 7 years as a Youth and Community Centre, the Venue is a registered charity and is run as a company limited by guarantee with a board of 8 directors. The day to day management is undertaken by a volunteer who commits ¾ day/week. Funded initially by a Lottery grant of £105,000, the Venue operates financially independent of other grants. The Youth activities are staffed by Local Authority Community Learning & Development staff and many other community activities, eg dance, personal training sessions, support groups (Pillar) use the facilities. Differential rates are charged for community or commercial hire. This is the principal locus of youth activities within the MAP area.

The Library The meeting room at the Library (Aberdeenshire Council owned) is used for monthly Community Council Meetings and an occasional club committee meeting.

Edzell Woods Population 346. This community of 145 households is situated at the southernmost point of the MAP area and is a private estate with un-adopted roads and no Local Authority facilities. There is no central community facility, shop, pub or focal point for residents to meet. As a consequence there is little community activity other than the Residents Association. This is primarily concerned with the upkeep of the environs of the estate and management of the private sewerage system and infrastructure. Not all residents contribute to its activities and costs. A new children's play park, provided by the Local Authority, has recently been installed. A football pitch and tennis courts are managed by the Community Association and funding from the Mearns Community Development Group has assisted in the purchase of new equipment. A Planning for Real event recently highlighted the requirements of the community and this now needs to be fully adopted by Aberdeenshire Council and its partners. Perhaps Planning Gain from the development of the adjoining redundant airbase would facilitate this in the near future. A key identified requirement is a community facility.

Overall Summary of Village Hall Usage within the MAP Area

Total Sessions Per Annum



4 ECONOMIC ACTIVITY

The income and expenditure details of village halls in the MAP area are presented to indicate current levels of economic activity.

	Income	Expenditure	Bank Reserves
St Cyrus	15,104	10,018	21,554
Auchenblae	15,039	8,683	13,500
Luthermuir	6,585	4,713	10,000
Fettercairn Hall	3,949	3,521	4,950
Fettercairn Gala Committee	4,392	1,156	18,292
Drumlithie	9,712	4,977	10,937
Marykirk	4,938	3,839	8,650
Fordoun	4,000	2,750	10,000
Laurencekirk Venue	7,117	5,838	
Laurencekirk Dickson Hall	2,488	1,457	
St Laurence Hall (Local Authority)			
	£73,324	£46,952	£97,883

Source – Audited Accounts provided or best estimates (Fordoun) of turnover

In Summary

- 1 9 halls paid out £10,307 in wages for hall keepers and cleaners
- 2 9 halls had a gross income of £73,324 in 2008
- 3 9 halls had an annual expenditure of £46,952 in 2008
- 4 Capital reserves of the 7 hall committees amounted to £97,880
- 5 The net operating revenues after labour and variable costs of the 9 halls was £26,372 for 2007/08

- The annual expenses in general were not met entirely from hall lets.
- Profits from hall activities were usually as a result of large fundraisers, eg Galas, sports events, Highland Games.
- Capital reserves were specifically required in most cases for remedial repair and maintenance work as well as compliance with Public Entertainment Licence requirements.
- It is essential for hall committees to maintain a buffer of capital reserves to meet unplanned repairs, one-off legislative expenses (eg disabled access) and to cushion the impact of low turnover due to access or repair delays.

5 VOLUNTEERS' ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTIONS

In attempting to put a financial cost on the input of volunteers, various assumptions have been made in line with recognised social audit practice (Social Audit Network 2006).

Managerial duties of treasurers and chairpersons have been assessed at a rate of £14 per hour, secretaries at £10 per hour, and ordinary committee members at the legal minimum wage rate of £5.80 per hour.

The frequency of meetings and the levels of activity within each of the community halls have allowed an estimate of hourly inputs from each hall committee and therefore a calculation of “economic activity” has been presented. Whether this can be regarded correctly as economic activity is arguable. What is not in question is the considerable monetary value of work carried out which does not have to be paid for by the State or Local Authority.

		Hours/month	Value £/hour	Cost/month
St Cyrus	Treasurer	8	£14.00	£112.00
	Secretary	5	£10.00	£50.00
	Chair	5	£14.00	£70.00
	6 members	4	£5.80	£139.20
				£371.20
Auchenblae	Treasurer	8	£14.00	£112.00
	Secretary	5	£10.00	£50.00
	Chair	5	£14.00	£70.00
	10 members	4	£5.80	£232.40
				£464.40
Luthermuir	Treasurer	6	£14.00	£84.00
	Secretary	5	£10.00	£50.00
	Chair	5	£14.00	£70.00
	5 members	4	£5.80	£138.40
				£342.40
Fettercairn	Treasurer	4	£14.00	£56.00
	Secretary	4	£10.00	£40.00
	Chair	4	£14.00	£56.00
	6 members	4	£5.80	£139.20
				£291.20
Fordoun (Do all cleaning no wages paid out)	Treasurer	8	£14.00	£112.00
	Secretary	8	£10.00	£80.00
	Chair	8	£14.00	£112.00
	4 members	6	£5.80	£139.20
				£443.20
Drumlithie	Treasurer	6	£14.00	£84.00
	Secretary	6	£10.00	£60.00
	Chair	6	£14.00	£84.00
	5 members	4	£5.80	£116.40
				£344.40
Marykirk	Treasurer	6	£14.00	£84.00
	Secretary	6	£10.00	£60.00
	Chair	6	£14.00	£84.00
	5 members	4	£5.80	£116.40
				£344.40
				£2,601.20
7 HALLS ESTIMATED ANNUAL VOLUNTEERS COSTS				£31,214.40

In Summary

The opportunity cost of volunteers running these 7 community facilities can be assessed at approximately £31,200 per annum or £4,457 per annum per community hall.

Capacity for Attracting External Funding

Another area of considerable economic impact is the capacity of volunteers through organised, properly constituted bodies to attract external funding. This inward investment, often created in partnership with other voluntary bodies, has the affect of stimulating real change and benefit to local communities.

Lottery funding, Awards for All, private donors, and Local Authority funding through KMAP are some examples of funding streams from outside community boundaries which have been successfully obtained.

The new LEADER funding streams administered through Aberdeenshire Council will offer more support for community initiatives with match funding for a wide range of local activities. Voluntary bodies, properly constituted, are ideally placed to take advantage of these rural initiatives and bring new capital into communities.

Fettercairn, St Cyrus, Arbuthnott and Drumlithie Halls have directly benefited in this way.

The Venue in Laurencekirk was developed as a direct result of Lottery funding obtained with professional guidance to a team of active volunteers.

Whilst many different funding streams exist, it is only through determined investigation by volunteers and time and patience in complying with scheme requirements that success is achieved. Volunteering time in doing this can be onerous for any individual and there is a clear opportunity here for professional support and direction being made available to community groups, with easy access and delivery being essential.

Examples of External Funding Awards

Drumlithie	Awards for All	£5,000	Windows
		£2,000	Chairs and tables
Arbuthnott	Scottish Executive	£10,000	Car park upgrade
Fettercairn	Lottery	£85,000	New Sports Pavilion
Laurencekirk Venue	Lottery	£105,000	Total refurbishment of building

Voluntary groups within our communities generate significant levels of income which they can then dispense locally, nationally or internationally. For example, the Rotary Club, Inner Wheel, Probus Clubs, WRI, Ladies Social Clubs, Masonic Lodges, Gala Committees, Save the Children Groups, and SSPCA Groups all produce fundraising streams.

It is clear that people like to financially support local needs first and outside interests second. One-off charities, eg Children in Need, the Tsunami Appeal, African famine appeals, etc are generally well supported and our schools take an active lead in this through promoting children and parent responses.

Without the presence of our community facilities for this fundraising, with dances, concerts, race nights, bingo, etc all adding to the rich social mixture of community activity, many of these deserving charities would suffer – so intrinsically linked with social and economic life within each community are the village halls.

6 CASE STUDIES – The Commercial Use of Village Halls

(1) Post Office Facilities

The recent cutbacks in full-time Post Office provision have resulted in the reallocation of part-time services to village halls in three communities within the MAP area.

Luthermuir, Drumlithie and Marykirk Village Halls are now used on a weekly basis to provide a wide range of services operated by the Post Office to these communities. People can pay their utility bills, draw cash and conduct banking lodgements with a range of national banks through the Post Office facilities. This is increasingly important in rural communities as many national banks have closed down local banking facilities, eg Clydesdale and Bank of Scotland. These banks have centralised their facilities often many miles away from their customers. Laurencekirk now has no Clydesdale Bank and the nearest facilities are in Stonehaven, Montrose and Brechin, up to 17 miles away.

The village Hall at Luthermuir now provides Post Office facilities from 0830 to 1300 one day per week and at Drumlithie the same facility is available from 1400 to 1630 one day per week. In each case 12 regular customers draw their pensions and conduct their financial affairs, paying utility bills, etc. The facilities are used by a wide range of people and age groups with many web-based transactions being posted through these local outlets, ie parcels and correspondence.

Taking into account the convenience and social importance of retaining this provision within our communities, it is also important to recognise the savings in transport costs and the “Green Footprint” of rural living that can be achieved through the use of community facilities.

Rural bus services are infrequent and used sparingly as many people continue to use their own cars or share with other car users to conduct regular shopping and business activity out-with their own community boundaries.

Retaining a service as important at the Post Office facility has only been possible within these three communities because the village hall exists and continues to flourish under the guidance of its volunteer committees. The locus provides the opportunity to disseminate information, for example, *Dial a Bus Leaflets*, *transport timetables* and any number of local initiatives. This is most important now that many shops and services have closed due to economic pressures within our rural communities.

(2) Pre-School Play Groups

Children's activity, particularly pre-school groupings, are the most numerous users of village hall facilities. The only village community facilities not used for pre-school groups are in Fettercairn where the Primary School has capacity and in Fordoun.

In Auchenblae the play school is run 5 days per week during school term time and offers up to 20 places for 3 – 4 year olds for a 2.5 hour session and 16 places for toddlers up to 2 years old for 1.5 hour sessions. Children can then progress to the Nursery located at Auchenblae Primary School prior to entering the school permanently. The group in Auchenblae is run by a committee of parent volunteers who employ play leaders (up to 6) and a manager to organise a curriculum for the children. Children from surrounding communities attend, as well as those from Auchenblae.

In Luthermuir a playschool group use the village hall facility for four sessions per week. The playgroup is for 2 – 5 year olds and currently 14 children regularly attend from both within and outwith the village boundaries.

Overall, the village halls have 31% of their use committed to children's pre-school activities. This is an important revenue source for hall committees but more importantly it allows significant benefits to families within close proximity to where these halls are situated. Social interaction and communications are increased between families, isolation is reduced, children's interpersonal skills are developed and parents released, all but briefly, to undertake other tasks. Employment opportunities are created for play leaders, community resources are utilised more effectively and Local Authority resources saved. All these benefits are achieved with volunteers as the initiators and managers of these activities.

The social and economic value of maintaining these two services within each small community is great and very important to those that use them. If people are to be encouraged to live in rural communities, contribute to the falling roll in many Primary Schools, and reduce their carbon footprint, then these basic services must continue to be available close at hand.

7 CONCLUSIONS AND OUTCOMES

The immediate outcomes of this survey of volunteers and their contribution into the management of community resources shows how important these facilities are in maintaining the whole fabric and infrastructure of village life in the smaller settlements of the Mearns area. Without these facilities, many people would be deprived of real contact and economic opportunity and services that have a large impact on their quality of life. As the economic turmoil and claw back of public funded investment manifests itself, we are increasingly dependent upon a vibrant, economically sustainable voluntary sector, managing community resources. These volunteers must be supported both financially and encouraged sensitively to continue with the responsibilities they willingly undertake to sustain rural community life and thereby meet the aspirations of the Scottish Government's key strategic priorities of Wealthier and Fairer; Healthier and Safer; Stronger and Greener people of Scotland.

- Volunteers within the MAP locus are prominent, active and take a lead in delivering social opportunities.
 - They run village halls, sports facilities and charitable fundraising events
 - They facilitate sporting activity which accounts for 25% of hall use, contributing to the healthier life styles of their communities
 - They provide employment opportunities for tradespeople, caterers, food and fabric suppliers
 - They offer employment opportunity to a range of child carers and playgroup leaders who utilise hall facilities more than any other group - 30%
 - They spend money in their local communities and support local businesses
 - They offer social trading discounts for local groups using community facilities
 - They make cash contributions to local charities and action groups supporting local initiatives

- They promote training and skills investment in volunteer bodies, increasing community capacity, communication and community welfare
- They bring a wide range of skills to any initiative and generally get things done
- They increase the community capacity to support the reduction of the contribution required of health workers, carers, and educationalists provided by the Local Authority.

8 RECOMMENDATIONS

(1) The issues surrounding volunteering in any capacity are well documented and the subject of much research. The demography of volunteers, however, must raise concern in many communities if services are to continue to be provided for the benefit of all.

The Local Authority should consider solutions as to how we encourage that large body of people in the 18-40 age group to contribute to voluntary activities. Football clubs, sports clubs, and youth groups must be incentivised to do more than just use these village resources – they must be encouraged to manage them too. Many people do not want to be involved organising the ever necessary round of fundraising events required to sustain village facilities. Financial incentive from the Local Authority which provides “core” funding in return for management service by user groups could offer a way ahead.

Developing collective responsibility across age groups to expand community enterprise and supporting young people’s development through representation on voluntary bodies must be an aim in building the capacity of volunteers.

(2) The provision for our young people within the MAP area is largely centred on Laurencekirk with smaller opportunities in St Cyrus, Luthermuir and Fettercairn. Recognising there is limited capacity within the Community Learning & Development Service to provide any more with the resources they have available, and fully appreciating the work they do, it is apparent that finance to provide more Youth Workers is required. Improving transport links between communities would inspire young people to get together, thus breaking down social barriers by coming to venues to participate in activities.

Members of the Youth Forum in Laurencekirk have recently highlighted some of the issues they want addressed: a swimming pool; places to “hang out”; better lighting around the skate park and tennis courts; village halls to allow youth events (dances, music etc); cheaper and better transport links in the evenings and at weekends; and sports facilities to be accessible, cheaper and offer more variety of activities.

Youth groups are sending out clear messages to policy makers and fund holders and their issues must be addressed if we are to ensure they become the future volunteers required to sustain communities and develop active citizenship principles.

(3) The structural and interior fabric of the community halls must be safeguarded and where necessary improved. Grant aid to achieve this must be readily available and not a complicated procedure to undertake. A small amount of investment here by the Local Authority has far-reaching benefits within our communities, as demonstrated by the important “focal point” halls have now become.

(4) The introduction of an annual awards ceremony which gives formal recognition of volunteering through a local award scheme and credits individuals for their accumulated effort. This is something that MAP could take on board and promote to highlight the value of volunteering within our communities.

(5) The introduction of a one stop shop to facilitate and simplify the plethora of legal and legislative requirements, grant and charitable funding sources to ease the burden for volunteers and guide them through the paperwork would be desirable.

(6) The disenfranchisement of the population of Edzell Woods should be addressed at the earliest opportunity by either directing Local Authority funding into the existing estate to modify buildings or by the building of a completely new hall facility.

(7) The opportunity to investigate best practice throughout Scotland in encouraging and sustaining voluntary bodies within rural communities should be investigated. Outcomes of transferable ideas and skills should be implemented across the community to enhance existing provision and further build the capacity of volunteering.

(8) Mearns Area Partnership could offer a key support role in achieving these objectives. Local people dealing with local issues and addressing specific needs. Core funding directed through MAP could support village halls, youth groups and a variety of initiatives.

The Mearns & Coastal Healthy Living Network, Mearns Community Transport Scheme, and the Laurencekirk Station Community Opening Celebrations all demonstrate a capacity of delivery of Community Planning objectives. Local Authority resources delivered and used directly by local communities, in community facilities run by local volunteers.

This is the template for local action. It is what Central Government aspires towards and where limited resources can have the most influence and impact on community life.

Dissemination – This report will be circulated for discussion to:

Mearns Area Partnership

- Community Councils
- Mearns and Coastal Healthy Living Network
- Glenbervie Community Association
- Edzell Woods Planning for Real Group
- Mearns Youth Forum
- Community Learning and Development Service – Aberdeenshire Council
- Social Work – Aberdeenshire Council
- Area Manager – Aberdeenshire Council
- NHS Grampian
- Elected Ward Members
- Laurencekirk Villages in Control
- Co-opted members

Aberdeenshire Council – Community Economic Development
Participating Village Halls and Organisations
Kincardine and Mearns Area Partnership
Kincardine and Mearns Community Planning Group
Kincardine and Deeside CVS – Voice
Scottish Council for Voluntary Service – SCVO
Aberdeenshire Council – Strategy Development Officer

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Environmental Impact Statement

MAP has good practice in place by: using recycled paper; re-using envelopes; and recycling all waste and ink cartridges. MAP communicates by email where possible to avoid undue use of paper and ink. Research for this report was done by telephone, where possible, to reduce use of vehicles.