

### Highland Community Planning Partnership

### Community Planning Board – 31 March 2021

Agenda Item	6.
Report No	CPB/04/21

### Volunteering in Highland, Impacts of COVID-19 – Update report 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021

#### 1. Context

- 1.1 The Board received a report outlining areas where COVID-19 appeared to be impacting volunteering within Highland on the 1<sup>st</sup> of February 2021. The key themes were:
- COVID has impacted significantly both on the ability and the type of volunteering, over 80% had had to modify or stop their volunteering activities.
  - Most felt positive about continuing to volunteer throughout 2021 but a quarter were considering changing how they volunteered. A smaller number and anticipated indicated that they would stop volunteering.
  - The biggest barrier to volunteering was lack of time (48%) but the commitment being more than an individual can provide (20%) not knowing where to look for new volunteering roles (17%), being daunted at starting something new (17%), not feeling appreciated (16%) and local politics around volunteering in my community (15%) were other more manageable barriers.
- 1.2 The Chair asked the individual CPB Partners to consider the following areas as suggested within the report,
- How work could be undertaken to address the local politics within communities that are barriers to participation
  - Supporting the promotion of the proposed volunteer app/matching platform when this is launched
  - Promoting the concept of volunteering within staff teams, including revising, or introducing a volunteering policy.
  - Plan and execute a larger scale celebration of volunteer week in June 2021

This is an update on those responses to date and an overview of some of the activity progressed by HTSI in response.

#### 2. CPB response

- 2.1 To date three responses from Partners have been received and are in general supportive around the direction and wider considerations.
- 2.2 **Local Politics:** Generally there is a sense that this is a complex issue and different core roles impact on the potential role or involvement that individual agencies are able to consider.  
**Suggest that this is an area that could be further explored and discussed within the CLDE Group within the CPP context**
- 2.3 **Volunteering App:** Again very supportive in promoting this and HTSI are aiming to have the App launched well in advance of Volunteer Week 2021 and will provide promotional information and materials to partners relevant to their response prior to the hard launch. Other offers of support and information are being individually considered within HTSI and will be responded to directly.  
**HTSI are progressing and will bring this back to the individual Partners directly to action offers of support in the first quarter of 2021/22.**
- 2.4 **Volunteering within the Partner Organisations:** The organisations who responded have a demonstrable history of volunteering within their staff teams and while policies vary, practice for staff teams is high, though predominantly based on individual initiative. There is both support to promote more and also consider reviewing approaches to look at different ways of communicating the benefits of volunteering for the individual. There are opportunities to consider a more proactive approach in some areas, though the understanding that this needs to be considered in the context of the pressures on staff teams through the previous twelve months is important.

**Consideration of supporting enhanced or diversifying messages to staffing teams around volunteering and linking workforce development to community recovery could be considered more widely, where appropriate, as opportunities present going forward; though this may be on an individual agency basis.**

- 2.5 **Volunteer Week:** Responses on this were all supportive but possibly the most varied. The outline for volunteer's week planning as it stands within HTSI is attached as an appendix, the CPB may wish to consider whether they want to plan any specific activities as a partnership, certainly some co-ordination of this approach would be useful otherwise there is the potential to both duplicate activity and miss opportunity for a more strategic approach to build on for future years.

**Consider creating a SPOC to receive coms planning outlines for Volunteer Week for each of the Partner organisations who can then pull this together for briefing for the CPB Agencies.**

### 3. HTSI Work Update

- 3.1 The results of the survey have been discussed both with Volunteer Managers within the Inner Moray Firth and, for cascading, to the TSI Delivery Partners across other areas of Highland. There is recognition that the barriers are not unexpected and the managers had a diverse conversation around this and are considering impacts for their own organisations. This will continue to be picked up through the forum structures, 1-1 support and the annual training planning within HTSI. Additional resource allocation against these training needs and new elearning development is being explored.

It is almost certain that the power imbalances, which can aggravate community relationships, reduce participation in certain groups and increase inequalities, could have been further widened during lockdown and will only get progressively worse in the period directly after restrictions are lifted. This could have a wide range of impacts on voluntary participation in communities, including how effective that is at both offering development opportunities for individuals and the efficacy of community based support for those most disadvantaged. The recovery planning processes need to consider the recommendations from the [Social Renewal Advisory Board](#), [CLD values](#) and [Community Engagement Standards](#) in the design, planning and activity throughout 2021 within Highland; currently there is not clear strategic involvement of the Sector across the planning areas for this.

HTSI is about to invest in a new role to support representation and participation of the Third Sector throughout 2021/22 and we anticipate that this will increase our capacity to support organisations volunteering to participate on behalf of the wider sector in Public Sector led decision making processes; as well as help to develop sector led collaborative activity.

The volunteering app/website matching site is nearing completion and we anticipate this will launch in the later quarter of 2021/22. This will increase the ability of organisations to manage their own volunteer requests on a central point and should release the limited TSI resources to focus on promotion of the interface and more importantly on supporting those more vulnerable or further from the volunteer market into suitable volunteering roles.

New investments in internal staff development, third sector training offers and eLearning access are all intended to continue improving the support and environment for volunteering within Highland and the recently revamped 'Volunteer Friendly' award will be rolled out across the area through 2021/22 as a revised quality measure.

A short series of seminars hosted over Volunteer Week will start a focus around key areas of improvement connected to the barriers identified, including 'the ask' and how that is presented, equalities and inclusion, boards and governance. This will be followed by revisiting volunteer time banking and short term skills matching.

Finally the focus of volunteers week in 2021 will be to say thank you. A lot of focus has gone, rightly, on the wide range of public sector based front line workers throughout the last year and while some focus has of course be provided to the army of volunteers who worked tirelessly throughout the last 12 months



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volunteer week provides an opportunity to really shout that message. The initial plans are outlined in the attached appendix.

Recommendation

For the **Board** to note the content.

### Appendix – HTSI Volunteer week activity overview

Theme	'Thank You'
<b>Resources for Groups</b>	A new guide with ideas on how to celebrate and thank volunteers will be produced digitally, with a range of templates and resources intended for small/medium organisations. This will include access to a limited stock of small items, postcards etc., that organisations could use to promote volunteering and to reach out to volunteers.
<b>Seminars to explore different challenges to volunteering – Volunteer Managers/HTSI Members</b>	We will host a series of short digital seminars around the following themes and aimed at volunteer managers across the HTSI members: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 'the Ask'</li> <li>- Equalities and inclusion</li> <li>- Youth Volunteering</li> <li>- Board and governance</li> </ul>
<b>Long Service Awards</b>	HTSI Hosted a long Service Awards Ceremony in 2019, where we celebrated over 2000 years of volunteering across more than 60 nominations. We will open nominations from organisations for their long serving volunteer with a view to hosting a ceremony later in 2021, ideally in person or digitally if necessary.
<b>Promotion of the volunteering app</b>	As previously discussed the volunteering matching platform will remain a key part of our coms planning throughout the week
<b>Digital 'Thank Yous'</b>	Throughout May we will offer our Members and others a chance to send in short video clips with messages of thanks which will then be promoted throughout volunteer week across the HTSI social media platforms.
<b>Revisiting the photo competition</b>	During Lockdown HTSI hosted a photo competition across various categories and we will host another competition themes for volunteer week. Date for submissions is to be confirmed.