



## REPORT FROM A PUBLIC MEETING, 30<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2022, WIGTOWN COUNTY BUILDINGS- (final 31.8.22)

### BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

After several attempts, as soon as Covid restrictions permitted, an open public meeting was organised with four main purposes, to:

1. Welcome as many members of the public as possible to our first post-COVID open meeting; provide an update of MAC-CAN's activities including current status of SCIO application, and to acknowledge people's efforts and successes since the first open meeting in February 2020
2. Provide a forum for sharing, learning and understanding people's views on the climate crisis, sustainability, community and other issues
3. Focus on ideas and actions that can help to build community, exploring 'solutions from below' that matter to local people and help to address climate action
4. Develop draft actions and next steps individually and collectively, with a clear focus on:
  - what ideas we should move forward into action?
  - who has the capacity to lead that and is able to commit effort?
  - what support do people need?
  - clarifying the Core Group's role (e.g. can't be the only doers, but can be the facilitators)

### ACTIVITIES

The Core Group met several times to discuss the best way of structuring the meeting while allowing as much time as possible for open discussion. The agenda (**Appendix One**) therefore started with brief presentations to give information about MAC-CAN's current situation and progress before we split into five groups covering the following topics. Each group was facilitated by a volunteer who presented and wrote up the key points from the discussions (facilitator in parenthesis).

- a) **Food and farming** - (Abi Mordin)
- b) **Hands on projects**; Croft, beach cleans, tree planting etc. (Julia Farrington)
- c) **Reduce, re-use & repair** – (Chris Pugh)
- d) **Energy & transport** – (George Pattison + Anne Connick)
- e) **Free-thinkers** – (Nick Walker)

### KEY POINTS FROM GROUPS

#### **Group A: Food and Farming**

##### **Good examples locally and elsewhere:**

- Community fridge
- Example in Glasgow (Woodlands): Veg Box Scheme – encourages people to eat more vegetables and be aware of seasonality. Buys from large wholesaler but only orders Scottish in season produce. Pay what you can model for affordability
- Lots of deliveries e.g. Fleet Fish and Roan's Dairy (not very local though)
- Barsolus – local veg but not organically produced. Unsure if they deliver
- Glenkens Food Hub – producer led cooperative, sourcing food from within 25 miles, delivering locally. Uses Open Food Network to collectivise producers

- MAC-CAN croft is a great model
- Barnbarroch Organic Beef – good practice
- Local Seed Swaps and Produce Swaps, these have been great
- Torr House Farm – Small farming family – younger farmers maybe easier to connect with?

### Local problems/issues (opportunities):

- Very difficult to access local food – particularly veg, meat, dairy and bread
- Too much grass! Too much dairy and livestock
- Lots of individuals doing great things but not much working together

### What we'd like to see more of:

- Hedgerows! Quite harshly cut or removed. Leave for biodiversity. Demo hedge laying somewhere?
- More community fridges? Or other food/produce sharing
- Surplus veg – is there a way of sharing/selling via the market?
- Market Gardens – there used to be lots across the area, produce had route to market via the train line to Glasgow. How do we bring this back?
- More milk refill machines – one of these near Stranraer, another just getting set up at Balnab Featherdown Farm Whithorn.
- More veg growing. Mapping of walled gardens locally?
- Make more noise! Increase profile of what's going on, raise awareness
- Affordable and accessible sustainably produced food

### Unanswered questions:

- Who owns the land?! Ask Andy Wightman!!
- What is local? How do we define this?
- Can we lease land from farmers for market gardening? How much would this cost? Equivalent to agri payments? Possible connection – Claymoddie, empty polytunnels, Christopher Nicholson landowner

### Key projects/ideas/activities to take forwards:

- Veg Box project as per Woodlands, maybe linking this in with surplus veg from local producers (gluts etc.) Possibly using Open Food Network as a platform
- DG8 'mark'?
- Tim >> Cara is interested in Market Gardening
- Farm Walk to Barnbarroch
- Engaging more with farmers – film screening of In Our Hands for example. Connect with more local farmers with Regenerative Farming Network. (I was looking to put in URL link but there are several – is there a specific local one? Otherwise why underlined?)
- Contact Christopher Nicholson.
- Mary in Kirkcowan (at event) has a large garden, used to be a market garden. Interested in similar model to Croft, open it up to the community. Also another participant in Creetown, similar large garden.
- Run a Permaculture Design Course locally, across different sites e.g. Croft and those suggested above. Lusi Alderslowe in Gatehouse of Fleet, established and very experienced Permaculture Teacher
- Community food shop

### Group B: Hands on Projects

#### Buying in Bulk – food, compost, cleaning products

Several ways of doing this:

- A premises, or a stall at the market, or someone's house becomes the central point and pick up
- Community distribution network - a couple vans touring the area

#### Community Allotments

- Unused space in large gardens
- Corner of a farmer's field to produce vegetables for sale locally

#### Recycling – set up a directory of resources including specialist recycling

- Printer ink
- Water filters
- Batteries

#### Buying more secondhand clothes etc.

#### Plant a wildlife area in your garden

### **Plant/book swap**

- Native, food plants
- Tree seedlings

### **Telephone library**

### **Tree planting – Woodlands Trust offering trees to the community**

#### **Establishing links with farmers**

- Hedgerow planting
- Scaling up ambition of MAC-CAN to engage with farmers

#### **Plastics**

- Litter picking on roads as well as on coast
- Divide up coast into manageable sections and make communities responsible for specific stretch
- Get mesh baskets for plastic waste so you see what's coming off the beaches
- What happens to the plastic once picked?
- See plastic as an asset, community resource – economy/employment
- How to prevent plastic waste getting into sea/land – who is responsible?
- Holding polluters responsible – fishermen, waste/skip processing companies
- Seasonal activities – summer picking – winter lobbying/campaigning
- Artists working with plastics

#### **Talking about all these activities at schools**

- Fashion – wearing second hand clothes
- Recycling etc.

#### **Forest School Camps**

- Time off school
- Learn about foraging, cooking, crafts and bush craft
- Summer camps

#### **Preserving food without power**

- Root cellaring
- Fermenting food – sauerkraut
- Culture Club fermentation group on FB
- Swapping cultures – kefir, sourdough
- Trying different things

#### **Cycling groups**

- Cycle safety – building people's confidence

### **Group C: Reduce, Reuse and Repair**

#### **Recycle Centres:**

- the ability for locals to take directly from the site, currently this is not permitted by the current council/contractor; no doubt there will be some Health & Safety issues. There would be enough items left to provide for the local recycle and reuse projects
- a dedicated area in the Recycle Centres for building materials that can be reused, for example unwanted bathroom suites, flooring, basically general building materials

#### **Community Fridges:**

- a need for more in the Machars region (and further afield) rather than food banks
- people feel more comfortable with going to a community fridge, (Whithorn being a good example of how this)
- possible difficulty with expanding the Fridges would be the food availability from the supermarkets - maybe the Fridges could be an outlet for home gardeners with their veg/fruit gluts or even growing extra crops for the Fridges

#### **Circular Economy of stuff:**

- more emphasis on encouraging the Circular Economy of stuff

### 'Ditch the cheap clothes':

- education would help people make better choices and in turn stimulate the three R's (reduce, reuse, recycle) – (plenty of information about where clothes and 'stuff' come from and how it is made)
- buying better quality items would lead to less waste
- encourage people to repair clothing that they know will last
- local community shops can play a very important part in recycling better quality items
- the stigma around 2<sup>nd</sup> hand clothes is changing, even amongst the younger generations
- some felt that the younger generation were getting behind the whole reuse and recycling movement
- Greta is one example however social media, online influencers and current trends motivate young people to buy latest fashions e.g. thick rubber soled trainers with no thoughts about recycling
- there were no comments on how to solve this current social media situation

### Recycling and repairing:

- skills are needed to do this, such as sewing on a button, darning socks, how to mend a bicycle.
- a central permanent site (could be online) was suggested with a directory of people happy to share their skills and knowledge – individuals could access when they needed a particular skill
- could also be part of a bartering system
- a physical place such as an A Free (no money exchanged) Market Stall where skills could be shared along with information pamphlets, upcoming future events etc. would also be required. (This idea is already used in Carlisle primarily for simple bicycle repairs but it can be adapted to other skills.)

## Group D: Energy and Transport

### Main feedback/discussion

All participants agreed both are national, long-term issues that are not easily solved at local level.

### Energy

- GP quoted *Sustainable Energy without the Hot Air* by David MacKay (2009) <http://withouthotair.com/>. In an endeavour to quantify the energy needed to sustain our lifestyle in the UK MacKay converted everything into a measurement of kilowatt hours. He calculated that every person in the UK uses the equivalent of 195 kWh per day. The big figures to address are as follows:
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- 1) Heating and Cooling (37kWh/pp/day)
- 2) Cars (40kWh/pp/day)
- 3) 'Stuff' (consumables) and the transportation of stuff (60 kWh/pp/day).

### Based on these as key issues we had the following feedback:

- Energy is controlled by Government & the Big 5 energy companies.
- In some rural areas energy companies won't provide smart meters. Why? What can be done about it?
- Reducing our dependency and desire for 'stuff' would make a big difference to our overall energy use, which is the biggest problem. This is an international problem. What can be done about it? Wanting to be fashionable and buy cheap items is particularly difficult to address. Cheap items are freely available. Not everyone can afford good quality. Suggested use of a decision-table to help people decide if they should buy something or if could find a better alternative
- We could locally promote use/buying of second-hand things, (i.e. current second hand shops but also suggestion of a 'free stall' at markets for people to donate/find things etc.)
- Home energy is supported by Government Grants but only for big things. Small things are not grant aided
- In rural areas we often can't get tradespeople (or good ones) to do work. If people could be trained or 'up-skilled' to do simple home improvements for themselves this would also save money

### Transport

- People can't use public transport if it isn't frequent and accessible. Rural areas mean people can't even get to bus stops or train stations without driving
- Buses are too big, often empty, and could be put to better use, especially in this area. They could possibly take tourists/deliveries, to make them more economical and pay for more frequent trips
- Cycling could perhaps be encouraged more, but the A75 is not very safe
- Could MAC-CAN help facilitate a local lift-share scheme (several already in existence) for people to sign up to (to provide a lift or looking for one)? They do work but a platform would be needed, and an agreed/paid co-ordinator

- There are new projects running in Norfolk and Wales which have 'on-demand' buses. Might be worth looking at
- Cost of electric cars is prohibitive to most people, and distances to travel would risk running out of charge or having to stop and charge part way
- Integration of buses with the wider public transport network in the UK
- We ran out of time to discuss fully but Tool Libraries and Re-Use centres were mentioned

### **Group E: Free Thinkers**

#### **Themes**

Engagement. Growth. Entusing. Young people.

A key theme for all groups was around the challenge of engagement / involvement / enthusiasm more widely than MAC-CAN itself:

- Young people in particular
- School initiatives may be "left behind" on move from primary to secondary but secondary age is vital to establish enthusiasm for the future
- Also for others who are hard to reach

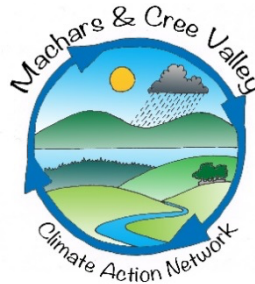
#### **Ideas (in no particular order)**

1. Use arts (e.g. performance, visual arts, writing, film) - including in schools - to:
  - express / address climate fears, anxieties, pessimism
  - involve and enthuse others
  - inspire action
2. Join up discussions with actions (e.g. talking / planning while working at Croft; seed potting while meeting to discuss). *This can help (for example) people with social anxiety (often aggravated by COVID-19) to feel able to take part.*
3. Subliminal actions leading by example in small local ways; e.g. turning lawns into meadow, putting up notice to explain / encourage.
4. Project work with secondary school
  - involve student and teacher champions, exploit links throughout the curriculum, aligned with D&GC climate emergency declaration
  - "after school" extra-curricular options limited in rural area with long bus routes, etc. so consider longer day/lunch and after school things in middle of day.
5. Create links with local farmers
  - activities / presence at Wigtown Show
  - improve access to land where this is difficult to encourage "in-touch-ness"

### **CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS** (incorporating ideas from the Green Fayre, Newton Stewart, 6<sup>th</sup> August)

1. **Produce a MAC-CAN events calendar** – a skeleton calendar that is sent to the members for their additions, and add names of who is leading each event
2. We need to **put detail on**:
  - a. The **key Practical Action(s) that MAC-CAN is undertaking**
  - b. How we will develop our Action focussed **Networking**
  - c. The **indicators** we will use for measuring our ambitions and activities
3. We need to **build MAC-CAN capacity** – plenty of ideas on the table
  - a. Produce a **skills inventory of MAC-CAN members** interests, skills, strengths, competencies, and support needs
  - b. **Focus on SCIO** and what we have already suggested
  - c. Undertake a **recruitment search for Trustees / Core Group members**
4. Core Group and interested to **develop an Action Plan**, based on this report and conclusions

## APPENDIX ONE



### Public Meeting, 30<sup>th</sup> April 2022, Wigtown County Buildings

#### Agenda

Activity	Time
Core Group + volunteers arrive and set up	09.00
Arrivals <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Welcome table incl. taking names, emails, permissions – <i>Jenna Cains</i></li> <li>- Refreshments – <i>Mary Pattison</i></li> </ul>	09:45-10.00
Opening and Welcome ( <i>Scott Jones</i> , facilitator)	10.00-10:05
Overview of MAC-CAN, ( <i>George Pattison</i> )	10:05-10:15
Treasurer's Summary (on behalf of <i>Jen Hendry</i> )	10:15-10:20
Croft Summary ( <i>Gill Butler-Orli</i> )	10:20-10:25
Catriona Muir & Maggie Kelly – presentation on the Galloway Apple Project	10:25-10:35
Kylie McConnell – presentation on an established organic farm; their pasture system, biodiversity, and local beef production	10:35-10:45
Table discussions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. <b>Food and farming</b> – <i>Abi Mordin</i></li> <li>B. <b>Hands on projects</b>; Croft, beach cleans, tree planting etc. – <i>Julia Farrington</i></li> <li>C. <b>Reduce, re-use &amp; repair</b> – <i>Chris Pugh</i></li> <li>D. <b>Energy &amp; transport</b> – <i>George Pattison + Anne Connick</i></li> <li>E. <b>Free-thinkers</b> – <i>Nick Walker</i></li> </ul>	Three rounds <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 10:50-11:05</li> <li>- 11:05-11:20</li> <li>- 11:20-11.35</li> </ul>
<b>Tea break</b>	<b>11.35-11:50</b>
Table discussions (as above)	Two rounds <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 11:50-12:05</li> <li>- 12:05-12:20</li> </ul>
Plenary and free discussion incl. links with other groups	12:20-12:50