

This is one of a series of case studies produced as part of the 'Learning from the Big Society Project'. It aims to draw lessons from the Eden Valley Big Society Vanguard, covering the parish groupings in Upper Eden, Heart of Eden and Lyvennet Valley, each of whom had worked together to produce a Community Led Plan for their area.

Many of the projects covered in the case studies are currently in development but we can still learn from the experiences of the communities and agencies involved.

The Challenge

The communities of the Eden Valley exist within a rural area characterised by outstanding landscapes in a countryside shaped by nature and managed through farming activities.

The settlements are small, dispersed and the distances between some of these and the more substantial centres of population can be considerable.

Travel behaviour is dominated by use of the car, regarded as a necessity for many who must travel to access their employment, essential services, training, education, leisure and entertainment, as well as being highly desirable for maintaining links with family and friends in neighbouring communities.

Public transport for many is either non-existent or infrequent and reduced funding is now adding a further challenge to maintain even the existing levels of public transport provision.

For those without access to a car this can mean isolation, deprivation and even anxiety and illness.

Locally tailored solutions

Transport planners are being challenged to take advantage of the opportunities arising through the Big Society combined with the local decision-making and activities being demonstrated by the communities in the Eden Valley.

The Government's Transport White Paper 'Creating Growth, Cutting Carbon – making sustainable local transport happen' (January 2011) emphasises the need for sustainable local transport choices to be determined at the local level. There is acknowledgement that small scale schemes can bring good value for money.

For the communities themselves they have their own vision, where:

- Creative solutions are positively encouraged to meet the needs of the most vulnerable in their communities
- Those living off the beaten track are not forgotten
- People can feel safe walking and cycling to neighbouring towns and villages

Case Study: Ravenstonedale Cycleway

Case Study: Heart of Eden Transport Study

Ravenstonedale Cycleway

Background

In 1979 the villages of Ravenstonedale and Newbiggin on Lune in Eden District were bypassed and divided by the A685 but no provision was made for pedestrian access between the two.

In 1998 Ravenstonedale Millennium Committee persuaded Cumbria Highways to plan a scheme for 600m of combined footpath and cycleway which would allow children to walk to school. It was then costed at £40,000.

The Project

By 2003 the scheme hadn't progressed and Ravenstonedale Parish Council followed up the project.

One of the barriers was funding and the Parish Council agreed to add £1,000 to its annual budget to contribute to the cost. It was further suggested that the scheme could usefully be incorporated into the National Cycle Network which would add value to the project.

The missing 600 metres would be the final piece of a scenic ten mile cycle route from Pendragon castle to Orton.

The scheme has been approved by Cumbria County Council (CCC) and the Upper Eden Community Plan (UECP) group has been working with the Parish Council to get the cycleway built.

What have the challenges been?

Cumbria County Council has contracted out highways work to Amey who have quoted a price of £106,000 for the project. However a local contractor has costed the work at £80,000. Because of the terms of the contract CCC can't employ the local company.

What has been achieved?

Ravenstonedale Parish Council and the UECP Project Officer have worked with CCC Highways Officers to improve communications and they are supportive of the project.

They understand the limitations of the current contract and hope to have more flexibility over awarding contracts in the future. After the current CCC Highways contract ends in March 2012 it is hoped that some progress will be made.

The Cumbria County Council's legal team have also confirmed that, as an alternative approach, the community could build the cycleway themselves if they could raise sufficient funds to cover the project without a Council contribution.

The Learning

Ravenstonedale Parish Council were prepared to contribute to the cost of the project and have ring-fenced £8,000 so far. Local people will fundraise towards the cost of projects which are important to them. UECP group would like to see CCC pass funding and responsibility to communities for small scale projects like this.

Greater flexibility around awarding contracts can save public bodies, such as Cumbria County Council, money and help them to be more responsive to the needs of communities.

Contact Details

Upper Eden Community Plan group

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www.uecp.org.uk

Ravenstonedale Parish Council

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www.ravenstonedale.org

Heart of Eden Transport Study

Background

The Heart of Eden Community Plan was published in 2009 and covers twelve parishes around Appleby. The Heart of Eden Development Trust has been set up to deliver the actions from the community plan.

Local residents were consulted about transport during the production of the plan and there are ten actions in the plan which focus on transport and access. These include projects to investigate transport solutions for young people and the promotion of existing public and community transport services.

The Project

Using a grant from the Big Society Grant Fund the Heart of Eden Development Trust commissioned the Community Transport Association (CTA) to carry out a study on public and community transport options for the area, particularly as cuts to public transport have been proposed.

The Trust wanted the study to identify practical steps they could take to improve transport for residents and was aware that it was difficult for young people in the surrounding villages to get to Appleby in the evenings.

The study:

- Identified minibuses and other vehicles available for community use including those owned by youth groups and schools. It set out recommendations to encourage organisations who owned minibuses to share them through Community Transport Cumbria's minibus sharing scheme.
- Mapped existing provision so that services could be promoted in a leaflet which brought together all the transport options for the area. This has also helped identify gaps in provision which can now be addressed by the Trust.

One of the findings of the study was that potential users weren't always aware of the range of transport options available. Transport guides have been produced for the following communities; Temple Sowerby, Long Marton, Kirkby Thore, Appleby, Bolton and Morland.

The guides set out bus and train times and also list information about alternatives such as Rural Wheels (a demand response shared taxi scheme run by Cumbria County Council), Voluntary Car Scheme (through which volunteer drivers provide lifts for people without transport), and Patient Transport Services.



The new Fellrunner bus service is launched in Bolton. (Photo: Fred Wilson)

What have the challenges been?

There was a tight timescale to get the project completed on time and the Trust needed to ensure that the study was focused on very practical projects which they could deliver and was not too wide-ranging. For this reason it was agreed that the study would not focus on patient transport provided by the NHS.

What has been achieved?

Carrying out the study has given the Heart of Eden Development Trust a starting point for delivering practical projects. Attending a Big Society event in November 2010 gave the Trust an opportunity to meet representatives from the Community Transport Association who were able to carry out the study.

The Heart of Eden Development Trust was already in contact with the transport team at Cumbria County Council before the study was commissioned and when the volunteer-run Fellrunner bus service had an opportunity to introduce new routes, following the purchase of a new vehicle, the Trust was well-positioned to suggest a new fast route through part of the Heart of Eden area from Bolton to Penrith.

The Trust will continue to work with Cumbria County Council to clarify the participation guidelines for Rural Wheels. They will be actively marketing the minibus sharing scheme to organisations which own minibuses and will be looking at ways to improve transport young people for evenings and weekends. They will also be distributing the transport guides, prepared by the CTA, to local residents.

For more information about this and other case studies in this series, please contact ACT on Tel: 01228 817224 or Email: info@cumbriaaction.org.uk

Topics covered in this series:

- Community Housing
- Community Broadband
- Community Owned Enterprise
- Community Renewable Energy
- Neighbourhood Planning
- Community Transport



The Learning

A relatively modest grant of £6,000 to pay for the feasibility study has allowed the Trust to embark on a series of projects which should make access to services easier for Heart of Eden residents.

A range of transport services were available but they required better promotion. Cumbria County Council has limited capacity for promoting local transport options and the Heart of Eden Development Trust can take a role in raising awareness of community and public transport in the area.

Contact Details

Heart of Eden Development Trust
www.heartofeden.co.uk

Cumbria Community Transport run a brokerage scheme for community minibuses in the county: www.cumbriact.org.uk

CTA is a national organisation for local community transport groups.
Tel: 0845 130 6195 www.ctauk.org

CCC coordinates **Rural Wheels** and a **voluntary car scheme** matching volunteer drivers with people that need transport .
Tel: 01228 221427 www.cumbria.gov.uk

Fellrunner Buses are operated by volunteers in the Eden area. Tel 01768 88232 www.fellrunnerbus.co.uk

ACT champions community and rural issues

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