

John McLuckie 0:20

Hello and welcome to this episode of the Argyll and Bute Community Planning Podcast. I'm John McLuckie, Partnerships Lead for Community Planning in Argyll and Bute and joining me for the second time on the podcast is Andy Macpherson, whose role is about to evolve from Community Planning Partnership Climate Change Project Manager into a new phase. Andy, welcome again to the podcast.

Andy Macpherson 0:40

Hello and thanks very much for having me along. It's great doing this a year ago and it's really interesting to have the opportunity to come back and look back over that and look forward to what comes next.

John McLuckie 0:51

Fantastic, yeah, looking forward to the conversation today. So, in episode 2, which was about a year ago, we spoke about your role and its links with community planning, why climate change is so important to community planning in Argyll and Bute and a bit about the climate change strategy and action plan that you've been developing since you came into post.

If I could start by just asking you, what do you think the main achievements in your role have been over the past year?

Andy Macpherson 1:17

Some of them, I think, are around the steps in the process and particular milestones and things like that and then there are some broader things as well. So yeah, I'm very pleased that the CPP Management Committee's approved the action plan that I've been working on over the last year. I remember when we talked about this a year ago, I was saying it's one thing to get people to agree to six principles about what the key areas of our action are, and it's quite another to get them to actually agree to

the actions to take those forward. There's still some work to do on that because some of the actions still fall across the remits of a few of the CPP partners. So, we're still looking for owners for some of those actions. So, we've actually got some further sessions scheduled while we're still within the funded period to do that. But also the fact that some of the actions now are directly transposed into the improvement plan and also into the climate ready business case. Something else is that since we last spoke, I had been doing a load of work related to legacy work and the CPP had asked me to look at, for example, lottery funding for taking things forward. We actually made an approach to the Lottery Climate Action Fund, but they're already oversubscribed. So, it's extremely fortunate that the Scottish Government then decided that they wanted to really move forward on what they're calling Climate Ready Regions, and so on the basis of that, I've been doing quite a lot of work to make sure that the Scottish Government recognised the work of the CPP and the climate change strategy, and that that actually forms a fantastic basis for a Climate Ready Region. And on the back of that, then getting funding to prepare a business case last year, and in my next phase of work, we'll actually be doing further work funded by that. So, those are some of the things I'm most pleased with in terms of process, but also one of the things the CPP asked me to do was to work more with communities on local resilience, and so again, that's been a whole extra strand to what I was doing rather than spending that money on commissioning a risk assessment. And that's been a really, really rewarding element of work over the last year.

John McLuckie 3:38

Excellent, and I think just from your introduction there, just the range of different types of activity you've been involved in from things at a kind of national level, the Climate Ready Region approach and also at a local level, and then there'll be regional work within what you've done as well. So, the scales of geography and the scales of individuals and groups you've been working with is quite extensive. So, I just wanted to pick up on a couple of things that you mentioned there. You mentioned about the work you've done with local communities. Can you just maybe tell us a bit more about the types of work you've done and the types of groups and communities you've been engaging with?

Andy Macpherson 4:11

Certainly, yeah. A lot of this came out of Storm Eowyn, where a lot of communities were kind of shut down, and so one of the things that emerged in feedback coming through things like the Area Community Planning Groups was we need more work on resilience within the community. And so that was where the Council resilience team that I've already been working with a bit was saying they'd love to engage more with communities themselves, but just in terms of the capacity they've got and things like that, they couldn't do. So basically, a lot of that was saying, what can we do with Community Councils on their local resilience plans or emergency plans really? So, I've had some form of engagement with 25 out of the 56 Community Council areas and that's not including some that the Council are already working directly with, because they're already engaged, I haven't. But it's been quite interesting because some of that was via an appeal via the Area Community Planning Groups, but also there's no substitute to just writing directly to the groups because there's so many different things. When I say some form of engagement, some of them haven't replied and that would simply be because they've just got too much stuff already going on, and then beyond that, in some cases, it's simply been a single meeting to talk about something of particular importance and sometimes it can be just talking through the steps involved in the template for a local resilience plan that the Council resilience team uses, that in turn reflects national guidance, and sometimes it's been getting right down into the detail of those. So, it's always been trying to tailor the support that I can give to what the Community Council is looking to do, and I've been trying to emphasise it's your plan, if you decide that all you want to do is to encourage households to develop their own resilience plan, that in itself is a massive step forward. And that's always my thing is that if there's one single thing to do, it's to get households as much as possible to develop their own resilience plan, and the more that each household is resilient, the less demand there is and the more capacity there is to support those who are unable to. So, that's been the bulk of that, and now I'm just in the process of actually looking to other groups to work with as well on the basis that any Community Councils I'm not engaged with by now, they're not likely to suddenly have that extra capacity. So, whether that's to be looking at Community Development Trusts, but also different kinds of groups and things like that, because it's not a specific requirement on Community Councils to

develop a resilience plan, it's much more that that tends to be who people kind of default to, but there's no specific duty on them to do that. So, if it's a matter of looking more widely, then great, but also to take a lot of those common lessons that have come out of those and to use those both to feedback to the Community Planning Partnership, but also for the climate risk assessment that's going to be my next piece of work as well, to build in a lot of that local experience and knowledge into the more kind of top down conventional approach to a regional climate assessment.

John McLuckie 7:37

Fascinating stuff, and I guess that leads quite neatly into asking you what is a Climate Ready Region, if you can summarise the intention behind it and what it might actually look like and maybe how it might be a bit different in Argyll and Bute to other parts of Scotland.

Andy Macpherson 7:53

Absolutely, yeah. These were called Regional Climate Change Adaptation Partnerships and their origins came from a load of flooding leads in a range of local authorities in the Glasgow and Clyde area, dealing with flooding issues that cut across all of their local authority districts, and they said, we need to take a wider regional approach. And gradually that grew from that particular flooding thing into that wider regional model. A lot of them are modelled on things like City Region Deals and so on, whereas for Argyll that doesn't quite work. Because we're so large and distinct, the Scottish Government's actually recognised that, rather like Highland, Argyll is a region in itself, rather than saying you've got to develop a partnership with other local authorities and they just took the line that Argyll is distinct in a lot of ways, so to work upon that. Beyond that, there's a desire within the National Climate Change Adaptation Plan for Climate Ready Regions, but the detail beyond that is quite often deliberately a bit blank. It says not to be overly prescriptive and recognising that if you're looking at, say, Edinburgh or Glasgow or something like that, where you've got very high population, lots of capital, lots of infrastructure, and

then where we are, it tends to be the very, very opposite. So, it's very much to sort of enable something that's got a degree of local ownership. So, we're looking at the priorities that face us rather than trying to do a one-size-fits-all element, and a really important thing as well is that for Argyll to make sure that it builds upon the work of the Community Planning Partnership. So, I'm really pleased that we've got all of the CPP Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan, are also embedded in the business case for the Climate Ready Region, and that also enables access to funding streams that otherwise wouldn't necessarily be there. I can't say at the moment what those funding streams are because there's a general lack of money for anything, but as I say, I'm really pleased that all of the stuff within the CPP strategy is reflected directly in the Climate Ready Region as well. And also the CPP were very instrumental in enabling all of the stakeholder engagement process that we did to develop the business case for the Climate Ready Region, and that's a model that I'm keen to follow as well for doing the first pass on a regional risk assessment. I say a first pass because these tend to be multi-year, high budget things, so what we're going to be doing in this year, is very much going to be what's the first sort of snapshot component of that.

John McLuckie 10:38

Yeah, yeah. As you say, that sounds like quite a large piece of work and something that's an iterative process almost as the years move on, and I guess linked to that, sort of quite broadly speaking across Argyll and Bute, what would you say are the main climate change priorities? To an extent, taking into consideration the CPP Climate Change Action Plan and the work you've done so far in risk assessment. Would you say it's things like resilience, mitigation, is it infrastructure, is it maybe a bit about habitat protection, are there other things in there as well?

Andy Macpherson 11:11

I'm afraid what I'm going to say is all of these, but very often it's the interplay between them that can offer us the areas of greatest opportunity. So, like when you mention that thing about habitat protection or habitat restoration and where we

could be looking at more sustainable forms of land management that can reduce the flood and landscape risk to our transport infrastructure and reduce carbon emissions at the same time. And there's examples of that already in practice, when we talk about works at the Rest and Be Thankful, there's actually been quite a lot of work done there in different kinds of tree planting and approaches at different levels on the hill to avoid damaging more of the ground and to support greater stability in some areas and then at different levels to have a different approach again. So, those are what I'd say are some of them but always recognising that our built infrastructure tends to be very, very stretched out, very vulnerable, and serving a small population. So, in terms of attracting capital investment, it's very, very difficult to make the case for funding in the way that you could do on a transport corridor, like say the M8 or something like that. It's a much harder job here to be able to find funding for some of those things. We've got a lot of coastline and most of our roads are very, very close to that. So again, when it comes to those things about what the priorities are, there is a need for some fairly ruthless prioritisation within there as well for which of the many things needs to be addressed most quickly, and that's why I think that sometimes it can be that thing about what's the greatest threat or where's the greatest opportunity sometimes as well, you know, where are the elements that you can find positives from them?

John McLuckie 12:58

Really interesting and a lot for consideration, but I guess these impacts will affect everybody. Just looking at Argyll and Bute, it will impact on everybody, so that prioritisation and that seeking funding and you used the word ruthless there, I think that's a reality, isn't it, that that might need to be the case in terms of what you prioritise. So, I guess just for yourself, as your role is moving into this new phase, what would you say your legacy so far has been in the work you've done, particularly within the CPP role that you've had.

Andy Macpherson 13:26

I think actually getting the strategy compiled, I didn't write it, I compiled it, on the

basis of what I got from everybody else, but getting the CPP agreeing to that and to the action plan, and then actually having elements of that embedded within the Outcomes Improvement Plan is one of the things that I see as being really good and also the business case for the Climate Ready Region. I'd love to think that thanks to the work that I've done with local communities on their local resilience plans, that communities were more resilient, but it's very much baby steps in that direction. So, I'm glad to have secured funding to take forward some elements of risk assessment as well, but all of these things still just feel like they're just steps in a longer-term process. But overall I'm really pleased to have got, as I say, a lot of climate action more kind of firmly embedded within the work of the CPP as a whole, and to have that greater recognition, and I'm absolutely delighted to have been invited to continue to attend CPP meetings and to report or update as appropriate, even though the CPP partners will no longer have that financial ownership. At this stage, as time goes on, it could well be that that could be something that changes and the CPP may choose to take more of an ownership role, and that's very much down to how the partners see their investment priorities and how that fits with what the Scottish Government's looking for. And, at the moment, we're just in the point of the Scottish Government saying, here's some funding for this piece of development work, here's some funding for this piece, where the money comes from in the future, we don't know, and whether there will be a longer-term bigger fund for that. I suspect that it will be some form of competitive bidding process, but that's all to wait and see, and I very much hope as well that more households can develop their own resilience plans, and again, that would be my single top takeaway over and above all the big strategy stuff, then there's a template for that on the Council website. Then it's one of those things where it doesn't have to be a climate change related thing, but the thing is we live in an increasingly uncertain world, so just having that greater degree of resilience is something that to me feels like the one step that I'd take if none of the other were available.

John McLuckie 15:55

Yeah, yeah. Well, that's a really interesting and key takeaway as your final point there on the preparedness and the resilience that that might help develop at an individual household level, really interesting. So, Andy, yeah, great to chat to you again, and I

think as you mentioned there, the CPP will be seeing a lot more of you as your work continues and evolves into this new phase. So, thanks very much again for taking part in the podcast and good to talk to you. Thank you.

Andy Macpherson 16:17

And thank you, and thanks as well to the CPP more widely. It's been fantastic working with the CPP on it and having the CPP genuinely engaged with it. It's actually been absolutely fundamental to it all and it's something that I very much appreciate. So, thank you.