

**The Highland Council**  
**Communities and Partnerships Committee**  
**10 December 2015**

Agenda Item	<b>15 (b)</b>
Report No	<b>CP 10/15</b>

**Lochaber Participatory Budgeting Experiment**

**Report by Head of Policy and Reform**

**Summary**

This paper provides Committee Members with an overview of the Lochaber Participatory Budgeting experiment which led to over 1200 local people voting to select projects to be funded for young people. The outcome and key points of learning from the process are highlighted to assist further consideration of the use of Participatory Budgeting and the various methods of delivery that can be used.

**1. Background**

- 1.1 Highland Council is progressing Participatory Budgeting (PB) approaches to see how this can involve more people in budget decisions. Survey evidence shows that in Highland only 20% of the adult population agree that the Council involves them in how it spends money. The Council currently receives advisory support from the Scottish Government in practising PB. In 2015 and 2016 Highland Council is initially using the Ward Discretionary Budget Including the ring-fenced Youth Fund.
- 1.2 Local Ward Councillors agreed that Lochaber Wards (Wards 12 and 22) would be the first area to try this approach. Councillors made £10,000 available from the ward budgets. The £10,000 was to support projects and schemes that helped young people between the ages of 11 and 25 years.
- 1.3 Local Members had received previous feedback from young people through specific youth focussed ward forums, that the use of social media would encourage and enable more young people (and communities) to participate in discussions about the things that may affect them and/or their community. Members were keen for social media to be used to engage more young people in the allocation of the fund.
- 1.4 The experiment ran from the 22<sup>nd</sup> June to the 21<sup>st</sup> September 2015.

**2. Process**

- 2.1 A core steering group was established to oversee the experiment. It was branded 'Your Voice Your Choice'. The engagement of young people at the design stage was facilitated by school staff and the youth workers (including the Lochaber Street Work project which engages with young people outwith school age as well). During each step of the process, young people's views and opinions were sought.

## 2.2 The pilot had 4 staged elements:

1. Call for bids;
2. Pre-assessment of bids;
3. On-line and Postal voting (worth 75% of the vote); and
4. Young People's Panels (worth 25% of the vote). This ensured young people had a strong voice in the process whilst testing the use of on-line voting and a 'weighting' method.

## 2.3 Project Bids

A webpage on the Highland Council website was created to call for bids, have the voting link and deliver the results [www.highland.gov.uk/YouthPB](http://www.highland.gov.uk/YouthPB). An application form and guidance were designed to be simple and brief and at the same time satisfying financial regulations and accessed on the webpage. The web link was promoted by local Community Planning partners, young people and community groups (who subsequently went on to support the entire process). Specific promotional support was received from:

- Community planning partners including NHS, SNH, HIE, Forestry Commission Scotland (Promotion, display of posters, circulation of links)
- Voluntary Action Lochaber - CVS (Promotion, lodging of information on their website and e-bulletins)
- Nevis Radio, Community Radio Station (Promotion, live radio)
- Sport Lochaber, Lochaber Chamber of Commerce and other third sector umbrella organisations (Promotion, lodging of information on websites and newsletters)
- Community Councils (circulation of information)
- Local Development Trusts (circulation of information)
- Highland Council Service points (display of posters)
- High Life Highland facilities (libraries and leisure centres) staff
- High Schools & Parent Councils (circulation of information and link)
- Young people sharing the link

42 bids were received totalling £45,788. They were all eligible.

## 2.4 Voting

The Steering Group agreed that local residents aged 11 years and older should be eligible to vote, with each able to vote for up to two bids by either using the on-line survey or submitting a postal vote. The voting link was shared on social media by young people, community groups and family members. No costs were incurred to publicise the voting opportunity.

- 2.5 The on-line vote was conducted using a simple survey monkey questionnaire. This asked for the voters name, address and age so that checks could be made to validate voting eligibility. Checks revealed only a small number of ineligible votes (e.g. less than 10 were out with the age eligibility and duplicate votes) which were discounted. 1157 completed the survey on-line.
- 2.6 Hard copies were made available from Highland Council service points or by downloading and this generated a further 122 postal votes which were then transferred to Survey Monkey.
- 2.7 In total 1279 people voted and 2243 votes were cast. There were no reports or evidence of any difficulties with voting. The voting age profile showed a strong voting turnout from young people but also shows the broad age range engaged in the process. The breakdown of voters by age and geography is set out at **Appendix 1**.
- 2.8 Assessment Panels  
A panel of a minimum of 5 young people aged between 11-25 years was established in each of the 4 Associated School Group areas. Their role was to give a young person's local view on the applications received by ranking them in order of merit/preference. This ranking was worth 25% of the vote. Young people wanted to see some 'weighting' towards their age group so they ensured a strong voice in the process and also a mechanism that allowed them to look at the bids from a local perspective.
- 2.9 Each young person was given simple guidance explaining the process and their role in the voting panel process. The panels were not made aware of the result from the on-line/postal vote so could not be influenced.
- 2.10 The panels were facilitated by a member of youth staff (assisted by the Associated High School). The panels themselves were led by the young people who had volunteered to be part of the process or encouraged and supported to do so. Each area had 'standby' panel members just in case there was any conflict of interest arising once the bids were received. Panels carefully scrutinised and considered the bids individually which in turn led to dynamic discussion regarding the difficulties of prioritising competing demands.

### **3. The Result**

- 3.1 11 of the 42 projects were successful, receiving a total of £10,210 in funding. The lowest bid to receive funding was £150 the highest being £2,500. **Appendix 2** lists all projects, showing the top 11 selected.

### **4. Points of interest**

- 4.1 With 1279 people voting, the public embraced the opportunity to participate in the allocation of public resources using an on-line method.

- 4.2 The internet was successfully used to publicise the opportunity. Although this was initially done by the Council through the use of news releases and Twitter, it was the public that used social media successfully to 'spread the word' sharing links to the bid and voting information on Council website pages throughout the entire process.
- 4.3 No resources other than officer and partner time during the course of a normal working week were expended. This was well received by the public as it enabled all the available resources to go directly to the community projects as opposed to diverting some for promotional, coordination and delivery activity.
- 4.4 The evaluation highlighted the success of the project and the method of delivery in terms of on-line voting which reached out to members of the community of all ages and some who had never previously participated in consultative or community events.
- 4.5 The use of panels to help give weighting to young people's views and reflect geographies had some success but the experiment showed that if these were to be used again for youth budget funding opportunities then the whole participatory process would need to be delivered at the associated school group not Ward level to make it more meaningful for young people. This would help ensure that the areas with lower school rolls and less connected communities are not marginalised in the process.

## **5. Implications**

- 5.1 Resource implications – To date £10,210 has been allocated to community groups from the Ward 12 and 22 youth and main ward discretionary funds. If Ward members agreed to roll participatory budgeting out in 2016/7 then the resource implications will be dependent on the method(s) used.
- 5.2 Legal implications – There are no legal implications at this time, although one part of the Community Empowerment Act relates to public participation in decision-making including resource allocation. Guidance is awaited on implementing this part of the Act but participatory budgeting can be seen as one approach to demonstrating our compliance.
- 5.3 Equalities implications – This method of participatory budgeting involved a wider range of people in decision-making. People aged 11 years and over were invited to vote and young people's views were given more weighting given the funding was to support projects for young people. Alternative methods of voting were put in place to allow participation either on-line or in hard copy.
- 5.4 Carbon clever implications – Bidders and voters were not required to attend any events or meetings removing the need to travel to participate.
- 5.5 Risk implications – Potential risks about a lack of interest did not materialise.
- 5.6 Gaelic implications – There are no Gaelic implications arising from this report.

5.7 Rural implications – All communities and residents of Lochaber were invited to participate over the age of 11 years.

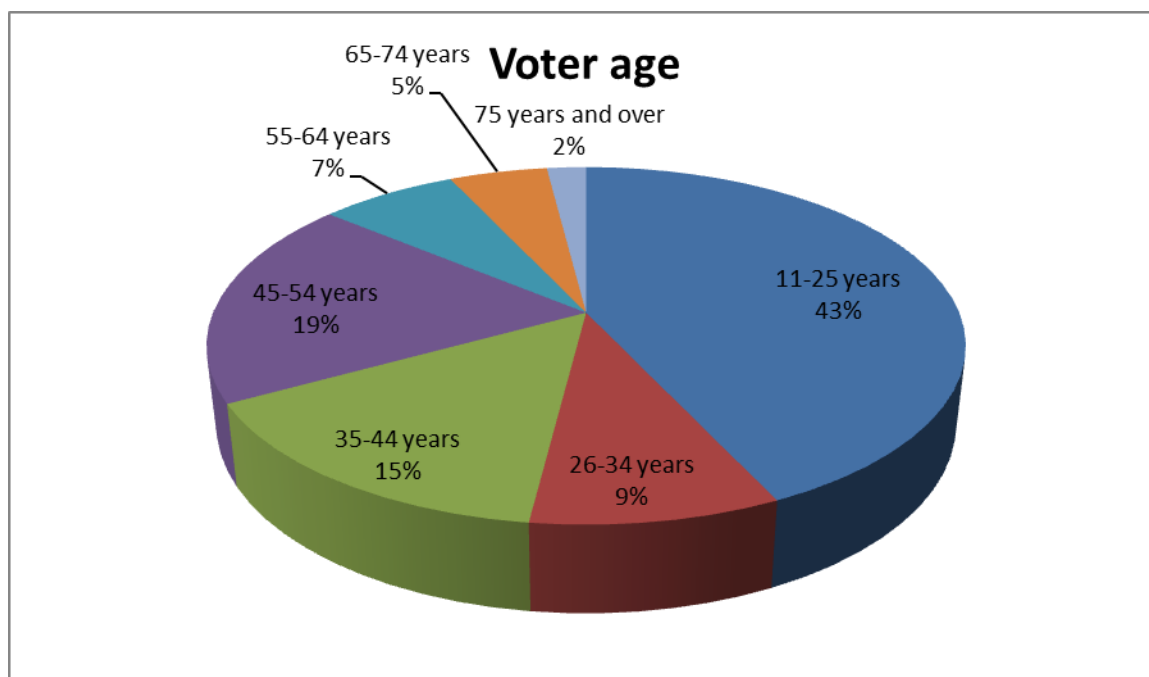
**6. Recommendation**

1. Members of the Committee are asked to note the success of the on-line method used in the Lochaber Wards 12 and 22 participatory budgeting experiments focusing on projects for young people.
2. The learning from the Lochaber approach can be applied to any other Wards where Members wish to pursue participatory budgeting methods.

Designation: Head of Policy and Reform

Date: 30 November 2015

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**Figure 1 - Voting age profile****Table 1 – percentage of those who voted from each postcode area within the Associated High School group area.**

70%	Fort William
8%	Ardnamurchan
14%	Mallaig
5%	Kinlochleven
3%	Other (living away at College/Uni or work placement but main home address in Lochaber)

**Table 2 - 2015/16 High School rolls for these areas are;**

Roll	ASG	% of overall High School roll for Lochaber
791	Fort William	69%
90	Ardnamurchan	8%
122	Mallaig	11%
138	Kinlochleven	12%

## Appendix 2

### List of eligible bids, votes and awards

(awards listed in order – 1<sup>st</sup> receiving the most public & panel support combined, emboldened project received the most on-line votes)

<b>Applicant &amp; project name</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Amount bid for</b>	<b>Total project cost</b>	<b>Award</b>	<b>Rank</b>
Lochaber Rugby Club	Purchase of new floodlights to enable evening training.	£1000	£2000	£1000	1st
Lochaber Leisure Centre Swim Team	Purchase of starting blocks.	£2500	£10000	£2500	2nd
<b>Lochaber Pipe Band</b>	Purchase of bagpipes to allow young people to participate from homes where it may not be possible for families to provide them.	£1000	£1600	£1000	3rd
Lochaber Women's Aid	Purchase of 'Listening' resources to aid communication with young people	£150	£150	£150	4th
Room 13 Caol –joint campus	Art transition project for new joint campus school	£1360	£1960	£1360	5th
Kilmallie Shinty Club	Hire of indoor facilities.	£1000	£1050	£500	6th
Mallaig Youth Dance Group	Purchase of moveable mirror equipment	£300	£300	£300	7th
Fort William Netball Club Transport	Help with the hiring of transport to enable junior players to participate in a structured netball framework throughout the Highlands and Islands.	£540	£640	£540	8th
High Life Highland	Extra activity days/nights for the young people in the Mallaig High school catchment area.	£1560	£2360	£1560	9th
Mallaig Youth Football	Purchase of equipment and small contribution to transport	£800	£800	£800	10th
Lochaber Camanachd Association	Purchase of protective helmets, sticks and some small assistance with travel costs.	£500	£1000	£500	11th
World Challenge – Ardnamurchan & Mallaig pupils	Cost of Immunisations to allow participation in Challenge.	£360	£2800		

Mallaig High School Parent Council -	Visits to further education establishments that will help facilitate their choices on future career pathways.	£1580	£2820		
Mallaig High School	Introduction of Young Scot scheme for local community run facilities.	£1500	£1500		
Claymores Amateur Boxing Club	Equipment and volunteer coaching training	£1000	£1550		
Ardnamurchan High School Parent Council	Contribution to running of Duke of Edinburgh scheme and fire service training	£1030	£4030		
High Life Highland	Lunchtime drop in for young people offering support, advice and signposting.	£365	£729		
Room 13 Ardnamurchan	Inspirational trips to art galleries	£500	£500		
Ardnamurchan High School	Interdisciplinary learning project using drama.	£200	£700		
Highlife Highland library service	Introduction of teenage book clubs. Joint venture between two rural High Schools.	£663	£1102		
Plantation Community Association	Winter sports lessons, equipment & transport for Plantation youth club attendees	£3580	£3580		
Nevis Community Radio	Young Presenter Training and purchase of new equipment for young presenters to use.	£1500	£2445		
Ardnamurchan High School	History and Art trips.	£500	£940		
Police Scotland	Materials to carry out road safety demonstrations	£300	£300		
Voluntary Action Lochaber	Delivery of a highly interactive and participative training event for potential new young Committee/Board members of third sector organisations and a follow on Committee/Board mentoring programme.	£2000	£3225		
Lochaber Rural Education Trust	Project for young people with additional support needs. Active, Healthy and Achieving project	£1000	£1200		
Meur Lochabair	Organisation and running of local Junior MOD	£1000	£3800		
Lochaber Hope	Accredited mentor training to 6 plus young people, with	£2460	£8980		



	additional spotting and referring training.				
Nimble Fingers Project	Room hire for Nimble fingers project which gives opportunities to experience working in the community rather than a school environment.	£540	£540		
West Highland College UHI	College buddy/mentoring programme for young students	£1000	£1000		
West Highland College UHI	Cooking for the terrified project for young home leavers.	£775	£775		
West Highland College UHI –	Student counselling for young adults	£1000	£3600		
West Highland College UHI –	Young people student support and Student Association membership	£1000	£1000		
Sail Away in Lochaber (SAIL)	Assisted sailing and canoe activities for young people in need	£1000	£1650		
Lochaber High School	Counselling & mentoring partnership	£1000	£3000		
Glen Mhor Pipe Band	Equipment & uniform for new members	£1500	£2950		
Fort William Youth Football	Purchase of 7 a side goals.	£1000	£1000		
Lochaber Showstoppers	Outside support for Drama,dance and music for young people.	£1000	£1000		
Lochaber High School	Purchase of Equipment and first aid course.	£3575	£10,175		
Lochaber High School –	Setting up of an ECO Group including equipment	£1000	£2000		
Lochaber Rugby Club -	Youth and girls transport for Ardnamurchan & Mallaig	£1000	£1350		
Lochaber Athletics Club –	enrolment and athletics coaching training for a young person	£150	£750		