

# **Building resilient institutional infrastructures for development in remote rural areas**

A report for the Arkleton Trust

Kendra Turnbull, July 2012



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## Contents

<b>Foreword.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Community development &amp; Institutional infrastructures .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>The rural element.....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Rural community development within the changing climate.....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Resilient institutional infrastructures.....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Key Hypotheses and potential research .....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Contribution of the research .....</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Appendices.....</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Appendix A- Case study localities .....</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Appendix B- Focus group questions .....</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>Appendix C- References.....</b>	<b>30</b>

## **Foreword**

In 2011 the Arkleton Trust called for expressions of interest on the theme of 'Doing Rural Development in an Economic Downturn' in order to consider what issue/issues it should focus on for its next funding period, commencing in 2013. A successful expression of interest was submitted to the Trust in January 2012 titled 'Building resilient institutional infrastructures for development in remote rural areas'. This report builds on that theme through thematic discussion and focus group analysis. Drawing on this analysis, four hypotheses were generated which form the basis for the proposed future study.

The report is written by Kendra Turnbull, a (First Class Honours) Rural Studies graduate of Newcastle University. Kendra lives and works in North Northumberland. Her undergraduate dissertation involved action research and participant observation analysing the partnership working during the writing of the Glendale Community Plan - of which she was the main author. She is currently working for a community heritage project which is planning commemoration events in conjunction with the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Battle of Flodden (1513). Additional support and input was provided by Dr Jane Atterton (Researcher, Rural Policy Centre, SAC) and Patsy Healey (Chair of the Glendale Gateway Trust).

## Introduction

The global economic crisis and subsequent economic stagnation have forced the hands of governments across the world to impose times of fiscal austerity. The United Kingdom (UK) government pledged to reduce public spending by £81 billion by 2014/15 (HM Treasury, 2010) leaving communities everywhere affected by severe reductions in public expenditure for both service provision and development initiatives. However, through the Localism Act 2011 the UK Government aims to “empower people to take action...mak[ing] local decisions a normal part of everyday life, giving communities, neighbourhoods and individuals more say, choice and ownership of their local facilities” (CLG, 2010). In Scotland, the proposed Community Empowerment and Renewal Bill, on which the Government has recently launched a consultation, seeks to support communities to achieve their own goals and aspirations through taking independent action and by having their voices heard in the decisions that affect their area.

The economic downturn and public sector cuts are clearly a current and pressing issue for all. They are also likely to be so for many years to come as public sector budgets are set to continue contracting until at least 2015. Combined with the context of parallel moves to localism and community empowerment this increased expectation on communities seems at odds with the reduced public purse and will no doubt test the capabilities of practitioners up and down the country. For rural areas, and particularly sparsely populated ones, this only adds to the challenges which rural communities already face; ageing demographic profiles, youth out-migration, affordable housing shortages, paucity of human capital or geographic isolation to name but a few. How communities will cope with these new challenges – will they suffer as a result of them or be able to grasp the new opportunities presented - or to what extent public policy needs to evolve to address them, has yet to be established.

Buikstra et al., (2010) state that adversity has the potential to both strengthen and weaken communities. This suggests that the resilience levels of communities could determine whether they rise to the challenge or stumble in its wake. How robust is local capacity? How well can it adapt? How far do the answers to these questions vary with local histories, with the wider institutional context and particular social and economic conditions?

*“Triggered at least in part by the recent economic crisis, discussions of local and regional development have recently broadened from a preoccupation with growth to one which captures the notion of resilience”.*

(Dawley, Pike and Tomaney, 2010, p642)

These questions focus the attention on the institutional infrastructures which exist in rural communities and which deliver community development. What they encompass and how they have been evolving could throw a light on of how rural areas can adapt and even thrive through economic hardship.

In order to further explore the theme of resilient institutional infrastructures, case study investigation and desk-based research was undertaken. Two case study communities were chosen and focus groups held in each locality. The three broad research questions proposed

in the initial expression of interest were used as a base line from which to explore the theme with local practitioners and community representatives:

- What institutional infrastructure has built up in recent years, what has it achieved and what has fostered its development?
- How is this infrastructure being affected by the new and evolving policy and economic context?
- What new institutional forms and approaches are appearing, and what are their development capabilities?

Wider desk-based research was conducted on various topics, including theories of rural development, the resilience of rural communities and the changing economic and political climate. A number of international experts were contacted at this stage of the project to feed in ideas and useful references, and a meeting was held with researchers in the Rural Society Research Team at SAC to explore their work on community resilience.

From the focus groups information was drawn so as to gain an understanding of how institutional infrastructures are adapting at the local level 'on the ground'. The anecdotes and examples provided were then cross referenced with the thematic literature review to form hypotheses or future research themes.

The structure of this report is therefore as follows:

The first sections provide an outline introduction to the broad background themes via a brief literature review. Throughout these sections text boxes are used to include associated verbatim quotes, comments and observations drawn from the focus groups as well as supporting quotes from literature. It is acknowledged that this review, of both theory and case study material, has merely 'scratched the surface' and that should the proposal be taken forward it simply points towards the information on which to build further study. This is recognised in our recommendation that future work surrounding this theme should include more case study communities.

Following this, there is a section in which key hypotheses are identified. These hypotheses have emerged from the thematic discussion and focus group evidence. They form a platform on which the outlined research proposal stands.

Finally the contribution of the proposed research is discussed; how it connects to existing or ongoing research, who the intended audience is and how it fits to the mission of the Arkleton Trust.

### **Case study communities**

Two case study communities were chosen in which to carry out focus groups to discuss the three research questions. This data collection was felt to be important to add 'on-the-ground experience' to the information available through carrying out a literature review.

The two communities chosen were Glendale in North Northumberland and Langholm in Dumfries and Galloway. Both communities saw development initiatives set up at a similar

time (the mid-1990s) although for different reasons. These initiatives have also chosen to take different 'development paths'. Both communities are perceived as peripheral in their regional contexts and choosing communities in England and Scotland offers an interesting opportunity for cross-border comparison. Further information on the two communities is provided in the Appendix to this report.

## Community development & Institutional infrastructures

When referring to communities a distinction is often made between 'communities of place or locality' and 'communities of interest', where place refers to those who live within a specified locality or territory, and interest where those within the community share a common understanding or interest but are not necessarily in the same locality (MacKinnon, 2002; Shucksmith, 2010). Shucksmith (2000) includes an additional angle of communities of interest within a community of place. In this study we will focus on communities of place and then the communities of interest within the locality.

### *Development:*

*“On the pragmatic level, development means whatever the body sponsoring an intervention decides it should mean: it may mean “modernisation”, integration in to the global market place, it may be the improvement of social provision, and so on. But at the heart, development must refer to a process of change: a change towards a ‘better’ state of things, or towards a more mature condition, a ‘creative unfolding’.”*

(Ray, 2000)

As well as the above distinctions between various communities, commentators argue that community development can also be constructed in different forms. The dualistic development models of exogenous (driven from outside) and endogenous (driven from within) are the most easily recognised. Ray (2000) refers to exogenous development as where “decision making power and the energy to sustain a territorial development dynamic rests outwith, and autonomous of, the territory”. Endogenous development fosters idealistic visions of organic growth, capacity building and communities in control of their own destiny. This ideology- that specific resources and capital within an area can hold the key to its development (Atterton & Thompson, 2010)- has been critiqued as being impractical in a complex society with multiple connections. Thus Shucksmith (2010) comments that rural governance should be taken into account to form neo-endogenous development, where local resources and capital are combined vertically with ‘extra-local’ (Atterton & Thompson, 2010; Ray, 2000) resources and capital, creating a balance between internal and external control (Atterton & Thompson, 2010). Horizontal connections will still exist, however, and

*“in order to evolve there has to be an engagement [with statutory agencies] in order to be heard.”*

Glendale Focus Group

the infrastructure on which this report and proposal focuses is not just about these neo-endogenous partnerships but also loose networks, cultures and practices within communities. A more general term of ‘networked development’ (Shucksmith, 2012) is thus adopted to encompass the multitude of connections and practices which make up the institutional infrastructure.

The growing emphasis on rural governance and localism suggests that there will be greater need for networked development and a degree of ‘buy in’ from the state so as to allow power to be transferred to the local; so as to facilitate empowerment and mobilise local capabilities. This transfer of power can cause issues as Ray (2000) explains:



“[It] can often be a challenge to the modus operandi of orthodox democracy. This is not only because of ‘non-elected’ interests in the decision making but also because it contains within itself an invitation to imagine alternative, even radical, notions of development”.

*“What you are left with [is] a Parish Council that wants to be doing stuff but hasn’t got the resources to do it and a trust that has the resources and the will and the rest of it but hasn’t got the democratic mandate.”*

Glendale Focus Group

## The rural element

Although development within urban or rural environments shares commonalities there are also factors which are particular to rural areas.

Osborne, Williamson and Beattie (2004) identify three issues which they believe to be unique to rural environments;

- Geographic scale and distinctiveness
- Paucity of human capital and
- Quantity of resources.

These issues should, however, not be viewed in isolation. The geographical distances between villages or market towns only adds to the paucity of human capital or resources and the availability of resources might not match the availability of human capital.

Lower population numbers can lead to over reliance on individuals or groups. In Langholm a recent change to the management of one of the town's hotels was welcomed as the previous owner had 'run the place down' affecting the appeal of the town as a whole. Both locations suffered from empty buildings or shops being owned by individuals who had no interest in the image that this gave. In a rural or small town setting, the impact of these empty buildings can be great, in terms of reducing footfall and blighting the main street.

Rural areas are also not homogenous and therefore distinctions can be made within and between different rural localities. A community located near an urban zone will face different opportunities and challenges than one that is remote. Additionally variances exist depending on the presence of a market town or multiple outlying villages and hamlets.

*"We are getting as much from volunteers in Langholm that we can." The majority of volunteers in Langholm are retired people many of whom are involved in multiple aspects. It is difficult to find replacements when someone steps down "there is a generation that are not coming forward to volunteer."*  
Langholm Focus Group

*Langholm's isolation is both a strength and a weakness. It provides motivation to 'get off their backsides' and get on with it but also isolates them from other communities from which they could learn or with whom they could share responsibilities.*

*Glendale has multiple villages with smaller communities who are very active, creating quite a vibrant development culture.*

Langholm & Glendale Focus Group

It has also been well documented that rural communities are developing an increasingly unbalanced population structure. The State of the Countryside Report (Commission for Rural Communities, 2010) reports the median age of rural England at 44.4 years compared to 38.5 in urban areas. This is largely due to a greater proportion of older people (resulting from the in-migration of older people and the ageing of people in-situ) and also a smaller proportion of those in the 16 to 29 age group (due to out-migration). The implications of an ageing population could be that development

becomes weighted in favour of the majority group, that the level of volunteers available reduces or that there are simply not enough young people to meet the care needs of the old. There is a however, an in-migration trend of 'forty and fifty somethings' which could provide the next generation of volunteers or the solutions to care services.

## *Rural community development within the changing climate*

In 2010 the new UK Coalition Government announced its intentions to reduce Britain's deficit by cutting public spending by a total of £81 billion by 2014/15 (HM Treasury, 2010). The subsequent reductions in expenditure have been felt by communities across the country as real budgets for both service provision and development initiatives contract.

*The Scottish Government's spending plans for the next four years show a cumulative, real-term reduction in the Scottish budget of 12.3 per cent by 2014/15. Local government funding overall reduces by three per cent between 2011/12 and 2012/13 and, cumulatively, by 6.3 per cent by 2014/15.*  
Audit Scotland (2012)

*Government funding to councils has fallen in real terms by £3.5 billion, 11.8 per cent, since 2010/11. The 2010 emergency budget cut £805 million of government funding to councils in 2010/11. The 2010 Spending Review announced that support to councils would fall by a further 26 per cent by 2014/15.*  
Audit Commission (2011)

The Quarterly National Accounts state that Gross Domestic Product (GDP) for the first quarter of 2012 is at approximately the same level. The third quarter data for 2010 suggests that growth has been broadly flat over the last eighteen months (Office for National Statistics, 2012). Both Scotland and the UK have recently been confirmed to be experiencing a double-dip recession (BBC, 2012).

Initiatives within both of the case study areas have felt the effects of the economic downturn with funding sources changing or depleting. Langholm are on a downward sliding scale of funding from Dumfries & Galloway Council without knowing if funding will be continued after 2013. In Glendale the abolition of the Regional Development Agency, One North East, meant the complete loss of a funding source without any replacement offered. Had the Trust been completely reliant on this funding source they may not have been able to keep going. It was also noted in the Glendale Focus Group that Community Action Northumberland's abilities had been severely limited due to an over reliance on public money.

*In 2006 the Youth Hostel in Wooler was threatened with closure. The Gateway Trust put together a funding package to buy the hostel as an asset for the trust and the community- a package which they admit would be extremely difficult to replicate in today's financial climate.*  
Glendale Focus Group

In addition to economic challenges significant policy shifts have added to the challenges that face development practitioners.

The 2011 Localism Act in England was enacted in order to 'shift power from central Government back into the hands of individuals, communities and councils' (DCLG, 2011). Within England it abolished Regional Strategies and instead introduced 'Neighbourhood Planning' devolving local development planning to the lowest level possible. Communities have the right to express interests in the running of Local Authority services or the right to bid for any community asset which is faced with closure or resale. Also featured within the Localism Act was the 'general power of competence' which creates more freedom within councils to work in more innovative ways (DCLG, 2011).

The Local Government in Scotland Act 2003 states that the unitary authority councils, of which there are 32 in Scotland, must 'initiate, maintain and facilitate community planning'. This is done through Community Planning Partnerships (CPP) and the Single Outcome Agreement (SOA). CPPs are whereby all public bodies and any community bodies that the local authority sees fit must be invited and encouraged to take part in community planning (Local Government in Scotland Act, 2003, S.15).

#### *Single Outcome Agreements*

*They are agreements between the Scottish Government and CPPs which set out how each will work towards improving outcomes for the local people in a way that reflects local circumstances and priorities, within the context of the Government's National Outcomes and Purpose.*

[www.scotland.gov.uk](http://www.scotland.gov.uk)

The recently launched consultation on the proposed Community Empowerment and Renewal Bill indicates that the Scottish Government is seeking to further support communities by making it easier for them to use buildings, land or resources that are not being used and by helping people get involved in decisions about the services in their community (ENABLE Scotland, 2012).

The above highlights the current changing economic and political climate in which this report proposes to set its study. These wider factors will no doubt influence the development paths taken by community development practitioners both now and as the scene emerges.

Both focus groups talked of the plans for devolved services and the new emergent institutions which would be required to deliver this. It was generally agreed that the new delivery mechanisms would most likely result in an increased demand on local volunteers. As mentioned above this could cause issues in rural areas where human capital tends to be older and more dispersed. Research also suggests that volunteers in rural areas already volunteer in services which are substitutional rather than additional (Woolvin, 2012). This raises the question as to how much more they *can* do as well as to how much more *should* they do? Or is this process just formalising something that is already being done?

The above policy indicates that public bodies are moving towards networked development practices where partnership working exists vertically and horizontally between public, voluntary and private sectors in order to meet the needs of the people. The current challenging economic circumstances have also meant that community development institutions of all sizes have had to review their situations. Again networking is increasingly seen as a delivery mechanism which can offer new funding streams or resources, value for money and improved outcomes. Another route is the increasingly encouraged ownership of community assets.

*“We wouldn’t have previously got that grouping of statutory agencies coming down to us.”*

Glendale Focus Group

*Two groups offering a similar drop in advice service for older people were initiated in the Glendale area. The one ran by a local group, opposed to the other ran by the NHS & Local Government, had higher attendances due to a simple understanding of where the locals wanted the events to be held.*  
Glendale Focus Group

If communities are to have more influence as to how resources are to be allocated there is a distinct need to have a strategic understanding of what communities require. The ‘Neighbourhood Planning’ approach or the proposed Community Empowerment and Renewal Bill may address this. However a growing inertia with top down prescribed strategic assessments, which change or disappear with every government or funding stream, is creating a desire for

communities to take control and create their own strategic evidence-based understanding to use as a resource and as a directional development tool (see Appendix A for the strategic paths taken by Glendale and Langholm).

## *Resilient institutional infrastructures*

Resilience is often thought about as the ability to resist change or to be able to 'bounce-back' or recover from a shock or adversity. However in terms of an evolving society the ability to return to the pre-shock equilibrium or 'remain the same' is not always the wisest decision. Here resilience becomes more of a process to evolve or continually change.

Dawley, Pike and Tomaney (2010) describe this as the difference between adaptation and adaptability. If a community or locality is capable of adaptation it can respond to a shock with a movement back towards its pre-shock state. Therefore "adaptation reflects an inherent tendency of systems to improve their adaptation to a given niche or environment by improving along the path that has been successful in the past" (Dawley, Pike and Tomaney, 2010, p654). Adaptability on the other hand shows the ability to be able to deviate from a previous path should a better opportunity be spotted. Adaptability embraces the idea of continual change rather than stability as the key to resilience (Davoudi, 2012).

*Not waiting for them to tell us what we need - more information - more in control - more resilient*  
Langholm Focus Group

*"Positives out of negatives", "Opportunity distinct from negativity"*  
Glendale Focus Group

This then leads to the idea of 'path dependency', whereby the history or chosen path of an area is said to influence its decision making. Areas become 'locked-in' to a way of doing things because that is what they have always done, how they have always functioned or what they have always been told to do. This lock-in creates norms of behaviour which can enable or constrain adaptive decision making (Dawley, Pike and Tomaney, 2010). The Langholm Initiative and the Glendale Gateway Trust were created out of very different circumstances and have thus, perhaps, from a determinist point of view followed different paths. In Langholm, once a vibrant mill town, the withdrawal of textile related employment prompted the local community to act to create the Initiative (adaptation). Since then they have tended to focus on activity or project driven development (reactionary approach). The Glendale Gateway Trust was formed from local needs flagged up by a Village Appraisal initiative in the early 1990s (adaptability) and has since followed a more provision based form of development (process or continual change approach).

*The Glendale Focus group talked of the 'golden oldies' having already 'taken the territory' and creating an influence of no change.*

Buikstra et al., (2010) talk of the necessary 'social vitality' - the social cohesion or mutual support for development - or the 'sense of purpose' needed to underpin sustainability or growth. Could the levels of the support for an initiative, and its decisions, be influenced by not straying too far from the path that it set out on?

Commentators suggest that understanding how different places address the issues of lock-ins can be central to investigating geographical resilience. An area which can

'delock' its path demonstrates the adaptive capacity of its human capital.

In the context of the changing economic and political climate, where service provision is being devolved to the local level, the emerging networked development structures will need to consider how the new directional path reacts and fits in with the old. Additionally they will need to recognise how not to become rigidly set in their own paths to take maximum advantage of development opportunities.

*In Glendale it was commented that because the Parish Councils look after some of the ongoing day to day needs of the community the Glendale Gateway Trust is enabled to be more strategic or forward looking.*

Dawley, Pike and Tomaney (2010) talk about the resilience of an area being shaped by the variance in the following characteristics-

- Potential of accumulated resources available: the variety, the abilities and capacity of individual firms, skills, hard and soft infrastructures.
- Connectedness: patterns of relations, networks and collaborations between firms and agencies. Traded interdependencies (e.g. supply agreements) and untraded interdependencies (e.g. informal knowledge spill-overs), informal and formal business associations, labour mobility between firms and agencies, etc.
- Creative and flexible responses: innovative capacity of firms, new firm formation, entrepreneurialism, venture capital, institutional innovation, etc.

*Capacity-*

*“when money is scarce funders look to those with good reputations”*

*Glendale Focus Group*

*Connectedness-*

*Langholm share the resource of the Town Hall to combine art exhibitions and tourist information- keeping tourists in the town longer so that they use local facilities*

*Creative responses-*

*Co-ordinating 4 Age brings together public and private agencies to cater for services for older people- even if they aren't the agencies main client.*

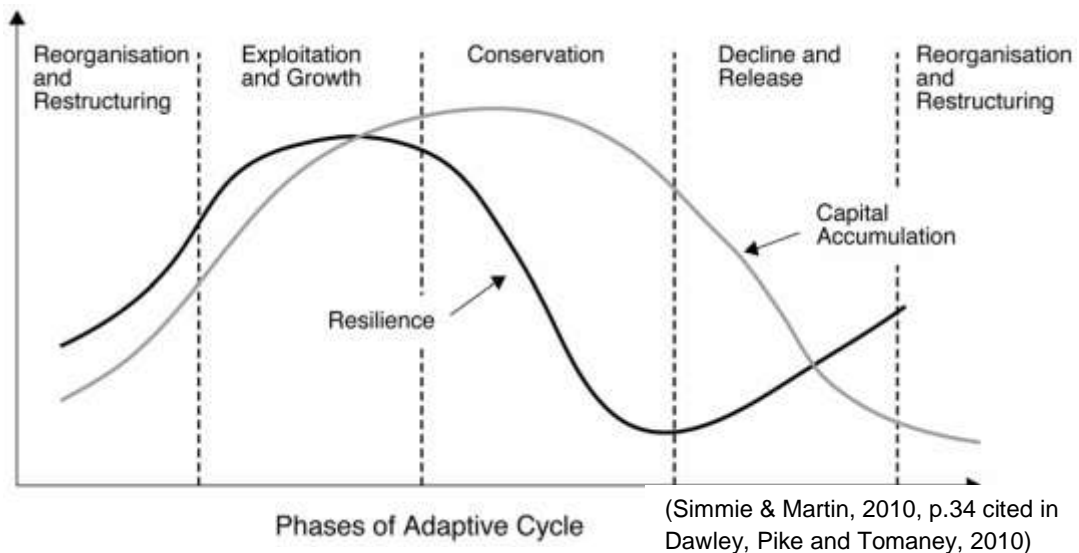
*New initiative- Glendale*

Therefore by studying the above mentioned characteristics of rural institutional infrastructures and their path dependency levels we can go some way towards understanding their resilience levels. However, as previously mentioned, resilience is not just about measuring characteristics in a snapshot in time. It is about the journey or evolution: it



is a process. Figure 2 visualises this process as an adaptive cycle<sup>1</sup> whereby when there is culture of growth and exploration there will be greater levels of connectedness and opportunities which will raise resilience levels. However, if everything becomes too connected and path dependant then resilience levels will fall as the infrastructure becomes more rigid and less adaptive. As decline sets in relations will become looser allowing for restructuring and growth once again.

Figure 2. Resilience as a process



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<sup>1</sup> We recognise that this diagram simplifies resilience into a linear process and that in reality it would involve greater diversity. For this study we consider the capital accumulation to include all types of capital not just economic.

## Key Hypotheses and potential research

### Discussion-

The above thematic literature review and the associated focus group findings go some way to exploring the answers to our three broad research questions-

- What institutional infrastructure has built up in recent years, what has it achieved and what has fostered its development?
- How is this infrastructure being affected by the new and evolving policy and economic context?
- What new institutional forms and approaches are appearing, and what are their development capabilities?

The increasing move towards communities undertaking development in networked arenas, talked about by Shucksmith (2012), is supported by the increasing need for partnership working arising from devolved services and from tightened budgets. Communities are also looking to take advantage of devolved power by gaining greater strategic understanding of their localities so as to develop in line with the specific needs of their community. This in turn leads to the distinctly rural characteristics of paucity of human capital or remote geographies which could affect the development capabilities of an area.

When we combine, and examine, these evolving institutional infrastructures with the rural and resilience characteristics, questions such as the following are raised:

What is the adaptive capacity of rural infrastructures? How prepared are existing public, private and voluntary sector organisations to tackle the challenges and take advantage of the opportunities in an evolving climate? How far do the answers to these questions vary with local histories of community development, with the wider institutional context and particular social and economic conditions?

Drawing on these questions, the literature review and the focus group discussions, four hypotheses have emerged which we believe should be examined within a framework of path dependency.

### Hypotheses-

#### **1. The geography of rural areas (both physical and social) could have an effect on the development culture that can exist within a rural locality and thus levels of vibrancy or social vitality**

A particular rural feature is the geographical distances between which development takes place – and which shape peoples' lives on an every day basis. These distances could have an effect on the variety of development initiatives that can exist within a rural locality and thus the vibrancy or social vitality levels. A varied and vibrant development infrastructure is thought to be a sign of a resilient community, but how much are these characteristics influenced by scale or isolation, or even landscape and topographical features? Although a locality cannot change its physical geography, recognising and understanding the physical

capabilities could influence how they proceed in encouraging the growth of their institutional infrastructure.

## **2. Ageing populations of rural areas will affect resilience levels**

The capacity of the human capital of an area can affect resilience levels. It is well documented that rural areas are ageing faster than urban areas. Both focus groups raised concerns about their ageing populations but also recognised that they could present opportunities. The implications of an ageing population could be that development becomes weighted in favour of the majority group, as noted in Glendale when referring to the developmental direction of an area being dominated by older incomers- a particular community of interest - being resistant to change. In Langholm there was concern regarding the succession of volunteers to replace those who are no longer so able. The rising levels of in-migration of the middle-aged is offered as a solution to this dilemma, however it would be interesting to consider whether these in-migrants have the same attitude to place, or connection to the local, which drives people to volunteer. Do they play a role in changing the cultures, practices and networks within communities and if so, in what ways? Changing policy will put increased need on voluntary contributions potentially making this a very important and timely consideration.

## **3. The changing economic and policy climate will move rural institutional infrastructures towards a networked development structure**

It is touched upon in the above thematic review that existing institutions may not be the best placed, or capable, of running devolved local services. Additionally it was commented on that the presence of multiple institutions allows each to focus on what they need to achieve. However, disconnected local services or development does not foster images of vibrant, resilient, development cultures. Therefore it is suggested that to negotiate the changing climate greater numbers of delivery/development institutions will evolve but also that greater levels of interaction will be required.

It is also important to explore how ready different institutions, not least in the public sector, are to deal with the changing relationships brought about by this networked development structure (as discussed by Ray, 2000). How ready are they to 'share' power with newly evolving institutions engaged in service delivery? How far do different institutions and individuals share similar understandings of key concepts such as resilience, vitality, social capital, and even development itself.

## **4. Communities need to gain a strategic understanding of their localities**

Leading on from the previous hypothesis, if partnership working or networked development is the format through which rural development will be delivered, a strategic understanding of the needs and current capabilities of a locality will be critical. Both of our chosen focus group communities had already embraced the idea of gathering the evidence, including statistical information, about their localities to use as both a resource and as a directional development tool. In Glendale, where the analysis had been completed, new strategic institutions were evolving to recognise the needs identified. In Langholm, where the analysis was still

underway, they were already talking of new institutions that would be required to take development forward based on the information gathered.

As previously mentioned resilience is a process and should not be measured at just one point in time, therefore the above hypotheses need to be considered within the evolutionary path of the area - its path dependency.

### **The path dependency or 'lock-in' of an area can affect its institutional development choices and the capacity of an area to act**

By considering the above hypotheses, understanding can be gained of the capacities and characteristics of rural areas. By feeding this understanding into a framework of path dependency, analysis can also be made into the evolutionary resilient capacities of an area.

- What influences communities as they start on their evolutionary pathway? Why did development initiatives start? What decisions have they taken since?

- What are the forms and amounts of capacity available and mobilised within the area? What capacity is needed/needs to be built to break from the path dependency and evolve along a different trajectory?

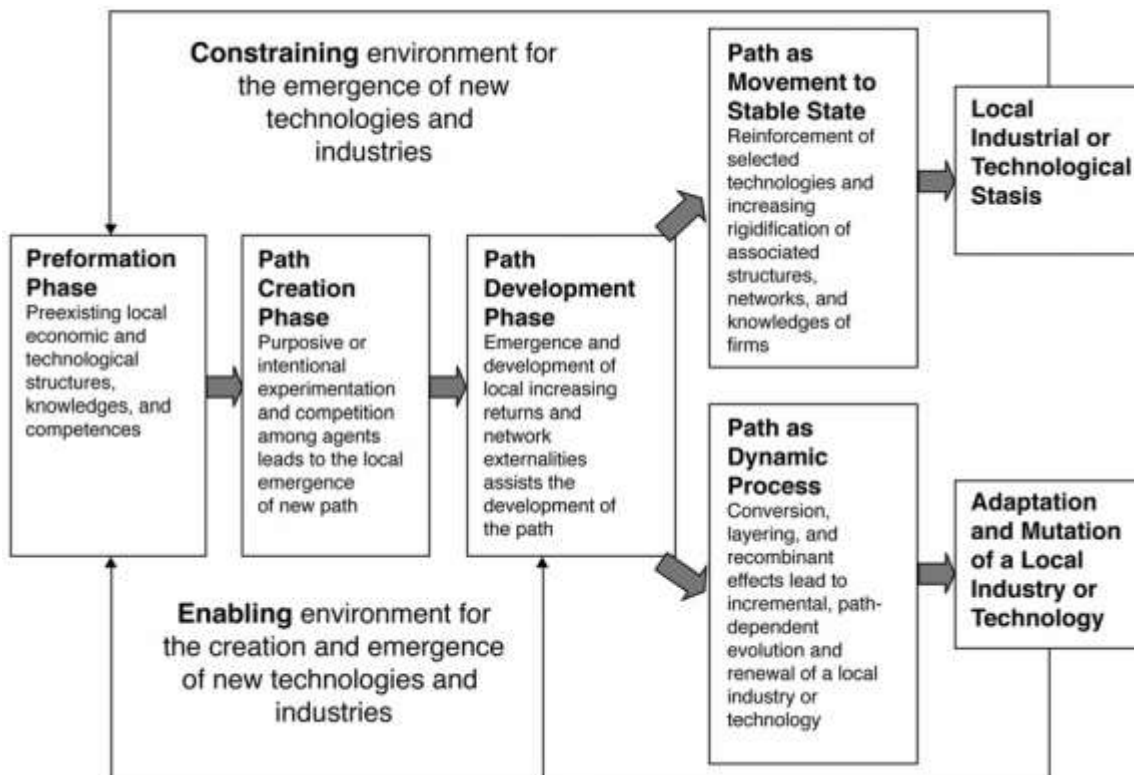
Exploring these questions will allow for understanding of evolutionary decisions and adaptive capabilities of localities, recognising when and how communities may be able to break from chosen paths so as to take advantage of alternative development opportunities.

Using the framework below as an initial guide<sup>2</sup>, we can consider whether localities provide enabling or constraining environments in which to build resilient institutional infrastructures.

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<sup>2</sup> This framework focuses on the technological and economic aspects of regional resilience. For the purposes of this study a new framework would need to be established recognising all the influential capacities noted in the hypotheses.

Figure 3. Path dependence model



(Martin, 2010, p. 21 cited in Dawley, Pike and Tomaney, 2010)

*Research proposal-*

Depending on levels of funding available it is proposed that investigations into the above hypotheses should be conducted in **four or five different case study localities**. At this stage we would not rule out one or more of these being international destinations. Connections have already been made with Aveiro University in Portugal, University College Dublin, and Volda Community College Norway. Should this ambition need to be constrained it is recommended that the localities of Glendale and Langholm would make for an interesting and informative study.

Initial work would need to be undertaken in **developing the evolutionary framework** in which the information gathered would be set. This framework will act as the anchor for how the research is analysed and presented. It will also subsequently define the characteristics within an ideal environment of resilience building. Preparation of this would involve **desk based research and discussions with relevant academics**.

In order to investigate the hypotheses research would need to be undertaken in the chosen case study localities to:

- Record the histories and decision making of development institutions.
- Map the development initiatives and their deliverables in relation to the social and physical geography of the locality.

- Compare and contrast the strategic journeys, analysing decisions taken, the influences behind those decisions and the emergence of new institutions.
- Record the demographic make-up of the localities and the characters within.

This process would require ***in depth desk research, participant observation, interviews and focus groups in all of the localities***. As our interpretation of ‘institutions’ takes a broad stance, encompassing formal and informal initiatives and agencies of all sizes, within the ‘infrastructure’ of the processes and practices of community development we would need to ensure broad community representation is achieved. Thus it is recommended that a small team of researchers should be involved over a two to three year period. This timescale would allow for the ***longitudinal analysis required for an evolutionary study***. It would also follow the communities through the current changing economic and political climate but provide results within a reasonable timeframe to allow other communities to utilise them.

An estimated budget for the project is set out below:

<p><b>Staff costs:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 Research Assistants for 3 years to undertake case study research in five communities, including two international case studies</li> <li>• Part-time Project Manager (4 days a month for 3 years)</li> </ul>	<p>Approx. £200,000</p> <p>Approx. £36,000</p> <p><i>Note: these costs do not include overheads</i></p>
<p><b>Cost per case study area:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In UK - including travel, accommodation, event costs, etc. for 3 case study areas</li> <li>• Elsewhere in EU – including travel, accommodation, event costs, etc. for 2 case study areas</li> </ul>	<p>£6,000</p> <p>£6,000</p>
<p><b>Consumables</b> (laptops, digital recorders, printing and photocopying costs, etc.)</p>	<p>£2,000</p>
<p><b>Total estimated cost</b> (for 3 year project):</p>	<p>£250,000</p>

As indicated above, the project scope could be reduced to focus on 2-3 UK case study communities, in which case the budget would be considerably less than that identified here. The international work could also be carried out by international partners on a sub-contractor basis drawing on the existing international links of those involved in the project (particularly Patsy Healey in Ireland, Portugal and the Nordic countries).

## *Contribution of the research*

The economic downturn and public sector cuts are clearly a current and pressing issue but they are also likely to affect rural areas for many years to come. Public sector budgets in the UK are to continue contracting until at least 2015 and the increased focus on moving power from central government to local government and communities has yet to provide more answers than questions as to how communities will cope. By conducting this study in these changing and challenging times we will gain real insight into the challenges and opportunities facing rural development.

The aim of this study would be to collect and provide information which would aid both policy makers and rural practitioners in building resilient institutional infrastructures. A key question for public policy is:

What kinds of external support would actually make a real difference to rural community development?

Although the study would be a stand-alone project we would aim to maintain close links with similar research projects and ensure that what we do builds on existing knowledge.

## *Connection to existing research*

The Rural Society Research Team at SAC are currently undertaking work on 'Governance and decision-making for community empowerment in rural communities' as part of the five year Scottish Government funded Strategic Research Programme on 'Vibrant Rural Communities'. This research is focusing on developing useful models for enhancing local capacity in local communities, identifying ways to support the delivery of vibrant rural communities and assessing different approaches to place-based rural development policy. Our research proposal compliments this work and we propose to maintain regular contact with the SAC researchers during the course of our project to share relevant findings and ensure that the projects do not unnecessarily overlap.

Two recent studies have explored resilience levels from an individual and community perspective:

- The Carnegie UK Trust has produced a handbook entitled 'Exploring community resilience in times of rapid change' which considered the three questions of; What is community resilience? How are people building it? and Why does it matter? (Wilding, 2011)
- From a paper entitled 'Identifying models of personal and community resilience that enhance psychological wellness: A Stanthorpe Study' The University of Queensland and the University of Southern Queensland have created a toolkit to "provide ideas and information that could be included in new or existing social programs or workshops conducted within Stanthorpe and other communities to enhance people's resilience" (Hegney et al., 2008).

Our study would build on this existing knowledge branching out on the levels of resilience understanding to other contributing factors, questions and hypotheses.

### *Connection to the Arkleton Trust*

The Arkleton Trust has a long history of producing work which crosses the boundaries between academics and practitioners. The theme for this proposal was formulated and put together by a mix of the above and it is proposed that this structure will remain throughout the lifetime of the project. This will create strong connections between the world of theory and practice, which will hopefully go beyond the realms of this study.

The research will draw out broader, general implications for rural development relating to the ability of communities to react and adapt to different external shocks and changes. This could in turn be used to influence both policy decisions and practical on the ground application.

By understanding the conditions in which institutional infrastructures are most resilient, we can provide a framework in which communities can survive in changing climates such as economic downturn, which ultimately should create more sustainable rural communities.

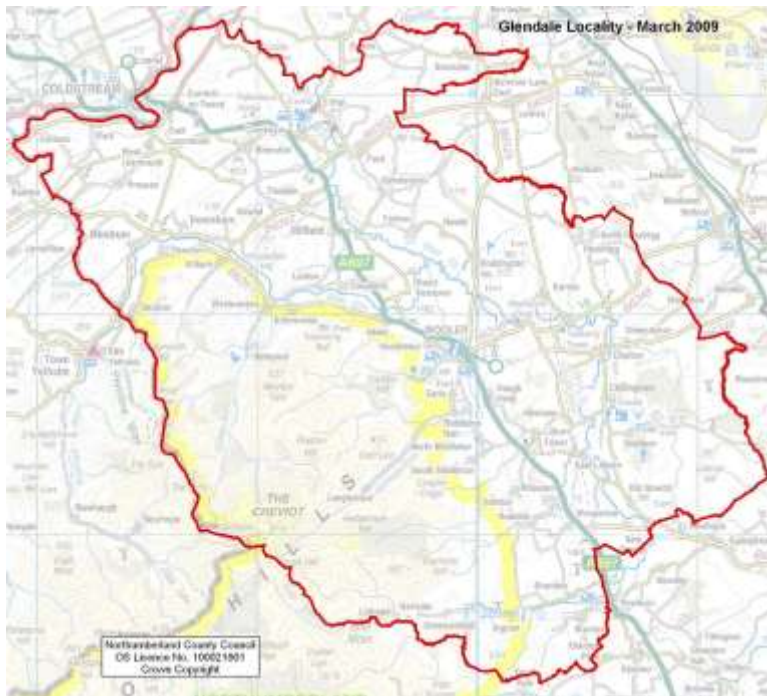


### Appendix A- Case study localities

#### Glendale

The area of 'Glendale' is given to many different areas. For the purposes of this study we will loosely base the study area the Glendale designated as one of the 27 localities by Northumberland County Council. Its western limits share a border with Scotland and its eastern limits run roughly parallel to the A1, with the A697 cutting through the middle.

#### Map of Glendale Locality



(Source: Northumberland County Council)

Natural England's Joint Character Assessments place Glendale within three of its character areas; Northumberland sandstone hills, Cheviot fringe and Cheviots. It describes the settlements as of ancient origin with many of the villages or hamlets placed in strategic sites associated with river crossings or the drover roads and Border tracks. The landscape is embedded with historical remains including evidence of Neolithic farmers, Bronze Age burial cists, Iron Age hillforts and a Roman road. The Cheviots are a wild and open upland moorland area of the Northumberland National Park (NNP), while the Cheviot fringes have a tranquil agricultural feel with pastures and meadows for arable and livestock production.

The population of Glendale is 5042 (2001 Census) with children making up 13.4% of the population, working age 56.4% and pensionable age at 30.2%. There are 2695 dwellings majority of which are detached or semi-detached (66%). Of the dwellings 87.8% are occupied with 6.4% second homes and 5.8% vacant. The average house price is £195,546. (All data retrieved from the 2001 Census via Northumberland InfoNet).

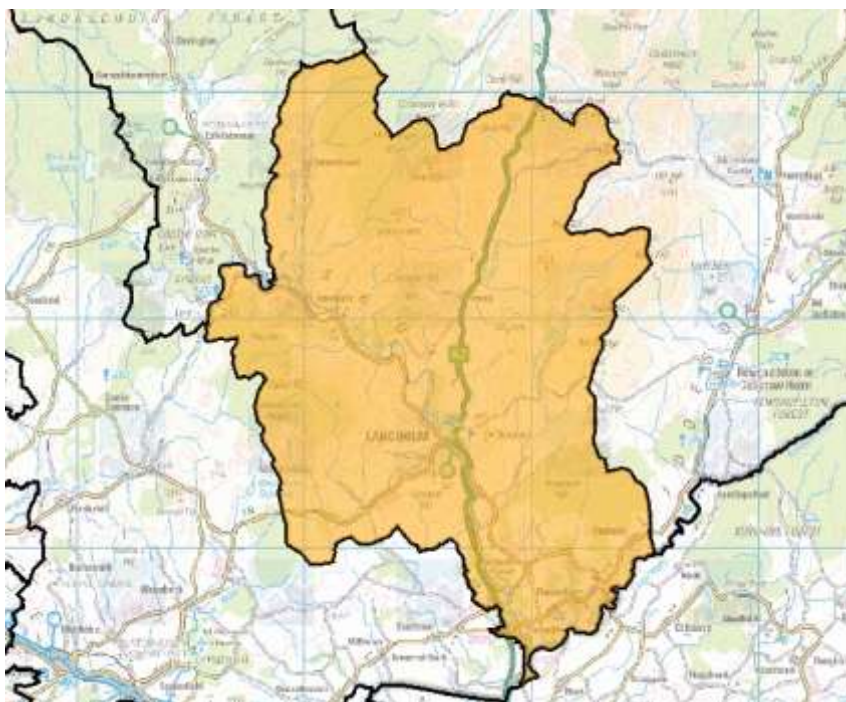
The Glendale Gateway Trust ([www.wooler.org.uk](http://www.wooler.org.uk)) has been in existence in Glendale since 1996, and has been responsible for developing a local community centre, several social housing units, a young people's 'drop-in' centre, initiatives to improve the centre of the largest community in the area, the purchase and management of the local youth hostel, and, with the county council, moving library facilities into the community centre. By 2012, it had fixed assets of nearly £2 million, a revenue budget of nearly £100,000, and employed five staff (3 fulltime) in mainstream work, and a further three staff (one fulltime) in running the youth hostel. Around 80% of its anticipated income for 2012-2013 was from its own assets.

In 2010 the now defunct Glendale Community Forum recognised a need for a comprehensive overview of the state of the locality. The Glendale Community Plan was researched and written with the support of a partnership steering group. One need recognised within the plan was for a more co-ordinated approach to services for older people. From this a partnership emerged of public, private and third sector agencies- Co-ordinating 4 Age (C4A). The partnership support for this group has grown from not only the fact based beginnings of the Community Plan but also from the political climate of partnership working.

### Langholm

Langholm is part of the intermediate geography area of Langholm and Canonbie and is part of the wider Local Authority area of Dumfries and Galloway. The A7 cuts through the middle and the A74(M) is slightly to the West.

### Map of Langholm Locality



The population of Langholm is 3561 (2010 mid-term population estimates) with children making up 13.79% of the population, working age 56.67% and pensionable age at 29.54%.

There are 1833 dwellings majority of which are terraced (34,6%) or detached (29.24%). Of the dwellings 93% are occupied with 3% second homes and 4% vacant. The average sold house price in 2010 was £132,500. (All data retrieved from Scottish Neighbourhood Statistics).

The Langholm Initiative ([www.langholm-online.co.uk](http://www.langholm-online.co.uk)) was established in 1994 to improve the business, social and physical environment of Langholm and the surrounding areas. The Langholm Initiative has also led or been involved in a wide range of projects since its inception, including music and arts festivals, improving the visual appearance of the town centre, initiating walks groups, and green tourism projects such as the Moorland Project. The Langholm Initiative also provides support and advice to other community groups and signposts to other organisations. By 2012, it had assets of £19,490, a revenue budget of £156,928, and employed one full time project officer (for the Moorland Project) and two part-time staff (general manager and admin support).

The Initiative has recently recognised that they were 'behind the curve' in understanding the needs of their community and a near closure of a residential home prompted them to approach Conservation and Development in Sparsely Populated Areas (CADISPA). CADISPA are currently undertaking a 'stock take of what facilities there are in Langholm, how they are funded, what organisations are on the go and what the community needs as well as wants over the next 10-20 years'. Support for this initiative was provided by the Dumfries & Galloway Council in relation to its CPP and the county's NHS 'Putting you first' campaign (a partnership approach looking into the way people ask for and receive care and support).

## Appendix B- Focus group questions

1. What groups or initiatives exist within the area which undertake community development? What do they deliver/support and how?

- *Think about groups/initiatives who deal with issues such as: Employment; Housing; Health/Welfare; Tourism; Social; Business; Environment; Transport; Communication*

2. Using the groups or initiatives provided (or a selection of) think about how they evolved

- *How were they initiated?*
  - *In reaction to a shock (natural or man-made)*
  - *Reacting to a need*
  - *Taking advantage of an opportunity*
- *Who initiated them? (bottom-up or top-down)*
  - *Were some initiatives/ projects created from the capacity gained from another project/institution*
- *What has helped/hindered their evolution?*
  - *For example local history, role of individuals, economic/social change, physical geography, market sizes, previous experience etc*

3. How has the economic climate in which these institutions operate changed?

- *Have the funding sources changed (e.g. EU, National/Regional/Local, Councils, Lottery)*
- *Financial markets*

4. How has the policy context in which these institutions operate changed?

- *For example Public sector cuts, Communities to run local services, Localism Bill, devolution*

“Community resilience has the potential to be both strengthened and weakened by adversity”

5. Thinking about the Langholm Initiative/Glendale Gateway Trust has the changing economic and policy context created opportunities or closed doors?

- *Consider how the changing climate impacted the Langholm Initiative*

6. How prepared is the Langholm Initiative/Glendale Gateway Trust to tackle the challenges and take advantage of the opportunities?

- *Consider dependency on funding sources, ability to adapt, sustainability, community support, available capacity, assets, psychological challenges*

7. Thinking about the wider community development institutions, the public and private sectors- How has the changing economic and policy context created opportunities or closed doors?

- *Consider how the changing climate impacted the wider community development institutions*

8. How prepared is the wider community to tackle the challenges and take advantage of the opportunities?

- *Consider dependency on funding sources, ability to adapt, sustainability, community support, available capacity, assets, psychological challenges*

9. How far is it possible for local capacity to evolve without any external support?

- In terms of resources, dedicated expertise, connectivity and service provision

10. Has the changing climate influenced development to be more or less representative of the communities needs?

11. What kinds of external support would actually make a real difference to what local communities can achieve on their own?

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