

### 1. Name of SOA case study

#### Stromness Project and Action Planning

Orkney Islands Council has created “Team Stromness” as a means of harnessing and coordinating the activities of the Council’s departments, the partner agencies and their funders into a unified structure to deliver the various regeneration and economic development project in Stromness in a coherent manner.

### 2. What was the local need addressed by this SOA case study?

The Local outcomes linked to this case study are: Everybody in Orkney has a suitable home  
A natural Environment which is protected, enhanced and sustainably managed to combat climate change  
Orkney’s people and businesses achieve their full potential on a long term. Sustainable basis  
Enhanced cultural activity enabling heritage, arts and sport to grow and thrive in Orkney

### 3. What was done – and by which partners?

#### Context:

Stromness is the second largest town in the archipelago of the Orkney Islands situated off the North coast of Scotland. Orkney has a population of around 19,500 and this is an ageing population. The distinctive architectural character of Stromness with its attractive small piers and slips, stone houses with paved twisting streets form a recognised Outstanding Conservation Area with 133 buildings listed for their historic importance.

Ever since the Vikings visited its sheltered bay and gave it the name "Hamnavoe". The harbour has always played a major part in the life of the town. For centuries, the vessels of the Hudson Bay Company and the whaling fleets were regular visitors and the town

became an important maritime centre. Stromness has one of Orkney's best natural harbours and is home to the main life line car/passenger ferry linking Orkney with the Scottish mainland. For most visitors, sailing into Orkney, Stromness will be the first port of call, greeted by a view that has met seafarers for centuries. Fishing continues albeit at a reduced level. In the recent past, Stromness has developed a key role in the emerging and internationally significant Marine Renewable Energy Sector. Through the pioneering activities of EMEC and Heriot Watt University, the town is at the leading edge of global research into wave and tidal energy.

Stromness is a small community with a population of about 1600. The population peaked around 2500 in 1831 but decline in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century to a low of 1650 in 1971. There was a partial recover to 1890 in 1991 by the 2001 census the population had declined to 1600, partly as a result of population shift to Kirkwall and the associated loss of status signified by the loss of ferry services, the auction mart and continuing retail leakage. 23.1% of the population is of pensionable age significantly higher than Kirkwall or Scotland, contributing to relative decline and the lack of economic vitality. In keeping with many peripheral places, Stromness remains fragile. It faces many challenges, some of which are unique to remote island communities. Small labour pools, distance to markets and suppliers and the high cost of travel can inhibit business development. The specific challenges of Stromness are; decline of traditional industries, loss of ferry services, loss of status, drift of activity away from the historic core, decline in number and quality of shops leading to vacant, underused and deteriorating buildings, limited supply of offices, limited supply of artists studio space and, in 08/09 the winter closure of the town's main hotel. The future of Stromness hangs in the balance; Stromness has stagnated whilst Kirkwall has continued to grow.

Voluntary Action Orkney held 2 Community Engagement meetings in Stromness in late 06 and early 07. These meetings attended by 140 people identified 3 major issues for Stromness: Renovation and new affordable housing, Encouraging and supporting business development and Sensitive development.

This crystallised into a number of actions which, when taken together with existing and planned public and private sector expenditure, resulted in some 48 actions in Stromness. These include Stromness Pierhead, a project by OIC to create a new public building replacing the Library and creating a "First stop shop" providing access to Council and other public services. This building would also allow for dispersal of jobs and functions from Kirkwall. Stromness Primary School is being replaced by the Council as part of its schools modernisation programme and is being relocated within Stromness.

The need for joint working is self evident. Prior to June 2009 there had been 4 studies all of which had similar, but not identical,

outcomes. They all had community consultation, they all identified projects. What they did not do was identify how these might be coordinated and managed. There was also a concern that the range of consultations might lead to confusion within the Community as to what was being done and who was doing it.

All the projects agreed to establish a single action plan on which each of the projects would be mapped and the relationship between the projects identified. The projects agreed to adopt a single project planning approach to Stromness in which each of the projects would complete a standard project plan which would allow greater and clearer management of the projects and allow for the identification of collaborative working in a way which might not otherwise have been possible. The Council agreed to appoint a member of their management team as “Stromness Champion” as a means of ensuring that interdepartmental issues could be resolved quickly.

The partners agreed that the “Champion” would also act as the focal point for continued communication with the Community representative groups including **Stromness Town Centre Partnership** a community group formed from representatives of the other groups in the town. Work has begun on the restoration of the Commercial Hotel, a project involving the Housing department and the THI, developing accommodation for key workers in the marine renewables industry.

The commitment of the partners and their local staff is clear. The bodies external to the Council can see clear virtue in being part of “Team Stromness” whilst at the same time being equally clear about the need to ensure that the parent bodies governance and delivery requirements are met. There is no sense that some of the partner bodies’ requirements are subordinate rather that the sustainability required by all the partners will be achieved more effectively and with greater intensity if delivered as part of the bigger picture. It is also recognised that there can be efficiency gains if some issues such as communication can be dealt with on a collective basis

#### 4. What is the evidence of the benefits for communities – or if the benefits are still to be delivered, what is the timeline for that?

The long term sustainability of the project is the long term sustainability of the Town. The future of Stromness hangs in the balance. The town is full of paradoxes. On the one hand the Town is at the forefront of an exciting green future based on Marine Renewables; on the other the population is increasingly elderly. It has a wonderful Historic Core but retail demand is slipping away leading to decline with vacant and derelict shops. It has a world class small art gallery and demand from artists but no studio space. It has the potential to grow in tourism terms but lacks focus.

The purpose of the many projects in Stromness is in response to this. By combining activities and recognising their interdependence the town is positioning itself to redress the decline of the recent past. The projects are important but collectively they represent the preservation of what is good, the appropriate modernising of Stromness and creating the setting for investment which will create sustainability for Stromness. Sustainability for its smaller communities is a key tenet of the Community plan for the area, represented in Stromness by this new area based project approach.

Stromness has, over the years had a number of project proposals which have either failed to materialise or not delivered. The benefit of the “Team Stromness” approach is that the coordination of projects and partners on an area basis provides a real opportunity for delivery of a range of interrelated projects which can have a significant impact on Stromness and its people and which can make a difference.

#### 5. What added value has the SOA process brought to the delivery of these benefits?

The Single Outcome Agreement commits our key partner agencies to working towards the Scottish Government and Orkney outcomes. This project is within the remit of National Outcome 10: We live in well-designed, sustainable places where we are able to access the amenities and services we need. The support from partnership working is referred to above and the SOA will support this in commitment from key agencies and the Scottish Government.

## 6. What next steps are you taking to meet this local need?

Team Stromness is being established to carry forward an Action Plan and coordinate the objectives of all Stromness projects. This will maximise the collective value of projects, and assist in the effective delivery of the local objectives.

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