

# Keeping Food Local: a remote challenge

Presentation to Meeting of Cross Party Group on Rural Policy  
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Professor David Marshall (UoE),  
Professor Paul Freathy, Dr. Keri Davies, Dr. Eric Calderwood (UoS)

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UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH  
Business School

UNIVERSITY of STIRLING  
Management  
School



# Background

- The Universities of Edinburgh and Stirling have examined the patterns of consumption, purchase behaviour and access to retail provision amongst Scottish island residents.
- Findings have included:
  - The spatial concentration of retailing and structural deficiencies in the transport infrastructure has impacted upon food access.
  - Rural residents accessed food via online platforms, use local stores or travel to the main towns to undertake their primary shop.
  - Remote communities remain resilient and adaptive in the face of specific challenges around food access.
- Royal Society of Edinburgh (RSE) award to examine the role of the informal food economy/network.





## Crofting / Home production-sales

- Croft ownership widespread but limited commercial crofting (hard work for little financial return, paid employment essential for many);
- Many crofts produce for themselves, but short season and poor soil - amount of food sold / bartered / gifted (gluts) is “insignificant”;
- Eggs, milk, veg, bakery, sheep (fattened & slaughtered on mainland), fish, tweed / garment production and tourism (e.g. holiday rental/pods);
- Certain crofting skills are being lost/not being passed on (cultivation / home slaughter / butchering).

**WHAT'S ON**  
at Ceann na h-Airigh

**POST OFFICE**  
Tue 11am - 1.30pm  
Wed 11am - 1.30pm  
Thu 11am - 1.30pm  
Fri 11am - 1.30pm

**CIDSIN**  
the grimsey kitchen  
Tue 2.30pm  
11am-4pm, Wednesday-Friday  
11.00  
Tuesday 11am-12.30pm  
Saturdays from 10 June

Full range of coffee services including postage, currency and training etc.

**MARKET**  
1pm - 4pm  
Every Wednesday (year-round)

Weekly local produce market, selling food, art and crafts from local growers, cochers & milkers

**EVENTS**  
Regular programme of workshops, talks, music and workshops etc.

See posters or drop in for more details  
All welcome

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## Local Markets / Stalls

- Seasonal markets, restricted trading hours, small independent traders;
- Includes local produce, may be combined with a box/home delivery scheme/social media;
- Some markets focused upon tourists rather than locals;



# Community Co-operatives / Social Enterprises

- Seen as a response to spatial concentration of retailing and structural deficiencies in the transport infrastructure;
- Flexibility over price, range and stocking policy;
- Can choose to source from local as well as national suppliers (reliant on mainland supply and distribution networks);



**ATTENTION ALL CUSTOMERS**

Please respect our staff and help customers

- Please use the hand sanitizer prior to using the refill station
- Please give other customers space
- We appreciate customer feedback

We will still be wearing masks on the shop floor, keeping the shop clean and keeping up our COVID-19 hygiene

Bùth Bharraigh Ltd

# Bùth Bharraigh - a community social enterprise

Strong sense of 'community' with a range of services (laundry, gift shop, museum);

Commitment to local producers (sourcing & labelling)



## Community Gardens

- Educationally / socially focused on wellbeing often around growing plants, fruit and vegetables;
- Sell plants/seeds but limited selection of vegetables and fruit for sale;
- Limited scalability or capacity to meet volume demand (polycrub);



# Food Banks

- *'Lots of hidden poverty'* on the islands
- Food banks focused upon well-being and the supply of basic foodstuffs (food waste) not much local produce;
- Discretion and respect for the individual important (delivery service);



# Local Grocery Retail

Vary from “excellent & innovative” to “poor and expensive”.

General support of independently managed stores and some evidence of local produce

Main source of supply came through the Co-op RDC;



Fàilte dha Co-op  
Chreag Goraìdh



# National Grocery Retail

- Customer support due to range, availability and quality of produce;
- Different views on price;
- Co-op supports Nisa and local independents;
- Delivery slot up to 1 month in advance for those outside the urban area.

# The remote challenge

- Reasonably good retail food provision but variable 'local' provision in the conventional market and a reliance of island residents upon national grocery multiples creating a degree of vulnerability to a wide range of market externalities.
- Limited evidence of informal provision in terms of growing/producing and gifting food in established networks – decline in 'traditional localism'.
- Examples of good local/informal food networks but these are 'complimentary' .....



# Thank you

## Related research:

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