

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 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.

What we did

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

- What is it like living here?
- What is working well?
- What could be better – especially for older people but also for whole community?
- 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.

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.

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.

Summary – the main points we heard

These are the main issues that people raised.

- 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 want to stay independent in their own communities.

- 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.
- This area needs more options on housing, especially smaller houses to let people stay in the area for longer.
- Community facilities here are good and people value them. There are barriers to using some public facilities and older people are looking for more access to computers.
- Transport is a big problem for some people. There are specific problems that need specific solutions, especially on access to NHS services and to other services based in Perth.
- People value local shops and have ideas on how these can work better for older customers.
- Informal routes for information and communication work well. Poor access to broadband is a major problem for the area.
- People want to be heard and be part of decisions that affect their community. They have ideas on ways to make this better.
- 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 are also detailed suggestions for locations within the area.

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.

Many of these developments are being taken on by local people and groups. Rural Wisdom is providing a way for people to get encouragement and some extra practical support. 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. These ideas are being taken forward through other routes.

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.
- 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 and other ways to increase transport options.
- 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.

Making buildings and community facilities sustainable

- Find ways to make village halls more viable, including ways to tell people in other areas about activities.
- More information on sources of funds for bigger costs such as keeping churches and other buildings maintained – impact of them closing would be felt by 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.

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 – helps 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 to get better broadband in rural areas.

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

Issues that people are talking about

- Valuing and using the strengths of people and communities
- Staying independent
- Support and care
- Housing
- Community facilities
- Transport
- Shops etc
- Information and communication
- Being heard and part of decisions
- Connections in the community

Valuing and using the strengths of people and communities

This is a welcoming and friendly place. People enjoy being part of community activities.

The activities in the area are great – community groups and things people do as neighbours and friends.

Older people want to contribute to their community and enjoy being involved in the activities they use.

Local people could contribute more but some people (of all ages) need a bit more support and encouragement. Sometimes this is about practical aspects such as transport but it can also be about having confidence, such as after an illness.

People gave examples of times when encouragement from someone else helped them or a relative build confidence after an illness or bereavement. This type of good friend/informal volunteering is important.

People who move to the area are invited to join groups and get good information from neighbours.

People welcome new friends who have moved to the area around the time they retire and what they bring to communities.

There are concerns about the growing numbers of holiday homes that are often empty and the impact this has on the community – people feel the balance has implications for communities that is not always recognised. They also have ideas on ways to make things work for people who are here more often such as regular weekend members of the community.

"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."

Staying independent

People need neighbours, friends or family near enough to them in order to be independent.

There is strong agreement that moving within the area and coming to Aberfeldy to get more support is better than having to move out of the area.

People would stay in their own homes longer if there was a low-level of nearby, reliable support they could call on if needed. Instead they move away or use bigger care packages sooner.

Improved broadband and reliable phone connections is a high priority and would enable older people to stay independent for much longer.

Some people choose to move in or nearer to Aberfeldy before they need support in order to stay independent.

Other people feel they are forced to move because they cannot be sure of support being there and coming to them and others in villages and scattered settlements that are further out.

There are examples of people moving into town when nearby houses are used by people for holidays or when most of the housing around them was sold: the problem is when neighbouring houses are often empty and/or people feel they no longer know their neighbours.

Support and care

For many people their main source of support is their family, including when a relative is their main carer. So support for families in this role is important.

Other people rely on support from neighbours: this needs to be recognised by services and they also need some help from time to time.

People want to see more local, flexible services in the area that help people to be independent as possible and to stay at home.

The support people get from the local Health Centres and staff there is good.

Services that are developed have to complement and respect the ordinary community support that work well in this area.

People are very positive about the support they get through the Wellbeing Co-operative.

Deeds for Needs is the Time Banking service that is based in Aberfeldy and covers this area. People are very positive about the impact it is making and how it benefits people who need some extra support as well as everyone else who contribute.

There are good opportunities for more support services, for example in Kinloch Rannoch and the areas nearby. These will make a big difference to people living there and can encourage people in other places to try this too.

Local services will get round the problems of distance from the main towns and transport routes, especially in winter when travel to some parts of the area can become very difficult. But this depends on people being able to live in the area – so there needs to be housing available for them. This has been a problem already for health services and it will apply to other public services and voluntary sector services too.

People want to be part of the community supporting each other. If people who volunteer had a bit more training more people would be able to contribute they could take on tasks that are new to them.

Support from volunteers still needs some funding to support the volunteers.

The community alarm service is based in Perth, which feels too far away for many people.

Access to services that are based in Perth or even Dundee can be a big problem. The people who organise these services often do not take account of how difficult it is for people living in this area to get there when giving appointments.

Housing

"There is virtually no affordable housing in the area."

"There are no opportunities to downsize."

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

People want more smaller houses that are easy for people as they get older. It needs to happen throughout the area, such as one or two in Kinloch Rannoch and Kenmore as well as some in Aberfeldy, so people are not forced out of the place they know and where they have social connections.

The needs of the local community – now and in the future – should be considered when applications for planning permission are assessed and decided by the Council.

There are spaces in Kinloch Rannoch, Kenmore and Aberfeldy where smaller houses and/or social housing could be built.

People want to see sheltered housing that feels safe and works well for older people reinstated in Aberfeldy.

This area needs housing that is affordable for people who work in the area. It is hard to develop local services when it is not possible for people on ordinary wages to live in the area where they work.

Some people think the Community Councils should become more involved on housing matters, or find other routes for local people to contribute their views and look for solutions.

The Council could set conditions that benefitted whole community when giving planning permission for new houses: examples that people suggested include putting in a pavement, bus stop or helping do something about better phone and broadband for everyone living there.

The issue of houses being sold as holiday homes is not straightforward for the community or for individual people.

- It would help the whole community be viable if houses were sold to people who wanted to stay here, such as younger families. That would also enable older people to stay as part of a supportive community.
- When homes are sold for a higher price it is often someone wanting it as a second home.
- But people who are selling may need to get as much income as possible to have enough for their own future.
- When a house is sold when someone goes into a care home or dies, it will be relatives who are naturally thinking of their own futures.
- There is a big impact when a whole estate is sold.

Community facilities

There is a good range of community activities and opportunities to do things with friends in Aberfeldy. People enjoy and value this aspect of living here. People talked about the Birks Cinema, clubs and groups and individual people who make a difference.

There are good local facilities such as libraries and health centres and the staff there are good and are helpful.

Many activities are happening in buildings that are run by the community – the Town Hall and Locus Centre in Aberfeldy, the Birks Cinema in Aberfeldy and village halls across the area. The facilities are run in ways that work well for community groups and the changes for using them are very reasonable, because the people running them know what is needed.

The higher cost of using the Campus and other public facilities means people don't use them as much.

Older people are not using the community facilities in some places where they feel these are more for younger people.

It would help if older people had more access to computers through community groups or at public places.

For some people it would be nice to be able to still use facilities like swimming pool as people got older and more frail. It would help if these services encourage people or make it easier for them, and if this is well publicised.

It is nice to have variety and choices – people do not always want to do the same things every week.

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

Transport

Transport is a big issue for many people living in this area, but there are many distinct aspects to the problems. There are also aspects of transport that work well, and people suggested building on these.

General

Better public transport and/or community transport would reduce social isolation and improve people's health and wellbeing, especially over the winter.

Affordable transport is a particular issue for people living in the smaller communities.

People come up with their own solutions for many situations.

- Neighbours and friends of all ages help each other.
- The people who organise regular community activities usually include sorting the transport for people who come along, such as people getting lifts from each other.
- People arrange transport for monthly and occasional activities.

Local organisations share their transport – for example, the Dalweem Care Home bus also helps people who use the Lunch Club.

There is scope for more car sharing between individual people as neighbours. Some people would be reassured if there was information about whether this affects your insurance. It may also need some low-level organising.

Getting to and from hospitals

It is difficult to get to Ninewells – time needed and awkward transport connections if relying on public transport. A related issue here is NHS staff not thinking of the time needed to travel when making appointments for people living in this area.

Some people are able to use the volunteer service arranged through doctors' surgeries.

The cost of transport to hospitals is high – the special service is £45 for the return trip to Ninewells and £21 to Perth Royal Infirmary. This is a high cost, especially for people whose income is tight and for people who need frequent hospital appointments.

When people do use the transport provided the drop-off points in Perth do not connect with the main bus routes. People have also had problems with the shuttle bus to Dundee not waiting if their bus into Perth is late.

"The shuttle bus to Ninewells goes from PRI to Ninewells. It does not connect to the bus station or Mill Street where people would alight from the Aberfeldy Bus. They have to walk to South Street to catch the shuttle. On return they are dropped off at the top of Canal Street and have to walk some distance to the nearest stop to connect to the Aberfeldy bus. Many people can't walk that far!"

"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?"

Bus services

The bus around Aberfeldy and the outlying areas takes a long time to get round, which is a problem for some people.

The reduced bus services during school holidays is a problem.

Timings of bus services – there is no return bus after 7pm from Perth.

Not all the buses coming from Perth to Pitlochry connect with the Aberfeldy bus. The Aberfeldy bus won't wait for the Perth bus if it is late.

People would like more buses to Perth and more frequent direct buses from Aberfeldy to Pitlochry.

The community bus provided by Breath Community Group and Dial a Bus services are good.

Other aspects

Some people don't find it easy to apply for Blue Badges or other national help with transport.

Parking is a problem in Aberfeldy and in Pitlochry when people from this area go there for shopping etc.

People would like the signs for speed restrictions to be clearer, to reduce speeding traffic in Aberfeldy and other places. It matters more to people who need a bit longer to get across the road. One solution could be the solar-powered signs.

"Could the parking spaces for families be dual purpose and also be used by older people?"

"Could we have a permit system for older residents to park in the town?"

Shops etc

Village shops are important and people want to keep them going. People were very positive about the support they and other people get from some people who own or work in shops in the area.

It would help if shops did more for people who struggle to carry shopping. These are potential customers.

There are extra challenges for people in places that have no village shop.

It would be good to have alternatives to on-line shopping for people who struggle to get to shops. People are using this when they

cannot get access to the local shops, which means the business is going away from the community.

People have worries about continued reliable access to the Post Office.

It is good that there is a bank in Aberfeldy. People worry about banks closing so many local branches, especially as there is effectively no internet access for so many people in this area. But no on-line banking also means people have a limited range of financial services.

Shopping in Pitlochry is also often difficult: again the design of the supermarket poses problems and there are not many parking spaces that work for people who are less able.

It is very difficult when people need to buy larger items such as a washing machine or furniture. Some retailers will not deliver to this area and this that do usually add high delivery charges. People are also relying on access to the internet – which is not always possible. This affects every household in the area but it causes particular problems for older people, such as needing to replace items for something that is easier to manage.

Some people go to Rannoch station and take the train to Fort William for shopping and banks.

People are happy to work with shops in the area and nearby to help them improve their service to older customers.

"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."

Information and communication

People telling each other what is happening is an important information route. But it also helps to have good information through the Quair and other routes such as flyers and posters in village halls, shops etc.

There are opportunities for community groups to help each other on this – sharing other people's information with the people you know.

Poor broadband is a major problem for the area and also affects older people.

It would be good to have more help with computer access – access to machines and help with using them. There is some great volunteer help on this within some community groups. But it would be good if younger people, e.g. through the schools, could also help older people.

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

Being heard and part of decisions

People are looking for easy ways to raise issues and help on how to send issues to the right people.

There are examples of local people raising issues and seeing changes happen. But there are also examples of long delays or no progress, which feels disempowering.

People are getting fed up with repeated consultations from the Council and Health Services on what often feel to be very similar topics. It suggests that their views were not listened to before.

It would be good if key people in public sector role, such as the head teacher and someone from medical practice, got more involved in the community. This could be them coming to Community Council meetings.

Community Council meetings should be advertised so people know about that.

It would be good if Councillors held surgeries in local places, so people could discuss their issues with them.

People want ways to contribute on specific planning decisions and how these will impact the whole community, as well as on overall plans.

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

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

"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."

Connections in the community

There could be a lot more opportunities for people to get to know others in their community.

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

There needs to be more activities that keep and build connections between people living in care home and others on the community. Examples could include volunteers going in, activities such as the garden fete happening there again, a music group and activities that bring together residents and neighbours.

- This would be good for the people living there now.
- It would also be a good way for people to understand what these services can offer and help them consider options when they or someone they care about needs more support.

It would be good to have more people volunteering to help with community activities – one-off ones and regular ones for children and whole community as well as for older people. This can be people helping out in less formal ways, not just formal volunteering with more formal processes.

Places

Aberfeldy

What happens in Aberfeldy is important for people across the area, as people use the shops and other facilities there. Many people consider this as a place to move to if they feel they are getting too isolated or need to be closer to services as they get older or their circumstances change.

Physical aspects of the town

There needs more housing in the town for local people wanting to stay independent and for workers.

There is a shortage of public toilets that are open and reliable. People also need more toilets for disabled people - again, this needs to be reliable.

Access around the town and to the services and facilities in it was frequently raised as a problem that has a big impact for some people who live here. It is also discouraging visitors.

- People want automatic doors to give better access at the library.
- Better access on pavements – problems with shop signs etc for people with visual impairments, uneven and holes make it difficult for people using wheelchairs or with balance problems.
- Footpaths and roads should be better maintained to make them more accessible.
- Some of shops have narrow doorways which makes it difficult for people to get access.
- Steps and kerbs at drop-off places make it difficult for people in wheelchairs to get about.

Parking is a problem in Aberfeldy.

- There needs to be more parking for disabled people
- Wider/bigger parking spaces close to the shops that can be used by people who do not have a blue badge
- Staff from local businesses park all day in front of their own shop and stop customers from using the space to shop locally. It also restricts access. People have requested traffic wardens to attend - they come up once then don't come back.

The Men's Shed is looking for more space to enable more people to take part.

Some people talked about the challenge of keeping the character of Aberfeldy and improving access – but people think there are solutions and want local people to be more involved.

Opportunities for people to get together

There could be more opportunities for school children to be involved in the community as a project or working alongside older people, e.g. watering flower baskets.

Information could be better, such as keeping notice boards updated.

There should be a way for ordinary people in the town to make suggestions.

There used to be more activities in sheltered housing, the care home and other places that were ways for older people to keep in touch with each other. It would be good if these got going or new ones started there.

The change from sheltered housing to social housing has reduced social contacts and feeling safe for some people.

Being heard and part of decisions

Norma the Warden is an asset and many people now think of her as the main route to raise issues.

It would help people get involved if Community Council meetings are publicised more.

Grandtully

Older people are not using the village hall here as much as the younger people do.

Facilities in Aberfeldy are important for people living in Grandtully as well as what happens in the village.

People want to have more ways for people to keep and build social connections. This is for older people and for others in this community.

People would like information on ways to stay independent and safe at home.

Fortingall and Glen Lyon

Transport is a big issue for people living here.

There are particular problems here with phone connections and broadband.

There is no local shop so people have a lot of problems if they do/can not drive.

75% of homes are holiday homes – this is now causing big problems for people who live here, especially in the winter.

There are small numbers of participants for any activities that happen. People are concerned about the numbers becoming too small to be viable – people would then lose the social connections they have. A solution could be getting people from nearby communities to come along.

The volunteer First Responders Team are an asset here.

Kinloch Rannoch

This is a great place to live and people want to be part of making it work well for everyone.

The combination of the landscape, weather and distance from other places means that people who live here have to be resourceful and resilient and work together as a community.

People have been part of making plans for more support and care within the village and for people living along the lochside and surrounding area.

It is important to remember people living outside the village. Older people living around the loch can be very isolated.

There are lots of opportunities for formal volunteering and less formal ways of contributing to community activities and supporting people. There are 140 volunteers in the area covering a range of activities – and this range could be even bigger.

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.

People are looking forward to the services that the We Care Group is planning.

It would be good to have housing that works well for older people in the village. If there was sheltered housing neighbours could support each other more.

There is no housing for young families and other youngish people - too many 4-5 bedroom houses that are too big and too expensive. It means young people have to move away for the area, which leaves older residents more vulnerable.

Ideally, there would be health care workers and people such as home helps based in the area.

Transport is a major issue for some people living here who does not have access to their own car.

- In their experience the shuttle bus which meets the Perth Bus does wait when it is not on time.
- They are being offered medical appointments at Ninewells too early. To get there, people have to take the school bus at 7.10am to get there by 12noon.
- There isn't a public bus to Aberfeldy for shopping at the Co-op, the swimming pool, cinema, etc. The School bus goes down at 7.10am, returns 4.45pm.
- On further discussion it was found that there used to be a bus which was withdrawn due to a lack of support. There isn't a set time that everyone wants to go and that perhaps the Aberfeldy Deeds 4 Needs 'going my way' transport matching services is perhaps a more appropriate model to consider.

Poor broadband is a problem for many people – it is slow, expensive and not reliable. This has implications for many aspects of living here, including access to banking and other services, keeping in touch with family, contacts with care and health services.

People are looking for information about activities based in Kinloch Rannoch and at other locations in the area.

Kenmore

There are people here who are very involved in activities in the local community, including through the Community Council, the church and farming-related activities.

People are interested in more activities that bring people together and are fun to do, such as singing and music. Activities that keep going through the winter would be welcome.

There are some activities outside the town but people need their own transport to get there.

It would be good to have more housing options in Kenmore for people living here and in surrounding area.

People use the health centre in Aberfeldy, but it takes time to get there. Could there be easier and quicker ways for people to get repeat prescriptions and appointments?

It would be good to have some people driving things forward in this community.

Amulree

This village is part-way between Aberfeldy and Dunkeld. People make use of activities and services in both towns, but tend to look more to Dunkeld.

There are few services here – the school, shop and hotel have all closed. The informal and voluntary activities are now focussed on the village hall.

There have been more young families moving in to houses that had been empty. This is having a positive impact for the while community and meetings and activities bring together people who have lived here for decades and people who moved recently.

Much activity is centred around the Village Hall and activities in Dunkeld. There is a wide variety of activities e.g. exercise based, eating together, arts based or traditional intergenerational community events funded by their own Community Fund.

Those who are active want to reach out to people who may not know what is there.

The Bridge magazine, church newsletter, Scottish Women's Institute, community email and people passing information to neighbours are the main information routes.

Broadband is poor and there is no mobile phone reception 2 miles outside the village. This has big implications for people, including worries about safety on farms.

One of the impacts of more young families moving to area is that there needs to be things for children and for young people to do. There are activities for children but nothing for teenagers. So local people would like to do something with them.

Transport is a big problem as the post bus has now ended and the school bus is too small to take other passengers. People help each other out as much as they can, but it is not always possible.

Contact for more information

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