



...ACT LOCAL

COMMUNITY PLANNING FOR
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The Dùthchas Handbook

The Strategy Process

The Tasks

Sustainability

1. Making a Start



Getting organised
Involving others
Focusing on sustainability

What do we mean by sustainability?

2. Mapping the Future



Building a Picture
Developing a Vision
Agreeing Priorities for Action

What is our vision for a sustainable community?

Describing the Area



Describing the area
Measuring change

How sustainable is our community?

3. Planning for Action



Focusing on the issues
Making the Strategic Links

How will we make our community more sustainable?

4. Making it Happen



Planning Projects
Organising
Setting up

What actions will deliver our sustainability objectives?

5. Measuring Progress

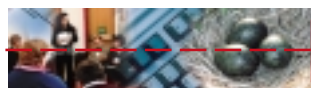


Measuring and Monitoring
Reviewing the Strategy

Have we improved the picture?

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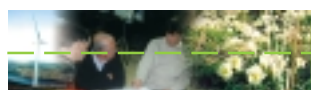
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Layout



Step

Task

Title of Task

Gaelic title

Purpose

Outlines the main objectives of this Task

Principles

Sets out the guiding principles or values upon which this Task is based

Actions

Action

Sets out the different activities and the main considerations in planning these



case study

Dùthchas Case Study

Gives useful insights into the Dùthchas experience.

case study

Case Study of other experiences

Provides some examples of the other relevant experiences.

Communications

Gives step-by-step information on how to plan communications

► Resources ►



People & time



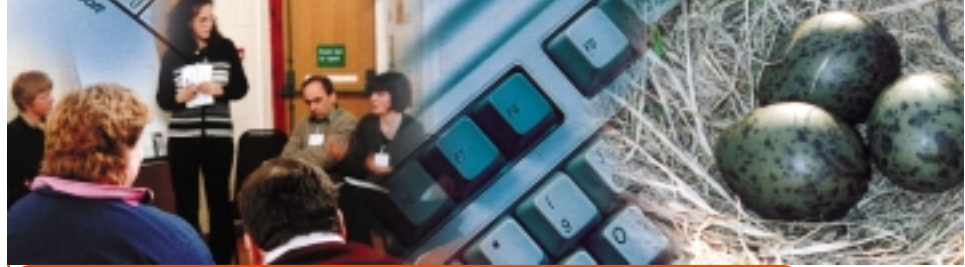
Information



Facilities & equipment



Funds



Foreword by Ross Finnie



Minister for Environment and Rural Development

When I met with members of the Dùthchas Project in Inverness, I was immediately struck by the obvious enthusiasm and commitment they had for this excellent initiative. My Deputy Minister, Rhona Brankin, was equally impressed when she visited. It was clear to both of us that the three communities involved and the Dùthchas Partnership organisations had thrown their weight behind the Project with hard work and dedication. There is no doubt that Dùthchas made progress in its aim of taking a new approach to building more sustainable communities.

I believe the Scottish Executive shares the same ethos as Dùthchas. From its inception, the Executive recognised that rural areas are diverse and distinct, have particular attractions and face particular challenges. That is why our Rural Affairs Department was created – to ensure that the rural dimension is reflected across *all* areas of Executive policy. Sustainable development is also at the heart of Executive policy. We are not just placing rural issues and sustainability at the core of Executive policy at philosophical level – it is backed up with a programme of action.

Our approach fits neatly with the Dùthchas ethos. Sustainability is about confident and healthy communities positively engaged in creating their own destiny and actively investing in their own assets. This Handbook is about how to begin that process in a creative and involving way.

To achieve sustainability, local people must be more involved in shaping their own environment and future. The focus is, quite rightly, increasingly on “community planning” with a recognition that this is about the community and the public bodies working as a team – bringing all groups together to identify and work towards shared goals. Commitment to sustainability begins at a personal and local level and involves everyone. It is about partnership – working together creatively to share and utilise our varied skills for a common purpose.

This Handbook is the product of a forward-looking demonstration project which was undertaken in the Scottish Highlands and Islands at the turn of the Millennium. The Dùthchas Project – with support from the EU LIFE Environment Programme – embraced a new approach to building more sustainable communities. This Handbook enables everyone to benefit from the many lessons learned during this work.

I am sure this Handbook will be helpful for everyone working for community development, within communities and as part of wider programmes. Community Planning, Local Agenda 21, Community Regeneration schemes, National Parks and Protected Area plans, are only a few of the current opportunities to use this imaginative approach.

This step-by-step guide describes a process of working with the community to develop a strategy for environmental, economic and social well-being in the local community. It demonstrates that the process is logical and based on common sense. It provides examples of what others have done and builds on the excellent learning experience of the Dùthchas Project.

I have great pleasure in commending this practical and highly relevant approach and all those who worked so hard to develop the Dùthchas Project. I believe this Handbook can offer advice to others who want to learn from Dùthchas and follow the lead of this excellent initiative in their own communities.

Published by the Dùthchas Project, June 2001

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Gaelic translation: Sine Gillespie, Dùthchas Area Co-ordinator for Trotternish

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Dùthchas

This handbook is intended to help others to learn from the experiences of the Dùthchas Project in planning for sustainable communities. Insights include the methods that we used, along with practical advice.

The Handbook contains details on each step that was taken, and some key lessons learned along the way. We do not proclaim that this is the blueprint for sustainable development in rural communities. We nevertheless feel able to recommend that others follow the Steps outlined here, and that the Handbook be something you consult, as and when you need to, in the course of your own process of community planning.

The CD Rom, which is attached to this Handbook, contains the full story of Dùthchas, and all of its publications. These are also available on the Dùthchas website, www.duthchas.org.uk. Together you should find this an invaluable tool kit to guide and help you in your work.

The Dùthchas Project was a pioneering initiative, aimed at finding new, practical solutions for developing rural areas in a more sustainable way. We did this by fully involving local communities and by working in partnership with the public bodies in a planned, strategic process.

The word **Dùthchas** is an old Gaelic term that speaks of strong, united, self-sufficient communities who actively look after their people, their heritage and their environment – we see this as the essence of sustainability.

The Project was funded from 1998 to 2001, as a demonstration, by the European Union LIFE Environment Programme and Scottish partner agencies. It worked with three pilot communities in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland – North Sutherland, Skye's Trotternish Peninsula and North Uist.

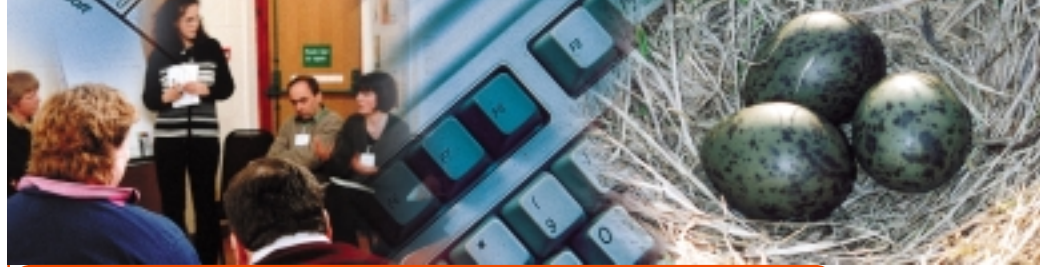
What were the objectives of Dùthchas?

- ▶ To listen to local people and focus energies on what is best for communities.
- ▶ To recognise the distinctive cultural identity of the communities involved and to find ways to nurture this identity.
- ▶ To better understand the value of the natural environment and find more sustainable ways to manage natural resources.
- ▶ To strengthen the local economy by building on local assets.
- ▶ To work with public agencies to gain their support and expert knowledge in converting good ideas into reality.

Dùthchas was based on the following core principles:

Sustainability	The main focus of the work was to identify solutions which would bring benefit to the people, their economy and environment with emphasis on the long term future.
Strategic approach	To plan for a more sustainable future, a strategic approach is essential. This builds on a collective vision and goals to shape an agreed path for development.
Participation	The full participation of local communities is essential to finding a development path that is appropriate and will receive the active support of the community.
Partnership	Partnership was a critical feature contributing to the success of the Dùthchas Project. This was reflected in the wide range of public sector bodies that actively participated.
Alignment	As each public body works to a particular remit, the Project tried to find ways of 'aligning' these to the aims of the local strategy.
Affordability	The process that was developed had to be affordable in normal circumstances, without the benefit of additional European funding.
Transferability	Dùthchas aimed to develop methods that could easily be adopted in other areas of Britain and Europe, thus reflecting its role as a demonstration project.

The Dùthchas project provided practical experience of listening to people and agencies, of building on local strengths and assets and of recognising that communities are a product of their history, their cultural identity and their natural surroundings. It set out to find practical ways of promoting community-based development in rural areas, of giving: *"everyone an opportunity to contribute so we all have a clear idea of where we want to go and how to get there"*.



Introduction

Local communities and sustainability

Dùthchas has discovered that when local people become fully involved in planning the future of their local area and community, this generates great energy, enthusiasm and ideas. When this involvement is more than a cursory consultation, it builds the foundations for a truly sustainable community – one which has:

- ▶ greater empowerment through building confidence, skills and co-operation
- ▶ a stronger sense of being a whole and integrated community
- ▶ stronger democracy through people participating in decisions that affect their lives
- ▶ an increased awareness of the local environment
- ▶ a better understanding of the importance of sustaining natural resources
- ▶ a deeper understanding of sustainability principles
- ▶ an awareness and involvement in developing the 'big' issues and new ways forward
- ▶ a stronger case for outside support and funding

The strategic approach proposed in this Handbook, provides the tools for enabling this.

What is an Area Sustainability Strategy?

It provides the framework for a community to plan comprehensively and to take action for sustainable development, both now and in the long-term future. It takes a strategic approach to shaping this, and fits in with the wider plans and policies of public bodies. It takes account of:

- ▶ the social, economic and environmental needs and resources of the area
- ▶ the impact that different activities might have on the needs and resources in the area
- ▶ the effect that activities in the area may have on other places and people, and on future generations.

An essential part of the Strategy is that it brings together the activities of many interest groups and organisations and links them around a common goal. It provides a framework in which to agree and organise:

- a **vision** for the future of the area
- the **objectives** which will help meet the vision
- the **actions** needed to make it happen
- the **roles** of the different players involved
- the **measures** which tell us whether we are making progress

Dùthchas wish to share with you their experiences of piloting this new approach to addressing these topical issues. Our links across Europe have shown us that the demand for this approach is high on the agenda everywhere. It is reasonable therefore to presume that many aspects of our work will be seen as relevant to others.

The methods documented in this Handbook are not specific to the Dùthchas Project. They are generic and can be used in other contexts and for other purposes. Our approaches to facilitating participation caused great interest and have already been replicated in other situations. The work we did to develop structured frameworks for planning and assessing sustainability was seen to break new ground and was considered to be applicable in other countries. Our sustainability checklist has already been successfully used in the UK and Sweden.

It is important however, to see this approach, not as an homogenous whole, but as a collection of optional steps. We would not advocate that Dùthchas be seen as a 'blueprint', but that others make judgements as to which aspects and approaches are appropriate to their situation. We have tried to point out some of the issues we discovered in doing this work which may help you to make this judgement.

How to use the Handbook:

We recommend that before using this Handbook, you:

- ▶ think ahead by browsing through and noting the layout and content of the steps
- ▶ think flexibly by considering the relevance of the different steps to your own situation
- ▶ think widely as to the many ways in which this work could relate to different situations

At the start of the Handbook, you will find 3 'pull-out' pages, which give signposts to finding your way around.



Step 1 Making a Start

'S e obair latha toiseachadh'
It's a day's work to start

Task 1.1

Purpose

GETTING ORGANISED

A' faighinn deiseal

Activities are centred on establishing ownership and responsibility for producing the Area Sustainability Strategy and putting in place the organisational framework. The principle purposes are:

- ▶ To set up a Strategy Team
- ▶ To develop a plan of action
- ▶ To outline resource requirements
- ▶ To gain support and funding

Principles

Ownership	Helping the whole community to identify with the Strategy and plan of action for making it happen.
Responsibility	Clarifying responsibilities for all those participating.
Accountability	Ensuring the accountability of the Strategy Team to those they represent.

Actions

Initiating the Strategy

Who should initiate the Strategy?

Who initiates the Strategy will depend on the context in which this work is being done.

It may be initiated by the community, or by a local authority, agency or non-governmental organisation. This may be for a variety of purposes - Community Planning; Local Agenda 21; Village Plans; National Park or Protected Area Plans, Community Regeneration etc.

Seeding the idea of the Strategy

How the idea is introduced is critical for the future 'ownership' of the process.

It may take a little time to gain acceptance of the idea. This may involve several meetings, including public meetings, to explore and shape the concept, build the team and gain their confidence.

Checking other initiatives

It is important to check on existing initiatives or strategies in the area that are similar or complementary. Understandably, there may be resistance from key players if they feel that another initiative is dealing with the same issues. Equally another initiative might complement the work, or act as a building block.

Gaining the interest and involvement of key players

Key players must agree to be involved – this may require seeking internal approval from their organisation or group. They may eventually become more formal 'partners' in the process.

Establishing a Strategy Team

A 'Strategy Team' will be needed to initiate and oversee the work. The composition of this Team will depend entirely on local circumstances. The long term objective is to put in place a partnership or organisation at local level, with the capacity to continue to implement and review a strategic process.

The roles of a Strategy Team

In building a Strategy Team, it is important to distinguish between the functions of management, steering and advice. This may lead to the need for 2 groups.

The management role is to look after the day-to-day running of the work, to oversee its implementation and monitoring, and to be responsible for the resources and management of any staff. For efficiency this should be a small group (3-5) drawn from the key players.

The steering role is to guide the work, root it firmly within the local context and create the critical links needed for its success. A steering group may well evolve into a long term and more formal partnership, which may take over the future implementation and review of the Strategy.



Who should be on the team?

Be clear about the role of the Team, and who you need for the work to succeed:

- ▶ Should it include both communities and agencies?
- ▶ Should it draw from both local and wider interests?
- ▶ What should be the position of any funding partners?
- ▶ What is a manageable number for your situation?
- ▶ How will the representatives be selected?

Formalising the Strategy Team

Consider holding a special meeting to gain the Team's consensus about:

- ▶ the aims of the Strategy
- ▶ the role of the Team in steering it
- ▶ the membership of the Team
- ▶ the 'terms of reference' for the Team

Facilitation

It is worth noting that the process about to unfold is one of 'partnership' and 'participation'. Special skills are required to 'facilitate' this process. A facilitator is chosen for their neutrality to the outcomes, their skills in drawing out the views of all, avoiding dominance of individuals or interests and gaining democratic consensus as to the way forward. It may be worth investing in training of potential facilitators at an early stage, or paying for 'professional' facilitation when necessary.

Developing a Plan of Action

The following questions are likely to be important:

What will be the main objectives?

The purpose of the Strategy must be clear and agreed at the outset.

It is important to set objectives, both for the overall Strategy and for each step in the process. Make sure that these are clear, relevant, achievable and agreed by the Team. The objectives should provide a clear guide to the work and the basis for evaluating progress at the end of each stage. Considerations may include:

- ▶ the ultimate objective
- ▶ breadth of focus
- ▶ time and resources available

What geographic area will it cover?

It is important that the Strategy covers the 'right' area – one that makes sense to local people and agencies and enables the work to be easily set within a wider planning context. It is worth putting some thought into the choice as it may well determine the success of the work. Considerations may include:

- ▶ the purpose of the Strategy
- ▶ resources and time available
- ▶ community 'cohesion' - an area that people traditionally relate to (eg. a parish)
- ▶ relationship to area boundaries used by agencies for planning and data collection
- ▶ natural boundaries and land management units

If considerations are complex, consider using GIS (Geographical Information System) or map overlay as an aid to decision making.

Who should be involved?

The different groups of people to be involved will be determined by the objectives of the Strategy and the composition of the area.

Considerations may include:

- ▶ the level of community involvement required
- ▶ the level of agency involvement required
- ▶ the range of interests required



What are the main stages of the process?

The main steps in producing the Strategy are set out on the inside front cover of the Handbook.

How long should it take?

An effective participatory process takes time, how long is determined by:

- ▶ the level of community involvement
- ▶ the size of the area and population
- ▶ any time constraints you may have

The choice of method will be directly related to the time available. In planning, be aware that time means different things to different people. Agencies may be governed by annual budget cycles, while communities may be affected by agricultural cycles (for instance).

case study

Time Scales- Dùthchas experience:



Setting up	6 - 12 months
Community Survey	3 - 6 months
Sustainability Profile	4 - 6 months
Strategy development	4 - 9 months
Implementation of first Actions	6 - 12 months
These stages may overlap.	

What resources will be needed?

An effective process needs resources. Develop a budget under key resource headings: personnel, travel & subsistence, office costs, events costs, publicity costs, communication costs.

Effective budgeting requires a good understanding of the demands of the process. Information Sheet 2 and the 'Resources' section in each Step will give an idea of the likely demands, sources and considerations.

Where are the funding sources?

Funding sources will vary with geographical area. Sources for a strategic planning process will be more limited than for specific projects. They are likely to include:

- ▶ UK government agencies & local authorities (probably in partnership)
- ▶ Charitable sources (Lottery is a useful source)
- ▶ EU sources (varied depending on area and focus)

The Strategy Team and stakeholders may include potential funding partners. Remember that no funding comes entirely without strings and each funder may wish to determine some outputs from the process or be involved in managing the work.

Dùthchas had funding from the EU LIFE Environment Programme and 11 public bodies

See Information Sheet 2 for ideas. **p8**

Agreeing the Plan of Action

It is important that the plan is understood and receives broad support from a good cross section of the people to be involved. Support could be sought through public meetings, media publicity, written consultation, etc.

See Information Sheet 1 for more help. **p6**



Setting Up

Raising the funds

At this point funding will be required before further work can be undertaken.

Depending on the context of the Strategy, different considerations may apply:

- ▶ **Who will be the lead partner?**
A lead partner will be needed to take responsibility for the funds. This must be an appropriately constituted body. In the case of a partnership, a public body may do this on behalf of the partnership.
- ▶ **How will the other partners relate to the lead partner?**
It may be necessary to set up a Partnership Agreement to formalise responsibilities for funds, decision making and implementation.

See Information Sheets 2 and 4. p8 p54

Appointing Community Agents

A first task on receipt of funds may be to appoint staff or 'Community Agents', to support the work on the ground. A rule of thumb is 1 full-time person will be needed for every 1000 people. Considerations are:

- ▶ People supporting community participation should ideally have good local knowledge, be able to relate well to the people of the area and have a track record of working with the community.
- ▶ They should also be able to relate well to the public bodies and be aware of their position in relation to the work.
- ▶ They should understand and have a strong interest in the objectives of the Strategy.
- ▶ They should demonstrate a willingness to learn about the methods and issues involved in the work – some of which may be quite complex.
- ▶ Job-sharing has proved to have many strengths in this work.

It is important to make the selection process as open and democratic as possible.

Communications

Focuses on:

- ▶ reinforcing the principles of transparency, ownership and accountability,
- ▶ establishing working relations with key journalists and media outlets,
- ▶ informing the community and agencies of the plans and gaining their support.

Resources



Co-ordinator (possibly an existing staff member of a local agency)
Strategy Team
6-12 months to complete this stage



Access to basic office facilities
Materials and venues for running meetings and workshops



Documentation about the area - partners strategies / consultation information / relevant newsletters



Co-ordinators time and travel
Office costs and materials
Meeting costs

Developing a Communications Plan

“Information is giving out, communication is getting through”

Why is a plan needed?

Effective communication is fundamental to the development and implementation of the Strategy. It underpins all the essential elements of the participatory process. It keeps people informed, invites their support and agreement and sustains their interest at each stage.

Without planning from the outset how communication is going to be tackled there is a genuine risk that the Strategy will “wither and die” due to loss of interest, motivation, commitment and momentum. Lack of good communication can also result in great confusion, with so many dispersed players involved.

Dùthchas experienced the very real difficulties in keeping so many people informed and having a shared understanding. Nothing is more likely to reduce support than misinformed rumour.

What is its purpose?

The purpose of a Communications Plan is to enable:

- ▶ awareness raising
- ▶ exchange of experience
- ▶ reinforcing key principles
- ▶ gaining support and approval
- ▶ informing and updating
- ▶ sustaining momentum and enthusiasm
- ▶ institutional learning in partner agencies

How is it developed?

The Strategy Team will set out a forward plan of how communication will be managed at all stages. Consideration should be given to:

- ▶ Who do we need to communicate with?
- ▶ What information needs to be shared?
- ▶ What will be the most effective means of communicating this information?
- ▶ How regularly we need to communicate?

Answers to these questions will form the basis of the Plan.

Is expert help needed?

Because of the critical importance of communications in this process, consider taking professional guidance and support at the outset, and throughout the process. This will include specialists in:

- ▶ the content and method of communicating information
- ▶ the technology – IT/video/press/artwork etc

Such guidance in designing your Communications Plan can save time and resources later.

What will it cost?

An effective Communications Plan will cost money to implement. Dissemination tools can be surprisingly expensive, especially where publications and professional graphics are involved. Do not attempt to construct a budget for this until you are happy with your Plan, and have consulted with professionals in the field. This element of project funding is usually greatly underestimated, in the false assumption that it is not as important as the work on the ground.

What will it contain?

The Plan will be a step by step guide to the communication tools to be used at each stage.

At the start of the strategy process, communication will be focused on raising awareness and informing and updating people about the start up phase and events. Methods that will assist here are word of mouth, public meetings, use of local newspapers, posters, local radio and TV, use of the internet via local web sites. At this early stage it will also be essential to establish a good working relationship with key local journalists and media outlets.

Once the Strategy is underway, communication will focus on giving information, reinforcing principles and gaining support and approval. This can be done through issuing leaflets, reports, newsletters, newspaper articles and continued use of a web site. It will be worth considering a regular local media slot to raise awareness of the issues connected with sustainability. The aim will be to engage local interest and make the concept of sustainability vital and relevant.

In the longer term communications will be used to keep people involved and to sustain momentum and enthusiasm. Celebratory events, press or newsletter articles, interactive web site pages and local TV or radio coverage will all help.

What are the methods?

The methods employed will depend on the specific purpose, the local context and the target audience. They may involve:

- ▶ effective use of the media
- ▶ written material & publications
- ▶ theatre, art, video, film
- ▶ exchange visits/information events
- ▶ multi-media and internet
- ▶ expert systems – eg. GIS

Dùthchas used all of these in its communications.

Communications boxes

At the end of each section in this Handbook, you will find a 'Communications' box which sets out the main considerations for planning that Step.

Resource planning

The main principles of resource planning are:

- ▶ Making best use of what already exists within the community
- ▶ Accessing resources in a way which in its self is sustainable
- ▶ Recognising and using both financial and non-financial resources
- ▶ Ensuring there is accountability to investors - the community itself or external investors

It is important to have an overall picture of what you want to do and what you might need. It is unlikely you will get what you want from one source, so putting together a resource package will be important. This can be split into financial and non-financial resources.

Funding trends

There have been some significant changes in the funding climate for community initiatives, which have an impact on the capability to generate financial support.

- ▶ In the 1970's it was possible to fund a project completely from one source.
- ▶ In the 1980's European Programmes began to play a significant role in funding training and community regeneration projects. The private sector also began to increase its support for community initiatives. There was a move away from support for particular organisations (eg tenants associations, village hall committees) and general development work to a greater emphasis on issues (eg regeneration, employment).
- ▶ The 1990's were noted for an emphasis on fixed term project work and a move away from single source funding to the necessity to seek matching resources and put together funding packages.
- ▶ Funding from the National Lottery Charities Board has become a major source of support for voluntary and community projects as has Government funding in support of national policy and programme developments.

Resource audit

An audit of what exists and where and how to access it is a useful first start:

- ▶ Who is currently providing funding for what?
- ▶ What skills, equipment, buildings, services already exist within the community?
- ▶ What can partners contribute?

Financial resources

Preparing applications for funding

The average ratio of successful to unsuccessful applications to the major Charities was stated recently as one to nine. This is partly because of increased competition and partly because grant applications are often left to the deadline and rushed. With care, the success rate can be significantly improved.

What makes quality in an application?

It meets the criteria - Each funder will have specific requirements: type of organisations who can apply, target group, activities which will/ won't be supported, maximum grant, type of grant. While it is possible introduce some flexibility the project must broadly fit the criteria.

It is cost effective - Will the return for the investment of the grant give value for money?

It is based on demonstrable need - There needs to have been sufficient background research done to show that the project is really needed and that it has the support of key organisations and existing and potential users with an interest in the activity

It specifies outputs and outcomes - What will happen if the grant is awarded?

Outputs are the tangible and direct results eg. '50 individuals will be trained in footpath construction', 'a new community centre will be built'.

Outcomes have longer term effects eg. 'The incidence of domestic violence is likely to fall', 'people will be more aware of their environment'.

It will succeed - Does the organisation have effective financial and operational management systems? Is the project adequately resourced? Will it achieve its aims and objectives?

It has an effective exit strategy - How will the project, services provided or the organisation continue after the funding has ceased? Which parts will no longer exist having achieved their aims?

Helpful reminders/warnings

most commonly quoted reasons why applications have not been successful are:

- ▶ the application was not signed at all, or by the appropriate people
- ▶ there was insufficient evidence of need
- ▶ there was no real evidence of consultation
- ▶ the required additional documentation (accounts, constitution) was not provided
- ▶ the application did not meet the criteria

Non-financial resources

People

Volunteers are an invaluable source of labour, skills and experience. Be aware of the contribution they can make and also the limitations as described in Task 1.2. They are also the key to effective local fund raising, through helping and organising events. Grant awarding organisations like to see a contribution from the community itself.

Being able to find and use volunteers is not just a means to get things done but can be an important part of capacity building, often involving people who might not see the opportunity otherwise to contribute.

Buildings, equipment and materials

The range of facilities and equipment that have been used, both in participation exercises and in the action which follow, is extensive. It includes shop fronts, halls, notice boards, workshops, typewriters, PC's, printers, paper, graphic materials, paint, wood, vehicles, audio and video equipment and more.

Services

It is also not just facilities and equipment that can be accessed to good effect. Often services - photocopying, accounting, building, design, writing, computing - can be had for little or no cost. It is best again to look locally first and then spread the net wider.

A feature of the last few years has been the growing number of LETS or local enterprise trading schemes, where goods and services can be exchanged at no financial cost. It may be worthwhile to also explore this option.



Task 1.2

INVOLVING OTHERS

Ag obair còmhla ri chèile

Participation doesn't just happen, it must be initiated, guided and sustained. The way in which this is done can completely alter the outputs. Participation is closely related to issues of social inclusion, democracy and power. Its effects can be far reaching and can also be seen as threatening to some.

Purpose

Activities concentrate on establishing widespread ownership and responsibility for the Area Sustainability Strategy and the formation of effective partnerships. The principle purposes are:

- ▶ Defining the principles of participation
- ▶ Identifying the stakeholders and other interested parties
- ▶ Forming partnerships
- ▶ Developing a communications process

Principles

Ownership	Getting people to play a positive active role in addressing the priorities they have helped to identify
Inclusiveness	Bringing all interested people together to share a diversity of ideas
Transparency	Building trust and rapport through being open and responsive to ideas
Partnership	Encouraging flexibility and diversity in shared working and decision-making
Accountability	Ensuring clarity about responsibilities and reporting progress
Capacity building	Building experience and confidence in shared planning and problem solving

Actions

Defining the Objectives for Participation

It is important to be clear at the outset about the purposes of the intended participation.

Why is participation needed?

Considerations will include:

- ▶ gaining community ownership and support
- ▶ rooting the Strategy in the reality of the area
- ▶ increasing awareness of the issues
- ▶ increasing confidence and empowering local people to take action for sustainability
- ▶ involving 'non-joiners' and those often excluded
- ▶ reducing conflict
- ▶ achieving agency support and links to plans and policy

What are the core principles?

The participatory process adopted should be shaped by the core principles established at the start. These relate the overall objectives of the work to good practice in participation.

The 'Principles' box above lists some fundamental guiding principles.

At the outset of the Dùthchas Project a set of guiding principles were established for the participatory part of the work.



case study

Guiding principles for effective participation

- ▶ purpose driven and relevant
- ▶ inclusive not exclusive
- ▶ flexible and self regulating
- ▶ equal opportunity
- ▶ involving of diverse interests
- ▶ accountable
- ▶ time efficient
- ▶ commitment to implementation



What level of participation will be needed?

Effective participation is most likely when each of the key interests or stakeholders is satisfied with the level at which they are involved. The classic analysis of the levels of the 'ladder of participation' is:

1. Acting together
2. Deciding together
3. Consultation
4. Information seeking
5. Informing

Participation and ownership increases from the bottom to the top of the ladder. The choice of which level is appropriate for which stakeholder group will depend on their relation to the main purpose of the work eg. :

- ▶ A community based Strategy, which requires local action to implement, will require that the community are as fully involved as possible – levels 1-2.
- ▶ If the support of Government agencies is required to develop and implement the Strategy, they should also be involved at levels 1-2.
- ▶ If an external interest group is interested in the Strategy but is unlikely to be affected by it, levels 4-5 may be sufficient.
- ▶ However if they are likely to present an obstacle to its success, if their considerations are not taken into account, level 3 would be more appropriate. etc.

It is a dynamic process and as people become more skilled, organised and confident they will want to move up and down the ladder as tasks dictate.

The choice of methods used for participation will vary for each level.

Identifying the Stakeholders

When identifying those who should be involved in the work it is important to identify the key 'stakeholders' – ie. those who have an interest in, and will be affected by the Strategy.

Stakeholders may include local interest groups, residents, businesses, public agencies, external organisations and interest groups. They may be interested in the area as a whole or have a particular subject or smaller area interest. Key stakeholders from these groups can be identified by asking the questions listed in the Dùthchas example below:

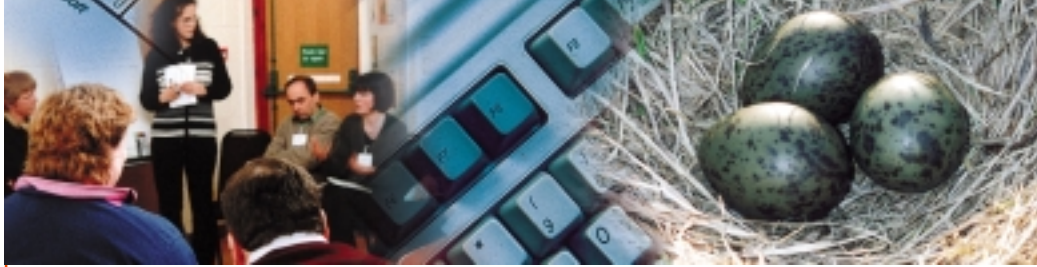
case study

Identifying the Stakeholders



Dùthchas identified the key stakeholders by carrying out in a participatory workshop with local people. In small groups, people were asked to 'brainstorm' the stakeholders under each of the following categories. The same was done with agencies by written consultation:

- ▶ *individuals who would be a crucial resource to the project*
- ▶ *organisations and individuals who might be directly affected by project activities*
- ▶ *organisations and individuals who might be indirectly affected by project activities*
- ▶ *organisations who wished to be involved whom it was crucial to involve*
- ▶ *organisations and individuals who might feel threatened by project activities*
- ▶ *key individuals whom the project should seek to involve*



Involving the Stakeholders

Once the stakeholders have been identified and the objectives for their participation established, it is important to reflect on how they will be involved in the process. Each may have different expectations, contributions to make and agendas.

Involving the community

In a 'community-based Strategy' the local community is likely to be the main focus of the involvement, it is therefore important to consider the following questions:

Who is the community?

Local communities can be represented in different ways:

- ▶ as local interest or representative groups, possibly area focused eg. Community Councils or single interest groups eg. sports clubs, cultural societies
- ▶ as businesses/ work groups – most people in the community will have a business interest – farmers, shop-keepers, contractors, service providers etc. These may or may not have local representative bodies
- ▶ as social groups – eg. old, young, handicapped people
- ▶ as individuals

Who are the movers and shakers?

There will be individuals within communities who have leadership roles because of their position: local minister, head teacher, doctor perhaps. While it is important to involve these people, are there other activists who really make things happen and without whose support participation would be less effective. Also, bear in mind that there are people out there whose talents are untapped, and they just need the opportunity to become active.

Where is the community?

Reaching people in the community requires some thought. If your objective is to enable full involvement of local people, identifying the places and situations in which people gather together will help to shape your approach. – eg. places of work, school, recreation, home. Expecting most people to come to you will be unrealistic. To engage many of the most important and least heard voices, you will have to reach out to them. Many people will respond best in a one-to-one situation.

What assistance is available from those with a responsibility for supporting and encouraging participation?

There will almost certainly be public sector community workers, voluntary sector community development agents, or private sector workers who can assist with the consultation.

What might we reasonably expect from community volunteers?

Practically all community members you wish to involve will be volunteers – ie. their participation will be in their own time and at their own expense. This fact is often overlooked when designing a participatory process. Depending on the strength of community spirit, many people will be prepared to invest substantial time in working for the future of their community. We might ask ourselves the question, is it fair to ask this of volunteers? With the best will in the world there are other demands on their time. Key questions will be: What is the minimum time input required to achieve the purpose and build ownership? Can we raise a budget to pay for some of this time? What support and training can we give? How do we ensure cover if volunteers have to pull out?

How do we communicate with the community?

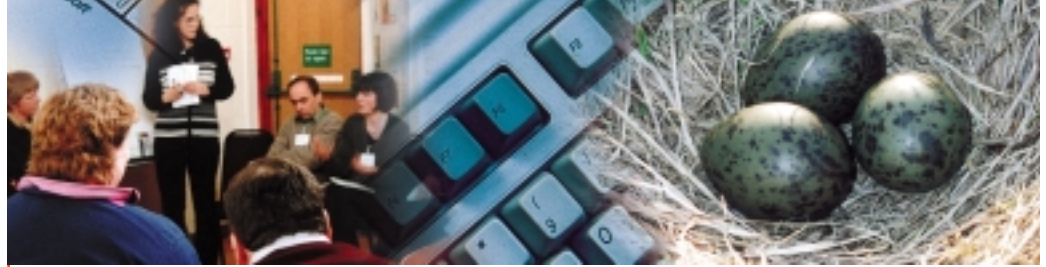
Information Sheet 1 deals with the various ways of talking to the community. The use of appropriate language is the foundation of good communication. Professional jargon can be very intimidating – and the death of communication so it will be important to keep language simple, to the point and reflective of local culture.

See *Information Sheet 1* p6

Involving the agencies

By 'agencies' we normally mean public bodies – both central and local government. However, there may be other voluntary or private organisations involved. It will be essential to involve several institutions of this kind to achieve a successful, agreed and supported Strategy, and to provide the broad focus of interests to achieve a common approach to 'sustainability'. A quick assessment of the roles of the various bodies will reveal those whose work most influences sustainability in the area.

This may be surprising, but Dúthchas had 21 'partner' agencies supporting its work.



Agencies differ from communities in some key ways, which affect their participation:

- ▶ they may represent the national, regional or even international interest
- ▶ they may have a narrow 'sectoral' focus of activity
- ▶ they may be limited by statute as to their activities
- ▶ they are unlikely to be focused solely on the interests of a single local area
- ▶ they will be governed by strategic plans and work programmes which may be inflexible in the short term or at local level
- ▶ they may have many internal departments necessitating good internal communication
- ▶ their representatives are paid, and may be available only within the working day
- ▶ junior staff may not have the discretion to take any decisions

Key considerations in planning for the involvement of agencies will be:

- ▶ forming an informal 'partnership' between the agencies involved and the project
- ▶ gaining consent for the work, well in advance, at a high level
- ▶ building realistic time and resource inputs into staff work plans and budgets
- ▶ gaining the appropriate level/ skill/ focus of staff involvement for the job
- ▶ identifying and opening internal links between critical departments
- ▶ ensuring that any staff whose focus is local to the area are informed and involved from the outset
- ▶ identifying and agreeing the most appropriate and acceptable ways of involving agency staff
- ▶ providing a full 'induction' to the Strategy objectives and process to all those who will be involved, and allowing local staff to help shape the approach.

Identifying Appropriate Methods for Involvement

Every situation is unique and there are no blue-prints. Each situation will require its own solutions to be tailored. The choice of methods for participation will vary depending on:

- ▶ the **objectives** of participation
- ▶ the core **principles** for participation
- ▶ the specific **outputs** required for the particular stage of the work
- ▶ the **stakeholders** to be involved
- ▶ the **level** of participation required
- ▶ the **scale** of the area and population
- ▶ the **time and resources** available
- ▶ the existing level of **community organisation**
- ▶ **previous experience** of consultations

It is a common mistake to suppose that one method can be used for any level or purpose.

Methodologies used in participation are numerous and varied. It would not be appropriate to look at these in any depth here as there are many other manuals devoted to this purpose.

Please see Appendix 1 'Useful Reading' **p59**

Information on the methods used in the Dùthchas process are included in each of the appropriate steps. You can also read about them on the CD Rom, which is attached.

Forming Partnerships

The work of developing an agreed Area Sustainability Strategy will require that many different groups and organisations be involved, to ensure support and ownership of the Strategy. This is commonly referred to as a 'partnership'.

'Partnerships' are now a common feature of life. However 'Partnership' is a buzz-word which covers all manner of "sins". Basically it means working with different groups and organisations to achieve a common aim. The complexity comes in relation to the range of partners involved, the extent of their different roles and their relationship to each other and to the work.

Communities often feel like 'unequal partners'. They are in a weak position in relation to agencies in terms of financial resources. They can also be intimidated by their structures, procedures and language. But communities contribute essential experience, knowledge and time, without which the partnership would be much less effective.



The Strategy development work will require at least a statement of commitment from the main 'partners' involved. This is commonly referred to as a 'partnership agreement'. At its most simple this means a statement of support for the aims of the work. At a more complex level, it may mean a formal agreement as to the role of each partner. The level of agreement required must be worked out by assessing:

- ▶ the number and type of 'partners' needed to make the work a success
- ▶ the range of roles and relationships required to implement the work
- ▶ the extent of the commitment and responsibilities to funding, resources and staff

For more information on Partnership Agreements see Information Sheet 2. **p8**

Awareness and Training

Setting out to involve so many players, in a relatively complex process, will require early and continuing attention to awareness-raising and training. This will involve different approaches for different players, but should be an on-going part of the work at each stage.

Awareness-raising is considered in more detail in the 'Communications Plan' See Information Sheet 1. **p6**

More formal training will only be needed for the Community Agents and main partners. This training will focus on the process and methods to be used at each stage. Training sessions are a useful way of bringing the main players together on a regular basis to renew their understanding of the process. They can also be used to set the objectives for each step of the work and to evaluate these at the end of each step – and they can be fun!!

Who's Who?

One of the most difficult things to work with and to predict are the implications of the different roles which different players may perform.

Key considerations are:

- ▶ 'He who pays the piper calls the tune' – never underestimate the power of money. Funders will always wish to maintain some control over the use of their funds. This has implications for equality in 'partnerships' between funders and communities.
- ▶ Equally, those who are paid by funders cannot be completely neutral. They may be sensitive to, subject to or just perceived to be controlled by the funders. This applies both to staff and contractors.
- ▶ 'Some are more equal than others' – every community has its 'usual suspects' – those who dominate community life and committees. It can be difficult to work around these people and involve the 'silent majority'.
- ▶ Within communities there will be many 'unseen' power structures and struggles which will influence who says what and to whom. Some conflicts associated with different factions may go back years, and they can pop up when least expected.
- ▶ Most players will be sensitive to the political direction of those most important to them – politicians, funders, local leaders.

All of these can cause unexpected tensions and shifts in balance. It is important to try to identify such power balances early on to avoid being caught out by them. Initiatives such as this, especially if introduced from outwith the area, can easily become the target for 'scapegoat' attack as a result of unseen local tensions & politics, which may have nothing to do with the project itself. It is also important to beware of key individuals carrying too many, possibly conflicting, roles eg. resource controller, representative and facilitator.

Communications

Focuses on:

- ▶ building the main components of the Communications Plan
- ▶ building in the needs of different players
- ▶ full and effective use of the media

Resources



Volunteers, Community Agents, Community Groups and Agencies



Volunteers expenses
Training for Community Agents/volunteers



Task 1.3

Purpose

Principles

Actions

FOCUSSING ON SUSTAINABILITY

A' toirt sùil air rudan a sheasas anns an ùine fhada

At the outset of the work, this task is designed to place the focus firmly on 'sustainability'. This is what marks this Strategy out from any other development process. The work will involve raising the profile of sustainability throughout the area and with the partners, and working with them to identify clear and agreed principles for sustainability, upon which the Strategy will be based.

Sustainability	Rooting the Strategy on the principles of sustainability
Awareness	Raising awareness of sustainability with the community and partners
Integration	Combining social, economic and environmental dimensions and relating these to wider definitions of sustainability set at national and international levels
Involvement	Encouraging everyone to become involved in establishing the core sustainability principles for their area
Ownership	Through involvement, enabling a sense of shared ownership of the principles

Raising Awareness

This Strategy is focussing on sustainability - setting it apart from a normal development strategy. This may cause some confusion, unless the issue is addressed clearly and directly at the outset. Sustainability is a difficult and nebulous concept. People may feel resistant to it as being jargon, trendy, just about the environment, just for professionals. However, Dùthchas discovered that working with sustainability as a framework had the effect of adding greatly to the value and dimensions of any development idea. Sustainability was found to be about all aspects of life and about enhancing the quality of life in all respects. This message needs to be communicated at the start and people helped to explore the different dimensions of the concept.

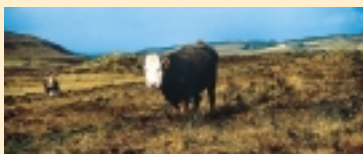
This could be done by working through the media and local events:

- ▶ Consider using local radio to run a series of programmes on various aspects of sustainability.
- ▶ Try to find a well known 'champion' to front the media work.
- ▶ Take out a regular page in the local press to encourage debate and contributions from a variety of perspectives.
- ▶ Hold an exhibition or theatre event.
- ▶ Run schools events and competitions.

Generally try to get everyone 'into the mood' for the work to come. Make it exciting, colourful and fun.

Dùthchas case study

Sustainability Examples



Dùthchas found it useful to be able to give people examples that they could relate to. We found the best example for our areas was the traditional 'crofting' lifestyle in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland. This lifestyle is still practised by some and is in living memory for many. It meant working

the land in harmony with nature, sowing in order to reap, sharing the harvest with everyone, working together towards common goals, knowing the reason you take every action, and never taking more from nature than you need. If you've got an example as good as that, your job is done!



Defining Sustainability

The work to come must be set clearly within the context of sustainability. This will not 'just happen', it will need to be helped and shaped. People may have an intrinsic understanding of sustainability, but may not find it easy to apply this to the decisions they take. What is needed is a simple guide that can be used to shape choices – some agreed Sustainability Principles, relevant to the local area.

What does it mean to the community?

The Principles will only have meaning locally if they have been shaped locally. This will involve the community in creating its own definition of sustainability, as it applies to its own area. But setting this within a wider understanding of sustainability.

To do this people will be encouraged to:

- ▶ explore the concept of sustainability as understood nationally and internationally,
- ▶ consider and define clearly what they understand by sustainability locally,
- ▶ agree a set of sustainability principles which meet the local situation.

It will be important to do this work, both with the Strategy Team and the wider community, probably in workshops held in local communities, or as part of other events.



case study

Sustainability Definitions



As time went on, our own ethical definitions for sustainability grew within us. We'll share them with you for interest, although you should create your own. We would not wish to suggest that these are "right" or "wrong" or conclusive, but we lived with them for a time, and they made sense to us.

- ▶ *To have a clear and strong sense of identity*
- ▶ *To have confidence and believe in ourselves*
- ▶ *To value everybody and offer everybody the chance to earn a living using their individual talents*
- ▶ *To be positively engaged in creating our own destiny*

- ▶ *To be the enthusiastic guardian of our surrounding natural and cultural inheritance, today and tomorrow*
- ▶ *To aim to deliver local needs locally*
- ▶ *To consider the effects of our actions on future generations*
- ▶ *To identify a realistic way forward for the community*

It was also useful to gather a proverb or two which held inspiration. For example, we used this Gaelic one: "An rud a bhios na do bhroin, cha bhi e na do thiomhnadh" which translates to "That which you have wasted will not be there for future generations."

Nesting within wider definitions

As sustainability is now widely used in the policies of governments and authorities, at every level, it is important that the local community understands how to make its own definition 'nest' with these wider definitions. This will make the Area Sustainability Strategy more appropriate to the agencies to work with.

The easiest way to achieve this is to present a simple review of wider definitions at the regional and national levels, and encourage a discussion of these before people attempt to produce their own definition.

See the case study boxes for examples. **p17**



case study

Sustainability Definitions

Two important definitions of sustainability are:

► Bruntland: "Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs"

► IUCN "Development that improves the quality of human life while living within the capacity of supporting ecosystems"

"An rud a bhois na do bhroin, cha bhi e na do thiomhnadh"

"That which you have wasted will not be there for future generations"

Communications

Focuses on:

- enlisting the support of local or national personalities
- creative use of the media
- the use of a page in local newspapers/ newsletters to act as a forum for discussion
- engaging speakers from a range of perspectives
- working with schools
- celebrating and circulating the sustainability principles

► Resources ►



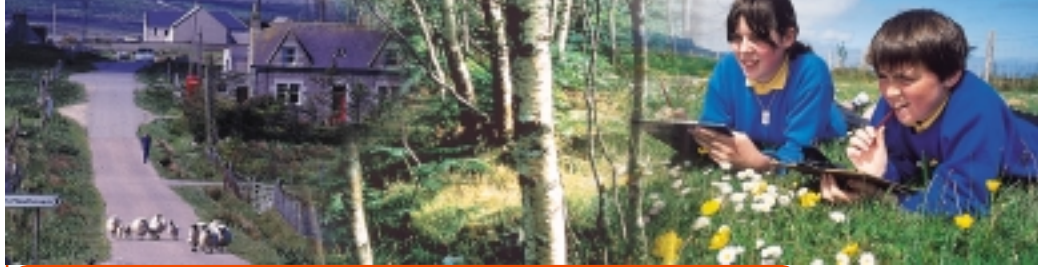
Trained facilitator



Venues and resources for public meetings/media events



Facilitator's costs, including training



Step 2 Mapping the Future

A' deanamh slighe air adhart

Task 2.1

BUILDING A PICTURE

A' togail dealbh

Purpose

This task will focus on gathering information on the current status of the area in relation to the Sustainability Principles (developed in Task 1.3). Both qualitative and quantitative information will be gathered from communities and agencies to:

- ▶ Build a picture of the area's strengths and challenges in relation to sustainability.
- ▶ Gather initial ideas on improving the area's sustainability.
- ▶ Identify information, contacts and resources for future action.

Principles

Inclusive	Full involvement of a wide cross-section of people in the area, including those who do not normally have a voice, and of the agencies serving the area.
Democratic	Open involvement in deciding the priorities for the area.
Relevant	Founded on local values and knowledge.
Empowering	Enabling local people to set the agenda, identify priorities and create the links.
Transparent	Ensuring that all information gathered is fully accessible to and shared by everyone in its original form.

Actions

Planning the Initial Review

The Initial Review process is a very formative stage of the work, if done well it will:

- ▶ provide the foundations for all that follows
- ▶ provide the baseline information about the area and people's ideas for its future
- ▶ be the first stage of involvement for the wider community
- ▶ generate a great amount of energy and support for the work locally
- ▶ generate a wealth of ideas and information

If not planned and carried out well, it can also set the work off on the wrong foot, and cause confusion and unrealistically raised expectations. Careful planning is therefore essential.

In the Dùthchas Project, this stage of the work was extremely popular with the community. It generated a high level of involvement and an excellent foundation of ideas to work from. These ideas are still being used by local agencies.

Setting the objectives of the review

The first stage is to set clear, relevant and achievable objectives. These will guide the work and provide the basis for evaluating this task. The objectives for the Initial Review should:

- ▶ be in line with the 'Purpose' (see above) and will clarify how this is to be achieved
- ▶ reflect the 'Principles' above
- ▶ ground this stage of the work in the 'Sustainability Principles' developed in the previous step



Dùthchas Initial Review Objectives



1. *To meet with as wide a cross section of people living in each area as possible in the time available.*
2. *To enable these people to identify, analyse and record the following:*
local initiatives (what, where, who involved)
local information and resources (what, where, what needed)
local values/strengths and issues/challenges (what people like and or dislike about their area) and ideas for change
local priority (locally preferred) ideas for the future
3. *To engage positively with local people and with agency staff*
4. *To raise realistic expectations*
5. *To build trust and rapport by connecting with people in a way that is comfortable for them*
6. *To plan and execute a major publicity and dissemination event in each area at the end of the Initial Review*
7. *To monitor and evaluate how well the above objectives have been achieved*
8. *To ensure that people feel valued and are thanked for their contribution.*

Identifying the information needed

Having set the objectives for the Initial Review, identify the types of information needed to meet your objectives. This will vary depending on the overall focus of the Strategy.

Objective 2 of the Dùthchas example sets the broad framework.

Consider the depth and breadth of information needed and where it is likely to be found. At this stage it is important to be realistic about the resources and time available to you for gathering the information. The essential rule is to keep it simple and to the point.

Sustainability is about “quality of life” as experienced by local people, but also about the measurement of the critical social, economic and environmental components of the area. The information gathered must reflect both aspects. The Sustainability Principles developed in Step 1.3 should give a guide to the considerations at this stage. **p15**

Identifying the sources of information

Essentially there are 2 types of information:

- ▶ Qualitative information comes from people’s views and feelings
- ▶ Quantitative information comes from the facts and figures recorded about the area by expert bodies and others

Both types are important in this work.

Information will come from 2 main sources: the local people and the expert organisations. The comparative relationship between the views of these groups will be important in building the full picture of the area. You should ask focused questions about who represents the local community in all its dimensions, and which expert organisations hold what information.

Identifying the most appropriate methods

The process adopted for the Initial Review must reflect:

- ▶ the key principles (listed above at the start of this Step)
- ▶ the nature of the information to be gathered
- ▶ the involvement of both communities and agencies
- ▶ the size of the area and its population
- ▶ the time and resources available

A wide range of methods is available for carrying out local surveys. However there is often confusion about choosing the most appropriate method for the situation. Many failures in community participation have been caused by the wrong choice of method.



Methods fall into some basic groups:

- ▶ discussion based - workshops/focus groups/conferences,
- ▶ document based – questionnaires and circulars,
- ▶ interview based - structured and semi-structured,
- ▶ visual - graphical and map-based.

Each of these has its own limitations as to appropriateness, skills, resources, audience, topic focus (eg. map-based methods are most appropriate for spatial/ physical information; questionnaires require sophisticated systems for design and analysis; workshops will provide a good idea of key issues, but few details).

Some useful references for further reading are given in Appendix 1.

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case study

Identifying the most appropriate methods



Dùthchas opted for a simple - but involving - process in 2 stages:

1. *Gathering information through open public workshops and individual interviews with people, as and where they preferred (in the local shop; at their homes, etc).*

2. *Confirming and prioritising ideas through travelling exhibitions*

(fully documented in the Dùthchas Initial Review reports available on the CD Rom and the Dùthchas Website).

Preparing the Community Agents

The review process will need people to organise and facilitate it. The 'facilitators' and/or Community Agents (who can be trained to facilitate) can be drawn both from professional community workers and from the local community.

The process of gathering the information will require a basic understanding of the principles and methods to be employed. The facilitators will need some simple training in their role. This is not a complex task, but should be delivered by an experienced facilitator, familiar with the particular methods to be used. Please note that friendly people who really enjoy communication are off to a head start!

Once these people have been trained, they can be useful in the area for future work of this kind. Consider creating a network of trained Community Agents and publicising it to local agencies etc.



case study

Preparing the Community Agents



Dùthchas placed emphasis on training their local Co-ordinators. The successful facilitation of the Initial Review process was dependent on these people having:

- ▶ *respect for people's differences, as well as for local perceptions, traditions and ideas*
- ▶ *belief in the capacity of all people to identify, analyse and record information about their locality'*
- ▶ *an open mind and no pre-conceived solutions or theories*
- ▶ *skills to prevent those who normally dominate from having more than their equal say*

- ▶ *a strategy to monitor who is and who is not having an opportunity to participate*
- ▶ *understanding of how to reduce the barriers to involvement*
- ▶ *understanding of how to keep and report on all information gathered, in the words in which it was expressed*
- ▶ *a commitment to using simple, everyday language and avoiding jargon, which can be intimidating and a communication barrier.*



Carrying Out the Community Review

The main stages in this work are:

- ▶ gathering information
- ▶ tracking participants
- ▶ feeding back the information gathered
- ▶ confirming and prioritising the ideas

The process for gathering information will depend on the choice of methods you have made. A range of options and ideas is listed below.

Framing the questions

Careful thought must be given to framing the questions to be sure that they will get at the information you require, whilst being appropriate to the participants. Consider the following:

- ▶ Are the questions user-friendly, can they be answered by anyone in the community?
- ▶ Do they get at the real issues for sustainability, based on your Sustainability Principles?
- ▶ Are they limited to the absolute minimum number for the purpose?
- ▶ Are they clear, un-ambiguous and not leading questions?

case study

Survey Questions



Dùthchas found three simple questions – ‘likes, dislikes and ideas for change’ – were very effective in eliciting a great variety of responses. They were very easy for anyone to respond to. The questions on their own will not, however, necessarily secure answers focused on the issues of sustainability. People tend to respond to the here and now

and often the small scale issues. The questions must be clearly set within a sustainability framework. For the agencies, these questions were too broad. They required more focus on the remit of each organisation. However, avoid many detailed questions, which could be perceived to be difficult and lead to a lot of “don’t knows”.

Open public meetings

One of the best ways of generating ideas and debate, is to bring people together. This could take the form of a community conference or smaller workshops with key groups.

- ▶ To ensure a broad representation, the event should be advertised well and invitingly throughout the area. The whole community should be invited.
- ▶ Make sure the venue and timing is accessible to the whole community.
- ▶ Plan the information to be gathered at the meeting and the methods for gathering it.
- ▶ Make a realistic ‘timeline’ to ensure you have ample time to achieve this.
- ▶ Organise the venue well in advance and make the layout friendly and egalitarian – ie. no ‘top table’ with theatre style rows of chairs.
- ▶ Provide welcoming refreshments at the start and at half time.
- ▶ Enlist a local ‘champion’ to introduce the proceedings.
- ▶ Be sure to spend some time clarifying the idea of sustainability.
- ▶ Keep the proceedings simple, clear and jargon-free.
- ▶ Make sure that those who are addressing the audience say a little rather than a lot, since people will get bored quickly and feel that this is not about “their say.”

See the Dùthchas example of these meetings.

It would also be possible for such an event to be planned as a complete day, in which the ideas raised are taken further and shaped into an action plan. The Glencairn Community Fun Day is an example (see Casestudy).

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Open Public Meetings



- ▶ Public meetings were held in each community or village. This helped accessibility and focus on shared local issues. The meetings were well advertised in the press and local venues (post offices, shops, schools).
 - ▶ A full introduction to the Strategy, its sustainability context and the purpose of the meeting was given.
 - ▶ Participants were divided randomly into small groups of about 6 people.
 - ▶ Each individual was asked to record on colour-coded 'post-it notes':
 - 3 things they value about their area
 - 3 things they dislike
 - 3 ideas for change to improve sustainability
 - ▶ Individuals placed their stickers onto a map of the area as appropriate.
 - ▶ The groups were also asked to provide information on current initiatives, local groups and useful contacts and people who may be interested in following up ideas for projects.
 - ▶ Each group reported back to the others
- All information was carefully preserved for later display.

case study

Glencairn Community Horizons - Community Fun Day

The Community Fun Day was held in May 1999. Over 120 local people met to discuss the regeneration of the community. The day was split into three workshops:

- 1 What is your vision for a thriving and prosperous Glencairn?
- 2 What's good and bad about Glencairn now?
- 3 What external pressures or changes are affecting Glencairn?

followed by issues presentations:

- ▶ young people's issues

- ▶ rural transport issues
 - ▶ rural economic development issues
 - ▶ older people's issues
 - ▶ children's and women's issues
- and then further workshops to discuss the issues and:

- ▶ Who needs to be involved in taking the project forward?
- ▶ What are the next steps?

After all the hard work the day was completed by a ceilidh in the evening.

Interviews

Interviews are an invaluable way of gaining the views of those who either would not normally attend a meeting, or who have particularly valuable or specialist knowledge. While interviews must be planned and conducted in a systematic way, they do not have to be complicated. 'Semi-structured' interviews are commonly used for community surveys. These allow for flexibility and informality.



case study

Interviews



Dùthchas did many 'out-and-about' informal interviews catching people in the places where they do business, at home or in the street. The interviews were targeted to pick up on those groups that were not

adequately represented at the community meetings. The process reflected that which was carried out in the community meetings, with the same questions asked.

Maps

Maps have been used to great effect as a basis for collecting ideas about an area. It is important to recognise though that they are most suitable for collecting information about physical features and places, but tend to restrict thinking on the wider, longer-term or non-spatial issues.

Maps were used in the Dùthchas survey to encourage people to think about their area as a whole, and to relate ideas to place.

case study

Planning for Real

'Planning for Real' is a well tried model for running this process, developed by the Neighbourhood Initiatives Foundation. This has been successfully employed by The Highland Council for many years, to assist them in developing Local Plans. The model

is based on a large table map of the area in question, and a selection of cards, which can be placed on the map to indicate issues and ideas. Please see the Appendices 1 and 2 for contact details.

Questionnaires

Questionnaires are an important tool for gathering more detailed information, or for contacting people who may be excluded, say because they live in a remote location. However, unless questionnaires are collected by hand, response rates may be low. A questionnaire with a stamped addressed envelope stands a significantly higher chance of being returned.

Dùthchas used a very simple questionnaire to gather the views of those living in a sparsely populated area. This was circulated to households and public places. People were able to return the questionnaires to post-offices, halls etc.

A useful package, including computer software, has been used extensively for community appraisals in the Western Isles, with community volunteers undertaking the distribution. Specialist work is involved in designing and analysing such a questionnaire.

case study

Kilmadock Community Council - Doune and Deanston Community Survey

Kilmadock Community Council, which covers the communities of Doune and Deanston in Stirlingshire, undertook a survey of local opinion to ascertain needs and issues. The University was commissioned to design a questionnaire which they subsequently analysed. The

questionnaire was distributed in each community, by the individual community councillors in person. The survey was presented to the District Council among others to action. The Council then organised a series of meetings, initially in the local school and then in resident's houses.



Tracking participants

To gain a good cross section of views, it is important to track the people who have participated. This can be done according to age, gender, home location and occupation.

Participants attending the community meetings are asked to record these details anonymously as they enter. The main gaps can then be identified and followed up by interviews.

Carrying Out the Agency Review

Surveying agencies and organisations is a quite different process to the community:

- ▶ Agencies are not individuals, and usually want to give 'corporate views'.
- ▶ Agency staff are busy people and require time in which to develop and gain approval for their views.
- ▶ It is likely that the information sought from agencies will be of a more technical/quantitative nature.

So plan your agency survey well in advance. You will have to identify the appropriate sources for the information you need, gain the agreement of the particular agencies to help you and agree the timetable and process.

Wherever possible arrange to meet with an agency representative to talk through their inputs. This can lead to a more in-depth contribution.



case study

Agency Survey

Dùthchas asked their partner agencies the same 3 questions as they asked the communities – ie the strengths, challenges and ideas for change. This was done in a questionnaire. Responses to this method did not provide the depth of information

needed. The process would undoubtedly have benefited from face to face meetings and more time. Agencies also wanted questions that were more specifically targeted at their interests.

Developing a Sustainability Profile

At this stage, during consultations with the agencies, a decision should be made as to whether there is a need to produce a more technical Sustainability Profile of the area. A Sustainability Profile will take a deeper look at the statistical information about the area, and develop a logical way of describing the current status of the area in relation to sustainability. If the decision is taken to produce the Profile this should be started after Step 2 has been completed.

Please refer to the Optional Step. **p33**

Likes:

"I love the storms in winter and the smell of plants growing in summer – hay, clover, grass"

"The friendliness of the people and the ease with which we can come and go to each other's homes"

"being able to carry on working my croft, because it was handed down to me by my father and that means something to me"

"people are not in such a hurry as elsewhere"

Disklikes:

"Scrap vehicles, tumble down sheds, rusting tractors – why do we tolerate these?"

"It's a hard life when it costs less to buy one of our sheep than it does to buy a leg of lamb in the butcher"

"House prices – you can't afford to buy one because the wages here are so low and you are out-priced by incomers"

"Unable to buy fish from local fishermen"



Collating the Information

All of the information collected from the communities and agencies has now to be brought together and made sense of. At this stage, the information should not be re-worded or interpreted. However, it may be useful to begin to group the responses according to criteria – eg:

- ▶ Who said it – from which community or agency?
- ▶ Which of the Sustainability Principles does it relate to?

Reporting Back and Prioritising

Giving feedback

An essential part of the planning is to build in a process for giving full feedback to the whole community, as soon as possible. Transparency is a core principle of this process. This means that people can clearly trace their ideas and what became of them. It also means that everyone gets the chance to see all the ideas raised, so as to learn and guard against the important ones being lost.

We are accustomed to imparting our views to surveys and never knowing what happened to them. In instances when we do see a report, the information gathered will have been interpreted by a third party. Very rarely do ideas get recorded in the form in which they were originally expressed. This can lead to problems of interpretation, and removes ownership from the participants.

case study

Feedback



Dùthchas provided feedback on the survey by organising travelling exhibitions that toured the village halls. In one case, because of the extensive area and scattered population, the exhibition was mounted in a bus and driven to all remote corners. The bus worked excellently as a medium for communicating since it was novel.

Everybody was excited by the impending visit of the bus and it caused much discussion on what the bus was all about. The exhibition showed all of the actual 'post-its' and maps written by participants. Most of the community attended these exhibitions, and great interest and discussion was generated.

Confirming and prioritising ideas

The survey process will generate a great array of ideas. In order to do anything with these a process of sorting and prioritising must take place. Again, this should be open and involving. Each community that generated the ideas should be asked to prioritise them. Be sure to stress however, that ideas that are not prioritised will be kept for later use.

Dùthchas did this by presenting a chart of the ideas raised, in the travelling exhibitions, and inviting people to place 10 coloured dots on the ideas they thought most important. This was an open process which caused much reflection and discussion. The top 20 ideas were then presented to the communities for selection of initial projects.

Ideas:

"Some nice leafy trees to improve the bleak landscape"

"Locally co-ordinated transport so young ones see more, go to more, experience more"

"Organic crofting produce – kept in the area – marketed from here"

"Keep more people of working age around the place"

"The old and infirm could be cared for to live in their own homes, because this is where they want to be"



Reporting

Finally, all of the results of the review and the methods used will be fully documented for others to gain access to.



case study

Reporting



The Dùthchas reports contain every idea given to us, in the exact words used. These ideas have proved an invaluable treasure chest for groups and organisations contemplating work in the area. Local groups have also found that the existence of this report, based on a very participative process, has given weight to funding applications.

Dùthchas also produced two very successful publications to help report back to the community and others:

- ▶ a 'value statement' – a colourful fold-out leaflet containing the key thoughts about why local people value their area. This was circulated to every household/ public place/ organisation,
- ▶ a tape-slide and video – documenting fully, in the words and images of the local people and their area, the main findings of the Initial Review.

Communications

Focuses on:

- ▶ encouraging involvement and ensuring wide feedback,
- ▶ breaking down traditional barriers to participation,
- ▶ making full use of the local media (in all forms),
- ▶ colourful ways of representing the results to the wider community.

Resources



Trained facilitator

1 month minimum to complete this stage - 4 months if full survey included



Meeting and exhibition venues

Possible internet access

Area maps at a large scale



See attached CD Rom for access to Dùthchas reports and methods

References section for full list of useful reading



Community agents fees and expenses

Venue and meeting costs



Task 2.2

DEVELOPING A VISION

A' togail sealladh

Purpose

This step will develop the foundations for the Strategy, by agreeing the sustainability vision, goals and objectives for the area, upon which the Strategy will be based.

Principles

Sustainability	Rooting the Strategy on the principles of sustainability
Integration	Combining social, economic and environmental dimensions and relating the vision to the wider framework set for sustainability at a national and international level
Involvement	Encouraging everyone to become involved in establishing the vision for the sustainable future of their area
Ownership	Through involvement enabling a sense of shared ownership of the vision
Resonance	Ensuring the vision is meaningful and 'rings true' to the local community

Actions

Defining a Shared Vision for the Future of the Area

What is a vision?

An inspirational picture of the future, in this case a 'sustainable future' for the area and its people.

case study

Vision

An example of a vision generated during a community workshop held in Northumberland:

"An inclusive and empowered community with a strong and diverse economy that promotes quality of life and respects the natural environment"

What makes a good vision?

A good vision should be:

- ▶ a clear statement of what is desired for the future
- ▶ precise to avoid any ambiguities
- ▶ ambitious but not committing to the impossible
- ▶ inspirational and worth working towards
- ▶ appropriate and 'rings true' to the majority of the community

What role does the vision play?

The vision should provide a focus for the whole Strategy. Your vision is your rock, when enthusiasm wanes, or you lose direction.

Whose vision is it?

This is a local Area Sustainability Strategy. It must therefore be meaningful to and owned by the local community. This means that the community must be the ones to define the vision. However, if the vision has the support and agreement of both the community and local agencies, it will be more powerful. To achieve this, local agency representatives can be invited to contribute to the process.

What is the process for developing a vision?

The process of developing a vision follows very closely the stages outlined for the Initial Review and indeed can be included as a part of the Initial Review process. It has four main stages:

1. exploring the things which people most value about their area
2. identifying the things which are seen as problems or challenges
3. envisaging a future in which the values are built upon and the challenges addressed
4. combining people's individual visions into a collective and agreed vision



How is the vision developed?

The first two stages of the visioning process described above will have been carried out within a community meeting held during the Initial Review. The second two stages can be either included within the Initial Review meeting or be the focus of a second meeting.

Defining the shared vision, setting underlying goals and establishing broad objectives (which together form the foundations of the Area Sustainability Strategy) could be carried out within a single community conference or workshop, guided by a trained facilitator. This approach has been successfully used by many communities, but probably works better in a relatively small community, where a good proportion of the population can be expected to get involved.



case study

Vision

The Dùthchas experience was that sometimes the visions improved if you "lived with them for a while". Some took

one meeting; others two and others three to shape. There were also consultations held about the visions with experts in the field.

Relating the vision to sustainability

The Sustainability Principles, developed in Step 1.3, should be used as a basis for shaping the vision and making sure that it fully relates to the long-term sustainability of the area.

Setting the Main Goals for Achieving the Vision

To achieve the desired outcome from a vision, it must have beneath it a set of clearly defined and agreed goals.

What is a goal?

A clear definition of a component of the vision to which the community aspires.

What makes a good goal?

- ▶ Each goal should show a very clear connection with the vision.
- ▶ The goals should reflect the wider Sustainability Principles that are at the heart of the vision. This includes reference to social, economic and environmental values as well as care for the future.
- ▶ The goals themselves must be clearly understood so that everyone appreciates what the Strategy aims to achieve by these goals.
- ▶ Goals need to be agreed by all involved so that everyone proceeds with the same expectations.

What role do the goals play?

The goals will provide the main "coat hangers" upon which the Strategy is hung. They are the first step in breaking the vision down into more tangible parts that the community will see it lead to action.

How are the goals developed?

- ▶ Goal setting should be a natural follow-on from the visioning exercise, and will be done in the same workshop.
- ▶ The purpose is to break the vision down into its main component parts, linked to the Sustainability Principles. The different elements of the Sustainability Principles will suggest an immediate way of doing this.
- ▶ There is no magic number for how many goals are appropriate, but the emphasis should be on keeping it to a minimum for clarity and ease of working.
- ▶ It is quite likely that whilst developing the vision statement many potential goals will have been identified. These should be recorded and considered.



case study

Developing goals – Community experience in Northumberland

The vision previously mentioned – “An inclusive and empowered community with a strong and diverse economy that promotes quality of life and respects the natural environment” was seen to be made up of 4 fundamental goals:

- ▶ “To create a vibrant, accessible and proactive community that recognises the needs of all and engages everyone in the development process.”
- ▶ “To increase the provision and improve the quality of essential services in a sustainable way.”
- ▶ “To encourage sustainable business development (including rural diversification) that will improve employment prospects for all especially the youth.”
- ▶ “To preserve and enhance the high quality natural and built environment and character of the District for the enjoyment of all.”

Establishing the Objectives for Meeting Each Goal

Having established a vision and goals, it is essential to set some clear objectives that will direct progress and assure the ultimate success of the Strategy.

What is an objective?

The main steps to be taken to achieve the goals.

What makes a good objective?

A good objective is:

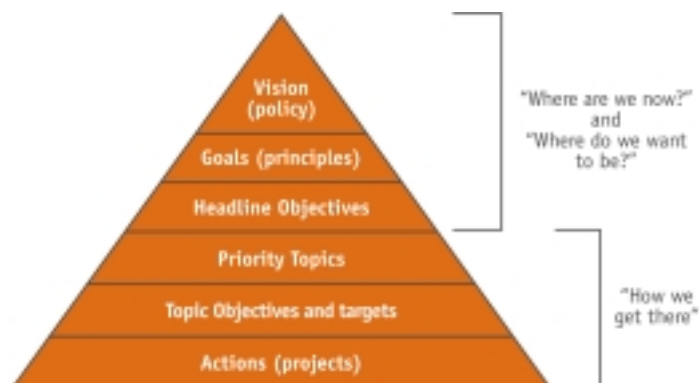
- ▶ relevant to the goal and to the local circumstances
- ▶ focused on a precise aspect of the goal
- ▶ clear and understandable
- ▶ action focused
- ▶ achievable
- ▶ motivating

What role do the objectives play?

The objectives help to expand the vision and goals and clarify the purpose of the Strategy. They direct progress and provide a framework for action:

- ▶ The objectives should act as clear signposts for action
- ▶ They should help to make the vision and goals more tangible
- ▶ They help to measure the success of the Strategy by acting as a basis for developing indicators to measure the status of the area *see Sustainability Profile Option* **p33**
- ▶ They should be measurable through targets and indicators

The pyramid diagram shows how our actions on the ground can be connected to our overarching vision. The vision is connected to the actions through establishing goals, objectives and topic areas for action.



How are the objectives developed?

Objective setting should be a natural follow on from the goal setting. This can also be part of the visioning exercise, done within the same workshop.

The purpose is to break individual goals into more “accessible” objectives that start to point towards actions on the ground. The emphasis should be on keeping the number of objectives to a minimum to ensure focus and clarity. The objectives should show a clear link with the overarching goal.

case study

Developing objectives example – Community experience in Northumberland

Taking one of the Northumberland community goals developed above – “To increase the provision and improve the quality of essential services in a sustainable way” a number of key objectives were identified that would take the community towards fulfilling this goal, these were:

- ▶ “To provide affordable and accessible public and community transport across the District”
- ▶ “To encourage social responsibility amongst service providers”

- ▶ “To fund and support the voluntary sector to enable better service provision”
- ▶ “To raise awareness of the value of increased funding for education”
- ▶ “To encourage the building and provision of low cost housing for rent”

Each of these objectives was seen as leading to clear actions that would deliver the goal of improving the quality of essential services for the area.

Communications

Focuses on:

- ▶ maintaining awareness
- ▶ feedback on progress
- ▶ celebrating the achievement of a collective visions and goals

Resources



Trained facilitator/s. At least 1 public meeting
1 month minimum to complete this stage – 4 months if survey included



Venue and resources for public meeting/s
Possible Internet access



Facilitator’s time and expenses
Meeting and publicity costs



Task 2.3

Purpose

Principles

Actions

AGREEING THE PRIORITIES FOR ACTION

Ag aontachadh air na prìomh rudan ri dheanamh

This task focuses on identifying a range of manageable topics for immediate action through:

- ▶ Confirming the sustainability gaps
- ▶ Prioritising the topics identified

Sustainability	Relating the Priority Topics to the Sustainability Principles identified in Task 1.3
Democratic	Encouraging the involvement of a wide cross section of people in both identifying and agreeing the topics
Resonant	Ensuring that Priority Topics relate to local priority issues

Confirming the Sustainability Gaps

The sustainability gaps are identified by comparing the current situation in the area with the objectives agreed for its future sustainability. This can be done at one of two stages:

1. Following the Initial Review. A comparison between the area's current situation, as identified in the Initial Review, and the sustainability objectives identified in Task 2.2. will provide the framework for identifying the principal gaps between the two.
2. In the Sustainability Profile. If the option to produce a Sustainability Profile is taken then the identification of gaps can be included as part of the profiling exercise.

see *Optional Step 2.4 on creating a Sustainability Profile* **p33**

The team carrying out the analysis will wish to confirm that the issues identified do adequately reflect the sustainability gaps for the area. This can be done through consultation with agency partners and any other expert advice available to the area.

Selecting Priority Topics

The Strategy Team may be faced with a wide array of topics relating to the different objectives. An immediate question will be - how do we prioritise these topics?

Key questions will be:

- ▶ How many topics can we deal with at a time?
- ▶ Who will make the selection?
- ▶ What prioritisation techniques will we use?
- ▶ How will we achieve a wider "ownership"?

A number of different scoring techniques could be devised to prioritise the topics. An example of a very simple method is given below.

case study

Example scoring technique used by the Dùthchas Project

Priority Topics were selected on the basis of how many sustainability benefits (social, economic and environmental) they would provide if a programme of action was put in place to address them. The scoring method was designed to include how strongly the topic came through in the Initial Review during the strengths and challenges exercise (see Task 2.1). Adding this criterion helped to make sure the topics selected related

closely to the priorities of the wider community. Topics were scored as follows:

- ▶ One point for a social benefit
- ▶ One point for an economic benefit
- ▶ One point for an environmental benefit
- ▶ One point if the topic came through strongly in the Initial Review.



Whatever the scoring method selected, the topics chosen should:

- ▶ relate to each of the main sustainability goals
- ▶ have community & agency support (from Initial Review and data gathering)
- ▶ help to address the big-picture – long term/ wide area
- ▶ address aspects of the area which are currently un-sustainable
- ▶ address aspects which present (under-developed) opportunities for sustainability
- ▶ provide a realistic framework within which to address issues at the local level

Expert advice can be sought in the selection process by circulating a short-list of topics to the key agencies, expert bodies and other stakeholders within the area.

The selection made by the Dùthchas Areas can be seen in the Dùthchas example below.



case study

Dùthchas Priority Topics



The three areas involved in Dùthchas carried out a process similar to the one identified in this section. The Priority Topics they selected were:

TROTTERNISH

*Trails and Interpretation
Local Produce
Renewable energy
Waste reduction
Transport infrastructure*

NORTH SUTHERLAND

*Cultural & natural heritage
Sustainable land use & renewable energy
Local produce development & marketing
Young returners
Essential services*

NORTH UIST & BERNERAY

*Tourism using our unique features
Marketing local produce
Renewable energy
Sustainable use of marine resources*

This selection demonstrated the difference in output from this more strategic process as distinct from the Initial Review survey. Whilst building on the Initial Review results, the topics selected at this stage were broader in focus, more clearly related to sustainability issues and, as in the case of renewable energy, focused on some of the big, unrealised opportunities for the area.

Communications

Focuses on:

- ▶ running and publicising an appropriate selection process for the Priority Topics
- ▶ keeping the community actively involved in the selection process

Resources



Strategy Team, volunteers, local community and agency representatives.
Could take 1 to 2 months depending on the involvement of the wider community



Possible internet access
Venues and resources for meetings



Copies of the Profile with sustainability gaps identified
A simple scoring method for selecting priorities



Meeting costs
Printing and publicity costs



Optional Describing the Area

A' beòthachadh sealladh air a sgìre

Optional Task

Purpose

The purpose of this task is to develop a factual profile of the area, in relation to its current sustainability. This task is optional, as it involves the need for technical expertise and is time consuming. The task is best carried out by a local authority or consultant.

Principles

Sustainability	Concentrating on the sustainability of the area and providing a focus for positive action.
Meaningful	Telling a meaningful story about the area which rings true with people's vision and goals.
Consensus	Agreeing the issues and topics raised and the status indicators for measuring progress.
Verifiable	Ensuring issues, topics and indicators can be verified, periodically checked and updated.

Actions

What is a Sustainability Profile?

The Profile describes the present state of the:

- ▶ social (e.g. local democracy and access to essential services)
 - ▶ economic (e.g. employment and access to training)
 - ▶ environmental (e.g. landscape value and local biodiversity)
- characteristics of the area and provides an overall picture of the area's sustainability

What does the Profile contain?

The Profile:

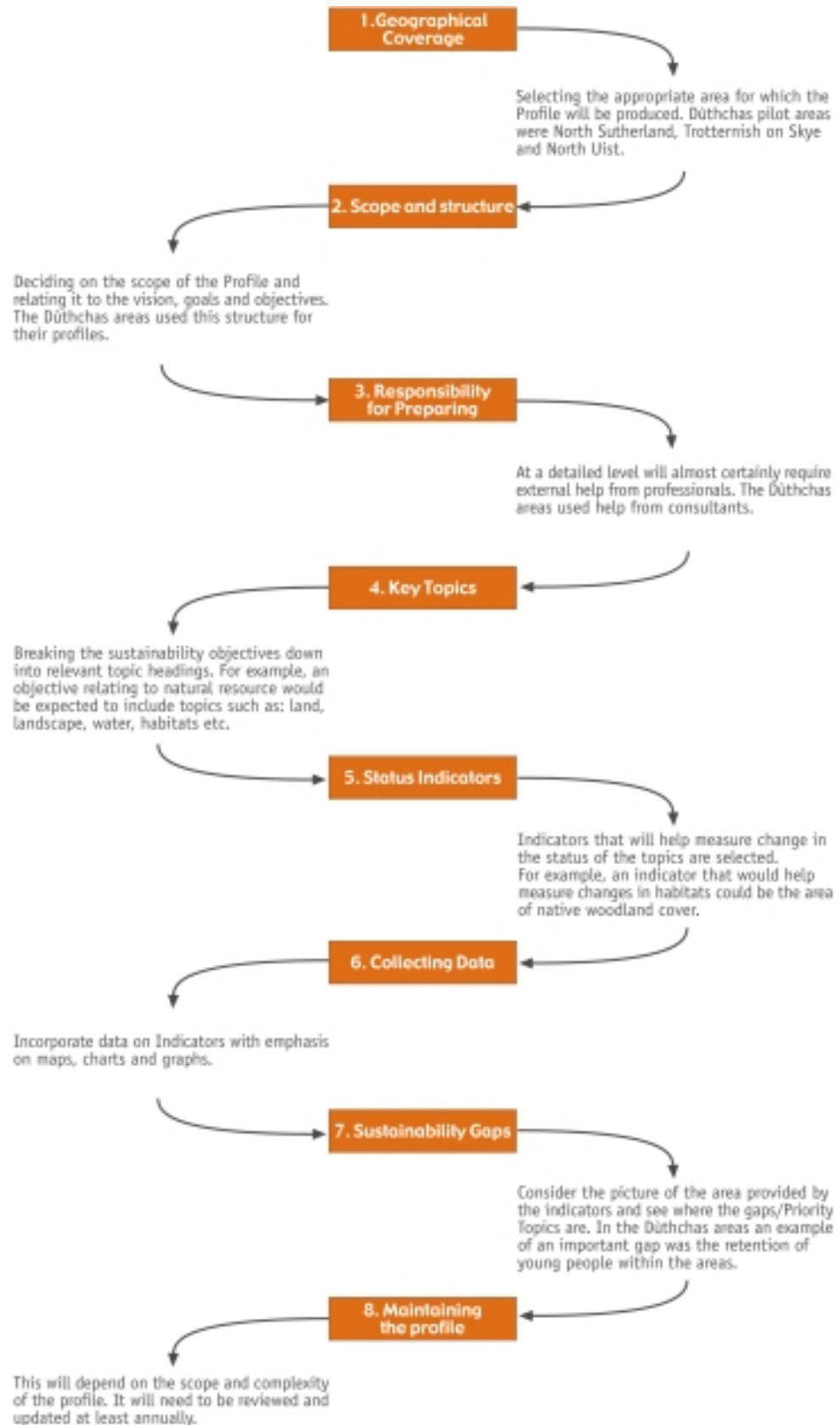
- ▶ is based on the sustainability principles developed in Step 1.3
- ▶ takes the goals and objectives developed in the visioning process within the Initial Review (Step 2) as a framework
- ▶ identifies the key sustainability topics which relate to the objectives (i.e. the social, economic and environmental characteristics)
- ▶ develops 'indicators' to measure these topics (see Information Sheet 3 for a detailed explanation about indicators) **p38**
- ▶ provides a current 'baseline' measurement of the sustainability of the area
- ▶ provides a simple tracking mechanism for measuring future changes to this

What are the Steps in Developing the Profile?

1. Agreeing the geographical coverage
2. Defining the scope and structure
3. Identifying responsibilities for preparing
4. Identifying the topics to be included
5. Developing status indicators
6. Collecting data
7. Identifying sustainability gaps
8. Maintaining the Profile



Guide to the Profiling Process





Geographical coverage

Developing the Profile will involve examining official social, economic and environmental data about the area, held by various agencies. It is therefore important to check that the area, at the time of selection (Step 1.1), makes sense in terms of the way in which official data is collected and held. Discussions will be needed with the local agencies to gather their opinions on these issues. This may not be easy, as agency data boundaries tend to vary significantly.

Scope and structure

Constructing a full Sustainability Profile can be an enormous task. It is important to rationalise the scope of the work at the outset to fit the time and resources available.

Since the Profile is based on establishing a set of appropriate indicators it is essential that people have a clear idea of what these are and how they are established so as to decide on the scope and level of detail within the Profile.

See Information Box 3 for an explanation and guide to indicators. **p38**

Consider the following questions:

- ▶ Will the Profile give a detailed or 'broad brush' view?
- ▶ How many indicators is it feasible to concentrate on?
- ▶ Who will be prepared to gather information and monitor the indicators into the future?

The scope of the work will also be determined by the data available. In some areas there may be very little information available, in the right format, on the chosen indicators. Decisions will also need to be taken as to how practical it is to collect data for some of the chosen indicators at a very local level.

Some local authorities may have already produced a State of the Environment or Sustainability Report at a district or county level. Depending on how this is structured and the indicators that are included it could be a very useful document for providing background information and even certain indicators.

Responsibility for preparing

Who is most appropriate to do this work will depend on the scope of the Profile:

- ▶ For Profiles that aim to give a very comprehensive picture of the area it will be necessary to seek specialist help. This can come either from local experts, academic institutions (universities or colleges), the local agencies themselves if any of these is prepared to give time to the exercise, or from specialist consultants who are paid to put such Profiles together.
- ▶ Profiles that focus in on a smaller number of representative indicators can be put together by members of the Strategy Team, or other volunteers from the community, possibly the local secondary school.

It should be noted however that whoever does the technical work, the Strategy Team and local community must be involved from the start, otherwise the Profile will have very little significance to the community and local agencies.

It is important to note that preparing the Profile will take real time. It will also require access to a computer, preferably with graphics capability. This will enable you to summarise data in colourful graphs, maps or figures.

Key topics

The objectives developed in Step 2.2 will be too broad in scope to readily allow suitable and meaningful indicators to be selected. They will need to be broken down further into the main topic headings. Identification of these key topics can be done at the time of establishing the objectives or during a separate facilitated workshop.

case study

Key Topics

*In the Dùthchas Profiles the objective:
"Protecting and enhancing natural resources
and promoting their value" was broken down
into the following topic headings:*

*sea, fresh water, land, air, biodiversity,
habitat, landscape, management,
stewardship, use and interpretation*



Key sustainability gaps

Using information provided from the indicators, a picture of the sustainability of the area can be produced. This will allow you to consider how well your objectives are being met and to ask some key questions:

- ▶ What is missing in our area that limits our progress in achieving an objective?
- ▶ Is there a particular topic that we are not addressing?
- ▶ Is there any aspect of the community, economy or environment that is deteriorating?
- ▶ Which topics are related to the challenges we identified in our Initial Review?
- ▶ Are there any areas of sustainability currently not being addressed?

By asking questions like these the main sustainability gaps for the area can be identified. This in turn will point to the topics that will become the focus of attention for future action.

Maintaining the Profile

The process for maintaining the Profile will depend on its scope and the resources available to the community.

- ▶ A more complex and technical Profile will require specialist expertise. It will be maintained either by local authorities, representative agencies, local academic institutions (universities/colleges) or consultants appointed to do this.
- ▶ A less complex Profile could be maintained within the community. The local secondary school may see this as a worth while educational exercise. Alternatively local community volunteers or voluntary groups may take on the task.
- ▶ An alternative approach may be to ask different agencies to “donate” an indicator based on information that they can readily supply and keep up to date. This would then only need a representative of the Area Strategy Team to compile and publicise the information gathered.

Communications

Focuses on:

- ▶ raising awareness about the concept of the Profile, and its relevance and importance to the community (vital for eventual ownership)
- ▶ publicising any meetings
- ▶ recruiting a team to produce it
- ▶ keeping the agencies and community informed of progress
- ▶ communicating the results of the profiling exercise

Resources



Strategy Team, volunteers, local community and agency representatives
May be appropriate to use an external consultant
Could take 2 to 3 months for a simple profile, 6 to 12 months for a comprehensive one



Access to printing/graphics software
Internet access
Venues and resources for meetings



Access to reference material and information held by agencies



Consultant's costs if appropriate
Graphic and printing costs
Meeting and publicity costs

All About Indicators

What is an indicator?

An indicator is a tool for measuring change and tracking progress towards a specific objective. It measures and makes understandable something that is considered important eg:

- ▶ A high temperature is a good indicator for illness.
- ▶ The presence of salmon returning to a river is a good indicator of cleaner river water.

Why are they used?

- ▶ They can be used to measure the position of the area in relation to the area sustainability objectives developed in Step 2.2.
- ▶ They can also be an important means, at the local level, of promoting action on the ground and facilitating communication on the progress of projects.
- ▶ Above all they help to provide a clear picture of the changes that takes place in an area as it moves towards a more sustainable future.

Why they are important tools for sustainability

- ▶ Indicators are recognised internationally and nationally, as an effective means of informing policy decisions and helping to understand and track sustainable development.
- ▶ They can be used as a benchmark for keeping whole countries, or regions on a sustainable track. For example the UK government has developed a set of 14 “headline” indicators to track the UK’s move towards sustainability. Two examples of such indicators are: *“Percentage of people of working age who are in work”* and *“Days when air pollution is moderate or higher.”*
- ▶ It is recognised however that the mere existence of indicators alone will not lead to sustainable development. They are simply a reflection of action on the ground.

Characteristics of good indicators

- ▶ Sustainability indicators should link the social, economic and environmental status of an area.
- ▶ It will be difficult to find indicators that can reflect equally all three aspects, but efforts should be made to do so. Those that measure only one aspect are not good measures of sustainability (see below).
- ▶ An effective indicator should ideally be selected by the community, so that it will be fully understood and accepted by everyone.
- ▶ The information behind the indicator should be presented simply and clearly. It should be based on reliable and readily available information sources.

What kinds of indicator are needed?

The kinds of indicators needed can be determined by the target audience:

- ▶ Agencies are more likely to favour technical indicators. Typical examples of these are - measures of water or air quality, percentage cover of particular habitats, levels of unemployment, levels of recorded crime, number of registered voters etc.
- ▶ Communities are more likely to be interested in indicators that relate to quality of life lead to direct action, and which can be used to measure the performance of specific projects. A typical example of this kind of indicator might be - *“the number of local direct marketing schemes from local producers”*. A popular indicator in urban areas has been *“the amount of dog dirt on streets!”*
- ▶ In practice both types of indicator will be needed – one to establish the overall picture of the area’s sustainability, the other to measure the performance of specific actions.

Examples of “good” and “not so good” Sustainability Indicators

- ▶ A traditional economic indicator is *“the number of employed people in an area.”*
- ▶ A sustainability indicator might be – *“the percentage of workers whose place of work and residence is within the area concerned”*. Local people, working locally are maintaining and sharing skills and knowledge within their community, whilst satisfying local needs. This has both economic and social benefits. There is also less need to commute over long distances, which will provide environmental benefits.



Step 3 Planning for Action

A'deasbad planaichean

Task 3.1

FOCUSING ON THE ISSUES

A' coimhead gu mionaideach air cuspairean na coimhearsnachd

Purpose

To develop a plan of action for each Priority Topic, designed to meet the sustainability vision and goals for the area.

Principles

Involving	Community and agency interests involved as well as external expertise
Informed	Based on sound knowledge of the area, but drawing on 'cutting edge' expertise
Transparent	An open process, with good consultation and publicity
Sustainable	Based on Sustainability Principles relating clearly to the sustainability framework and goals

Actions

What is a Topic Plan?

Having identified the Priority Topics, in Step 2.3, this Step is all about planning for the actions that will be taken, through these Priority Topics, to achieve your Sustainability Goals. This work will be addressed in three stages:

- ▶ Planning the process
- ▶ Establishing the groups needed to do the work
- ▶ Developing and confirming the Topic Plans

This is the start of a long-term process, which will go on to carry out the actions agreed in the Plans.

Planning the Process

In planning this part of the process, key considerations will be:

- ▶ **Aim** – This work proposes to take community groups beyond their normal contribution to development planning. It is asking them to take responsibility for a strategic plan, which also takes account of sustainability.
- ▶ **Participation** – Make sure you have the right involvement in the Topic Groups to do the job. Also consider how you are going to share their thinking with the wider community and agencies, whose support will be essential. This work will demand more of people than the normal brief consultation. The experience of Dùthchas has shown that, while people will have concerns about the time and work involved, they will also feel a strong ownership of the final Plan, and commitment to seeing it realised. This is quite different to plans developed by outside bodies.
- ▶ **Timescales** – It is important to recognise that the groups will be working voluntarily. There is also likely to be some impatience to see practical results. Devise a process which will use people's time in the most efficient and respectful way.
- ▶ **Information** – While there will be access to information in the area, be aware that the latest expertise may not be found locally. Bringing together local knowledge with 'cutting edge' expertise can be a powerful way of producing radical and effective solutions and of building local confidence to act.

Establishing the Groups

Establishing Topic Groups

It is important to distinguish between the Strategy Team and a specific Topic Group. The latter is a topic-focused project planning team.



Dùthchas identified a list of possible characteristics to look for in Topic Group members:

- ▶ commitment to the success of the Strategy
- ▶ good geographical representation of the area
- ▶ cross section of community and agency representatives
- ▶ relevant local and wider knowledge and practical experience
- ▶ local credibility
- ▶ ambitious/fresh thinkers
- ▶ age and gender range
- ▶ time to do the work

It may be necessary to look widely to find people with the qualities being sought. The direct involvement of local people in the planing process will give a strong sense of ownership and support for the Plans.

Each Topic Group should have a leader or chairperson, who will guide the group and be the main point of contact.

Terms of Reference

The Topic Groups need an agreed 'terms of reference', defining their task, roles, time-scales and other requirements. This helps to prevent confusion and enables negotiation on the extent of the role. The Terms of Reference should be drafted and agreed at the first meeting of the Group.

Give serious consideration to paying the community Topic Group members a basic fee for their work and expenses. This will help to get over the resentment caused by many hours of voluntary input, and comparisons made with the paid staff of public bodies.

Establishing Reference Groups

One feature of the Dùthchas process was the setting up of 'expert' Reference Groups for each Priority Topic. These consisted of people with specialist expertise from outwith the area. The Reference Groups agreed to be consulted on the development of the Topic Plans, and many also attended seminars or hosted visits. Some of these contacts will go on to become long-term reference points for the community.

The Work Plan

The main stages of the work will involve:

- ▶ clarifying the scope of the Topic
- ▶ agreeing a vision for the future sustainable development of the Topic
- ▶ identifying objectives for achieving the vision
- ▶ identifying actions to meet the objectives
- ▶ identifying roles & responsibilities in implementing the actions
- ▶ developing indicators and targets for measuring progress

The Topic Group will also need to :

- ▶ ensure the Plan takes account of the Initial Review and Sustainability Profile findings
- ▶ ensure the Plan covers social, environmental and economic aspects
- ▶ identify the information and expertise that should be taken into account
- ▶ gather and analyse information
- ▶ identify key 'stakeholders' who have an interest in and will need to be involved or consulted in the work, including the local community and key organisations

Defining the Topic Plans

It is important that the Topic Groups have a clear vision of what the Topic Plans will be like. This includes the content, format and style.

Key features of Topic Plans identified by the Dùthchas groups were:

- ▶ a clear framework for the way forward
- ▶ action focused
- ▶ commitment and support from locals and agencies
- ▶ practical, common sense and workmanlike
- ▶ clear, simple and relevant
- ▶ inspiring and positive



The process

The work of taking the Topic from a basic idea to a fully worked out development plan is demanding. To do this job properly, and to involve the community and agencies fully, will take time and resources. This needs to be set against the limitations of people's time, energy and resources. There are many options as to how this process is carried out. This should be negotiated between the Strategy Team and Topic Group. Two possible options are set out below - one rapid and one extended. There are also many options in between. A selection of methods which may be used in the workshops is also set out in the Dùthchas case-study boxes.



case study

Workshop Process

The cycle was spread over a 6 month period as follows:

Workshop 1

Identify vision and objectives

Workshop 2

Finalise objectives and identify actions

Workshop 3

Finalise the Plan and prioritise actions

Consultations with Reference Groups were carried out between meetings, and the results fed back to the Topic Groups. Some Groups also held informal meetings and carried out investigations between meetings. Seminars and exchange visits to enable exchange of expertise on the Topics were also organised between meetings.

Two-day workshop

This is a rapid way to complete the main planning work. It involves bringing all of the Topic Groups together for a concerted planning workshop/ retreat. During this they will develop the vision, objectives, actions and indicators – in 4 half day sessions. Outside 'experts' can also be invited to assist. This method, whilst meeting the demands for a rapid process, does not allow time for full consultation and fact finding, nor for ideas to develop.

A number of short workshops and consultations

This was the approach taken by Dùthchas. See case-study box to see how it was done.

This approach has the advantage of allowing more time for reflection, consulting and learning. However, beware that the process overall does not take too long. This will try the patience of the Topic Group members who will be anxious for tangible results.

Workshop 1

Setting the Topic Vision and Objectives

The main actions for this first workshop are:

- ▶ agreeing a Topic vision
- ▶ agreeing a set of objectives for the Topic
- ▶ identifying the stakeholders
- ▶ identifying a Reference Group to consult with
- ▶ identify any study visits or seminars which would help the Group

NB. It is very important that every output from the workshops is recorded in the exact words of the Group. Inaccurate interpretation can lead to loss of faith by the Group.



case study

Setting the vision and initial objectives:

- ▶ Individuals asked for their vision for the Topic in 20 years time.
- ▶ Visions group according to theme.
- ▶ Objective developed for each theme.
- ▶ Group negotiates their collective vision, encapsulating all objectives.



'Trotternish as a shining example of a waste free environment'



Litter and waste disposal had been identified during the Initial Review in Trotternish as a an important issue. Following the Sustainability Profile, this was confirmed by the area as one of their 5 Priority Topics. A Waste Reduction Group was set up. Using the method shown above, the Group came up with the following vision:

In relation to their vision they identified 3 priority objectives:

- ▶ Raise awareness so waste reduction is an integral part of all our lives and is seen as having added value.
- ▶ Set up composting and other local recycling schemes and develop local markets for recycled materials.
- ▶ Raise the profile of litter reduction, including fly tipping.

Workshop 2

Confirming and Prioritising the Objectives and Identifying the Action

The main actions for this workshop are:

- ▶ giving feedback on the consultation
- ▶ confirming the amended vision and objectives
- ▶ identifying the priority objectives
- ▶ considering how well these are currently met
- ▶ identifying actions to improve current performance

Identifying the actions

Taking each priority objective in turn:

1. Give a score (1-10) as to how well this is currently being met.
2. Give 2a.positive and 2b.negative reasons for the score.
3. Agree a group score for current performance on the objective.
4. List the actions which could be taken to improve the score.

The 'H form' method can be used to record these, with the above information being listed on the diagram as follows:

2a	1 & 3	2b
	4	

Workshop 3

Finalising the Topic Plan and Defining the First Action Plan

The main actions for this workshop are:

- ▶ to take in consultation responses
- ▶ finally agree the Topic Plan vision, objectives and actions
- ▶ prioritise up to 6 actions overall and select the first one to start work on
- ▶ select targets and indicators to measure progress

It is important that this final stage is carried out thoroughly to make the Plan as realistic, appropriate and as acceptable as possible. Upon this will depend the future support for the Plan by the agencies and community. The choices should be made carefully to be:

- ▶ the most important next steps in achieving the objectives
- ▶ realistic/achievable/appropriate



case study

Prioritising actions



1. Give each of the agreed actions an individual number.
2. Identify the actions that require lobbying – ie. lie outwith the remit of the Group to implement – mark these/ identify which are high priority and set aside.
3. Examine the remaining actions in turn and score under the following criteria:
 - ▶ Priority in achieving objective
 - ▶ Achievability in the short, medium, long term
4. Write each action number on a post-it and place in the relevant box on a flip chart, according to priority – Now/ Sooner/ Later
5. Prioritise and record the top 2 actions in the 'Now' box for each objective - a maximum of 6 overall
6. Agree selection with Group - keep this sheet for recording

Remember, the actions which are not selected will go into the Strategy for research and implementation under future rounds of the process.



case study

Prioritising actions



The Waste Reduction Group in Trotternish developed the following priority actions to meet their objectives:

- ▶ Develop a community composting scheme, linked to local horticultural production.
- ▶ Provide information and publicity on the amount and cost of waste disposal from Trotternish.
- ▶ Undertake a business audit and demonstrate potential savings to businesses and households.

- ▶ Undertake a study on the environmental and economic impact of litter.
- ▶ Develop an initiative to uplift scrap vehicles.

The Group later selected the first action to start work on and have now developed a composting scheme with households and schools, and are linking this to local horticultural businesses.

Communications

Focuses on:

- ▶ the establishment of Topic Groups, by encouraging community members to come forward to participate in future projects
- ▶ maintaining interest as Topic ideas are shaped up into fully worked out development plans
- ▶ establishing and liaising with 'expert' Reference Groups for each Priority Topic
- ▶ identifying and accessing key sources of information

Resources



Topic Group members, reference Group members, Community Agents/facilitators
Community and agency members
Depending on the process, 3-6 months



Venues and resources for meetings, possibly a residential centre for 2 day event
Possibly seminars and study visits



Access to key information relating to the Priority Topics
Information on the range of skills, experience and knowledge of agency and community representatives, who might form the Topic and Reference Groups



Meeting costs. Possible residential venue costs
Facilitator/ Community Agents fees
Topic Group member's expenses and possibly fee
Printing and dissemination costs



Task 3.1

Purpose

Principles

Actions

MAKING STRATEGIC LINKS

A' deanamh ceanglaichean farsainn

Activities in this task are focused on linking the Area Sustainability Strategy to the wider world, recognising that the area does not operate in isolation and reflecting the spirit of partnership. Making the links will help to gain support from key agencies and other organisations and help to identify the contributions they can make to implementation. The principle purposes are:

- ▶ Relating the Strategy to relevant Government and agency strategies.
- ▶ Identifying the links with other strategies for the area.
- ▶ Identifying and harnessing sources of support for implementing the Strategy.

Involving	Making sure that the overall Strategy and related Topic Plans reflect both community and agency interests whilst identifying the links elsewhere Committing all interested parties to achieving common goals
Accountable	Making clear who is responsible for what, particularly where complex strategic links are established Widening the ownership of, and accountability for the Strategy through the strategic links
Informative	Establishing any new links should provide the opportunity for informing more people about the Strategy and widening the information base

Strategic Links

At a time when the Government is talking about partnership and 'joined-up government', the process of establishing strategic links is very topical. Unfortunately, there are very few examples of this having been tackled in a systematic way. Dúthchas was one of the few to pioneer this process. So this is experimental work. Nor is it particularly easy work. Agencies are not structured for alignment. Each one operates to different objectives, covering different areas, with different systems of funding and support. It is also remarkably difficult to access the kind of information that is really needed for this purpose, or to gain any kind of commitment to delivering support in advance. It is however essential to pursue these critical links and build on the knowledge of how to do it effectively.

Stages in Making Strategic Links

1. Identifying relevant strategies and plans
2. Reviewing written documentation
3. Consulting with appropriate agencies
4. Confirming and recording support

Identifying relevant strategies and plans

The Area Sustainability Strategy and related Topic Plans must now make clear strategic links with the plans of other organisations working in the area. This will also help to identify potential support for implementing the Strategy and Topic Plans. This will be done through detailed document review and consultation with agencies.

- ▶ This process will have been started during Step 1.1 where an early list of relevant plans will have been made. Similarly during Steps 2.1 and 2.2 information will have been gathered which will give insight into the interests and plans of relevant bodies.
- ▶ Agency Partners in the Strategy will be the first to approach.
- ▶ Any relevant national strategies or plans can be identified via the Government or specific Departmental web sites.
- ▶ Local Authorities, who are responsible for similar strategies, such as Local Agenda 21 and Community Plans, will be an obvious point of contact on a local level.



Reviewing written documentation

This will involve studying relevant plans (Local Plan, economic development plans, tourism plans, transport plans etc.) and agency strategies. Highlight the parts of the plans that might be relevant to your Strategy and particular to the Topic Plans.

Either community agents or members of the Strategy Team should be involved in undertaking this background research and consultations with the agencies. The work will need careful co-ordination and some training to carry out effectively.

Consulting with appropriate agencies

Early strategic links will have been made through involving agencies in the Strategy development process. Continue discussions with these and other agencies to identify relevant links to the Strategy and Topic Plans. This could be done through:

- ▶ a questionnaire to all key bodies – *see the Dùthchas example below,*
- ▶ one to one meetings or telephone calls – this is advised for agencies whose work is likely to be particularly important for the success of the Strategy
- ▶ a facilitated multi-agency workshop

The aim of these consultations will be to establish:

- ▶ Positive and negative links to the work of other organisations and initiatives.
- ▶ Possible areas of support from other organisations for implementing the Strategy.

These will relate to:

- ▶ plans and policies
- ▶ activities and initiatives
- ▶ regulatory roles
- ▶ resources (money, staff, information, facilities etc.)
- ▶ potential for partnership

Agencies need to be given extensive notice of being asked to participate in this work, and a lengthy time period for completing any questionnaires. They will also wish to have any information approved internally before it is circulated more widely or published.

Confirming and recording support

Following the consultations, all identified links and sources of support should be fully documented and confirmed with the appropriate bodies. These can then be summarised in any Strategy reports.

The important information for the Strategies will include:

- ▶ lead partners
- ▶ support partners
- ▶ potential funding sources
- ▶ related initiatives
- ▶ strategic links



case study

Dùthchas agency links questionnaire



1. *Identify the elements of the Strategy/ Topic Plan that most closely relate to your interests and to which you may be able to contribute through:*
 - *funding mechanisms*
 - *other forms of support – advice/ training/ staff time etc.*
 - *current or planned agency initiatives*
 - *your regulatory role*
 - *your policy positions – current/ amended*
2. *Prioritise those project/ policy actions which you would wish to support in the short/ medium and long term and state how.*
3. *Identify the elements of the Strategy or Topic Plan with which your organisation may find difficulty – ie. which:*
 - *run counter to your regulatory role*
 - *run counter to existing policies*
 - *conflict/ overlap with existing initiatives*
4. *List any other issues or organisations which you feel may be important for the implementation of the Strategy or Topic Plans.*

Communications

Focuses on:

- ▶ strengthening the links already made with public agencies and other organisations or partnerships that have ongoing initiatives regarded as highly relevant to the Area Sustainability Strategy
- ▶ information and know-how exchange
- ▶ agency focused meetings or workshops to align complimentary strategies
- ▶ identifying sources of support for the Area Sustainability Strategy or specific Topic Plans
- ▶ celebrating and publicising any new project partnerships or sources of funding that may result

▶ Resources ▶



Strategy Team, Community Agents, Trained facilitator
1 or more agency meetings or workshops
2 to 4 months to complete this stage



Venue and resources for meetings
Access to internet



Time and expenses of Community Agents/Facilitator
Meeting costs, Dissemination and publicity costs



Step 4 Making it Happen

A' toirt na planaichean gu bi

Task 4.1

PLANNING PROJECTS

A' planadh pròiseactan

Purpose

Activities in this task are focused on converting the Topic Plans into realistic work plans for action on the ground. This means developing the equivalent of a "mini-business plan" for each project identified.

The principle purposes are:

- ▶ To create a Project Plan
- ▶ To validate the Project Plan
- ▶ To verify the sustainability of the proposed project

Principles

Sustainability	Grounded in Sustainability Principles that will deliver the area vision and goals
Inclusiveness	Making sure all the interested parties are involved in the action
Simplicity and clarity	Clear, straightforward, user-friendly plans
Measurable	Leading to measurable actions on the ground
Consensus	Ensuring that all actions are understood and agreed by the community

Actions

Project Planning

The Topic Plan objectives and actions provide the basis for developing the first phase of projects. Projects to be undertaken in this phase will now be planned and brought to life.

A 'project' is a series of activities designed to achieve a specific outcome, within a set time-scale and set budget. It should therefore have a defined start and end point, clear goals, an organised plan, allocated resources, and a team to carry it out.

Stages of Project Planning

1. Checking feasibility
2. Checking for sustainability
3. Action planning
4. Allocating responsibilities
5. Validating the Project Plan

Checking feasibility

Before starting a project it is necessary to establish whether it is likely to be successful. Steps need to be taken to verify that the project is appropriately timed, feasible and worthwhile before going ahead.

Questions to ask include:

- ▶ Are the project goals in line with the Strategy's long-term goals?
- ▶ How will the outcome of the project affect the long-term performance of the area?
- ▶ How realistic is it that the project will win funding?
- ▶ Are there people ready/willing and able to make the project happen?
- ▶ Does the project fit well with other initiatives?
- ▶ Any obvious impediments/delays to the project?

The Dùthchas Feasibility Criteria are set out below.



Dùthchas feasibility criteria



How realistic is it that the project will win funding?

- ▶ *Does it have funding body support?*
- ▶ *Would a large amount of money have to be raised?*
- ▶ *Would the community need to raise much money?*
- ▶ *Would the project provide value for money?*

Are there people ready/willing and able to make the project happen?

- ▶ *Does the project have sufficient community support to provide the inputs needed?*
- ▶ *Are the people who would need to be involved available?*
- ▶ *Are the required skills and knowledge available?*
- ▶ *Would time requirements for Dùthchas staff be reasonable?*

Does the project fit well with other initiatives

- ▶ *Does the project duplicate existing/planned activities?*
- ▶ *Does the project build on existing/planned activities?*
- ▶ *Does the project have multiple benefits/spinoffs?*
- ▶ *Does the project bring together different groups and agencies?*

Any obvious impediments/delays to the project?

- ▶ *Are there any legislative/policy barriers?*
- ▶ *Are there any potential conflicts of interest?*
- ▶ *Is there likely to be lobbying against the project?*
- ▶ *Any significant delays in the funding process?*
- ▶ *Would any permissions be required – planning etc?*

Checking for sustainability

A simple Sustainability Checklist will help to ensure that each project is on track to deliver the area sustainability goals and objectives. Screening the project at this stage gives the opportunity to find ways of adding value to it by increasing the positive impacts and minimising the negative ones.

The main things to consider are whether the project:

- ▶ is viable in the long-term
- ▶ improves opportunities for the local economy
- ▶ uses local resources and provides benefits for the local community
- ▶ avoids harm to the environment and community

The Checklist should contain a good balance of questions that address social, economic and environmental issues. The Dùthchas Sustainability Criteria are listed below. This was the result of a lot of research. Using the Checklist showed clearly how much 'added value' can be given to a project idea in this way.



Dùthchas Sustainability Criteria



Economy

- ▶ Creating additional spending, wages & profits in the local area.
- ▶ Creating/safeguarding local jobs & training opportunities.
- ▶ Linking local production & consumption (recycling local income).
- ▶ Supporting jobs of suitable quality (eg. skills, longevity, year-round, broadening the local economic base).
- ▶ Using & promoting local resources & reducing dependence on imports.
- ▶ Involving affordable long-term maintenance costs.

Community

- ▶ Involving local people in managing & maintaining the project.
- ▶ Using/developing local knowledge and skills.

- ▶ Increasing co-operation & decision-making in the community.
- ▶ Providing benefits for all sectors of the community.
- ▶ Supporting local services, amenities & infrastructure.
- ▶ Strengthening the local cultural heritage.

Environment

- ▶ Avoiding loss of natural resources.
- ▶ Minimising negative impacts on landscape & wildlife.
- ▶ Promoting energy efficiency & recycling.
- ▶ Raising awareness & enjoyment of the environment.
- ▶ Protecting threatened species.
- ▶ Enhancing wildlife & landscape.

Strathay Eco-loo

In one community, a public toilet for the beach was selected as a priority. However funding was not forthcoming for this. By using the Sustainability checklist, the original idea was transformed. It became an information point, with displays on the

local environment, tourist facilities etc. It was housed in a 'green' building, constructed as a training exercise for local people, using local timber, and incorporating solar energy and it also had a toilet! This project was very attractive to funders.

Action Planning

Each project will be planned individually. Below is an Action Plan pro-forma used by Dùthchas. This can be used in a Group meeting to develop a rough plan at the first stage. The headings can be listed on a flip chart, with space for the answers alongside:

- ▶ Project objectives
- ▶ Who is responsible
- ▶ Who is involved locally/ externally
- ▶ Skills needed
- ▶ Information needed
- ▶ Resources needed
- ▶ Timetable
- ▶ Opportunities for support
- ▶ Possible barriers

Each of these headings is then researched and developed into a 'Business Plan' for the project. This can be time consuming work, which ideally a local development worker should be paid to undertake.



Allocating responsibilities

Identifying a lead organisation is critical. The lead body will take responsibility for initiating the project, raising and holding the resources, employing any staff etc. A community-based company has the advantage of placing ownership with the community. There may be existing local organisations ready to take it on. If not, it is a relatively easy task to establish one.

See Step 4.2. and Information Sheet 4. **p54**

Other key stakeholders and potential partners or funders should be involved from an early stage, particularly those who could have a significant effect on the project.

Once funding is raised, money may be available for employing a project manager. However, during the planning and establishment stages, this will not be an option. Investigate options for funding a short term contract to do this, or gaining staff support from a local organisation.

Validating the Project Plan

No matter how well a plan has been written, unexpected things can happen and circumstances can change. The Topic Group should brainstorm, with support where available from agencies and other experts, a potential list of “challenges” to the project and analyse each for their impact on the project. Involving people outside the project team can be very helpful in that it can encourage the team to defend the plan against constructive criticism and forge strong links to overcome any obstacles that might arise.

Communications

Focuses on:

- ▶ sustaining momentum as detailed Project Plans get worked up
- ▶ further networking to ensure that all appropriate stakeholders in the project are fully engaged
- ▶ gaining agreement with the Project Plans
- ▶ publicity for any achievements or projects started

Resources



Lead organisations, individuals and agencies to take forward each plan



Project funding for each activity



Task 4.2

Purpose

Principles

Actions

ORGANISING

A' cumail rian air gnothaichean

To develop an organisation framework through which the Strategy can be implemented and put to work.

Ownership	Rooting the ownership of the Strategy within the community
Appropriate	Choosing the right structures for the job in hand
Manageable	Choosing solutions that are within the scope of the community to manage
Secure	Ensuring adequate protection for those involved

Identifying Your Needs

This stage of the work is all about creating the right organisational framework to deliver your action plan in an effective, efficient and legal way. This revolves around the following questions:

- ▶ Who will take responsibility for implementing the work programme?
- ▶ Will this be one body or several?
- ▶ What will their roles be?
- ▶ How will you secure their commitment to undertaking these roles?
- ▶ What will be the relationship between any implementing bodies?
- ▶ Who will be responsible for raising, holding and dispensing funds?
- ▶ Do you need staff to help implement the work?
- ▶ Who will be responsible for recruiting and employing the staff?
- ▶ Does a suitable body exist or will you have to set one up?

Remember that there are 2 things to consider in finding answers to the above questions:

- ▶ Where do you want the long-term ownership of this work to lie – with the local community or with outside agencies, and what are the implications of this decision?
- ▶ Is the decision being taken on the basis of the easiest route or on the basis of the most appropriate route?

Again this is all about local empowerment and capacity building.

Reviewing the Options

Having gained answers to at least some of the above questions, the next step is to look at the options that are available to carry them out. This will include investigating:

- ▶ Which partners do we need on board to support the work?
- ▶ How will we secure their involvement?
- ▶ What form of organisation do we need to implement the work?
- ▶ What is involved in setting this up?

Making Strategic Links

Building on the work undertaken in Step 3.2, this is the time to get your partners to sign up to their support role for the future. Gentleman's agreements are fine, but remember the personnel and priorities of the partners may change in the future. If you need to have continuing support from a partner organisation, try to sort out what this will be and get a written agreement before you start. One way to do this is by forming a 'Partnership Agreement'.



Creating a Partnership

A Partnership can take many forms, from a loose grouping of interested bodies, to a formally contracted group. The form of partnership needed to carry out your work programme will be determined by the partner's role in providing:

- ▶ funding
- ▶ staff time
- ▶ employment of staff on behalf of the project
- ▶ other resources –premises, equipment, access to information & data etc.
- ▶ delivery of an aspect of the work

All of these contributions have real value, in monetary terms. If any of these are required to deliver your work programme, then you need to have a written agreement.



case study

Dùthchas Partnerships



Dùthchas took partnership very seriously. The original project was based on a Partnership Agreement between 11 funding partners – based on the clauses above. This was tested on one occasion, and found reasonably thought not to be entirely successful in keeping partners to their original commitments.

When the Pilot Areas came to setting up their own organisational structures for the future, Dùthchas employed a consultant to find out what each needed and wanted. This identified the need for 2 types of structure :

- ▶ *A partnership Agreement to retain the involvement and support of the original Dùthchas partners.*

- ▶ *A legal organisation through which to raise and hold funds (see below).*

After much discussion, a relatively simple form of partnership agreement was drawn up in one area, which most partners felt happy to sign. This is more of a token bond of support than a true agreement, but none-the-less will help to retain a sense of involvement.

An existing Community Company took on the work in one area, in the second the staff were employed by one of the Partners, on behalf of the group and in the third a new community company had to be formed.

Choosing the Right Organisational Structure

If your work programme involves raising and holding funds, owning or leasing premises or employing staff, then you will need to have an appropriate legally constituted organisation through which to do this. Ultimately, as the work moves on from the Strategy phase to implementation, it may be desirable for a community limited company to be formed (if one does not already exist) in order to take care of funds and to place the ownership of the process within the community itself.

The first considerations must be:

- ▶ What kind of organisation must it be to do the job effectively?
- ▶ Does such an organisation already exist within the area?
- ▶ If not will we establish a new organisation?

Setting Up a New Organisation

If your decision is that no suitable organisation currently exists to implement the work, then your next task will be to consider the options for establishing one. This is not as frightening as it may seem. An organisation is simply a legal vehicle which enables you to do different things, provides a formal structure within which to do them, is recognised by funders and provides a degree of protection to those involved in the work. The choice of organisation is, as said above, absolutely critical.

Please refer to Information Sheet 4 for information on the various forms of organisation.

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At this stage it would be a good idea to take good professional advice. A good starting point when seeking advice will be your local Council for Voluntary Service. Consult with these before a solicitor, as they are experienced in meeting the specific needs of the voluntary sector.



A list of helpful publications can also be found at the end of this Handbook in Appendix 1. **p59**

This may seem like a lot of hard work, but once you have your new organisation well established, think of the many ways in which it can help to build the capacity of your community to manage its own affairs.

Staff Issues

Employing a local development worker or community agent may well be essential to implementing your Strategy. If so, you will have 2 choices - to employ them under a local community organisation, or to invite one of your partners to do so. There are implications for ownership in this decision.

Employment of staff is also a subject well served by expert advice and publications. Start by contacting your Local Enterprise Company and Council for Voluntary Service, and get hold of some of the excellent employer's packs available through these and other organisations.

See Appendix 1. **p59**

Establishing an Office

A staff person will need an office. This should be budgeted into your funding proposals, as part of the core funds. In many communities office premises are hard to find. You may need to be creative. An important consideration is accessibility to the public. If you want to encourage local ownership of your Strategy, it will be important that local people feel welcomed to drop in at the centre of activity, and that this centre is located as near to the heart of the community as possible. This may mean that home working may not be appropriate. Dùthchas ended up with staff in a village hall, a rented cottage and a local tele-service centre.

Communications

Focuses on:

- ▶ networking between the community and agencies
- ▶ building partnerships for the future
- ▶ consensus building on future plans and actions
- ▶ recruiting project teams

▶ Resources ▶



Expert advisor, neutral facilitator, partners involvement
This stage can take up to 6 months to complete



Funding for advisor



See reference section

Setting Up Partnerships and Organisations

Partnership Agreements

A Partnership Agreement is not a legally binding agreement, it is more of a 'gentleman's agreement'. However it does provide a clear record and a moral duty on the signatories to abide by its terms. If fund-raising and substantial sums of money or responsibility for staff are involved, it will be necessary to place these under the safeguard of a legally constituted body. One of the partners may be prepared to take on this role, in which case their responsibilities to the wider partnership will need to be clearly documented.

A Partnership Agreement will contain clauses relating to all aspects of the work to which any of the partners have a responsibility. These may cover:

- ▶ Aims, objectives and activities of the work programme
- ▶ Duration of the work programme/ period of agreement
- ▶ Management structure
- ▶ Financial management, contributions and responsibilities
- ▶ Responsibility for personnel
- ▶ Individual partner responsibilities
- ▶ Any critical relationships between 2 or more partners
- ▶ Copyright ownership of any publications or products
- ▶ Publicity and acknowledgements
- ▶ Procedures for reviewing any element of the agreement
- ▶ Procedures for resolution of any conflict
- ▶ Procedures for withdrawal of a partner
- ▶ Statement of commitment and signatures of all partners

Setting Up a New Organisation

Setting up an appropriate organisational structure requires careful thought. There are many thousands of non-governmental organisations operating in communities everywhere. However it is a fact that a large percentage of these are not the appropriate ones for the job, and in many cases are actually operating illegally, exposing their members to the risk of financial and legal liability.

Incorporated or unincorporated?

The first choice is between an 'incorporated' or an 'unincorporated' body:

- ▶ In an unincorporated body, the group has no identity in law, except as a collection of individuals. These individuals are personally liable for any debts the group may incur. Most local community groups take this form, with an informal constitution.
- ▶ An incorporated body is more than the sum of its members, it has a separate legal identity. It can own property, enter into legal contracts and become liable for debts, giving members some protection (though not complete) from liability.

This first decision will be entirely determined by your predicted need to hold and manage funds. Only very small funds should be held under an unincorporated body.

Optional structures

At a very broad level, the main options of organisational structure are:

- ▶ **Unincorporated Association** – the simplest type of structure only suited to low budget groups. Quick, cheap and easy to set up and run.
- ▶ **Trust** – usually set up to administer funds or property for specific purposes. Run by Trustees, who have financial liability.
- ▶ **Friendly Society** – used for benevolent purposes. It can become a charity and hold property. Must register with the Register of Friendly Societies.
- ▶ **Company Limited by Guarantee** – appropriate for administering a larger budget, owning property, administering contracts and employing staff. Has its own legal identity and limits the liability of its members (except in cases of negligence). Must register with Companies House.
- ▶ **Industrial and Provident Society** – the appropriate vehicle for a co-operative enterprise, owned and controlled by its workers.

Once the decision has been made, the next step will be to draft an appropriate constitution, according to the requirements of the structure you have chosen. Again, take good advice on this before proceeding.

Plenty of excellent advice and publications are available to help you make the right choice. Make sure you do your research well before deciding.

Some are listed in the Useful Reading section at the end of this Handbook. **p59**



Step 5 Measuring Progress

A' measadh ciamar a tha thu faighinn air adhart

Task 5.1

MEASURING AND MONITORING

A' measadh agus a' stiùireadh

Purpose

Activities in this task are focused on measuring whether the Area Sustainability Strategy, and the projects it has generated, are delivering your goals and objectives, and are taking the area closer to its overall sustainability vision. The principle purposes are:

- ▶ To develop sustainability indicators that will effectively monitor the progress made
- ▶ To monitor the performance of the area in delivering its sustainability goals and objectives.
- ▶ To measure the sustainability of individual actions making up the Project Plans
- ▶ To measure the performance of each of the Topic Plans in contributing to sustainable development within the area

Principles

Sustainability	The indicators must be based on sound sustainability criteria
Clarity	The indicators should be clear and easy to understand The results of the measuring and monitoring process should give a clear picture of the progress being made
Measurable	The indicators should be easily measurable, preferably by the local community
Resonance	The indicators should relate closely to the priorities identified by the community
Informative	The process of selecting indicators and undertaking the measuring and monitoring should aim to be as informative as possible

Actions

Measuring Change in the Area

Change across the area as a whole is measured through 'Area Status Indicators'

For more information on these please refer to Information Sheet 3. p38

These indicators relate to your broad sustainability goals and objectives. They are chosen to reflect a limited number of key issues, which between them will give a good picture of the state of the area. Data for these indicators is collected on a long-term basis so that the performance of the area in delivering its sustainability goals and objectives can be monitored.

Ideally these indicators will be based on a full Area Sustainability Profile, as described in the Optional Task. p33
The Profile acts as a benchmark from which progress towards achieving the area vision, goals and objectives can be tracked.

An option may be to engage local agencies in contributing indicators, which they are currently measuring for the area, and which related to your vision and goals. There is the possibility of also involving local schools or colleges in helping to maintain and monitor these indicators.

Data on the area status should to be compiled, processed and reported on annually by the Strategy Team.

Measuring Progress on Topic Plans

The final stage of developing the Topic Plans is to identify ways of measuring progress towards meeting your objectives for each Topic. This can be done through the selection of 'Topic indicators'.

Effective project monitoring will allow information on appropriate indicators to be gathered, so that the team can measure and adjust progress. This helps in the good management of the Topic Plan to keep it moving forward smoothly.

Topic indicators may be more community-based than area status indicators and should provide signals for appropriate action on the ground. Indicators are chosen by asking "How will we know if we have achieved this Topic objective?"



Gathering information on the indicators and reporting on progress enables communication with all key stakeholders and will provide any justification for making adjustments to the Project Plan if these are found to be necessary.

Reference should be made to Information Sheet 3 for background information on the characteristics of good indicators. **p54**

Monitoring Progress on Actions

Monitoring progress on your actions or projects is done by setting 'targets'. Targets are precise measures of progress, usually based on numbers related to such questions as: By when will it be done? How much will be done? How many items will be produced?

An example of a target is:

"To set up 2 new fresh produce businesses, selling to the local community, by the end of the year"

The targets should relate to the overall Topic objectives, for example:

"To improve the local market for goods and services"

Setting out clearly the Topic objectives, indicators, priorities and targets will help to decide which aspects of the project require most effort and resources.

Well-defined and achievable targets will enthuse and motivate team members.

Communications

Focuses on:

- ▶ choosing Topic indicators
- ▶ updating the community on progress in the measuring and monitoring activities
- ▶ active communication with those funding and supporting projects
- ▶ communicating any successes as individual projects start to deliver results on the ground
- ▶ sustaining interest and momentum through events to celebrate project milestones

Resources



Community agent, strategy team, local agency representatives, local community
Measuring and monitoring will require regular time inputs on a long-term basis both for the strategy as a whole (status indicators) and for individual projects (topic indicators). Topic indicators could be completed within a two month time frame (includes choosing and agreeing).



Access to reference material and data bases held by agencies and local authorities.
Access to computer with graphics capability



Meeting costs. Graphics and printing support costs. Dissemination costs



Task 5.2

REVIEWING THE STRATEGY

A' sgrùdadh a ro-innleachd bho àm gu àm

Purpose

This step focuses on making sure that no one loses sight of the overall Strategy, vision and goals. This means carrying out a periodic review of the Strategy, in a systematic and comprehensive way. This will give a realistic assessments of how best to continue the Strategy and what the next steps should be.

The principle purposes are:

- ▶ To review progress in achieving the Topic objectives and project targets
- ▶ To review progress in achieving the overall area vision and goals
- ▶ To agree on how best to continue the Strategy in the future
- ▶ To communicate on the progress and celebrate any successes

Principles

Sustainability	Ensuring that the Strategy continues to be rooted in the principles of sustainability
Ownership	The whole community should continue to identify with the Strategy and where necessary ways should be sought to encourage and foster this
Involvement	Encouraging everyone to take an active interest in their Strategy and to participate in taking it forward

Actions

Reviewing progress

Project review meetings should be held throughout the life of a project to discuss progress and achievements and to mark milestones.

The review meetings should check:

- ▶ whether the project is continuing to meet the sustainability criteria
- ▶ whether it is on track to deliver the agreed objectives and targets
- ▶ that the resources and time-scale are still realistic

The aims of review meetings should be to keep everyone up to date with progress and give them a shared understanding of what is happening.

Reviewing Topics and Projects

Periodic review meetings will be necessary to discuss progress in achieving Topic Plan visions, objectives and targets.

The aims of review meetings should be to keep everyone up to date with progress and give them a shared understanding of what is happening.

Project review meetings are held about once a month in order to monitor detailed achievements and issues that affect the implementation of the Project Plan.

The review meetings should check:

- ▶ whether the project is continuing to meet the sustainability criteria
- ▶ whether it is on track to deliver the agreed objectives and targets
- ▶ that the resources and time-scale are still realistic

Sometimes an "event-driven" review may be necessary to celebrate the achievement of certain project milestones. Such a review should involve key stakeholders and partners involved with the Topic area.

If progress is being made it is important to recognise and celebrate the efforts made by the project team. This will keep the spirit and energy of the team going and help to sustain momentum.



Reviewing Goals, Objectives and the Overall Strategy

For the Strategy to remain relevant and useful to the community, It must be an accurate and up to date statement of what is needed. It is therefore essential that the Strategy is reviewed regularly and updated as necessary. It will be the job of the Strategy Team to carry out the reviews.

It is suggested that progress reviews take place:

- ▶ on an annual basis, in order to measure on-going progress, identify and correct any problems, and identify the next year's Action Plan
- ▶ on a three to five yearly basis, to undertake a complete revision of the Strategy, carry out a new community survey, identify new Priority Topics to be taken forward, and initiate the process of developing new Topic Plans

Components of the review will include:

- ▶ progress in each step assessed
- ▶ the adequacy of the vision, goals, objectives, topic plans and projects/actions checked
- ▶ trends in the measurement of the area status indicators assessed in order to monitor progress towards the sustainability vision

The results that come out of the Strategy review will give a clear indication of where the priorities lie and what are likely to be the principle actions in the future.

Each review should be followed by significant publicity and a celebration of achievements.

Communications

Focuses on:

- ▶ communicating the results of the review process to the wider community
- ▶ feedback on the performance of individual projects
- ▶ celebrating and publicising achievements

Resources



Strategy team, community agents, access to key partners/stakeholders, local agency representatives

The Strategy review process will require regular time inputs on a long-term basis
Periodic reviews will be needed for individual projects and an annual review of the Strategy itself



Venue and resources for running a review meeting



Up to date information on specific projects

An up to date version of the Area Strategy and its progress to date



Meeting costs

Dissemination costs



Useful Reading

Step 1 Making a Start

Defining Objectives for Participation

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Involving the Community as Stakeholders

- Community Workers Co-operative (1997) *Strategies to Encourage Participation*, CWC: Galway
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Partnerships

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Sustainability

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Communications

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- Ward, S (1992) *Getting the Message Across*, Journeyman Press: London

Resources

General

- Halcrow Fox (1998) *Developing Projects and Securing Funding*, Good Practice in Consultants Rural Development No 6, Scottish National Rural Partnership, Scottish Office: Edinburgh
- SCVO *Getting Funds From Trusts*, SCVO: Edinburgh (currently being reprinted)
- SCVO *Developing European Social Fund Projects*, SCVO: Edinburgh (currently being updated)

Sources of Funds

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- Eastwood, N (1997) *The Youth Funding Guide*, Directory of Social Change and National Youth Agency: London
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Step 4 Getting to work

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SCVO	<i>Committees</i> , SCVO: Edinburgh
SCVO (1999)	<i>Working With Us 2000 Good Employment Practice for Voluntary Organisations in Scotland</i> , SCVO: Edinburgh
Ian Murray ed.	<i>'Constitutions and Charitable Status – Guide and Models for Voluntary Bodies in Scotland'</i> SCVO: Edinburgh
www.communitymatters.org.uk	Useful site with a list of priced publications and information sheets on a wide range of issues affecting community organisations

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The Dùthchas Reports

The Dùthchas Project CD Rom (2001)	Contains the full story of Dùthchas and all of the reports produced by the Dùthchas Project
Dùthchas Final Report (2001)	The report of the Dùthchas Project and its lessons
Initial Review Report and Appendices (1999)	One for each Pilot Area
Area Sustainability Profile and Appendices (1999)	One for each Pilot Area
'Our Place in the Future' (1999)	Area Statements of what local people most value about their area
Dùthchas video (1999)	Documents the ideas raised by the local community in the Initial Review
Dùthchas Newsletters (1999/ 2000)	3 editions documenting events in the Project
'Looking after the Future' (1999)	Report of the Transnational Conference
'IT for Communities – You Know IT Makes Sense' (1999)	Report of the conference on the use of IT by local communities
'Natural and Cultural Heritage' (2000)	Seminar Report
'Renewable Energy' (2000)	Seminar Report
'Local Produce'	Seminar Report
Norway – Scotland (2000)	Report of the exchange programme with Norway
Jutland Study Tour (2000)	Report of study tour on Renewable Energy
Cumbria Study Tour (2000)	Report of study tour on Local Produce
GIS Report (2000)	Report of trial use of Geographical Information Systems in the Pilot Areas
'Our Land, Our People and Our Place in the Future' (2001)	The Area Strategies and Action Plans for the three Pilot Areas



Useful Organisations

Community Development Foundation	www.cdf.org.uk
Department of Environment Transport and the Regions	www.detr.gov.uk
Directory of Social Change	www.dsc.org.uk
European Environment Agency	www.eea.eu.int
International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives	www.iclei.org
Local Agenda 21 UK: Sustainable Development Unit	www.la21-uk.org
New Economics Foundation	www.neweconomics.org
Scottish Community Development Centre	www.scdc.org.uk
Scottish Environment Protection Agency	www.sepa.org.uk
Shell Better Britain	www.sbbc.co.uk
SustainAbility	www.sustainability.co.uk
Sustainable Development Commission	www.sd-commission.gov.uk
Sustainable Scotland	www.sustainable.scotland.gov.uk
United Nations Environment Programme	www.unep.org

Community Learning Scotland

Rosebery House, 9 Haymarket Terrace, Edinburgh, EH12 5EZ
Tel: 0131 313 2488 Fax: 0131 313 6800

CSV Environment

236 Clyde Street, Glasgow, G1 4JH
Tel: 0141 248 6864 Fax: 0141 204 0668

Forward Scotland

c/o Scottish Power, St Vincent Crescent, Glasgow, G3 8LT
Tel: 0141 567 4334 Fax: 0141 567 4339

Friends of the Earth Scotland

Bonnington Mill, 72 Newhaven Road, Edinburgh, EH6 5QJ
Tel: 0131 554 9977 Fax: 0131 554 8656

Planning Aid Scotland

Bonnington Mill, 72 Newhaven Road, Edinburgh, EH6 5QJ
Tel: 0131 555 1565 Fax: 0131 555 2471

Scottish Community Development Centre

Suite 329, Baltic Chambers, 50 Wellington Street, Glasgow, G2 6HJ
Tel: 0141 248 1924 Fax: 0141 248 4938

Scottish Council of Voluntary Organisations

18/19 Claremont Crescent, Edinburgh, RH7 4QD
Tel: 0131 556 3882 Fax: 0131 556 0279

Scottish Crofters' Union

Old Mill, Broadford, Isle of Skye, IV49 9AQ#
Tel: 01471 822529 Fax: 01471 822799

Scottish Natural Heritage

Battleby, Redgorton, Perth, PH1 3EW
Tel: 01738 444177 Fax: 01738 444180

Scottish Homes

Thistle House, 912 Haymarket Terrace, Edinburgh, EH12 5HE
Tel: 0131 313 0044 Fax: 0131 313 2680

Neighbourhood Initiatives Foundation

The Poplars, Lightmoor, Telford, Shropshire, TF4 3QN
Tel: 01952 590777 Fax: 01952 591771

Standing Conference for Community Development

356 Glossop Road, Sheffield, S10 2HW
Tel: 0114 270 1718 Fax: 0114 276 2377



A final message from the Dùthchas Team

A healthy community is one that is positively engaged in creating its own destiny and actively invests in its assets. But where do you get the power to do all this? Before your community can move forward confidently, you will need to have a shared understanding of what your assets are. You will also need a shared understanding of your challenges, and the dreams and opportunities of your community. And while you are gathering this vital information, you will need to look carefully at how all of this measures up sustainably. This is a lot of work, but you are going to engage a lot of helpers from across the community young and old, firm and infirm, professional and practical.

Dùthchas set out to create new community groups and take them beyond their normal contribution to development planning in their own locality. Since every community is unique, your experiences will be different to ours. During the trial period of the Dùthchas project, we had a sense that we were “sowing seeds of sustainability”. Indeed the people who played a part were themselves “seeds”. One way or another, all of the people whom you involve need to be aware that they are on board for a long period principally to plan. They plan the harvest, and they also are part of the harvest.

The experience of Dùthchas has shown that, while people do have concerns about the time and work involved, as long as they stay on board they will feel a strong ownership and pride in the final plan, and a commitment to seeing it realised. This is quite different to the experience of plans being developed by outside bodies.

Sustainability is ultimately about confident communities. And seeing your own ideas coming to fruition can be as satisfying as watching your children grow up.

We hope that this Handbook does justice to the hard work of the Project Team, our Dùthchas communities and our many Partners. The project was a great leap forward for our rural communities and we invite you to share with us the experience of Dùthchas.

We congratulate you if you are embarking on a similar journey. It is a journey, and ultimately, when you take big strides, the journey will not be plain sailing. We hope you live a lot on your journey and that you learn a lot from what you are doing – as we did.

Our very best wishes to you, *Tha sinn an dòchas gun téid gu math leibh.*

**From Vanessa, Issie, Lorna, Wilma, Meg, Kerry, Anna, Caitriona, Iain and Sine
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