

Networking Scottish

Scotland's islands

Perched on the outer rim of Europe, Scotland forms the northern part of Great Britain and is about two-thirds the size of England and Wales which occupy the remaining portion.

There are 95 inhabited islands in Scotland with a total population of just under 100,000. These islands fall into six local authority areas: Shetland, Orkney, Western Isles (all of which have their own councils) and Highland, Argyll & Bute and North Ayrshire (which are mainland councils with island communities).

The Western Isles and health

The Western Isles are an archipelago of 10 populated islands, 30 miles off the mainland, and stretch from the Isle of Barra (population: 1,300) in the South to the Isle of Lewis (population: 22,000) in the north. The Western Isles National Health Service ensures health services are provide for the 27,000 residents of the archipelago.

The main hospital in the islands is based in the north in Stornoway, Isle of Lewis, with a small hospital in the South on the Isle of Barra, and a new hospital on the Isle of Benbecula. There are also 15 general practices across the islands.

For more information about Scottish islands visit www.scottishislands.org.uk



Isle of Lewis

Stornoway

Scotland

Europe

Barra

Castlebay

Scotland's record on food and health



Eating for Health: The Diet Action Plan for Scotland 1996

Outlines Scotland's poor health record and notoriously bad diet and highlighted the need for networking between work within different communities as well as between

the different sectors such as primary producers, retail, community, catering and the health service to promote change.

Improving Health in Scotland: The Challenge, 2003

Recognises the need to support and develop healthy communities

Eating for Health: Meeting the challenge, 2004

(Co-ordinated action, improved communication and leadership for Scottish Food and Health policy.)

Outlines the future Diet Action Plan and highlights the importance of networking and access.



sh Islands on Food

Fas Fallain is Gaelic for grow healthy

by Mary Maclean, Co-ordinator

It takes half the time to get to the mainland of Scotland from Stornoway as it takes to reach one of the furthestmost points of the Western Isles, Barra.

The Western Isles remains steeped in tradition and for many years has focused on sheep production which resulted in a loss of fruit and vegetable growing skills. Fas Fallain has created tailored training opportunities for people who wish to gain horticultural qualifications which are recognised on the mainland. Advice on marketing and selling is also made available.

On the Western Isles access to fresh food is unreliable because it is dependent on a ferry crossing. The capital, Stornoway, includes a large social housing scheme. For people on a low income fresh produce is not only unreliable, it's expensive. Fas Fallain was set up to help those people across the Western Isles grow healthy by improving food access.

Local communities on the Western Isles such as the Cearns social housing scheme are being encouraged to set up community growing projects, which produce fresh affordable produce to be sold in community shops. Healthy eating social evenings are organised so the community can experiment with different fresh produce.



"One of the largest exports from the western Isles is children of a school age continuing their education on the mainland or seeking new futures when they have left school. Fas Fallain encourages school visits to community growing projects so the children can see what the island can produce" – Mary

For more information about Fas Fallain contact Mary MacLean on 0044 (0)1851701623 or marym.cearn@wihb.scot.nhs.uk. For more information about the health on the Western Isles visit www.show.scot.nhs.uk/wihb/

Supported by



Public Health Nursing on the Isle of Barra

by Frances Macneil, Community Nurse

Barra can be reached from the mainland by plane in an hour, or a five hour ferry crossing from a port a few hours drive from Glasgow.

Crofting and fishing remain a predominant part of Barra's culture – however it no longer sustains the majority of families. Many young people leave the island to seek new futures.

All shops, amenities and community services are situated in the main township, Castlebay, which houses a third of Barra's total population. The circular road around the island is 13 miles in length and scattered throughout are between 15-20 villages. Islanders rely primarily on private transport although a limited public service is available.

The picture to the right shows all the pupils, aged 5 to 11, from one of three primary schools on Barra. They are taking part in a session on healthy eating, supported by Western Isles National Health Service. The fresh produce used was purchased at the only supermarket on the island.



"On a small island like Barra many individuals wear different hats. I am also employed by Western Isles National Health service as a midwife, providing a comprehensive home service to mums on the island. This includes providing information about diet and nutrition throughout pregnancy, infant feeding, particularly supporting breast feeding, advice on weaning and promoting lifelong good eating habits." – Frances

More information about Barra visit www.isleofbarra.com
To contact Frances Macneil call 00 44 (0)1871810893



and Health Issues

The Scottish Community Diet Project



The over-riding aim is to improve Scotland's food and health

The SCDP do this by supporting work within low-income communities that improves access to and take-up of a healthy diet. Major obstacles being addressed by community-based initiatives are:

- **Availability** - increasing access to fruit and vegetables of an acceptable quality and cost
- **Affordability** - tackling not only the cost of shopping but getting to shops
- **Skills** - improving confidence and skills in cooking and shopping
- **Culture** - overcoming ingrained habits.

The SCDP helps low income communities to

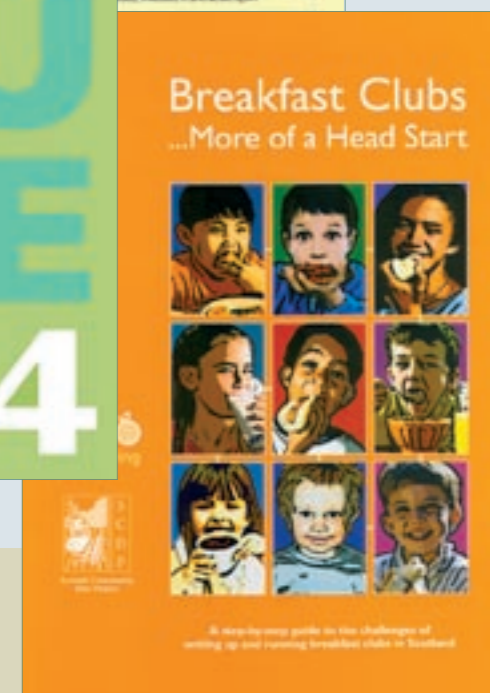
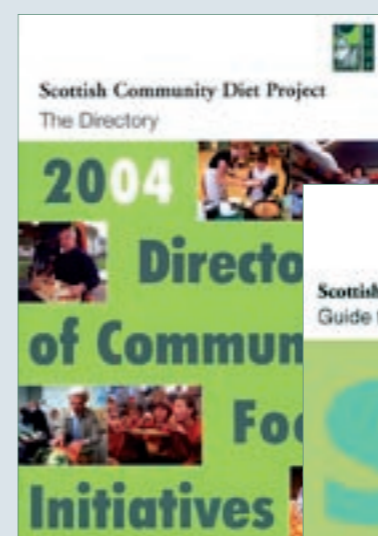
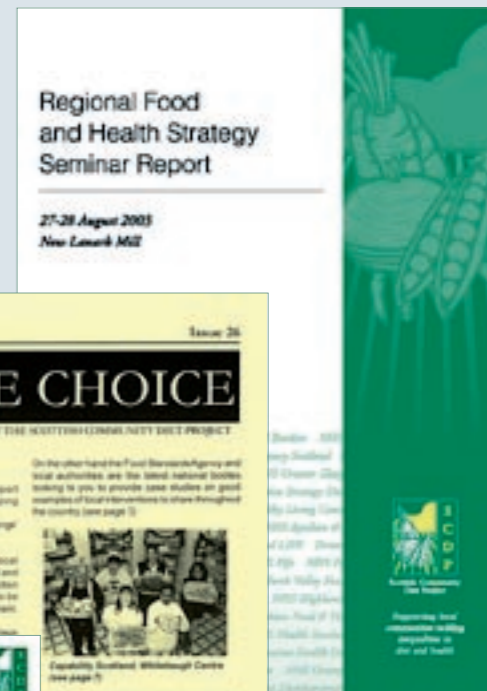
- **identify barriers to a healthy balanced diet**
- **develop local responses to addressing them and**
- **highlight where actions at other levels, or in other sectors, are required.**

The SCDP value the experience, understanding, skills and knowledge within Scotland's communities and their unique contribution to developing and delivering policy and practice at all levels.

Some of our publications include...

- **Source 2004** - information about funding sources for community initiatives working on food and health issues.
- **Directory of Community Food Initiatives 2004** – over 300 entries across the whole of Scotland.
- **Regional food and health Strategy Seminar Report 2003** - Scotland has a number of regional food and health strategies at different stages. This report outlines a range and highlights some of the differences.
- **Breakfast Clubs... More of a Head Start**
A step-by step guide to the challenges of setting up and running breakfast clubs in Scotland.
- **Fare Choice** - a free quarterly newsletter about food and health issues sent out to over 2000 contacts across Scotland.

For more information and a chance to download reports and newsletters visit the SCDP website: www.dietproject.org.uk



The Scottish Community Diet Project is supported by the Scottish Executive's Health Department (www.scotland.gov.uk)

Networking

"Bringing groups and agencies together to share experiences and learn from each other is central to our work. From national conferences and local seminars to study tours and community exchanges, we aim to maximise opportunities for people to share and learn from each other on all aspects of food access both in Scotland and beyond."

- Lucy Gillie, Development Officer for Networking and Communication, Scottish Community Diet Project

Food and Health on Scottish Islands: A networking conference for island communities can be downloaded from www.dietproject.org.uk



The Scottish Community Diet Project (SCDP) brings dietary initiatives based in low income communities within a strategic Scottish framework through the process of networking. There are many inhabited islands in Scotland with an aging and decreasing population. As part of on-going work to look at regional food and health action plans across Scotland the SCDP explored the barriers to food access which face dietary initiatives on islands.

Networking island communities

The food and health on Scottish islands networking conference for island communities was planned and publicised a year before it took place to ensure island communities could plan to attend. There were 15 delegates including community, health, enterprise and council representatives from the Isles of Barra, Bute, Islay, Mull and Iona, Orkney, Skye, the Small Isles and the Western Isles. The event was not held on a island or a mainland ferry port but in the largest city in Scotland, Glasgow, which is easier to travel to and where many islanders go to shop or have relatives.

Main outcomes

The conference revealed that although the islands share, in broad terms, many of the barriers to accessing healthy food found in other parts of

Scotland – i.e. availability, affordability, culture and skills – the issues differ in the detail, even within islands.

The remoteness of the islands, from both the mainland and from public and private sector decision-makers, was an issue for some in terms of transport, communication and understanding, and in ensuring equity of service. The cost of living (perceived to be higher on the islands), a lack of competition amongst supermarkets, problems in accessing appropriate levels of funding and the limits of small-scale production all contribute to a distinctly 'island' picture.

Informal networking between island communities is incredibly difficult as transport routes mostly run towards the mainland and not between islands. Since the conference, networking has increased and participants have visited projects and exchanged information and contacts by email and telephone.

The networking could be measured by increased anecdotal feedback of real relationships forged with between island communities. An increase in the number of applications for small grants and newsletters from island communities.

Networking initiatives in remote communities is not easy because geographical and financial barriers must be overcome but it can assist initiatives to find ways to tackle their remoteness and support organisations understand what remoteness means in real terms.