# CLD Standards Council Scotland

Response
to

# Rural Delivery Plan
## Vision, Strategic Objectives & Key Performance Indicators

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## About Us

The CLD Standards Council Scotland is the professional body for people who work or volunteer in community learning and development (CLD) across Scotland. CLD is a field of professional practice which has three integral domains of practice; adult learning, community development and youth work. As a member-led organisation we have a growing membership of over 3325 members (inclusive of CLD: Youth Work practitioners), an executive committee and three functional committees which are made up of members from across the CLD sector in Scotland. Our approach and work plans to deliver our core responsibilities are defined by our member committees and based on feedback from the wider membership.

Our ministerially set core responsibilities are:

- Deliver a professional approvals structure for qualifications, courses, and development opportunities for everyone involved in CLD
- Maintain a registration system available to practitioners delivering and active in CLD practice
- Develop and establish a model of supported induction, professional learning, and training opportunities
- Improve and develop our organisational capability; and
- Collaborate and contribute to relevant CLD policy and workforce development information.

## Vision
"Our vision is that the communities and people of Scotland are served by CLD practitioners that are recognised as competent, confident and committed to equality, empowerment and life-wide learning for all."

## Mission
"Our mission is to drive high standards of professional practice in the CLD sector by the approval of professional learning, the registration of practitioners and the enabling of professional development, working with our members to be a voice for the profession."

The CLD Standards Council works with a wide range of organisations across CLD and education sectors, nationally and internationally. We are members of a number of organisations, some we have specific partnership or framework agreements with, and we engage and work with many others.

Organisations we have formal agreements with:
- AIEB (All Ireland Endorsement Body for Community Work Education and Training)
- COSLA (Convention of Scottish Local Authorities)
- Education Scotland
- GTCS (General Teaching Council Scotland)
- JETS (Joint Education and Training Standards – UK & Republic of Ireland)
- SCURL (Scottish Confederation of University and Research Libraries)
- Volunteer Scotland

Organisations we have membership of:

- BEMIS (Black and Ethnic Minority Infrastructure in Scotland)
- CDAS (Community Development Alliance)
- Human Rights Consortium Scotland
- IACD (International Association for Community Development)
- Inclusion Scotland
- PARN (Professional Association of Research Networks)
- SCDI (Scottish Council for Development & Industry)
- SCQF (Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework)
- SCVO (Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations)
- TAG:PALYCW (The Professional Association of Lecturers in Youth and Community Work)

Key Stakeholders and Partner Organisations:
- Alliance of Commonwealth Youth Work Associations (ACWYA)
- CLD Managers Scotland
- CLD Professional Learning Networks
- College Development Network
- CWA (Community Work Australia)
- LEAD Scotland (Linking Education and Disability Scotland)
- Learning Link Scotland
- LGBT Youth Scotland
- Open University
- SCDC (Scottish Community Development Centre)
- SCDN (Scottish Community Development Network)
- Scotland's Learning Partnership
- The Young Women's Movement
- YMCA Scotland
- Youth Scotland
- YouthLink Scotland
- Youth 1st (Fife)
- Youth Highland
- Young Scot

For further information on the CLD Standards Council please visit our website and view our social media cldstandards | Twitter, Facebook | Linktree.  If you would like to discuss this response further, please email us on contact@cldstandardscouncil.org.uk

## About Community Learning and Development in Scotland

The Community Learning and Development (CLD) sector, which is a unification of the 3 professional practice disciplines of Adult Learning (Including ESOL), Community Development and Youth Work, is an integral and essential part of Scottish education, as recently reported in [Learning: For All. For Life. A report from the Independent Review of Community Learning and Development (CLD)](#), which was undertaken by Ms Kate Still, as part of Education Reform, and commissioned by Mr Graeme Dey MSP, the Minister for Higher and Further Education, and Veterans.

The CLD sector across Scotland is receiving considerable amount of attention at present, with the aforementioned recent Independent Review of CLD publishing the Still report [Learning: For All. For Life](#), (June 2024) and the HMIE producing the [Evaluation of Community Learning and Development in Scotland](#), alongside the wider piece around [Education Reform](#) in Scotland.

CLD has its origins in the period of change that swept through society in the 18th and 19th centuries. New industries, and changes in science, technology, land use and education dislocated or smashed traditional forms of family and community life, with the history of youth work starting with voluntary action through faith organisations. Over time, we saw the further development of adult and young people's education with development of the [Workers Educational Association](#) and the National Council of Labour Colleges, and then the growth of community development as a response to the "rediscovery of poverty" in the 1960's. The Alexander Report – [Adult Education: the challenge of change](#) (HMSO 1975) was a response to the persistent issues of disadvantage, and advocated that "Adult education should be regarded as an aspect of community education and should with the youth and community service, be incorporated into a community education service". In 1998, Mr Brian Wilson MP established a working group to "*consider a national strategy for community based adult education, youth work and educational support for community development in the light of Government priorities in relation to social inclusion and lifelong learning*" ([Communities: Change Through Learning. P14](#)). In 2004, the Scottish Executive published [Working and Learning Together to Build Stronger Communities](#), stating "*Community learning and development should incorporate the best of practice undertaken in the fields of 'community education' and 'community development'. It should enable individuals and communities to make real changes to their lives through community action and community-based learning. CLD is an approach which enables agencies to work with communities and provide access to their involvement in learning, action, and decision-making.*" These advancements were fundamental in bringing about the birth of CLD in the form it has grown into in the 21st century.

CLD continues to play a central role in ensuring individuals of all ages, families and communities across Scotland reach their potential through lifelong learning, mutual self-help, and community organisation, as well as supporting the delivery of other services. Examples of high quality, professionally delivered CLD practice are evidenced through improving opportunities for learning and development in rural areas, supporting learners of all ages to develop confidence, autonomy and skills, literacy, and numeracy support through to community art projects, Scottish Youth Parliament, community participatory budgeting initiatives, such as the national Youth Bank project, and supporting capacity building of community developments such as foodbanks and credit unions.

The purpose of CLD is still to support people to become empowered, individually, and collectively, to make positive changes in their lives and in their communities, through learning. The three domains of professional practice which together make up the CLD sector (Adult Learning, Community Development and Youth Work), work collaboratively to make all of [Scotland's National Outcomes](#) a reality. CLD as a single professional practice area has a critical educative intervention role across Scotland that we would like to see strengthened through stronger focused legislation for CLD as a unified professional discipline. The Government's [National Performance Framework](#) sets out the strategic objectives for all public services. The three practice domains of CLD do not operate in a vacuum, but are intrinsically connected and interwoven, reliant on each other to ensure the long-term impact and change for the people and communities they are working with and supporting. For example, CLD: youth work interventions around employability or equalities will not be sustainable or as impactful, if the young people are returning to a home environment where those same interventions are not being had with their parents, grandparents or siblings through community-based adult education programmes and community development actions.

In Scotland, Community Learning and Development has a legislative underpinning through the implementation of the [Requirements for Community Learning and Development (Scotland) Regulations 2013](#), which are located as part of Section 2 of the [Education (Scotland) Act 1980](#). These Regulations require each local authority to [publish a 3-year plan](#) that details the delivery of CLD activity in the local authority area, as stipulated in the [community-learning-development-plans-guidance-2024-2027.pdf](#).

The specific policy priorities for community learning and development as determined by the Scottish Government are:

1.     Improved life chances for people of all ages, through learning, personal development, and active citizenship.
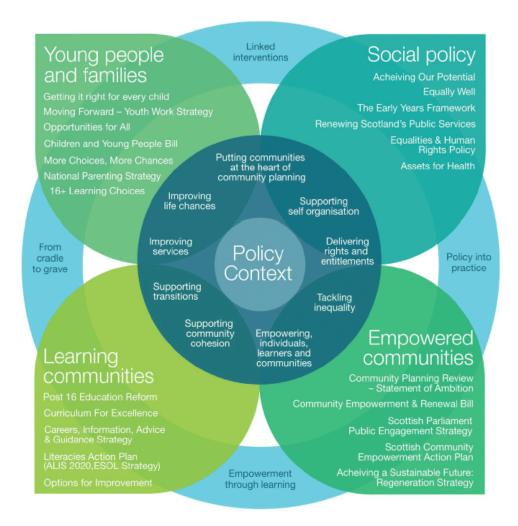2.     Stronger, more resilient, supportive, influential, and inclusive communities.

CLD is delivered in diverse settings and sectors, by practitioners with a wide variety of job titles and volunteer roles, working with people of all ages. This includes (but is not necessarily limited to) –

•     Community Development (building the capacity of communities to meet their own needs, engaging with, and influencing decision makers).
•     Youth Work, family learning and other early intervention work with children, young people, and families.
•     Community-based Adult Learning, including adult literacies and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL).
•     Learning for vulnerable and disadvantaged groups in the community, for example, people with disabilities, care leavers or offenders.
•     Working with individuals and communities to improve their health and wellbeing.
•     Volunteer support and development.
•     Learning support and guidance in the community.

It is essential to further acknowledge that CLD plays a crucial role in supporting young people, adults, community groups and vulnerable people across Scotland to gain and access the information, skills and learning needed to respond to emerging and often challenging need. This

was highly evident during the [Covid 19 Pandemic](#), [Community, COVID-19, challenge and change – Policy Scotland](#), [Engage, Educate, Connect, Empower: CLD, Resilience and Recovery - July 2020](#) and as mentioned previously, most recently evidenced in the Scottish Governments Independent Review of CLD by Kate Still: [Learning: For All. For Life.](#) And in the HMIE report [evaluation-of-community-learning-and-development-in-scotland-dec24.docx](#)

The following diagram was used in the 2012 Strategic Guidance on CLD for Community Planning Partnerships to illustrate the policy context for CLD in Scotland.  and continues to provide a useful picture of the pivotal role of CLD and CLD: youth work.

# Response from the CLD Standards Council to Scottish Governments consultation on proposed Rural Delivery Plan: Vision, Strategic Objectives & Key Indicators

**Governments Policy Role in Scotland**

Scottish Government have a wealth of policies, strategies and guidance supporting community engagement, development and empowerment but often these are deficient in connection, approaches and aims resulting in institutional, and policy, barriers preventing communities to grow and develop together. We also find that these documents often have a considerable lack of attention and detail regarding the people, human resource and skills required to achieve these community based aims.

CLD, as the professional sector working with, and within, communities in Scotland know firsthand that to create a better understanding of community need, along with how human aspects of location and infrastructure interrelate and interact, you need the engagement, knowledge and drive of people from within those communities, and offering them professional CLD support, develops and strengthens individual and collective skills, knowledge and experience, enables meaningful engagement and truthful data gathering of needs from the ground up.

As well as what is detailed in following sections of this response, we would like to offer reference to some additional strategies and documentation that we believe should be reviewed and considered as part of the consultation, to ensure connectivity between them and the rural delivery plan:

- Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015
- Community Wealth Building
- Democracy Matters 2
- Community-led regeneration - Regeneration - gov.scot
- Empowering Communities Programme - Community empowerment - gov.scot
- The Place Standard tool is a way of assessing places. | Our Place
- Best Start, Bright Futures: tackling child poverty delivery plan 2022 to 2026 - gov.scot
- Scottish Government Planning Guidance: Effective Community Engagement in Local Development Plans: Summary of responses to the consultation
- Community benefits from net zero energy developments: consultation - gov.scot
- Social capital and community wellbeing in Scotland - gov.scot
- National strategy for community justice: delivery plan and updates - gov.scot
- Participation handbook - gov.scot
- Just Transition: draft plan for transport in Scotland - gov.scot
- Islands (Scotland) Act 2018
- The National Plan for Scotland's Islands - gov.scot

The CLD practitioners are professionally qualified in community development and therefore fully committed to the principle of co-production as an essential approach to ensuring fair and equitable commitment from all involved for community development, especially in rural areas where community members are more challenging to engage with on a regular and sustained basis. Planning With People - Community engagement and participation guidance (www.gov.scot) states "*Co-production is defined by the Scottish Co Production Network as the process of active dialogue and engagement between people who use services and those who provide them. Co-production requires people to act together on an equal basis, contributing their lived experience, skills, and ideas about what works to make our communities better. CLD*

*practice offers that by supporting a Co-production approach, ensuring decisions affecting people are made with them, not for them*."


**The Vision for Rural Scotland**

"*Our vision is for a vibrant, sustainable, equal and inclusive rural Scotland, with its diverse rural communities thriving across economic, cultural, social and environmental dimensions, feeding, powering, inspiring, providing homes and livelihoods to, and nurturing the wellbeing of current and future generations*"

**Q: Do you agree with the proposed vision for rural Scotland?**
**A:** *Partially*

Whilst the CLD Standards Council, and its members, recognise that the proposed vision is positive, covering all the key areas and reflecting barriers that impact rural communities, there was some discourse regarding the length of the vision statement and the language used.  There was a consensus that both here and throughout the documentation, there are a significant number of words and phrases used which are open to misinterpretation, do not offer a clear meaning, or is language that both people working and living across Scotland may not understand.  There was an agreement with regards to ensuring this delivery plan being equitable and inclusive, and a call for policy makers to ensure use of language that is meaningful, easy to understand and clear to interpret.

Whilst members understood the desire for the vision to be succinct, they felt this was to the detriment of the reader, specifically when statements like "*thriving across……… dimensions*" would not be logical to most.  It was suggested that the vision would benefit from being opened up and more descriptive, perhaps listing or giving more detail, and therefore explained clearly.

We suggest that accessing advice from the Plain English Campaign may be beneficial. https://www.plainenglish.co.uk/. We also recommend that language be tested out by individuals from the rural communities across Scotland, including low-level literacy learners, to gauge understanding, as well as New Scots Refugees, ESOL learners and translators to ensure how the intent of the words used carries over into the languages recognised to be the main immigrant or foreign languages used in Scotland's communities (e.g.: Arabic, Chinese, French, Hindu, Punjabi, Polish, Spanish, Urdu) and you could access further information to support this from recent census. Languages | Scotland's Census.

Some comments offered:

"*I agree with this vision because rural areas contribute significantly to Scotland's economy, environment, and cultural heritage, and ensuring their sustainability benefits the entire nation.*"

"*Rural Scotland has key industries like renewable energy, whisky, agriculture and tourism but currently it is difficult to live in these places due higher costs of living caused by poor transport links, high energy costs. Housing is unaffordable for many as local people are priced out by those looking for second homes, this has caused rural areas to lose young people and families which leads to depopulation.*"

"*seems to include all the ways we live and work in the countryside*"

*"but not at the cost of losing all our rural spaces and wildlife diversity"*

*"It doesn't flow well for me as a reader but the right message is there"*

*"Yeah, I like it. As long as you take a deep breath."*

*"That's one heck of a sentence. Difficult to understand but I think it's got everything in there, it needs to be broken down into at least two or three, and simpler."*

*" I think this plan could go further, it's about embracing the differences (rurality) and knowing what is the positive differences for those that choose to live there and but also awareness of the barriers that this can create"*

*" Plan is fine but we need better connections between Local Authorities and Govt Agencies to help residents get the services they need. Businesses, agencies and community organisations work together to meet the needs of most vulnerable and isolated people."*

**Strategic Objectives for Rural Scotland**

Overall, members felt that all nine of the proposed strategic objectives (SO) were relevant, important and valid, but again there was apprehension around the ambiguity of the wording, opening each one up for misinterpretation or loss of impact. There was consensus that agreeing or commenting on all would be difficult as there was no detail behind them to explain and offer depth to each of the statements.  Members asked for greater detail to be offered, so an accurate consultation of the objectives could be undertaken.

**Q: Do you agree with the proposed nine strategic objectives for rural Scotland?**
**A:** *Partially (for all nine)*

**SO1: To improve the sustainability and profitability in the agricultural, land-based and marine sectors.**

Majority of responses were in favour, however caution was offered around the profitability aspect of this objective, with fear that this would lend power towards profitability coming before conservation, or loss of traditional agriculture which may not be as big an income generator. Members discussed community wealth building initiatives and community development incentives such as solar panels land grabbing for profits, which often means increase in mass farming, and loss of jobs and security for those living rurally.

Discussion was had around the meaning of "sustainability" and if that meant more smaller, diverse farms, regenerative agriculture, biodiversity, which they would support or does it mean more mass produced farms, larger scale and less diversity, which agreement was that this would not be something they could support.

CLD through adult learning, community development and youth work, supports the farming communities (land and marine), with opportunities for informal skills development including literacy and numeracy, as well as digital skills and activism.  CLD supports Scotland's national aims towards a sustainable future through these learning opportunities and community action projects that develop environmental awareness.  Supporting economic sustainability by

equipping learners of all ages with experiential learning opportunities to develop skills and confidence. CLD practitioners support individuals to realise and release their potential.  This also supports individuals and communities to be more engaged and actively participate in social justice actions to address inequalities impacting them and the communities the live and work in.

Some comments offered:

*"Many rural communities face depopulation, with younger people leaving due to limited or poorly paid job opportunities. Sustainable, profitable industries like the marine sector encourage people to stay."*

*"It would be good if more effort could be made to encourage community ownership of land so the profits are fed back into the community rather than big corporations."*

*"not at the expense of the environmental integrity of the land or sea, or at the expense of the workforce who have developed centuries of land management knowledge"*

*"Sustainability - yes, profitability - no. Money should never be put before conservation of natural resources and environments"*

**SO2: To support and promote an inclusive, innovative, productive, and sustainable wellbeing rural economy, providing direct benefits for local communities, revitalising them through the growth of the green economy, and delivering robust and inclusive access to digital infrastructure and services across rural Scotland.**

Consensus was this is an important objective and impacts on so many of the vulnerable young people, adults and communities the CLD practitioners support and work with, often around digital issues causing social isolation, compounding cost of living crisis and poverty, creating barriers to accessing food, banking, health care, council services and so much more that is now only accessible online.

Members wanted more detail into how this objective came about, some detail of interpretation and what it really was meaning.  What does an inclusive, innovative, productive and sustainable wellbeing economy look like? Would people living rurally understand what this means? Discussions were around the need for it to focus on offering basics first before aspiring towards innovation, stating that often individuals and communities that the CLD sector supports do not need innovation or enterprise but are looking for equality and equity in accessing services.  Why should people in rural areas pay twice as much for Wi-Fi as folk in Glasgow or the central belt, and still be getting a far poorer service, with those in the central belt often getting 20 times the speed compared to rural provision. Whilst rural communities may accept poorer connectivity, they should not have to accept paying a higher price for a poorer service. This was also mirrored in conversations around delivery costs when purchasing online and it being a "postcode lottery" with companies enforcing additional payments making things unobtainable, or those living rurally unable to get smart meters due to poor connectivity, again, all barriers to people trying to cope at a time when the country is in a poor fiscal state, and many struggling with cost of living and food poverty.

Members called for clearer language, and more detail to support the meaning behind the objective, with clear descriptions on what that will actually look like on the ground, the impact, the benefit, the support and processes needed to make it happen.

Some comments offered:

*"We chose to live in a rural area, but that doesn't mean we should be discriminated from the same as access as everybody else"*

*"This would be a good proposed objective but the community will need to be the ones to decide on how the benefits are agreed rather than any outside companies."*

*"I agree with the statement but believe access to digital services, is essential for growth, not as a result of"*

*"local communities usually means the immediate locality of any new infrastructure, maybe consider local authority area-wide benefits"*

*"our connections often terrible and we were like, oh, the wind's blowing. Which is ridiculous. It sounds ridiculous, but it's so true still in this day and age"*

*"Again, it's the detail, isn't it? Better connectivity. Who's going to disagree with that? But then what does that look like in reality? What's is going to cost us?"*

**SO3: To support sustainable local communities by addressing population challenges in rural Scotland, to equip people with the skills, resources and education to develop a highly valued and adaptive workforce, and to ensure that workforce is supported to work through high quality, accessible and affordable childcare across rural Scotland.**

Scotland is leading the way regards its approaches to CLD, in terms of delivery and outcomes, a focus on supporting the lifelong and life wide aspects of Scottish Education, as well as having the only professional registration body for Community Learning and Development in the world, yet it is still not fully recognised or supported by statutory funded legislation. CLD as a valued professional aspect of education, needs recognition, parity of esteem in the ecosystem and safeguarded like other educators within the system, with an explicit guaranteed budget from Scottish Government. We strongly believe that it should be clearly stipulated that CLD as a profession and a practice has a crucial role here. The professionally qualified practice of CLD and its community-led approaches should be emphasised as vital to safeguarding the processes which ensure places and communities can successfully indicate the priorities of those who live there. This would include co-participation and community led action planning and research, supported by professionally qualified CLD practitioners who can offer and facilitate community capacity building support.

To achieve this ambitious objective, the needs of the local communities to address population challenges needs to come from the communities. Historically, and culturally, decision-making powers often lie out with the community so a considerable amount of work around these objectives and the approaches to achievement is required. The flow of communication, as well as developing trust and understanding from all is necessary. Without these community members may feel contempt, frustration and disempowerment, with approaches and development being seen as another tokenistic and "being done to" initiative by "others" and ultimately by the local authority.

The CLD profession supports the most vulnerable individuals and communities to learn, grow and develop through a range of engagement activities, including assisting those far from the workplace to access volunteering as a way to increase self-esteem, diminish social isolation and raise self-worth whilst learning new skills to take with them into the workplace when ready. Volunteering within communities supports Scotland's national performance framework and outcomes . A recent review of community development during the pandemic was carried out by HM Inspectors (Responsive, supportive and resilient communities) and shows the range of work and support offered through the CLD profession and its approaches, including training and enabling volunteers to support communities to deal with the cost-of-living crisis or support the increasing numbers of refugees arriving in the country.

In a College Development Network Blog, Alan Sherry OBE, Chair of the CLD Standards Council, recognised the role of CLD and community based learning for adults and the impact it offers learners for integration and progression into the workplace when he said " *The CLD sector has a long-standing and effective track record of delivering community-based adult learning which enables individuals to acquire the meta-skills identified by Skills Development Scotland as central to employer needs for Industry 4.0.  Community-based learning, including literacy and ESOL provision, is often the most effective means of engaging successfully with those who have had a previous negative experience of education and/or have held job roles where there has been no formal training. In addition, local access to learning removes the need to travel, the cost of which is often a major barrier to individuals in the most deprived urban and rural communities.*"

Some comments offered:

*"people still need knowledge and opportunities even if they live in a rural areas"*

*"If developments are to take place in rural areas, job guarantees, training, funding and apprenticeships should be created to ensure local people have access to well paid, long term employment rather than outsiders taking these roles."*

*"More support should be provided to those that wish to create business in rural Scotland including access to professional advice and funding. Invest in childcare hubs, mobile childcare services, and flexible nursery hours to ensure families and mothers can participate fully in the workforce."*

*"it doesnt acknowledge that so many folk are equipped -but the work conditions and pay are not able to attract"*

*"Further education/ job opportunities - Young people are more likely to leave Helensburgh and Lomond due to lack of further education and job opportunities there are in the local area."*

*"CLD Youth Lead in Kintyre support young people to achieve qualifications and awards that support their personal development and enhance their CV's when there is a lack of suitable learning/training opportunities for people of their age"*

**SO4: To address rural poverty and existing economic, social and environmental inequalities across rural Scotland, to empower local communities to ensure Scotland's natural capital is owned and used fairly, and that our rural communities can access high quality, affordable and accessible services and facilities that positively enhance their lives**

CLD offers the learning and development opportunities to ensure communities that are inclusive, empowered, resilient and safe, to tackling poverty by sharing opportunities, wealth and power more equally, working collaboratively to make all of Scotland's National Outcomes a reality. We want to highlight the reduction in resource that the CLD workforce has endured, ultimately to the increasing detriment of Scotland's communities. Also, there is ongoing concerns around the continuing reductions in funding to support the operational costs of community halls & centres, libraries and other public spaces where CLD happens, resulting in disadvantage and discrimination to rural and vulnerable communities. This comes at a time when Scottish Government are focusing on driving further policy development around communities being empowered, increased community participation and responsibility, leading on community development projects that are linked to need. Concerns were raised around communities being asked to do more, and to take on more responsibility for community-based services and venues, without professionally qualified CLD practitioners being available to facilitate the learning, understanding, skills development and support that communities and individuals need to undertake this ask from central and local government

It is interesting to see empowerment outlined in this objective and we would offer caution as to its use and meaning. Often when we see reference to empowering communities, it is about policy, approaches, others empowering them, and not about supporting individuals and communities to be empowered. Empowerment is about people having the power and skills to have control over their own lives. CLD practitioners are educated, trained and qualified to support and develop this knowledge and upskill people to empower themselves. There may be empowering elements in all the levels of community development and growth, but not all are empowering. With such little detail, there is no guarantee that this rural delivery plan would positively impact, support and enable people to be empowered, therefore we offer caution and ask that consideration be given to the point that development, support and engagement will not empower communities.

Some comments offered:

*"Not enough rural places have services, a lot of services are cut off because budget cuts"*

*"Goes without saying. Fair distribution and access for all"*

*"Many rural communities do not want too many buildings locally and would rather travel slightly further to be able to stay in green areas."*

*"It's about supporting people to develop skills and knowledge to become empowered and want to drive the development and changes for their communities and themselves, no one can make someone else empowered."*

**SO5: To improve access to high quality affordable and market housing to enable the people of rural Scotland to live, work and thrive**

Whilst most were in favour of this objective, some voiced concerns around the environmental impact of creating enough housing, as well as lack of concern around the damage to land and wildlife. As previously mentioned, the objective is open to interpretation and required more detail as to what "improved access" might look like, who deems what is and is not affordable,

and if every rural community then becomes a "[20 minute neighbourhood](#)" we may risk losing the very reason people chose to live rurally.  There is a fine line or balance to be found, as well as detailed community mapping of activities required, to understand the differing housing and infrastructure needs of each rural community.

Some comments offered:

*"This is one of the most important objectives. House prices are often exceeding wages and houses being bought for second homes/holiday lets can price local families out."*

*"Increasing the social housing or having community led housing projects that limit who can purchase/let these properties to those who will live full time in the area or young people looking step onto the property ladder through shared equity."*

*"Yes, address the biggest issue affecting rural living. More truly affordable rental and buying housing sector"*

*"There are huge building sites everywhere. They are damaging existing farmland, green spaces and fragmenting populations of wildlife. The majority are being built for those moving here from out with the area for work and commerce, not for local families."*

*"...and market housing - doesn't flow well.  It should read: high quality affordable housing"*

**SO6: To build on access to robust health and social care across rural Scotland and improve the health and wellbeing of those in our rural communities**

Whilst discussions around this objective evidenced that most felt access to health and social care is important, concerns were raised again regarding the need for detail to fully understand the meaning behind it and how this might look in reality.  This success of this objective is strongly dependant on significant investment into health literacy and education, as well as improved transport infrastructure and understanding of rights. Members felt there was also a need for positivity and a focus on the benefits to health of living rurally, such as access to outdoors, walks and activities, nature and wellbeing, community support, community doctors, and personal connections.  All of which have a positive impact on peoples physical and mental wellbeing.  It was felt that perhaps this, as with other objectives, could be seen as being set by urban dwellers who were reflecting on what they felt access to healthcare should look like.

Some comments offered:

*"Rural Scotland has an ageing population which has led to an increasing demand for care services, assisted living, and community-based support. Social Care needs strengthen by investing in homecare services, local carers, and respite care allows people to remain in their communities while receiving the support they need."*

*"An improvement to public transport links for medical services will ensure rural residents can access necessary healthcare. Increasing the capacity of local GPs/Hospitals will help make sure local people can be seen before there conditions worsen."*

*"Rural living has many positives for health but access to services when needed should be improved"*

*"doesn't include that health and wellbeing are also impacted by fair and equal access to countryside, walks, and rural activities"*

*"The aim is laudable - however, in my experience those in rural areas are often looked after better than those in built up areas as there is more community involvement and people care more about their neighbours."*

*"(objective) doesn't flow well.  **Improve access** to robust health ...to **enhance the health** and wellbeing."*

**SO7: To contribute to national action to address the threat of climate change and to restore nature, alongside seizing the economic opportunities and community benefits from a circular economy and the just transition to net zero**

As with previous objectives, members were unsure about this objective as they required more detail to understand what is was aiming for and how it expected to see it come to fruition.

Concerns were raised about the disconnect between policies, as well as funding grants and infrastructure development to support net zero ambitions, improve the environment and meet Scotland s national outcomes.  The example given was the community of Wick who are able to access funding to get fully funded electric buses for community transport however there is no infrastructure for EV charging, or what is there is broken or not fit for purpose, so any funding from Energy Savings Trust is wasted as they do not have, and cannot get, the infrastructure to support their use.

Feedback given also offered insight into unrealistic funding pipelines, which required communities to have so much backing, research and buy in, that often deadlines had long passed before communities were able to meet the paperwork requirements, and another missed opportunity.  Development, and sustainment, of the CLD sector is needed to support positive community development so individuals and groups can lead on seizing the economic opportunities suitable for their areas.

Some comments offered:

*"Too much misleading in both sides of the argument to be able to form a reliable response"*

*"How are we restoring nature when cutting down protected species and destroying habitat to build luxury houses?"*

*"To contribute to national action to address the threat of climate change and to restore nature, whilst seizing economic opportunities and gleaning community benefits from a circular economy and mobilizing a transition to net zero."*

*" [Green Freeport](#) may bring in much needed revenue, it's an unbelievable opportunity for Highland"*

**SO8: To improve access to a sustainable, inclusive and safe transport system in rural Scotland**

Whilst this was regarded as high priority for rural communities, discussions were had regarding what a sustainable transport system would be, and members asked that meaningful research be carried out regarding this issues. CLD practitioners working and living in rural Scotland reported that most rural bus services are subsidised, however those services are frequently cut because subsidies are cut, with reasoning given that there is not enough use, but this is due to the area affected being rural with less people living there.

CLD youth work in rural areas depends on transport links to not only get young people to and from CLD youth activities, but often provision is sandwiched between bus times in and out of a village, or after school because you have a window before the later bus takes them home. Social isolation plays a massive part in young people's decline in mental health, as well as lack of social skills and ability to engage with their communities. Practitioners commented on how positive the free bus travel is for young people in Scotland, but only if there is a bus service for them to travel on. In many instances CLD services need to provide lifts and arrange transport for young people and adults in rural areas to access learning opportunities. Examples given were:

- Youth Lead in Kintyre provides lifts to and from activities for young people to ensure participation due to a lack of appropriate public transport
- Youth Lead in Kintyre provides trips to other parts of Scotland to overcome rural isolation
- Youth Lead supports the local Kintyre Youth Action Council and local MSYP to share their views with decision makers on issues that affect them (including lack of transport and lack of mental health supports etc)
- Transport - due to large area of Helensburgh and Lomond, transport links between the most rural parts to more populated areas are very minimal with busses running from Helensburgh to Arrochar roughly every hour and train links being even less than that
- As part of the P7/S1 transitions, Live Argyll Youth Work and colleagues at Active Schools and Football Development are bringing together the Primary 7 pupils of the six outlying rural feeder schools for some fun, team building games and to build relationships with each other. The travel time from some of these primary schools to the high school is over an hour. For pupils moving from a small rural primary school with school roll of between 7 and 50 to a large high school with over 700 pupils will be a difficult adjustment and for some young people could be an overwhelming experience. Having already built relationships with young people from these other schools and having a familiarity with Live Argyll Youth Work, Active Schools staff will help to support these young people should they experience any anxiety with the transition to high school.

Some comments offered:

*"if you haven't got those transport links either, you know, you don't have those links to healthcare or the education or the other things………And that is one of the major factors, or barriers, I think in a lot of rural areas"*

*"Social isolation - due to transport barriers for young people living in rural areas, this contributes to social isolation for some young people living in Helensburgh and Lomond. This could lead to potential mental health issues due to lack of social interactions that the young people will have outside of school"*

*"many rural communities are quite cut off from transport links, or the scheduled public transport is at times that don't suit those trying to get to work."*

*"**Suggest wording**………. To design and implement an affordable, sustainable, inclusive and safe transport system in rural Scotland with integrated infrastructure transport links. (Just doesn't exist for some people)"*

**SO9: To support culture, including the arts, cultural heritage, the historic and natural environment and Scotland's languages, which all form a crucial component of the identity of rural communities throughout Scotland**

CLD practice is embedded in culture and arts, supporting language acquisition and development, as well as social integration and cultural awareness. Through our community based ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) provision we support learners to gain beneficial language skills, knowledge of Scottish culture and systems, and support for integration into the life of the local community.

Examples of this include paid and volunteer CLD workers supporting language development through ESOL, from a social practice model ensuring that individuals' learning needs are taken into account to enable integration into the community.  A number of refugee and asylum seekers, with support from CLD practitioners, have moved into volunteering roles which further assists with language development, confidence building and integration.  This also enables the communities themselves to welcome the new families, break down barriers, understand cultural differences, build relations and offer acceptance,  therefore enabling refugees and people seeking asylum to feel as welcomed and accepted as possible, keeping their dignity, culture and worth.

Gaelic learning for young people and adults also features significantly in a few CLD services across local authorities, helping participants to understand more about their area's culture and history as well as learn the Gaelic language, and the CLD Standards Council are actively engaged with the Gaelic Learning and Development Group (GLAD) which has a strong CLD focus.

Some comments offered:

*"gle mhath!"*

*"Do not agree…… Looking to change too much. As long as rural Scotland is included in a Scottish identity I feel that's enough for now"*

**Key Performance Indicators**

**Q:  Do these (indicators for environment and climate change) adequately measure what success should look like in this area?**
**A: No**

It was felt that there was not enough information to offer meaningful ratings on each of the individual elements for the nine performance indicators.  We would strongly suggest that these be consulted on again, but with more detail being offered as to what each one means and with

references to how they might be measured, as some members voiced that a significant number of indicators could be interpreted both positively and negatively, depending on individuals experience and perception, which we believe will weaken and skew the data currently being collected.

*"Questions not clear or given enough context to answer well, but I think it also depends on who is making the decisions or defining the questions."*

Members offered the following comments:

For the **agriculture, forestry, marine and land-based** indicators:

*"Not my area of expertise. Community woodlands feature in my work and access to them is important for rural communities and visitors"*

*"Questions not clear or given enough context to answer, but I think it also depends on who is making the decisions about the type of sustainable farming/environmental schemes. The decisions need to be in the hands of people who know what they are talking about - farmers, fishermen/women etc. along with conservationists. We need to be going back to sustainable farming that encourages smaller family farms and not big conglomerates."*

For **economy and digital connectivity** indicators:

*"All relevant to my work in CLD, but hard to comment on as not fully sure the meaning behind"*

*"Again questions are not clear with enough information. Does business closures and opening mean the times of opening and closing or the success and failure of businesses?"*

*"People in rural areas do accept that they will not have maybe the same service as they get in cities but neither should they have to pay the same rate to get a substandard service."*

For **population, education and skills** indicators:

*"Doesn't talk about adult education or anything achieved outside of school environment. Education is more than just school"*

For **social justice** indicators:

*"What about food and health poverty?"*

*"Should include access to services such as CLD and youth projects"*

For **housing** indicators:

*"Priority housing for locals or key workers"*

*"needs to address the need for affordable housing at prices relative to wages in that area"*

For **health and social care** indicators:

*"What about additional support needs, neurodiversity etc? Actual access to care services in rural areas should be an indicator even before you think about quality of care"*

For **environment and climate change** indicators:

*"does household rubbish recycled more reflect the local authority ability to deliver a service, rather than the householder choice?*

*"Rural areas don't have access to eg battery/plastics etc recycling"*

*"good quality local food growing. support for farmers - farm to fork initiatives"*

*"Also consider education aspect and the number of people involved in community gardens or growing/wildlife projects"*

For **transport** indicators:

*"Access to public transport. Can't use it if it doesn't exist"*

*"Social use of public transport. Use of U22s free bus pass for young people. Use of disability bus passes shows if it is available and accessible for all"*

For **culture, arts and language** indicators:

*"rural Scotland allows a lot of community led arts participation in village halls etc but often long distances between "Visitor attractions" that can be too expensive for many to get into"*

*" Will the plan measure local arts activity in these halls and venues as opposed to big ticket venues to capture how we actually consume- and deliver - our arts/culture/heritage?"*

*"Definition of culture - who decides?"*

**Conclusion**

In this response we have offered significant feedback from across our membership regarding the language of the vision and strategic objectives, along with a request for further consultation on performance indicators, enabling more detail to be offered so accurate feedback on relevance to measuring success can be established. We have also provided evidence from members on how the CLD sector is a core contributor to the success of policies and guidance such as the proposed Rural Delivery Plan.

Finally, we would like to offer some further links to relevant references which you may want to consider when developing the Rural Delivery Plan:

[Responsive, supportive, and resilient communities: A review of community development during the pandemic (education.gov.scot)](#)

CLD Stories | CLD Standards Council for Scotland

Competent Practitioner Framework | CLD Standards Council for Scotland

National Standards for Community Engagement

Community Engagement and Participation Guidance | COSLA

How to do a community audit: building profiles using neighbourhood statistics – infed.org:

Community-Profiling-in-West-Dunbartonshire.pdf (gcph.co.uk)

https://www.gov.scot/publications/strategic-guidance-community-planning-partnerships-community-learning-development/

https://www.scotlandscensus.gov.uk/about/2022-census/

Council Area Profiles | National Records of Scotland (nrscotland.gov.uk)

Rural Scotland Key Facts 2021 (www.gov.scot)

Community Learning and Development in Scotland and internationally: literature review - gov.scot

Attainment Scotland Fund evaluation - families and communities: thematic evaluation report 2024 - gov.scot

The People's Panel: Community Resilience - Research findings from People's Panel members on community resilience