

CLLD Network Workshop

19th & 20th of March 2024

Glasgow

Event Report

Angus Rural Partnership

With thanks to **Scottish Rural Network & Scottish Government** for supporting this event



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Welcome

Alistair Prior, Chair, Angus Rural Partnership welcomed a cross section of Local Action Group (LAG) managers, chairs, vice chairs and board members from 17 Local Action Groups to the workshop.

He then started by highlighting that CLLD is at a crossroads having been in a period of transition since the UK left the EU and associated EU funded LEADER/CLLD programmes. Recent discussions at the [Scottish Rural & Islands Parliament](#) coupled with the introduction of the Agriculture & Rural Communities Bill in the Scottish Parliament suggested to the CLLD community that the CLLD network needs to have a clearer purpose, a coherent narrative and a structure that better supports CLLD development and implementation.

To that end the aims of the workshop were:

- **To develop prospects for CLLD in the context of emerging and future rural & islands policy,**
- **To explore the various ways that CLLD could be implemented in the future, and:**
- **To agree how the CLLD community should support each other and effectively influence policy development and implementation.**

Introductory Remarks

Anna Densham, Deputy Director, Land Reform, Rural & Islands Policy, Scottish Government offered a brief introduction to the current and emerging policy/funding landscape.

Anna acknowledged the issues around the fiscal context with pressures on capital funding and annual budgets making it difficult to plan. Linked to such pressures were the transition to new arrangements coming out of the [Agricultural & Rural Communities \(Scotland\) Bill](#) and the budgets/allocations for Agriculture Reform Programme and CLLD. Anna also highlighted the need for alignment of activities, for best value and opportunities for greater efficiencies/better outcomes through collaboration and partnership working.

[A Rural Scotland Data Dashboard](#) is informing the development of the Rural Delivery Plan & ongoing Islands work. The dashboard data is highlighting various issues, e.g. persistent challenges of an ageing population particularly in Remote Rural areas, housing, heating, mobility, impact of Brexit, Covid & current economic situation, climate & nature emergencies-mitigation challenge, land use & biodiversity crisis.

Scottish Government will be increasing work on rural poverty over the next few months to understand such issues better. On a more positive note, Anna highlighted that the

Rural & Islands economy punches above its weight in terms of what it contributes to Scotland. There is also much to be positive about in terms of the strengthen of social Capital and its interactions across rural and island Scotland.

Anna finished her introduction, suggesting that we need to ask ourselves the following questions:

- What can only CLLD do? What is its USP? Where does it add value?
- How best can CLLD actions be enabled? What should governance at local and national level look like?
- How do we demonstrate outcomes? How do we explain our role in building capital? How do we demonstrate what we have achieved?

Highlights of CLLD

Delegates were invited to introduce themselves and tell each other about the best things done in their respective CLLD programmes in the last year or two.

Many participants highlighted actions undertaken on **Youth Local Action Groups (YLAGs)**.

- **Fife** set up a YLAG last year with input from Cairngorms & Scottish Borders. The YLAG set out criteria for applications, grants given up to £20k, visited applicants, devised application form.
- **Cairngorms** were frank about their previous scepticism of Co-operation projects, but acknowledged the establishment of their YLAG was inspired by the work of the Rural Youth Project & early exchanges with Finnish colleagues. Cairngorms now recognise the value of Co-operation activity on various areas after going to Finland with young people.
- **Forth Valley & Lomond** YLAG inspired by work in the Cairngorms & Scottish Borders and knowledge exchange from a LEADER project with Finland. Finnish YLAG partners visiting in May 2024.

The co-operation project, '**Knitting the Herring**' between **Fife, Outer Hebrides & Shetland** was also highlighted. The initiative had a huge following online & in museums, generating a lot of interest in the Year of Coast & Waters.

Another co-operation project (**Orkney, Shetland & Outer Hebrides**) focused on the **Agriculture & Rural Communities Bill & potential impacts of future policy on islands** with respect to various land typologies, uses, climate and weather.

Moray were the first LA hosted by a TSI which enabled to more to be done through LEADER with Community Wealth Building, CLLD and economy woven together.

Moray worked with the Wellbeing Community Alliance to do **Community Led Vision** for a just transition plan to a well-being economy. (Launched March 2024)

Aberdeenshire introduced **Energy Audits** to help communities deliver support on the ground.

Ayrshire established a **Community Action Asset Fund** to manage & maintain property for future generations.

Tyne & Esk met with **project applicants** who found it beneficial to **receive support and animation work from the LAG**.

Rural Perth & Kinross established **Community Action Plans programme** to enable areas to develop their own plans and ensure amongst other things a pipeline of projects for CLLD.

Moray is still running an **International Collaboration on Climate action** 5 years after the initiative was launched. This work is also linked to Aberdeenshire & Aberdeen City.

RPK & Moray worked together to promote wellbeing economy across policies - '**Can be Scotland Wellbeing Economy**'.

What does CLLD mean to you?

Participants were then invited to come up with words or phrases that summed up what CLLD meant to them.

Key words and phrases that summed up CLLD were:

- Independent and relevant, centred on needs and priorities of people and place.
- Valued animation for bottom up, grassroots action.
- Being Inclusive, being energising - providing opportunities for all
- Strengthening collaboration & networking.
- Utilising, sharing expertise to realise opportunities and build resilience.
- Being responsive, driving locally led initiatives and addressing local issues.
- Building capacity, enabling, and empowering communities.
- Developing inspiring, innovative, and dynamic solutions to complex issues
- Invested in local futures and making a difference.
- Being outcome focused

Horizon Scanning future policy and prospects for CLLD in Scotland

Three groups focused on horizon scanning, future policy and prospects for CLLD in Scotland.

The first group focused on policy, the second on funding and the third on the wider rural dynamic. Each group was encouraged to identify the issues over the short, medium to longer term, they were also invited to consider any challenges or opportunities there might be with respect to CLLD.

Policy.

This session identified various strategies, plans and programmes that have a bearing on and relevance to CLLD. Several points of feedback identified actions that the CLLD community needs to look at now or in the short term, these included the: Land Reform Bill, Agricultural & Rural Communities Bill (with the Rural Support Plan), Rural Delivery Plan and work on the well-being economy as part of the National Strategy for Economic Transformation.

It was also suggested that policies aimed at attracting/retaining young adults to islands and rural areas were also extremely important. Other policies identified included: National Performance Framework, implementation of the Good Food Act. Short term lets, National Transport Strategy, Energy Strategy, Infrastructure Plan, Community Wealth Building, National Peatland Plan, Tourism Visitor Levies, Community Empowerment Act. NPF4, Islands Plan review, Fair fares review.

It was clear that whilst there are potentially a lot of policies being developed or implemented at various levels of government there was a consensus that there is a distinct lack of coherence in a cluttered policy landscape. The group highlighted the need for a joined-up approach both horizontally and vertically across the policy arena.

The short-term nature of funding and the association with the absence of evidence to demonstrate change were both cited as challenges to the policy discourse. Other challenges highlighted included the high-level nature of the Agriculture & Rural Communities Bill, the fiscal landscape, the Verity House Agreement, and in way CLLD interfaces with COSLA. Above all was the apparent lack of political will to be ambitious, to be transformational, to really think strategically about how priorities can be identified and actions locally through local decision making.

Various opportunities for CLLD were then outlined. Public expectations and the respective roles of the state and communities are changing. There's a huge opportunity to support resource and leverage community LED responses to challenges and opportunities. The group reflected that there needs to be a coherence around what CLLD offers to then enable CLLD to support coherence to policy implementation locally. Such actions will rely on governments at all levels to think about how they can implement the principle of subsidiarity effectively. CLLD for its part offers an

opportunity to animate at the local level, to make things happen, to broaden and deepen engagement, to really consider how policies can be translated into practice.

To do this CLLD will need to think about how it can work closely with COSLA and SLAED (Scottish Local Authorities Economic Development). The CLLD community may also wish to consider how best it can work with the [Scottish Rural & Islands Youth Parliament](#) and their connections with the [Scottish Youth Parliament](#). Key to this will be leveraging in the knowledge and energy available both locally and naturally nationally across the CLLD network to engage effectively with expertise in areas such as employability, service improvement, economic development (regional & city-region), land use partnerships. Participants also recognised the EU dimension, with relevant policy areas also being implemented in EU level and supported through the likes of [Horizon Europe](#), there's an opportunity for CLLD to support the innovation landscape, to embrace the risk, to manage that risk, to test new ideas and approaches.

Discussions also considered that that LEADER/CLLD has enabled place-based policy development and implementation. The question remained around how it can be an enabler in pursuance of the objectives set out in the Agriculture and Rural Communities Bill. This led to reflections on how sophisticated CLLD needs to be, how it complements other activities, what it wants to achieve in terms of outcomes and how it demonstrates the actions therein are contributing to the bigger policy piece around agriculture, communities & economy.

Funding

The discussions concluded that annual financing (from Scottish Government) does not offer value for money, nor does annual financing acknowledge that CLLD is a process that requires a strategic approach over multiple years. Such approaches involve many connections, including to local plans, policies and priorities of local partners such as local authorities and Regional Economic Partnerships. Participants agreed that there is no doubt that funding, particularly over the longer term, will support early engagement in the CLLD process and make the CLLD approach much more coherent.

Various other funding opportunities for CLLD were cited:

- UK Government under UK Shared Prosperity Fund or Levelling Up (which rely on CLLD working closely with Local Authorities.)
- National Lottery.
- Loans, particularly for local developments
- Crown Estate Scotland
- Community Benefit funds (from energy developments)

Irrespective of the funding opportunity it was agreed that the CLLD network need to be able to have the capacity and wherewithal to engage with prospective funders and make the case for CLLD being partners in the development and roll out of such funds and in doing so ensuring they meet the needs of local communities and businesses.

It was also considered that being partners with funders to deliver initiatives over the longer term would only work if CLLD LAGs had the capacity to develop their ideas. Having a complete picture and a full understanding of the funding landscape and the finances and funding for CLLD is essential.

Wider Rural Dynamic

It was agreed that there is no doubt that CLLD can capture and support the wider rural dynamic, to do this successfully will depend on CLLD groups and their partners having the relevant capacity and skills to support these broader agendas. The group also considered that our resilience would continue to be tested by the many long-term issues that we are faced with, such issues include:

- Infrastructure - transport, broadband, accessibility, energy and housing.
- Society - demographic change, de-population, fuel poverty, food poverty, supply chain vulnerability, training, volunteers, isolation.
- Funding – public sector cuts, funding landscape, funding requirements
- Environment – climate change, biodiversity decline

The group considered that there are many opportunities for CLLD in tackling some of these wider issues because of the holistic thinking the approach can offer. CLLD's culture of collaboration, in bringing together policy and practice at a local level can enable learning between local communities and businesses, and in doing so effectively influence policy making.

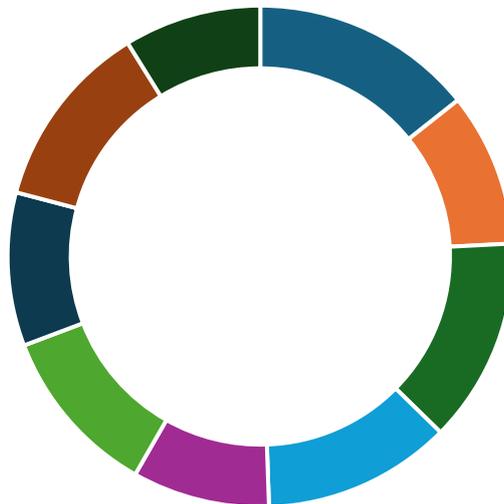
Another key dimension for CLLD going forward is building on the success of the youth LAG model – where the next generation can take ownership of these thorny issues (with the LAGs) and develop strategies around the opportunities that these issues present, including career opportunities for young people and supporting environmental restoration/climate actions.

CLLD as an enabler of positive change

Having discussed the bigger picture and potential prospects for CLLD, participants then considered how approaching through CLLD could bring these areas to life and so effect positive change across many areas identified across the three themes discussed.

It was clear that the current context had a bearing on how CLLD could be an effective enabler of positive change with issues such as annual funding, limited resources for animation and the inability of LAGs to think truly strategically about what CLLD means for them. That said, the group very clear about the prerequisites for CLLD to be an enabler of positive change, summed up below:

CLLD as an enabler of positive change



- Partnership of key people and organisations with relevant knowledge, expertise and networks
- Catalysts for local action
- Intermediaries that work effectively across public, private and third sector
- Giving communities agency through animation = where communities lead and own their future
- Influencing wider policy development/implementation as advocates for local needs
- Translating and distilling local needs and aspirations into strategic plans
- Being innovative - testing ideas, enabling transformation, taking risks
- A process that stimulates and supports local development over time
- Actioning agreed strategies and priorities of local people

CLLD Implementation approaches

The second session of the workshop. Started with Scott Petrie from Angus Rural Partnership and David Cameron from Cairngorms Trust, offering insights into the evolution of their respective approaches to CLLD.

Scott outlined the role and function of [Angus Rural Partnership \(ARP\)](#). The organisation was established in 2022 and is currently a one tier SCIO with a board of trustees and is also the Accountable Body for Angus for the CLLD Programme. Work is currently underway to map community-led development and rural resilience activities to help inform how the development of a multi-year plan will complement and add value to existing activities and guide future work. The board is also looking to move to a multi-tier membership model that enables people to come together and drive the agenda as part of a wider umbrella that can support communities and businesses across the area. Finding the right board members with the appropriate skills and experience to mitigate risks govern effectively will be key. ARP's status is enabling to explore non-SG funding opportunities that will enable it to move forward with its plans, it is also considering how equivalent organisations operate elsewhere in the UK and Europe. ARP is currently focusing on the provision of training and support to community anchor organisations through the coordination and provision of specialist expertise.

David then outlined the work of the [Cairngorms Trust](#), an organisation which has been operating for some eight years or so. In May 2023 the trust ran an event to get feedback from beneficiaries of the CLLD Programme, it transpired they were concerned about why trusted partners must go through annual applications. The Trust asked themselves what they can do within the current structures around CLLD programming, to that end they have started exploring a community development / partnership contract with partners whereby the trust would encourage and support multi-year actions and absorb the risk associated with funding multi-year projects. An aspect of focus is therefore seeking to work within the limitations of the current national funding model to innovate and test what can be done locally to improve the impact of locally led development action.

The discussions then focused on approaches elsewhere. With some areas doing things or looking to things differently (e.g. Ayrshire, D&G). Others such as Outer Hebrides are based on the LEADER model where the membership are also active on Trusts etc. They do not intend to form a SCIO as the current model works for them. In Orkney they have broadly stuck to the Council memorandum model. Orkney Islands Council has committed to a more LEADER setup with Crown Estate Scotland and local authority monies being levered in. money. for money across the board.

All agreed that there was a huge learning curve on the need for robust governance and the retention of directors when it comes to roles, responsibilities, and liabilities. need to be honest about what is required. Robust governance structure can help

reduce the risk. Participants also acknowledged the need for there to be a coherence strategy or plan to support implementation of respective approaches.

Leadership in CLLD

The final round of group discussions focused on leadership in CLLD. The first group discussed how we (the CLLD community) could support each other. The second group discussed how we could influence policy development and implementation, while the third group focused on how we could effectively communicate and network?

Supporting each other

Much of the discussion was focused on organising ourselves, whilst there was agreement that we should have a CLLD network for Scotland, questions remained; how do we develop a set of agreed processes for CLLD Scotland? What does CLLD mean? What is our identity? What is our brand?

The conversation then turned to how the CLLD network might be brought to life. It was suggested that someone was required to support the network and provide other functions such as communication and secretariat. It was also suggested that this could be Scottish Government funded (through Technical Assistance) or through a co-operation action between LAGs. It was clear that LAG members would need to coordinate work, participants wondered if we could be inspired by existing approaches elsewhere.

Discussions also highlighted the possibility of the CLLD network having an annual business plan that could link up with the annual plan of the Scottish Rural Network. It was acknowledged that the SRN would need to be well resourced to support capacity building and the development of CLLD.

Other suggestions for supporting each other included the provision of knowledge banks, an online platform as well as events, project visits. Co-operation projects were also considered to be potentially useful ways of driving CLLD nationally – e.g. involving young people into CLLD actions.

It was also acknowledged that LAGs members themselves had to own that process if they were to build an effective CLLD network, e.g., meeting regularly, running working groups to tackle specific issues. Success would very much depend on people knowing each other and having their contact details.

Influencing policy

Discussions started with reflections around whether the CLLD network could utilise its resources given time pressures and relevant skill sets of paid staff and volunteers alike to enable it to effectively engage and influence policy. That engagement, for example, could involve campaigns using a variety of tools. Participants felt that success would rely on LAGs understanding and demonstrating to themselves (at least initially) the messages they want to convey. As with the previous group it was suggested that a secretariat could help LAGs come together to undertake this work.

It was considered essential that all LAGs need to be able to effectively engage with MSPs, Scottish Government, agencies, funders, private sector and others to explain what SG funding is doing in their locale (as well as Scotland wide). This would rely on coherent and robust working groups (including an effective chairs group) to develop a narrative that was able to demonstrate and celebrate successes, with scope for the CLLD network to championing what was being achieved Scotland wide.

Those achievements, including highlighting the USP/added value of CLLD and its ability to effect real change over short, medium, and longer term will involve the use of various tools. Such tools will vary depending on the target audience, but could include social media, signage, booklets, knowledge exchange/information activities or events.

Effective communications and networking

Communicating and networking at both the national and local level were seen as pre-requisites for success. It was considered that the Agriculture and Rural Communities Bill would be an early test of how the CLLD Network embarks in this space.

Participants took the view that LAGs should take the time to celebrate their successes, with those successes being part of any reporting back to organisations such as Scottish Government and accountable bodies.

Effective communication was also dependent on getting the message right and managing expectations about what is feasible. There is potential for the CLLD network and the Scottish Rural Network to collaborate in this space.

In terms of ensuring there is capacity in the CLLD community it was suggested that collaboration projects could prove to be useful if it helps LAGS to promote CLLD, develop a brand and support the running of the CLLD network. Discussions explored the co-operation idea further, reflecting that an independent LAG might be best to host a co-operation action. Such an action should focus on ways to influence policy at a national level, particularly the Agriculture & Rural Communities Bill, undertake promotion of CLLD and develop a brand and dedicated website. It was also suggested that such a co-operation action could also support chairs and coordinators.

Development of ideas and actions

There was agreement that the CLLD network should immediately focus its energies on the Agriculture & Rural Communities Bill process and any follow up actions associated with its implementation given the potential bearing on funding for CLLD beyond 2025.

Actions could include direct engagement with Ministers or the development of a common narrative, for example by aggregating responses to the agri-bill consultation/engagement exercises (by both SG and the Scottish Parliament) from those CLLD's that responded.

The CLLD network should also build on the outcomes of discussions on CLLD at the Scottish Rural & Islands Parliament. Such actions by the CLLD network would provide an early opportunity to bring the network together.

As far as the CLLD network itself was concerned it was acknowledged that work on this would be a process, starting off with a working group who could begin to construct what was needed. Reflections on what that work might entail included:

- Development of the vision for the CLLD network, Moray offered to share their building alliances work.
- Establish a means to enable the network group to coordinate Agri Bill CLLD asks/requests.
- Development of clear communications strategy to enable us to engage effectively with third parties, such as SLAED, MSPs.
- Development of a brand (potentially with input from Youth LAGs).
- Develop terms of reference (or framework) for what the CLLD network will do, and how LAGs will work together – this could be done by a working group as a precursor to the establishment of the network body.
- The CLLD network 'host' could be un-constituted or one of the independent CLLD groups could act as the host (utilising the structures already in place).
- Consideration of resourcing and planning of actions needed to support the CLLD Network. Potential approaches - co-operation project commissioned by LAGs or through Technical Assistance (where Scottish Government procures support centrally on behalf LAGs).

It was agreed that for the CLLD community to communicate effectively they would need prepare a narrative/crib sheet for local groups to use to engage with MSPs etc. It was also considered essential that effective internal communication required everyone to have each other's contacts details.

The group also agreed that there would be merit in bringing forward a co-operation project that could illustrate some of the best practices and outcomes from the last 10 years of funding under LEADER/CLLD.

The practices highlighted earlier in the workshop being potentially great examples of what LEADER/CLLD has achieved and prime examples of the Unique Selling Point of CLLD as requested at the start of the workshop. Suggested aspects of the added value of LEADER/CLLD that could be highlighted included value to the rural economy, value to the national economy, power of partnership working and collaboration to local communities and businesses.

Next Steps for the CLLD Network

- Alistair Prior & Alan Robertson to place Power Point presentation, photos etc on SRN website.
- Alistair Prior to prepare an event report – to be circulated to participants and shared with the wider CLLD network before mid April. Will also be placed on the SRN website.
- David Cameron, Cairngorms to write up first proposal as to how a group could be constituted (by 29 March 2024 for internal consideration by the working group supporting the workshop prior to circulation with workshop outputs).
- Lynn Douglas, Scottish Government) to sort out communications permissions and establish a method of sharing contacts amongst the network.
- Prepare materials to enable the CLLD network to engage with different groups, e.g. SLAED. (tbc)