



APPRAISING THE SUSTAINABILITY OF FOUR SCOTTISH COMMUNITIES

CASE STUDIES OVERVIEW

Final Report

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Prepared on behalf of Forward Scotland by CAG Consultants

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Introduction

1. Sustainable Communities: The Scottish Context

Scotland's communities are diverse in nature and faced with a variety of economic, social and environmental challenges. While some problems are related to distinct types of communities, such as the physical remoteness of many parts of the Highlands and Islands, other problems are common to many urban and rural areas. High unemployment, environmental degradation, poor housing and a lack of services and amenities are a challenge for communities across the country.

As Forward Scotland has recognised, the tackling of these issues involves an integrated approach that is sympathetic to the particular circumstances people find themselves in and to the views of local people. It requires the support and involvement of a variety of organisations including the Scottish Executive, government agencies, the private sector and community organisations.

The importance of this work has been recognised by the Scottish Government, who have now embraced the concept of sustainability more fully through their *Meeting the Needs Strategy*, the development of sustainability indicators and the production of the *Building a Sustainable Scotland* Report which examines the performance of all departments of the Executive in relation to sustainability. The Executive has also made a commitment to environmental justice, while the creation work of Communities Scotland and other agencies such as Highlands and Islands Enterprise is intended to further support a community based approach to economic, social and environmental renewal.

Forward Scotland, through its grant schemes and newer resources such as the Community Webnet, are taking a lead in the promotion of sustainable communities through the provision of funding and expertise and by supporting capacity building and awareness.

2. Purpose of the research

As part of a pilot project to profile sustainable communities, Forward Scotland commissioned CAG Consultants to appraise the sustainability of four Scottish communities: Salsburgh in North Lanarkshire, Portobello on the eastern side of Edinburgh, Braemar in rural Aberdeenshire and Stornoway on the Isle of Lewis. The objective in conducting these appraisals is to seek to understand how sustainable these communities are and how sustainable the plans in place to improve quality of life in those areas are likely to be, given the sustainability assets of the area.

The appraisals form part of the Profiling Sustainable Communities Research Project, which is intended to inform stakeholders of the outcomes of efforts to build sustainable communities. The project aims to achieve the following:

- a higher profile for sustainable communities work
- a greater awareness of sustainable communities activity
- a greater awareness of what is involved in making communities more sustainable
- a clearer set of objectives for policy and implementation
- more sustainable communities

Ultimately it is intended that the project will build a vision of sustainable communities in Scotland.

The four community sustainability appraisals take into account the following aspects of sustainable communities:

- social, economic and environmental aspects of sustainable communities, including social inclusion, environmental justice, environmental management
- the demographics of the communities, including an assessment of how this impacts on the medium and long term capacity to become more sustainable
- the culture of the communities, including an assessment of how this impacts on the medium and long term capacity to become more sustainable
- the medium and long term plan and patterns of development in the community and an assessment of how this affects their capacity to become more sustainable
- the relationship of the communities being appraised with those on which they rely for services, employment and recreation/leisure
- the role of that community in influencing service delivery
- the awareness of the community to sustainable communities work in that area

Methodology

3. Methodology

These sustainability appraisals follow established sustainability appraisal methodologies by developing sustainability objectives and indicators, collecting baseline data (including identifying trends) and identifying sustainability issues. In addition, some limited analysis is made of the future plans for the communities. In highlighting the key sustainability assets and issues in each of the communities, this research provides a basis for a more detailed assessment of plans for the communities and will provide crucial contextual information for the preparation of any new plans and initiatives in the future.

The methodology adopted for the appraisals incorporates the following key elements:

Stage 1

- Definition of criteria and indicators for appraising community sustainability, for exploration through quantitative and qualitative methods. This framework has to evolve as the research progresses, in response to the availability of data at the required level.
- Desk-based scoping of the specific qualities and character of the communities.
- Desk research on baseline data for criteria and indicators.
- Desk research and review of key land use plans for each community.
- Telephone interviews with four relevant stakeholders for each community - two representatives of service providers and two community-based organisations (e.g. SIPs, Community Councils, local Councils for Voluntary Service).
- Group discussions with community members.

Stage 2

- Half-day dialogue events with community members and service providers in each community to discuss emerging findings and identify future priorities.

4. The four communities

The four communities used as case studies for the research were as follows:

- Salsburgh in North Lanarkshire, a village of approximately 1,200 residents lying in a rural area on the central Scotland plateau at the highest point between Glasgow and Edinburgh. The village and surrounding area have experienced considerable decline since the 1970s particularly associated with the decline of coal mining. Large quarrying operations remain in the vicinity of the village.
- Portobello in the City of Edinburgh, a community of around 15,000 people which until the end of the nineteenth century had its own burgh status but which has now become a largely residential suburb of Edinburgh. Established to take advantage of the nearby clay deposits through brick, bottle and pottery works, the impressive sandy beach later led to Portobello becoming a popular holiday resort, attracting visitors from across Scotland.
- Stornoway on the Isle of Lewis, a town of approximately 6,000 people which acts as the main service centre for the Outer Hebrides.
- Braemar in rural Aberdeenshire, a highland village of approximately 900 people, largely Victorian in character and heavily reliant on tourist activity. The town lies at the heart of the newly-established Cairngorms National Park.

Findings

5. Economic aspects

Economic assets

- The appraisals highlighted the pivotal role of the natural environment in the local economy of all four communities but particularly the two in the Highlands and Islands. The high landscape value of the areas surrounding Braemar and Stornoway has led to significant levels of tourist activity in these communities. Topography and climate also play particularly important roles in Braemar's economy through attracting summer and winter mountain sports to the area. Historically, Portobello's beach played a similar role in its local economy and continues to attract leisure visitors, as well as offering the potential to attract future investment to the area. The landscape around Salsburgh is also seen to offer the potential to attract leisure and tourist activity, although this potential is, as yet, unrealised. Historically, Salsburgh's economy has been focused on the extraction of its mineral assets and, although this has declined in recent years, large quarrying operations remain in the area.
- The appraisals highlighted the potential for further more sustainable large-scale exploitation of the natural environment in two of the four communities. Major wind farms are proposed close to Stornoway and Salsburgh to take advantage of the exposed nature of surrounding land, and considerable potential has been identified for the exploitation of wave power resources in the sea off Stornoway. However, in Salsburgh there is considerable local resistance to the erection of wind turbines, related to concerns about health and the impact on landscape value.
- The proximity to Scotland's economic heartland was identified as a key asset in two of the communities. Portobello is in close proximity to the employment and economic activity of central Edinburgh, whilst Salsburgh's road access to Edinburgh and Glasgow is seen to give it the potential to attract new investment and development.
- In the other two communities, Braemar and Stornoway, the local population were seen to be of particular economic importance. The maintenance of stable and diverse populations was a key issue in both of these communities and was seen to be crucial to maintaining successful local economies.

Economic activity

- Each of the communities appraised have experienced significant fluctuations in their economic fortunes. The aftermath of economic decline is most apparent in Salsburgh, which has experienced the loss of coal mining and associated industries over the last 30-40 years, which has in turn led to considerable population decline and associated loss of services and facilities for local people. Stornoway has also experienced significant economic decline in recent decades, particularly with the decline of the fishing industry. Portobello's period of decline occurred in the more distant past, first with the loss of the brick, bottle and pottery works and then with the decline of the domestic tourist market. Braemar has long been dependent on tourism and suffers from fluctuations in the tourist market.
- The larger communities have more diverse local economies, which has enabled them to cope better with fluctuations in individual economic sectors. The smaller communities, Salsburgh and Braemar, remain economically vulnerable due to their dependence on a narrow range of sectors.
- Stornoway stands out as the community most open to economic change and diversification. Threatened by continued significant population decline, opportunities for diversification in to renewable energy, information technology, niche products and increased cultural tourism are being actively explored.

Employment

- The sustainability of travel patterns to employment or study varies widely across the case studies. Perhaps surprisingly, the island community and the most rural community appear to have the most sustainable travel patterns. Braemar is too far from the nearest major economic centre to attract significant numbers of commuters, whilst Stornoway is a very compact town with relatively high usage of walking and cycling. The proximity of Portobello and Salsburgh to major economic centres results in longer distances to work for residents of these communities, although the level of public transport usage for these journeys in Portobello is relatively high.
- The only community with higher than average levels employed in senior occupations was Portobello, because of its proximity to employment opportunities in Edinburgh. The shortage of higher level occupations was identified as a key issue in the other three communities, which was seen to contribute to the drift of young people and highly skilled people from these areas.

6. Environmental aspects

Environmental assets

- The research has revealed the close correlation between economic and environmental assets in the four communities. Present economic activity and future economic potential is seen to be closely tied to the environmental assets of the four communities. In Salsburgh, the key assets are the minerals, the landscape value and the altitude/exposure of the area. In Stornoway they are the landscape value, Lews Castle and wind/wave power resources. In Braemar the key environmental assets are the landscape value and the altitude/terrain, whilst in Portobello the key asset is the beach.

Environmental impacts

- However, in each of the communities appraised, there is a history of environmental damage from economic activity as well as major concerns about the current and future impacts of economic change. The integration of economic development and environmental protection is a crucial issue which has yet to be fully addressed in any of the communities:
 - Braemar continues to be reliant on tourism and is in need of the development of affordable housing, yet is suffering from the impacts of tourist activity (e.g. litter and footpath erosion) and there are serious concerns about the impact of new development on water supply and sewage provision.
 - Salsburgh continues to suffer from the impacts of nearby mineral extraction and needs to attract quality local employment but the major proposals which have been forthcoming for the area, such as landfill operations, opencast mining and wind farms, are generating serious concerns locally.
 - Local aspirations for Portobello include the attraction of high skilled local employment and the further development of the area as a leisure destination. However, development opportunities for new leisure uses have yet to be clearly identified and there are concerns about inappropriate development adjacent to the promenade. Whilst the community have aspirations for new high skilled employment uses on some of the older industrial sites, this is not yet articulated in policy for the area and current proposals for a large supermarket are generating serious local opposition.
 - Of the four communities, Stornoway appears to have moved furthest in addressing the integration of economic development and environmental protection. Although the environment continues to suffer from the impacts of local quarrying and pollution from fish farming, there appears to be an emerging consensus about the need to promote more sustainable economic

development, such as the production of renewable energy and high tech business uses. Some progress towards this goal has already been made, such as organic fish farming and the production of niche/high quality products by traditional crofters.

- The importance attached to basic environmental issues by local communities was highlighted by the case studies. Addressing issues such as litter, dog fouling and fly tipping are seen to be extremely important.

Sustainable energy use and travel

- There appears to be growing awareness and support for sustainable energy initiatives and a desire for funding to support such schemes. As well as the large scale schemes previously mentioned, a number of smaller scale initiatives were highlighted:
 - In Stornoway, ground source heat pumps and PV panels are being installed on some new social housing.
 - In Braemar, the feasibility of a biomass district heating scheme is being explored.
 - In Portobello, PV panels have been installed on public toilets and the local school has achieved 'eco-school' status.
 - Salsburgh appears to be the exception with regard to such initiatives and the community are also strongly opposed to the larger scale wind farm proposals.
- The absence of a significant public transport network in Braemar and Stornoway is compensated for by the relatively short distances which people travel to work or study. Although the distances travelled by Portobello residents is much greater, the levels of car usage are lower than the national average because of the excellent bus service into central Edinburgh. Salsburgh on the other hand, suffers from a shortage of local employment and poor public transport provision, which produces longer trips and a high dependence on the car.
- Levels of waste recycling were lower than the national average in all four communities, and were particularly low in Stornoway and Braemar, reflecting the high cost of transporting waste to recycling facilities from these communities.

7. Social aspects

- The case study communities exhibit wide variations in the levels of deprivation. According to the statistics (Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation) Salsburgh is the most deprived of the four communities, particularly in terms of access, although one of the

wards in Stornoway was ranked as more deprived than Salsburgh and significantly more deprived than the other wards in Stornoway.

- This highlights the discrepancies which exist between deprivation statistics and local perceptions and variations. For example, although Coulregrein ward in Stornoway ranked as the most deprived ward in any of the case studies, this was not perceived as a deprived area by local people, and although the statistics suggest that Braemar is the least deprived community, local participants suggested that there were pockets of significant social exclusion.
- Housing affordability was highlighted as a key issue in three of the four communities. The purchase of second homes and the low rates of house building is impacting on affordability in Braemar and Stornoway, whilst the generally high prices in Edinburgh make Portobello an expensive place to live. The shortage of affordable homes is seen as a contributory factor in the loss of young people from these areas. Salsburgh is the exception in this regard, although there is increasing developer interest in the area which suggests that this may change.
- The unemployment and education statistics mirror the deprivation statistics to a large extent, with only Salsburgh exhibiting unemployment levels above the national average and educational attainment levels below the national average.
- Although crime was not highlighted as a key issue in any of the communities, anti-social behaviour, particularly amongst young people is a very important issue for the two communities in the central belt, Salsburgh and Portobello. Noise and street drinking were common problems for both of these communities, whilst the use of motorbikes in public spaces was a specific problem for Salsburgh. The shortage of facilities for young people and the failure to empower them and involve them in local decision-making, were identified as root causes of such problems.
- Although seemingly not leading to significant problems of anti-social behaviour, the shortage of facilities for young people was highlighted as a contributory factor to population decline in Stornoway and Braemar.

8. Services and employment

- Access to shops and services is a key issue in three of the communities, with only Portobello having good access to a complete range of services. Braemar is in an isolated rural location, with access to secondary schooling, health services, retail and leisure facilities highlighted as particular problems. Although Salsburgh is little more than 6 miles from Airdrie, the low levels of car ownership and poor public transport provision make access to all but the most basic services extremely problematic. In Stornoway, although access to basic services is good, the diversity of retail provision is limited, as is specialist health care. Many islanders therefore travel to the mainland for such services but the expense of this journey puts it out of reach of many others.

- A key issue for Portobello and Salsburgh is the provision of community facilities. Salsburgh's village hall is large but does not currently function as a community centre because of the expense involved in hiring it, whilst Portobello's community centre is well-used but outdated. Plans for a new community centre are now being actively pursued.

9. Demographics

- The population of the four communities varied in terms of absolute numbers (Portobello has around 15 times the population of Braemar) and also in terms of the age and gender structure of each community. All four communities had, to a greater or lesser extent, a 'top heavy' age structure with more older people than average and fewer children and young adults. This was particularly the case in the two northern communities (Braemar and Stornoway), with the loss of young people being an important issue for both communities. For all communities the sustaining of a viable and mixed population is directly related to the strength of the communities economies and the particular economic pressures acting on each area.
- Stornoway and the Outer Hebrides as a whole are suffering from the most rapid population decline found anywhere in Scotland, with the population of the islands falling 10% between 1991 and 2001 and expected to fall by a further 17.5% by 2016. This level of population loss is not sustainable, and threatens the long-term viability of many communities in the outer isles. Indeed, the need to maintain a viable population in the islands emerged as the most significant challenge facing the islands over coming years. Salsburgh also has a declining population. Like Stornoway, this is due to the decline of traditional employment in the area and the failure to date to attract new businesses and economic activity to the village.
- Population decline is also an issue for Braemar, but unlike Stornoway or Salsburgh the problems in Braemar are related to a strong economy with a high demand for a limited number of dwellings. This has led to high house prices and the growth in the number of holiday homes in upper Deeside, putting housing out of reach of many local people. The concern is that over time the village of Braemar will become a holiday destination with very limited resident population.

10. Culture

- The research highlighted the great cultural diversity of the four communities and highlighted how cultural assets could bring economic and social benefits. Of the four, Stornoway emerged as the community with the most distinct cultural heritage. The Gaelic language is still spoken widely within the Outer Hebrides and significant efforts are now being made to stem the decline of Gaelic and ensure that it survives as a living language. The survival of Gaelic was viewed as not just important in cultural terms, but it was also recognised that the language and culture of the islands could provide significant employment through tourism, the media and education. The Hebrides also has a strong and distinct religious tradition, something that was viewed as being both an

asset and a potential barrier to the development of tourism, in particular with regard to the closure of many tourist services on Sundays.

- The other three communities also had their own cultural characteristics. Like Stornoway, Braemar has a distinct history, drawn both from the Doric culture of north-east Scotland and its links with the royal heritage of Deeside and events such as the Braemar Gathering. As with Stornoway, these cultural assets are viewed as also having economic benefits for the area.
- The other two communities are more urban in character and do not have the clear cultural heritage of the two Highland communities. Portobello is seen as having a vibrant local cultural and artistic scene and a cultural strength based on the diversity of people now living in the area. Salsburgh appears to have the lowest level of cultural activity. This can be attributed to the economic decline of the village in recent years and the proximity of the village to Glasgow. It also serves to demonstrate how the loss of traditional industries in such communities can lead to a loss of community cohesion and vitality.

11. Patterns of development

- Major weaknesses in planning policies were highlighted in relation to some of the key sustainability issues in the four communities:
 - The current local plan covering Salsburgh was adopted in 1991 and, although it recognises the need to stem population decline, its policies have failed to achieve this. It does not specifically address the issue of sustainable economic development in Salsburgh, nor improving access to the surrounding countryside. The current review of the plan is expected to address these issues.
 - The local plan covering Portobello could have stronger policies to resist traffic-generating uses on the key development sites and fails to put forward a clear strategy for re-establishing the town as a centre for leisure activities.
 - The Western Isles structure plan seeks to promote development outside Stornoway but fails to show how this policy can be implemented without compromising the sustainability of Stornoway itself, which is in need of commercial and residential development. The policy does not sit easily with the policies and proposals put forward by the Stornoway Regeneration Study, which promote the development of Stornoway and which are also included in the plan.
 - The new Finalised Aberdeenshire Local Plan, although not yet fully adopted, addresses many of the key sustainability issues identified by the research. However, local concerns were expressed about the restrictiveness of policies to protect the character of the area and their impact on potential new economic initiatives. There were also concerns about the levels of affordable housing which would be required on the sites identified for housing development.

12. Engagement and awareness

Community organisations

- All four settlements have a variety of active community based organisations. With the exception of Stornoway, Community Councils emerged as the most important community organisations in terms of influencing the overall development of each area. In contrast, within Stornoway there are no Community Councils though there is a network of active residents groups which serve a similar purpose.
- Reflecting its larger and more diverse population, Portobello appears to have the broadest range of community organisations active within the settlement. Within the other settlements there are also a range of organisations which each make a significant contribution to the life of the community. These range from sports and recreation clubs to long standing and unique organisations such as the Braemar Royal Highland Society. In both Salsburgh and Braemar there have been community based attempts to help improve the local economy, such as Smarter Salsburgh and the Friends of Glenshee (who sought to save the local ski industry through promoting a community buyout of the financially troubled centre.)
- As with the level of cultural activity, it appears that Salsburgh has suffered from the decline of the traditional economic base of the village and the loss of a coherent social identity, with this being indicated by the low number of community organisations active within the area.

Community engagement

- Levels of community engagement varied significantly across the four areas. Again reflecting its larger population and possibly its socio-economic profile, Portobello appears to have the highest level of community engagement. This is demonstrated by both general levels of community participation in decision making and in specific campaigns against unwelcome developments such as the Portobello Campaign Against the Superstore. Other communities have also been active in relation to specific issues, with Community Councils again serving as an important conduit for discussion between local people and decision-makers.
- The research highlighted a high level of cynicism about the benefits of being involved and also a degree of consultation fatigue. This is most obviously an issue in Portobello where the high number of community consultation exercises that have taken place in recent years, and their failure to deliver significant improvements to the area, have caused many people to be sceptical about the benefits of becoming involved. In Salsburgh it was felt that many local people did not feel confident about becoming involved in decision making, with the poor state of the local economy leading many people to become apathetic.

- The creation of new structures such as the Local Development Committees in Edinburgh and the Cairngorms National Park Authority in Braemar have provided new channels for engagement with decision makers. These are in general welcomed, although many people do not feel that such organisations will actually address their concerns.

Relationships with decision-makers

- The view of decision makers varied significantly between the four communities:
 - Stornoway appears to have the most harmonious relationship between community organisations and the Council and other public bodies. This may reflect the effectiveness of the Council in addressing local needs, but may also be related to the importance of the Council as a key component of the local economy.
 - In Portobello the view of the Council and other services was mixed. Indeed there was a view that while some Council services were responsive to local needs others were not. In particular Community Planning is perceived as having promised much but delivered little within Portobello, as the Community Planning areas defined by the Local Authority were felt to be too large to ensure that the views of individual communities were heard.
 - In Braemar the main problem was seen as the physical remoteness of many service providers. While there was strong support for the local Councillor, the common view was that Aberdeenshire Council is more concerned with the larger population centres on the east coast than on the upland areas. This sense of isolation has been strengthened by the loss of some key workers due to cost cutting and rationalisation, meaning that residents of Braemar had to now travel large distances to access services.
 - In Salsburgh the relationship between the community and North Lanarkshire Council appears to have been confrontational in the past, although there are signs that the situation is now improving, particularly through joint working on the Smarter Salsburgh initiative. Many local residents still felt that the Local Authority and other service providers were dismissive of their concerns.

Awareness of sustainable community initiatives

- The research uncovered a wide range of sustainable community initiatives in each of the settlements, with the overall level of activity appearing to correlate with the general level of community activity in each area. As such Portobello appears to have the highest number of community led initiatives and Salsburgh the least.

- In Salsburgh and Stornoway the initiatives appear to have come from public agencies (e.g. from Forward Scotland or the Local Authority) rather than being generated from within the community. In Stornoway this appears to be because the Council has taken the lead in promoting sustainable communities and is a strong force within the local area. In Salsburgh it may be that the high levels of deprivation and economic decline, and the low level of community activity, could have led others to feel that intervention was required to help ‘kickstart’ such work

13. Conclusions

- There is a close correlation between the environmental and economic assets in each of the four communities, highlighting the pivotal role which the natural environment plays in Scotland’s economy. However, the integration of economic development and environmental protection is a crunch issue which has yet to be fully addressed in any of the four communities.
- Geography appears to be a key determinant of the economic assets of the four communities. For the two communities in the central belt, proximity to the economic hubs of Glasgow and Edinburgh were the key economic assets. For the two northern communities, the local population and the natural environment are seen to be of greater significance to economic potential.
- The research has highlighted the importance of diversity in local economies, as well as the ability to adapt to changing economic conditions. The larger communities, i.e. the Stornoway and Portobello case studies, demonstrate these qualities, whilst the smaller communities have been vulnerable to fluctuations in individual economic sectors.
- The exploitation of environmental assets has led to significant negative social and environmental impacts in communities like Salsburgh and few tangible benefits for these communities. In areas like this, there is a clear need for closer cooperation and communication with local communities regarding the future exploitation of environmental assets as well as the need for demonstrable community benefits which outweigh the negative impacts on the local environment.
- The proximity of the communities to major economic centres appears to determine the sustainability of the travel patterns to work or study. As a result, the two communities considered most ‘remote’, Braemar and Stornoway, demonstrated the most sustainable travel patterns in terms of distance travelled to work or study, whilst Portobello and Salsburgh, within commuting distance of major economic centres generated longer trips. This is compounded in Salsburgh by the poor public transport provision which leads to a heavy reliance on the car for such trips.
- The shortage of senior occupations was identified as a key employment issue in each of the communities except Portobello because of its proximity to the employment opportunities in Edinburgh.

- Local communities attach very high importance to basic environmental issues such as litter, dog fouling and fly-tipping.
- The levels of waste recycling are particularly low in Stornoway and Braemar, and increasing recycling rates in such communities is hindered by the high costs of transporting waste to recycling facilities.
- The key social issues highlighted by the case studies are housing affordability, anti-social behaviour amongst young people and ageing and declining populations.
 - Radical measures, in partnership with a range of agencies, were seen to be necessary to address housing affordability problems.
 - The need to provide facilities for young people was identified as a priority in all four communities, whilst participants in Portobello also recognised the need to empower young people and involve them in local decision-making.
 - Each of the four communities have ‘top heavy’ population structures and population decline was a serious issue facing three of the communities. These issues are linked to the other two key social issues, since the provision of affordable homes and facilities for young people are seen as paramount to achieving diverse and viable populations.
- Portobello, being part of the wider Edinburgh conurbation, has good access to the complete range of services. However, access to shops and services in the other three communities is problematic and will require innovative solutions, such as the delivery of mobile services and community transport projects.
- The research highlighted the great cultural diversity of the four communities and highlighted how cultural assets could bring economic and social benefits. Of the four, Stornoway emerged as the community with the most distinct cultural heritage and the survival of this culture is viewed as important not just in cultural terms, but also in terms of the economic benefits it can bring. The low levels of cultural activity and absence of distinctive cultural characteristics in Salsburgh demonstrates how the loss of traditional industries in such communities can lead to a loss of community cohesion and vitality.
- Major weaknesses in planning policies were highlighted in relation to some of the key sustainability issues in the four communities. A general failure to translate strategic sustainability objectives into the integration of economic, social and environmental issues at the local level is apparent, with Braemar being the possible exception to this.
- The case studies demonstrate the diversity of community activity in Scottish communities, with each of the communities having a range of organisations which make a significant contribution to the life of the community. However, as with the level of cultural

activity, it appears that Salsburgh has suffered from the decline of the traditional economic base of the village and the loss of a coherent social identity, with this being indicated by the relatively low number of community organisations active within the area.

- Although they have very limited powers, the research highlighted the importance of community councils in providing a conduit for discussion between local people and decision-makers, although the research also highlighted a high level of cynicism about the benefits of being involved and also a degree of consultation fatigue. Therefore, although the creation of new structures such as the Local Development Committees in Edinburgh and the Cairngorms National Park Authority in Braemar have provided new channels for engagement with decision makers, many people do not feel that such organisations will actually address their concerns.
- Relationships between communities and decision makers varied between the four communities. Stornoway appears to have the most harmonious relationship between community organisations and the Council and other public bodies. In the other three areas, although relationships appear to have improved in recent years, the relationships appeared to be more confrontational and feelings of neglect were expressed in each of these communities. There was some optimism that the community planning process could go some way to improving this situation but opportunities for engagement in the process are not yet widely known about and concerns were expressed about the size of the community planning areas.
- The research uncovered a wide range of sustainable community initiatives in each of the settlements, with the overall level of activity appearing to correlate with the general level of community activity in each area. In Salsburgh and Stornoway the initiatives appear to have come from public agencies (e.g. from Forward Scotland or the Local Authority) rather than being generated from within the community. In Stornoway in particular, the Council is taking a strong lead in promoting sustainable communities.