

Rural Wisdom in Highland Perthshire

Autumn 2017



About Rural Wisdom

Rural Wisdom is working with communities in Scotland and Wales to create opportunities for older people to shape their community. Our aim is to make communities work better for older people and the other people who live there.

These are the outcomes we want to achieve

- More older people, and a more diverse range of older people, have a stronger voice
- Older people have the opportunity for more social connections in their communities
- There are more activities that are led by older people and are co-produced in the community, and older people get support from them
- People of all ages are part of creating communities that work well for older people
- Older people in rural areas are contributing to local and national policies and initiatives.



A community that works for older people has an impact for everyone who lives there.

It is a lovely place to live. When I moved here the people were so welcoming and now I enjoy being part of supporting my neighbours and friends.

We could have more ways to share skills and draw in more people. It is volunteering with a small v – people helping each other out.



What we did

Over the summer we met people living across the area. The conversations centred on **4** questions:

1. **What is it like living here?**
2. **What is working well?**
3. **What could be better – especially for older people but also for the whole community?**
4. **Have you any ideas on what would help?**

We started by telling people about the Rural Wisdom project and that we wanted to hear from them. We put a piece in the Quair, as people said this was the best way to reach people across the area. We also put items on community noticeboards and Facebook pages, and had items in community e-newsletters.

We have been at or in touch with:

- 17 community groups – mostly groups in touch with older people or mixed age groups plus a few with a stronger focus on younger people.
- 8 groups of local people attending group activities.
- 4 Gala Days, Highland Games and 4 Community Councils.
- Services that support older people, to hear from the older people there.



It is the approach that matters. Pop in for tea and a chat, not Go online to find out what we do.



Overall, we met over 175 people who live or work in this community. We also met people from other rural locations who told us about the very similar issues that affect people in their community.

We heard about how older people see the community working for themselves and other older people. We also heard how younger people think it could work for their older relatives and neighbours.

What happens next

Talking to people

We are continuing to meet people to hear about their ideas and how they want to be part of their community. This includes support providers and community groups who we were not able to meet over the summer.

We are going back to the people we met to tell them what we heard and the plans for the next phase of Rural Wisdom.

We are sharing this report with other people across the area and with people who make decisions about services in the area.



We need more toilets that the public can use when out and about.

Poor broadband is a problem for many people – it is slow, expensive and not reliable.



Taking the ideas forward

People in this area will continue to come up with ideas on ways to make their communities work better for older people and others who live here.

Many of the developments people suggested are being taken on by local people and groups. Rural Wisdom is providing a way for community groups to get extra practical support for what they do. The Rural Wisdom team will also be facilitating some developments to help them get going.

People also came up with ideas on ways to improve opportunities for younger people who live in this area. We will be encouraging them and older people are looking forward to seeing younger people have more opportunities too.



It would be good to have more activities that bring people together naturally in each village/local community, including across generations.

There would be less need for care and we could be more independent for longer if we had sheltered housing.

People don't know where or how to raise issues – for example, who do you go to about transport problems?

You have to leave at 6 am to get to Ninewells for a 9 am appointment. Why don't they give us appointments for later in the day?

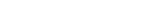


The main points we heard

This is a welcoming and friendly place that values and uses the strengths of people and communities. Older people want to continue being an active part of this.	People value local shops and have ideas on how these can work better for older customers.
People want to stay independent in their own communities.	Transport is a big problem. There are specific problems that need specific solutions, especially on access to NHS services and other services based in Perth.
Family, friends and neighbours are the main support for most people. People want to have better access to support and care that is based in the area and is flexible, to extend the natural supports in these communities.	Informal routes for information and communication work well. Poor access to broadband is a major problem for the area.
This area needs more options on housing, especially smaller houses to let people stay in the area for longer.	People want to be heard and be part of decisions that affect their community. They have ideas on ways to make this better.
Community facilities here are good and people value them. There are barriers to using some public facilities. Older people are looking for more access to computers.	People want to be part of building connections in the community, including between people moving to the area and those living here, and between older people living in settings like care homes and others in the community.

There is a longer version of this report on the Rural Wisdom website: www.ruralwisdom.org It has more on each of the themes people raised and detailed suggestions for locations within the area.

Rural Wisdom in Highland Perthshire Autumn 2017 7



What Next? Things people would like to see happening

This is the initial list of developments that people would like to see. They all benefit older people living in this area but many of them will also benefit other people.

People expect that most of these ideas will be taken forward by people working together, rather than by just one group of people.

More activities that build social connections

- More ways for people to have company – activities in the community where people meet and more structured support such as befrienders.
- Creating more activities involving the people who live in the care home – them getting out to things and people coming to them.
- Asking men what interests them and then providing more activities that appeal to them and welcome them.



Could we have shopping buddies who are tall enough to reach the top shelves? Or personal shoppers? Or a stool on request? Even just for an hour each day.

Access around Aberfeldy is a big problem for people who have mobility or sight problems.



- Local groups having taster sessions and running sessions for beginners, to get more people along and involved. Examples are Bridge for Beginners and the Men's Shed running taster sessions and going out to locations across the area.
- Weekend community activities that will help build the community.
- Intergenerational activities that are natural and continue in each local place – whatever the people there want to do.

Making this area work better for people who live here

- Talking to local shops and businesses about access and parking.
- Talking to the people who make decisions about bus services, as part of increasing options around transport
- Looking at a lift share scheme.
- People getting together to find more ways to support older people who do not have or need a Blue Badge but do have problems getting around.
- Linking up with Living Streets to raise awareness about making the centre of Aberfeldy safer and easier for pedestrians.



The message for everyone, including public bodies, is that good communication needs lots of routes.

There could be more opportunities for involving people in their 50s and 60s or younger. People would welcome a bit more training and support and then they could take on more volunteering roles.



Making buildings and community facilities sustainable

- Find ways to make village halls more viable, including ways to tell people in other areas about activities, so the halls are used more as well as people having more choices and connections.
- More information on sources of funds for bigger costs such as keeping churches and other buildings maintained – the impact of them closing would be felt by the whole community.
- Talking to the Council about making the library easier to access for people with disabilities.
- Move on with plans in areas that need another way for people to share information on what is there, or need more space for community facilities and activities.



People want to know if public services will be continuing – are they stable and secure with enough staffing?

People want to stay independent in their own communities.



Information that gives people opportunities and support

- Provide information on managing fuel allowances, how to protect yourself from con men and other money matters.
- Share more information on practical ways to open food packaging and prepare food and other day-to-day things that help people stay independent.
- Provide support for people when they want to apply for Blue Badges.

Partnerships between people in this area and people who make decisions

- Start work on a process for these communities and key public sector staff to meet regularly and work together on an equal basis.
- Find out more about ways to get smaller and more affordable housing in rural areas, and begin talking to the Council about this issue.
- Link up with national action through various routes to get better broadband in rural areas.



We want to have ways for real partnerships between people living here and the staff in the Council and Health services. It should be the community taking the initiative, starting with our ideas, not just responding to what the public service has decided to consult on this month.





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