

A Food Share Operation for Mid Argyll

Background

At present, three charities are addressing the joint issues of food poverty and food waste in Mid Argyll. Moving On Mid Argyll (MOMA) provides non-perishable food parcels via agencies such as Social Services, CAB and Carr Gomm and has no contact with the end customer. Mid Argyll Youth Development Services (MAYDS) provide emergency food, mainly to young people and families unwilling to engage with authority. The Snowdrop (formerly MS) Centre is focused on reduction of food waste via fresh food share and also holds a small supply of non-perishable food for 24/7 access.

In February 2023, a Working Group was set up to address the obvious inefficiencies of these multiple systems and to develop a food share operation to meet increasing demand as the cost of living crisis deepens. The working group is made up of representatives from the three charities, Social Services, the Co-op member pioneer and is supported by our Community Development Officer from A&BC.

Process

Several surveys were carried out in the summer of 2023 to elicit views of the local retail community (those selling food especially), the general public, our partners (Social Services etc) and members of the Job Club, which meets every Thursday morning in the Lochgilphead Community Centre. A combination of online and face to face interviews was used. The findings were clear and consistent.

- Mid Argyll needs a centralised operation providing fresh and non-perishable food, with an emphasis on reducing food waste
- This should be non-judgemental, discreet and accessible
- Advice on other services should be available (and a cuppa and a warm welcome)
- Lochgilphead is the ideal location but a system to supply outlying villages is needed
- Food safety and proper stock rotation are key
- The centre should be open to all but managed to identify and avoid abuse

MAYDS have offered to provide premises for the centre in a building adjacent to their offices. This is an ideal location as it is central, but discreet. The Environmental Health team at A&BC have visited the premises and advised on action required, quotations for the work have been received and funding and other support applied for. It was agreed that one part time salaried employee should be recruited to have overall control of the operation, supported by volunteers and young people on the WorkingRite program which is run by MAYDS in Argyll and Bute.

Funding

Funding is being sought for a one-year pilot. The total cost including building work, capital cost and running costs for this are estimated at just under £34K. Core funding of £22,700 has been secured from the Ventient A-Chruach Community Fund and an additional £2,500 has been applied for from the A&BC Supporting Communities Fund. MAYDS have provided rent in kind estimated at £2,400 and MOMA will provide stock and cash to the value of £3000. The Co-Op have agreed to provide second hand shelving and contractors to install it. Jewsons will provide paint FOC. An approach has been made to SSE for £1,500. An application will be made to the ACHA Community Action Fund and the Balfour Beatty Charitable Trust will also be approached.

Timing

Macleods have been approached to carry out the necessary building works with a target completion date on end May. Recruitment of the salaried employee will start in April to be in post by end May.

Training of volunteers and PVG assessments will take place during May and June. Fit out is planned to take place in June and the goal is to open the centre in mid-July.

Monitoring Success

Success in an ideal world would of course mean no need for such a facility but in the scope of the pilot, usage of the facility by family size, frequency of attendance and geographic spread will be captured. Numbers of food parcels provided via agencies will continue to be recorded as currently. Consumption of stock items will be tracked. We will also use the pilot to assess the success of referral to other services and to identify other associated activities which could prove beneficial to customers.

Kim Ritchie

Trustee, MOMA

16th April 2024