



# Youth Scotland Rural Action Fund

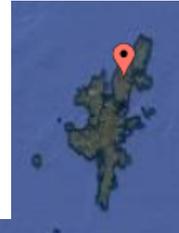
January 2019



# Rural Action Fund – Facts & Figures

**“3,176 young people reached”**

**“£28,872 funding to 55 projects out of 63 applications”**



**“478 people volunteering over 5,700 hours”**

**“14 applications from non-Youth Scotland member groups”**



**“36 applications from community groups not registered as charities”**

*Aw thanks for opening another night! I was dreading the summer holidays coz it just drags in if there is nothing to do*

# Purpose of the Rural Action Fund

## The need

Approximately 1/3 of our member groups are in rural and remote rural communities and these groups are disproportionately affected by reductions in funding for universal youth work. It is often the case that funding targeted towards priority areas identified through the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation misses out on reaching rural communities. In addition, 40% of our member groups are not registered charities which further impacts on their ability to access funding reserved for registered charities. The number of groups which are not registered charities is also disproportionately skewed towards local authorities with large percentages of remote and rural communities.

We know that youth workers, particularly volunteers, are passionate in continuing to deliver youth work of the highest possible quality in the face of challenging circumstances relating to funding, access to facilities, and capacity to meet young people's needs. Youth Scotland's Rural Action Fund was created to address the specific needs and challenges which rural youth groups are facing in funding the delivery of community-based universal youth work. The most significant of which is the difficulty in securing funding for universal versus targeted youth work and for funding the costs which are essential to delivering high quality youth work experiences such as hall lets, equipment and sessional staff.

## The difference we wanted to make

In setting up the Rural Action Fund, Youth Scotland wanted to make it easier for rural youth groups to access small amounts of funding which could be used on what was really needed for young people in their communities. It was about:

- removing barriers to funding for groups that are reliant on volunteers and have limited capacity to apply for funds;
- removing the need to create new projects or services;
- being flexible in supporting the groups;
- reaching youth groups that other funders are unable to reach; and
- providing opportunities for young people to have fun and enjoyable youth work experiences in their local communities and beyond.

In supporting Youth Scotland, The Robertson Trust recognised the need for funding universal youth work and the specific needs of rural communities. The Rural Action Fund was also intended to make a difference for the Trust in being able to reach small community-based youth groups for whom it is unable to directly fund.

# Delivering the fund

## Promotion and support

### In the beginning...

It was important to make the information and fund guidance as accessible as possible and also to make sure that we spread the word widely about this new fund. We based the guidance, application process and forms on our previously successful Cashback for Communities Small Grants (2013-2017) programme and made amendments to tailor this for the slightly different audience. Once this was complete we promoted the new fund extensively across our communications channels (social media, newsletters, e-bulletins) as well promoted through word of mouth across the Youth Scotland network. This includes our partner Area Associations who worked to spread the word about the fund in their areas and also actively supported groups to apply. We also promoted the fund and support from The Robertson Trust through YouthLink Scotland, the National Agency for Youth Work, and an [article in Third Force News](#).

We know from a variety of metrics that this reach a very wide audience. For example, our Facebook promotional campaign reached 13,903 unique people and it was viewed 32,082 times with 370 people physically interacting with the post. We saw broadly similar levels of engagement through Twitter and a spike in traffic to our web pages as well. At the time, this was our most successful (with regards to these metrics) social media campaign. Unfortunately, this exceptionally high level of interest did not translate into high numbers of applicants in the first round of funding in May 2018, receiving only 8 applications.

### Along the way...

This led us to question whether our promotional work was reaching the right audience – those voluntary led youth groups in rural communities. We changed our approach and used a more ‘traditional’ form of communication: writing a letter about the fund and enclosing the application for to every group in our membership who we believed would meet the fund criteria. We also placed more emphasis on word-of-mouth, making direct contact with groups and our partners across Scotland working with these groups locally.

Our changed approach resulted in significant increases in the number of applications we received for the new fund deadlines in June (23) and August (22). For our final round of funding in November, owing to a smaller amount of funding remaining, we did not use this approach as we did not want to raise expectations and then disappoint groups and young people. Interestingly, the number of applicants fell again to single figures. This would indicate that the personal and more traditional approach is more successful in reaching smaller community-based youth groups in rural communities.

Throughout the delivery of the fund, we spoke with a number of applicants directly (or those supporting them locally) prior to them submitting an application to talk through their ideas and support them in completing their applications. Feedback suggests this was valued by those who applied as well as for those who we were able to advise did not meet the criteria (e.g. having too many paid staff etc.) so they did not waste their time and effort.

## Grants awarded

Across the four rounds of funding, we awarded 55 grants to 52 different groups. Three groups submitted a second application in later rounds having completed their original projects and sent in their end of project reports. The total amount of funding confirmed to date was £28,872, with awards ranging from £210 to £500. The majority (40) were awarded £500. A detailed list of the organisations which were funded is provided as an appendix to this report.

All successful applicants were also provided with a resource pack at a cost of £50 each (included in total above) to support them in their efforts to accredit the achievements of young people through their youth work experiences. A small number had included the costs of accredited youth awards in their funding applications but we believed that in the Year of Young People and with significant national efforts to close the attainment gap, this small action would help these groups demonstrate the value of youth work in young people's education achievements.

## Support for groups

Over the year our support for groups has focussed on three areas:

- increasing awareness of the Rural Action Fund and supporting groups to apply;
- Being responsive and flexible to groups needs in changing circumstances once funding has been awarded;
- Increasing awareness of the wider range of our training and capacity-building support, including supporting non-member groups to become members.

Undoubtedly, the biggest focus of our efforts has been in supporting groups to become aware of and apply for funding to the Rural Action Fund. As previously outlined, we initially underestimated the effort involved in ensuring we reached the right audience. However, on reflection the evolution of awareness and applications for the fund has followed the same pattern as our experience of the Cashback Small Grants programme in 2013, which also started slowly and grew over time.

Sadly things do not always go to plan and for a small number of projects, we received contact to say that they would be unable to deliver as they had outlined in their application. In these cases, it was due to factors beyond their control such as family illness limiting their capacity to deliver. However, owing to our knowledge of community-based youth work and the challenges of being a volunteer as well as our

flexible approach, we have been able to agree alternatives which mean that young people have still been able to benefit and the outcomes of the fund have been met. The example below best illustrates this:

The **Den Youth Café** in the Highlands is run completely by volunteers and delivery is led by a lady and her husband who want to provide opportunities for young people in their local community. The Den applied for funding to cover the costs of hiring an astro pitch to provide young people with the chance to take part in football and other sports. Unfortunately, family illness meant that the couple would be unable to deliver these activities and the youth group was going to have to close down for a period, meaning the young people would have no youth work opportunities at all.

Following discussion, we agreed that the funding could instead be used to take the young people on a trip to see the Christmas Panto in Inverness.



As a result, the young people had an opportunity to do an activity that many had never experienced before and also continued to feel part of the Den Youth Café, which they were missing with the normal activities being closed. The photos below show a number of very happy faces! For the volunteers who lead the Café, this flexibility meant that they felt supported during a difficult time and were able to offer young people a quality experience in spite of their own personal challenges.



*I asked one girl how she was doing when she got on the bus and she said "I am so excited!" When she got off the bus at the end of the night I asked her how she felt now and she said "still excited, it was an amazing day". Susan, Youth Worker*

# Impact of the Rural Action Fund

The Rural Action Fund has been a real success and demonstrates the impact that small amounts of funding can have when youth groups are able to meet their own identified needs. Based on the applications and end of project reports received we can be confident that the following outcomes have been achieved:

## 1. Removing barriers to youth work opportunities in rural communities

Groups told us that accessing youth work opportunities was the biggest barrier for young people in their community with **76%** of all applicants highlighting a **lack of suitable transport** as a significant barrier. Young people are reliant on parents or other older siblings being able to provide lifts in cars with almost **50%** of applicants highlighting the **distance to activities** being a barrier. These barriers are best illustrated in the quotes from youth groups below:

*Lots of activities available in Stornoway, but cost to transport their too much for lots of families.*

Western Isles

*We have a very poor public transport service which does not allow young people from the outlying villages to access the groups independently.*

Highland

*The proposed event would be a trip to a local campsite for an overnight camping trip. Local for an urban area may be five or ten miles from where they live - for us, because we are so rural, local can be a two hour bus journey. This campsite is 76miles from where we live. A mini-bus would be hired to transport the group to the campsite and back.*

Highland

*Limited bus service, so cannot leave village without parents or private transport.*

Stirling

## How the Rural Action Fund made a difference

The fund supported a number of groups to hire mini-buses or other forms of transport to be able to take young people on trips to venues out with their community or in some cases to collect them and bring them to venues. Examples include:

The **Breasclete Junior Youth Club** in the Western Isles which took a group of young people to the Scaladale Centre for an overnight stay in June. *“This provided the children and young people with an opportunity to get together and build relationships with each other while working in their teams during the activities [and] without the funding we would not have been able to attend the Centre”.*

*Scaladale trip was the highlight of the year. I really hope we can go again.* Robbie, Young person

*This was a fantastic trip. The skills that the children and young people develop and the fun that they all have at Scaladale is priceless.* Dina, Youth Worker

The **Grantown YM Youth Club** in the Highlands wanted to encourage young people in the outlying villages of Grantown to take part in summer activities by providing transport as the public transport service is very poor. This included providing a range of new opportunities based on feedback from young people on what they wanted to take part in. As result, the Community Centre has a new Garden Project which has encouraged new young people to get involved. *“We have been able to show that the Community Centre is a place that can be open, comfortable, inclusive, fun and accessible when planning takes place with funding. We have had the chance to meet with new young people and their family”.*

*Great to feel part of all this. Did not know I could be so creative.* Shannon, Young Person

*The project has enabled us to identify how we could progress in the future with transport issues (and) reach a wider audience. We have been able to reach young people who may not have otherwise had access to activities.* Julie, Youth Worker

## 2. Sustaining and increasing provision of youth work opportunities in rural communities

### How the Rural Action Fund made a difference

Many groups told us that funding enabled them to overcome barriers of not having enough access to facilities to be able to offer more provision. Equally, some of the groups were able to use the funding to sustain their existing provision, without which it would have stopped. These are illustrated in the examples below:

The **Creetown Youth Club** in Dumfries & Galloway needed to replace the broken heating system in their hall, *"otherwise the village will not have a youth club"*. As a result of the broken heating, the youth club had started to lose members. However, the flexibility of the Rural Action Fund meant that the youth club could use this funding towards the cost of an essential new heating system which has ensured that the youth club is able to continue for the young people in the community.

The **Zone Youth Committee** in East Ayrshire which was able to open for another evening during the summer holidays. *"We are 15miles from the nearest town which is Ayr and our authority is East Ayrshire which means if the council put on free activities it is usually in Kilmarnock which is thirty five miles away and it means two bus trips."*

*Thank god for this club I was not looking forward to these holidays at all with me having another two kids I can't afford to give him money all the time.* Mandy, Parent

*During these seven weeks it kept young people out of trouble, gave them a purpose by having a club where they could meet their friends and have activities provided.*

Rachel, Youth Worker

The brand new **Alford Youth Café** in Aberdeenshire opened on 31 August as a result of funding from the Rural Action Fund. Local members of the community has identified that *“there is nowhere for teenagers to get together to just hang out that is organised, safe and fun”*. A group of volunteers came together and secured new premises along with equipment to set up the youth café.

*I [now] have a place that my friends and I can go after school to hang out.* Christianne, Young Person

*Super excited to be part of such a fantastic new venture.*  
Denise, Adult volunteer

*New youth café in Alford, run by some amazing people with a heart and passion for the youth of Alford.* Amy, local community member

### 3. Increasing the capacity of rural youth groups

For many youth groups across the country, rural or not, the capacity of volunteers and youth workers is one of the biggest limiting factors in their capacity to deliver youth work.

#### How the Rural Action Fund made a difference

One of the biggest ways in which the Rural Action Fund has helped has been through youth groups being able to attract new volunteers. Out of 478 volunteers involved in the groups funded activities, **35% (167)** were new to the groups.

*We have already attracted additional volunteers from the parents who also attended the crazy golf.* Terri, Back Football and Recreation Club, Western Isles

Wigtown Bay Sailing Club in Dumfries & Galloway used funding to offer young people the chance to take part in kayaking and sailing for the first time. As a result, a group of

young people have now completed their RYA certificates and are able to provide per support for other young people joining the club.

## A few more facts and figures...

Overall, the Rural Action Fund has reached 3,176 young people in 52 rural communities from 16 local authority areas across Scotland. The breakdown of young people, youth groups told us about is shown in the table below:

Age	Female	Male	Other	Total
<10 years	556	681	0	1,237
10 – 17 years	811	781	1	1,593
18 – 25 years	161	183	2	346
<b>Total</b>	1,528	1,645	3	3,176

We can also confidently say that we reached some of Scotland’s most rural communities with this funding. Using [The Scottish Government Urban Rural Classification](#) to analyse the post codes of the groups that were funded, nearly **two-thirds (65%)** of the groups applying were from communities ranked as the most rural in Scotland. This means they are “Areas with a population of less than 3,000 people, and with a drive time of over 30 minutes to a Settlement of 10,000 or more.” Overall, **95%** of applications came from groups rated between 4 and 6 on the Scottish Government’s 6 point scale, where 4 means “Settlements of 3,000 to 9,999 people, and with a drive time of over 30 minutes to a Settlement of 10,000 or more”.

## Rurality versus Deprivation Indices

One of the drivers for setting up this fund was to address the challenge of rural youth groups being unable to access other sources of funding which is targeted towards specific groups. Such targeted funding is often on the basis of ‘deprivation’ as measured using the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation where funding goes towards those most deprived such as communities ranked as the 20% most deprived. Of the 63 applications we received for the Rural Action Fund, only three of these were from groups in communities considered amongst the 20% most deprived (Only one of these three met the criteria for funding). This also indicates that the Rural Action Fund achieved the objective for providing funding to those groups who are unable to access other funding restricted to targeted groups.

# Learning

## Engaging with small groups

### Application process

Delivering this fund has provided us with further evidence that working with small voluntary community-based youth groups requires slightly different approaches to larger groups with full-time staff. Being aware of, and adapting to, the needs and circumstances of small rural youth groups such as personal contact and allowing for hand-written short applications (which require less time to complete) are minor things which make a big difference. Out of the 63 applications we received, 25% (16) were handwritten.

### Amount of funding

Although we set the criteria for funding being restricted to groups with a turnover of less than £200,000 the majority of applicants had a turnover far less than this with a significant number having less than £50,000. While £500 grants are 'micro' in the context of Youth Scotland's turnover or for many funders, for the organisations supported through the Rural Action Fund, this was a lot of money. Moreover, while many applied for funding towards the costs of projects, in most cases this was e.g. £500 towards a total of £8-900 and the groups saw it as part of the process to fundraise in their local community to find the rest. In some cases this allowed for families and young people themselves to contribute towards the costs of trips so there was a sense of genuine ownership of the experience.

## Improvements

As shown in this report, we made improvements to our approach as we went along through each round of funding. One area that we did not alter was the fund guidance, preferring instead to keep this consistent as we tried to raise awareness. While we made every effort to make the guidance and information about the fund as accessible and simple as possible, we know from feedback that there are some areas where we can improve this, if we are able to continue the fund. These areas include:

- Removing reference to Cashback for Communities (while this was included to ensure that we were reaching those not eligible for the current phase of Cashback, feedback suggests this caused confusion and there may have been groups who did not apply as they received one of our small grants in the previous phase of Cashback).
- Providing clearer guidance about staff levels in eligible youth groups. We know from supporting groups through the application process that there were some

who thought they were ineligible because they had e.g. 2 part-time members of staff each working 6 hours per week (that is less than 1 full-time equivalent).

## Further information

For further information on this report, please contact:

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