

Sustaining Dunbar Report for Annual Member's Meeting, 1.Sept 2020

Every year brings change and challenge, threats and opportunities and the period since our last AGM in September 2019 is no exception but the forces that influence our activities have intensified since the onset of the COVID pandemic.

Sustaining Dunbar responded to a number of consultations informing Government Strategy in response to current emergencies.

Board Members and others participated in training to develop skills in Stronger Stories, in using the processes of Deliberative Democracy in consultation and how to facilitate Carbon Conversations and Future Conversations. We also



participated in the Community Energy Futures programme run by Community Energy Scotland -designed to help community groups across Scotland understand the coming changes in the UK energy system and provide them with the knowledge and support to

develop innovative renewable energy projects of their own with their local communities.

Our objectives for the year focused on improving our communications, developing better links with other local groups, consolidating our relationship with East Lothian Council and the local community planning forum DELAP, so as to build a strong base for future projects and funding approaches.

While some projects are still on hold other unplanned initiatives have been delivered. The Coworking project has been held back by unanticipated challenges in securing premises now compounded by the pandemic. However productive collaboration with local groups has developed and three particular projects have been instrumental in opening up possibilities and partnerships, demonstrating and building our strategy.

At the end of 2019 we were invited by the Friends of the John Muir Birthplace to collaborate in creating an exhibition celebrating John Muir as an activist and

campaigner and to look at the contemporary relevance of his work. The title of Rob Hopkins' latest book 'From What Is To What If – unleashing the power of imagination to create the future we want' is a strong influence on the team who are



taking the process forward. The pandemic has altered how the project will be delivered but the emphasis on creative community engagement to tap into our collective knowledge and intelligence remains.

Securing £80k from the Scottish Government Supporting Communities Fund enabled 10 local organisations to enhance their support to the community and deliver services specifically related to COVID and the lockdown conditions. Sustaining Dunbar is a Community Development Trust and through this initiative we were able to fulfill and demonstrate this role to the wider community.

The Climate Action East Linton (formerly East Linton Melting Pot) has emerged as a hub of local climate action. As a newly formed group they benefited from our experience and legal structure in developing a successful application to the Climate Challenge Fund. Their project Fixing For The Future will run a repair café when social distancing requirements allow but in the meantime they are stimulating awareness and local action in response to the climate emergency through training and discussion groups.

Other groups we supported in making funding applications include North Light Arts for Rebellious Threads – a project to slow down fast fashion, and in addition to the ten projects that received the COVID grants, our Development Manager, Osbert Lancaster, worked with the Dunbar Trades Association to develop ideas and funding applications for town centre development schemes.

Our Energy Project has reached an interesting stage of development and is now being appraised for feasibility funding for a possible community owned solar farm.

The Belhaven Community Garden, established by Sustaining Dunbar in 2012, continues to flourish thanks to the unstinting generosity of dedicated volunteers and is increasingly important as a therapeutic space, as well as for growing fruit and vegetables, creating opportunities for learning and sharing skills and enhancing biodiversity.

Social events are an important element of our community engagement. Highlights from the past year include a glorious gathering of people at our annual Apple Day celebrations and the election



hustings held in collaboration with local churches which was attended by 120 people.

Other regular social meetings included a book group which met over several weeks to discuss Rob Hopkins book, 'What If', and which inspired many creative ideas.

We gratefully acknowledge the generous support of all our volunteers including the Board Members for their commitment to realizing the organisation's aims and to our funders – Dunbar & East Linton Area Partnership and Scottish Government. We are also very grateful for the support we receive as members of Development Trust Association Scotland, Scottish Communities Climate Action Network and Community Energy Scotland.

Looking ahead

Following our immediate response to COVID-19, in particular helping local groups access funding to deliver vital services, we turned our attention to the wider implications of the crises and its connections to Sustaining Dunbar's aim of supporting and nurturing local projects that serve the community of Dunbar, East Linton and the surrounding area, build local resilience and support our rapid transition away from fossil fuel dependence.

While life was easier for many of us before COVID-19, below the surface "normal" was far from perfect. Often out of sight and out of mind, "normal" was a time of inequality with food banks getting ever busier across the country, of rising mental ill health, of loneliness, of social and political divisions, and of environmental and climate crises, and of economic instability.

Following discussion with a number of local groups, we are convening and developing the **What If Network** to work on the COVID-19 recovery, in the context of the climate and ecological emergencies, so the area can be home to thriving people, in a thriving place, while respecting the wellbeing of all people, and the health of the whole planet.



Exactly how the What If Network develops, what we do and how, will depend on what members want, the changing COVID-19 restrictions, our success with fundraising and so on. However we plan to work in two overlapping phases: developing plans and then making them happen.

The What If Network will:

- Develop a series of online activities and safe, in person, events and meetings to learn what matters to people, imagine the future we want, and to generate and test ideas about possible new projects and developments.

- Help groups create high quality, targeted funding applications for both new and existing activities, potentially including collaborative projects.

- Provide coherent, well-evidenced input, based on direct experience and community consultation, to help shape future Area Plans, local and national policies and strategies.

To learn more and see how you can get involved, visit the [Sustaining Dunbar website](#) and the [What If Network project website](#).

Jo Mcnamara
August 2020

WHAT IF...? we imagined a future full of possibility... where we focus on a positive vision where we tell a new story of a future where humans and the environment flourish together

What if we were a Good Food Community?
In which no one goes hungry, everyone has access to good, healthy food and access to land if they want it ...

What if we were a Good Enterprise Community?
In which everybody's necessities are produced and available locally, everyone has access to meaningful and rewarding work, where new and existing businesses are inspired and supported to be part of the solution...

What if we were a Good for Nature Community?
In which we build and restore our local environment and measure our progress by the number and diversity of birds, insects and other wildlife.

What if we were a Good Energy Community?
In which new housing can radiate its heat, older housing has been made warm and comfortable and locally earned renewable energy supplies our needs.

What if we were a Good Community?
In which we are connected to our neighbours, our streets have become places for social interaction and for children to play, in which everyone has the chance to learn and share new skills, in which caring and sharing are the norm.....

What if ...
You reached out to other communities in Scotland and beyond, to learn from them and to share our experience. In which we worked together to influence local and national governments to go further and faster to build the new system that we and the rest of the world so urgently need...

Now you imagine the future you want and ask 'What If?' - and be part of shaping a vision we all share.

3 SUMMIT
A 3 day summit on what a better future we could create together. What if we could:
- PREVENT HOMELESSNESS
- PROTECT ENVIRONMENT
- GROW OUR ECONOMY
- MAKE SCHOOLS, AIR & HEALTHY CHILDREN
- ...