

COMMUNITY SPACES MEET UP: SESSION NOTES



FROM YOUTH CLUBS TO LIFELONG ROOTS: COMMUNITY SPACES SHAPING RURAL FUTURES



28TH JANUARY 2026 10AM - 11:30 AM (ONLINE)



SESSION SPEAKERS

☀️ Thomas Fisher, CoDel

☀️ Tara Drummie, Uist Beò

☀️ Youth Researchers from Dumfries & Galloway - Hayley McGaw (Glenkens) and Korey Patterson (Thornhill)

☀️ Sam Jabir, Inspiralba



SESSION OVERVIEW & PURPOSE

- ✨ Explore how community spaces can better engage young people
- ✨ Share examples of youth participation in rural and island areas
- ✨ Identify barriers to involvement in governance and decision-making
 - ✨ Highlight practical strategies for inclusive engagement

SESSION THEMES

- ✨ Youth participation and leadership
- ✨ Barriers in community governance
 - ✨ Intergenerational collaboration
 - ✨ Rural retention of young people
 - ✨ Digital engagement
- ✨ Inclusion and representation in decision-making



SPEAKER TOPICS

Tara Drummie, Uist Beo

Digital engagement & youth visibility: Uist Beo platform attracts 100,000 monthly views. Promotes jobs, events & youth stories. Strengthens local identity and opportunity awareness.

Key messages:

- Positive storytelling shifts perceptions
- Intergenerational collaboration is essential
- Face-to-face trust-building remains crucial
- Sustainable funding is needed for digital initiatives

Thomas Fisher CoDel

Key insights: More young adults are staying or returning to rural communities. Social connections play a critical role in retention. Community spaces support belonging and peer networks.

Recommendations:

- Listen to young people's perspectives
- Link education to local opportunities
- Invest in accessible social spaces
- Support peer-to-peer interaction

Sam Jabir, InspirAlba

Key points

- Rural depopulation requires proactive strategies
- 60% of InspirAlba employees are under 30
- Structured programmes build skills and confidence

Effective approaches

- Long-term engagement
- Tailored programmes
- Leadership pathways
- Tangible rewards for involvement



SPEAKER TOPICS

Hayley McGaw

Inclusive Social Spaces for Young People

Key reflections

- Community halls are vital for connection
- Rural isolation affects social development
- Informal spaces encourage participation

Successful example

- The Bodega Social – intergenerational event building connections

Learning

- Consistent social opportunities matter
- Inclusion must be intentional



Korey Patterson

Barriers to Youth Participation - Challenges identified

- Gatekeeping by committees
- Lack of trust in young people
- Limited support for youth-led initiatives
- Decision-making structures resistant to change

Call to action

- Make boards more representative
- Encourage partnerships
- Shift from deficit to asset-based thinking



EMERGING THEMES

Inclusion & Representation

- ★ Committees often lack demographic diversity
- ★ Flexible meeting structures needed

Intergenerational Collaboration

- ★ Shared projects strengthen communities
- ★ Mentorship builds leadership capacity

Trust & Power-Sharing

- ★ Young people need meaningful roles
- ★ Shared decision-making builds confidence

DIGITAL & PHYSICAL SPACES

Role of digital platforms

- ★ Raise awareness of opportunities
- ★ Connect dispersed communities
- ★ Promote positive narratives

Key takeaway:

Digital engagement should complement - not replace - face-to-face interaction

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ★ Community spaces must evolve to stay relevant
- ★ Youth engagement requires structural change
 - ★ Trust and partnership are essential
 - ★ Long-term investment builds leadership
- ★ Listening to young people leads to stronger communities

THANK YOU!!!

A heartfelt thanks to all speakers and participants.

For follow-up conversations, resources, or connections:

Email nikki@sra.scot / aimee.spence@socialenterprise.scot

Let's continue building inclusive and vibrant rural community spaces.

