



CARES CASE STUDY

OCHIL YOUTH COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT

SUMMARY

Ochil Youth Community Improvement (OYCI) is a youth led social enterprise making change happen locally, entirely driven by young people's participation. The group is making real, positive change including launching a drama club, organising community clean ups, running a study club, developing enterprise initiatives, organising a drop in youth space and improving access to sports facilities. OYCI evolved from a large-scale youth led consultation involving 570 young people to understand what they wanted to change in their community. The OYCI team is now putting lots of these ideas into action.

- Fund Name: EDF-ER Burnfoot Cluster (Burnfoot Hill, Burnfoot North, Rhodders)
- Fund Donor: EDF Renewables
- Technology: Onshore wind
- Annual Fund Value: £90,000 (index linked)
- Year of Fund commencement: 2011
- Fund Area of Benefit: Community Council areas of Alva; Dollar; Menstrie and; Tillicoultry in Clackmannanshire, and; Blackford and the hamlet of Glendevon in Perth and Kinross.
- Purpose of awards: To find ways to better support children and young people's visions and voices.
- Value of awards: £15,000
- Dates of awards: May 2017

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BACKGROUND

EDF's cluster of wind farms in the Ochil Hills provide a Community Fund that benefits several villages and small towns which are collectively known locally as the Hillfoots villages. In 2016, the Community Panel that oversees the Fund reviewed awards made in the previous two years and identified low levels of spend on activity for children and young people. It was also felt that there weren't many services or engagement activities in the Hillfoots for young people.

Following discussions on the best way to address this, the Panel decided to commission consultation work to find out what improvements young people would like to see in the area. An independent consultant with experience in working with young people was appointed, designed a research process and recruited a group of 10-17 year olds from local schools to get involved.

The group came together to share their ideas then consulted with hundreds of their peers on what they would like to see offered for young people in the area. In light of the group's shared passion to make their community better, they named themselves Ochil Youth Community Improvement (OYCI). Their findings and recommendations were presented to the Fund Panel in February 2017, in the Improving Our Communities Consultation Report. The consultant has since set up OYCI Community Interest Company (CIC) in June 2017 to take forward many of the recommendations.

PROJECT ACHIEVEMENTS

OYCI CIC was set up to harness and develop young people's ideas and enable them to make real positive change in their local communities. It is supported by school staff from the primary and secondary schools, with ongoing input from independent consultants and a sessional youth worker paid for by the EDF Burnfoot Hill grant.

OUTCOMES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

From July 2017, the team established working structures and processes, developing partnerships with local schools and other key stakeholders, identifying opportunities and funding for activities, and agreeing coaching tools to support the young people involved and evaluate OYCI's work.

At the start of the 2017/18 school year, five members of the team moved from primary school into secondary school at Alva Academy. They all asked to stay involved and reported OYCI has helped with their transition: "I knew the school and some of the older faces so it's not as scary". One team member who moved to an out-of-catchment school also asked to remain involved, saying, "I want to stay involved as it is an opportunity to stay connected and continue to make my community better". New members were recruited from Strathdevon and Tillicoultry primary schools.

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With the majority of the team now attending Alva Academy it was agreed that they could all be in the same "Squad class". This means they come together twice a week for dedicated time on OYCI activities within their scheduled timetables. Alva Academy supplies a teacher to support this.

One-to-one coaching sessions have been held between the lead consultant and every OYCI member. The sessions focused on the skills the young person would like to develop and identifying how OYCI can provide them with opportunities to gain these.

Informed by their earlier consultation activity, the OYCI members selected the priorities they would like to take forward. Small teams were established to focus on specific activities, like Drama Club & Community Performance, Swimming, Enterprise and Marketing, Community Clean Up & Lighting, and the "Our Space" youth club.

In November 2017, OYCI members at Alva Academy focussed on marketing the organisation and its work. They made a short video to showcase their work, redesigned the OYCI brand and identified website requirements. The team also considered how to make the most of the Year of Young People 2018, working with the school's Year of Young People Ambassador to design a community event for young people in the Hillfoots. The Enterprise and Marketing team interviewed marketing and design agencies and appointed one to finalise the logo and develop the website.

At the same time, OYCI team members from Dollar engaged with Dollar Community Trust on the improvements they would like to see to local parks. This included initial research, a walk around the parks to audit existing features, generate ideas and identify priorities for improvements, and consultation with other young people.

The Improving Our Communities Consultation Report identified a study club as a priority for many young people. Alva Academy has provided a small budget to OYCI to establish and run a club for pupils in S1 to S3. OYCI team members consulted with their peers on a suitable time and space for the club and produced a flier. Older children committed to a rota for providing support at the club and developed a register and evaluation forms. 24 young people have been supported to improve their knowledge and skills, while the OYCI team have improved their skills and confidence in consulting with peers, designing, running and continuously improving a club, and mentoring younger people who attend. 71% of attendees rated the club five out of five, and 35% attend regularly. Three pupils have gone on to gain valuable employment experience and references and have since made donations towards running the club in return.

Primary school teams chose to take forward an enterprise project. Menstrie Primary team members developed products to sell at a school event and made marketing materials to advertise what they were doing and why. They made a

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small profit of £35 and went on to identify how they could use this to make a larger sum. They purchased wooden spoons and worked with older OYCI team members at Alva Academy, using the laser cutter there, to etch designs on the spoons. These sold out at the Christmas Fayre in Menstrie, bringing in £100 in profit. The team plan to turn this into a larger profit again, keen to see how much they can earn through enterprise in one school year. This activity has raised the profile of OYCI with parents and carers, the wider community and key partners. Team members have developed skills and confidence in initiating and leading enterprise activity, numeracy, literacy, design, marketing, team work and organisation.

The consultation report also identified a specific gap around accessible drama provision for young people in the Hillfoots. Establishing a drama club and delivering a community performance became a passionate goal for OYCI's Drama Action Group. They secured support from Macrobert Arts Centre's Creative Learning Team and this had a ripple effect, with members of the Alva Academy teaching team volunteering their services outside of school hours. This meant that the opportunity could be offered to young people not at the school. £48,000 funding was secured from Young Start to develop the drama club which has been running Friday evening sessions since the start of April with around 30 or so participants. The group's skills have been developed in consultation, fundraising, running a club and presenting to large groups.

OYCI has moved from a young person's community consultation exercise to a vehicle through which young people are improving their community. The team are identifying their own priorities, securing support, planning delivery and going on to make their ideas a reality. As one of the team members put it, "We are making real positive changes".

LESSONS LEARNED

Commissioning is an effective way of distributing some of a community benefit fund. Rather than operating more conventionally (which this Panel has broadly done to date) the Panel were responsive to the proposal from Foundation Scotland to commission the initial research. The Panel quickly realised the benefits of taking a more proactive approach to spending the funds.

Young people have competing priorities on their time, so getting together and driving action forward between meetings can be difficult. To overcome this OYCI uses a three-point engagement model featuring regular meetings of the full group, smaller working groups and one-to-one sessions between OYCI team members and others. Participating schools have enabled most engagement to happen during the school day and allowed children to attend a full group session each term. In addition, the Alva Academy team meet fortnightly with primary school teams. Perhaps the most important factor in helping the young people prioritise OYCI activity is their

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increasing sense of agency through involvement. They have started to take responsibility for actions and report back because they are realising that they can make change happen.

With so many young people involved, communicating across the team has been a challenge. The team have prioritise development of the website, communicated with parents as well as the young people and across several platforms (email, Facebook, Messenger), and held regular get-togethers and team building sessions - for the whole team and for sub-groups.

Another challenge has been availability of resources such as funding, staff time and a working base. The grant from EDF-ER Burnfoot Hill Community Fund has been a major source of support in this first year, with the Fund Panel (made up of local representatives) seeing real value in what OYCI was seeking to do. Going forward, the team will develop a mixed funding model, seeking grant income for core activity and funding of specific priorities, establishing service level agreements, and bringing in money through enterprise. Developing relationships and working in collaboration with schools, youth services, businesses, community councils and other community organisations is also key.



Website: <https://www.foundationscotland.org.uk/programmes/edf-burnfoot-hill/>

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