

Bridging the Gap Evaluation



Report for The Bridge and BAVS

 *Social Research*

 *Service Design & Innovation*

 *Strategy & Collaboration*

 *Evaluation Support*

 *Social Impact Measurement*



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1: Introduction

This report presents the evaluation of the Bridging the Gap programme delivered by The Bridge and BAVS. This section introduces the study and the delivery organisations, and describes the research methodology applied.

The Bridge

The Bridge



Scottish Borders Community Development Company, trading as The Bridge, is the Council for Voluntary Service for the Scottish Borders and a community anchor organisation. It is a partner in the Borders Third Sector Interface (TSI), in partnership with Berwickshire Association for Voluntary Service, Scottish Borders Social Enterprise Chamber and Volunteer Centre Borders.

The Bridge aims to support the development of resilient and empowered communities in the Scottish Borders.

The Bridge provides support and information to build capacity of community groups, voluntary organisations and social enterprises across the Borders and represent their interests to public agencies. It also operates a number of social enterprises, including two Thrift Shops and community transport.

Berwickshire Association for Voluntary Service (BAVS)



Berwickshire Association for Voluntary Service (BAVS) is an independent voluntary organisation that aims to support, inform, represent and provide services to community and voluntary groups in the Berwickshire area of the Scottish Borders.

BAVS has operated since 1971 and is a member of the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO) and Borders TSI.

BAVS supports organisations at their inception and throughout their operation, providing advice, information and training to existing groups, and helping new groups get established. They also provide their own community services, including community transport and three charity shops.

Bridging The Gap

The Bridge and BAVS have secured funding from the UK Community Renewal Fund for the Bridging the Gap through Knowledge Transfer programme (Bridging the Gap).

The programme's overall aims are to support community organisations in the Scottish Borders with the transition to Net Zero and to facilitate collaboration with other voluntary organisations and statutory partners, including Scottish Borders Council.

Originally the programme was planned to run from January until the end of June 2022, but due to the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic this was extended until the end of December 2022.

Our Research Method

For this study we have applied a mixed method, consisting of:

- Review of programme documentation.
- Survey of workshop participants, with 20 responses (response rate of 53%).
- Survey of Ideas Into Action Conference participants with 38 responses (representing 100% of the attending 29 organisations).
- Semi-structured telephone interviews with 7 workshop participants, all of whom also had received an Energy

Audit and Decarbonisation Plan through the programme.

- Semi-structured telephone interviews with 4 workshop facilitators;

▪ Observation of the Newcastleton site visit.

- Observation of the Ideas Into Action conference.
-

2: The Bridging the Gap Programme

This section describes the Bridging the Gap programme in detail.

Bridging the Gap has worked with in total 49 community organisations across the Scottish Borders, almost 2.5 times the targeted 20 organisations.

The pandemic had an impact on the original programme of activity. The revised programme agreed with the funder contained the following main elements:

- Knowledge Transfer Workshops.
- Energy Audit and Decarbonisation Plans for Community Buildings.
- Ideas Into Action conference.
- Knowledge Bank and Knowledge Team.

Bridging the Gap programme. In total there were 49 community organisations that participated in 84 activities, as shown in Table 2.1.

TABLE 2.1: PROGRAMME ACTIVITY

Activity	Participation
Workshops	35 organisations
Energy Audit and Decarbonisation Plans	20 organisations
Ideas Into Action Conference	29 organisations
Total	49 organisations participating in 84 activities

There are 95 village halls in the Scottish Borders¹, of which 44² (46%) participated in the

The programme has reached organisations across the Scottish Borders. Figure 2.1 provides an overview of the geographic spread of the participating organisations.

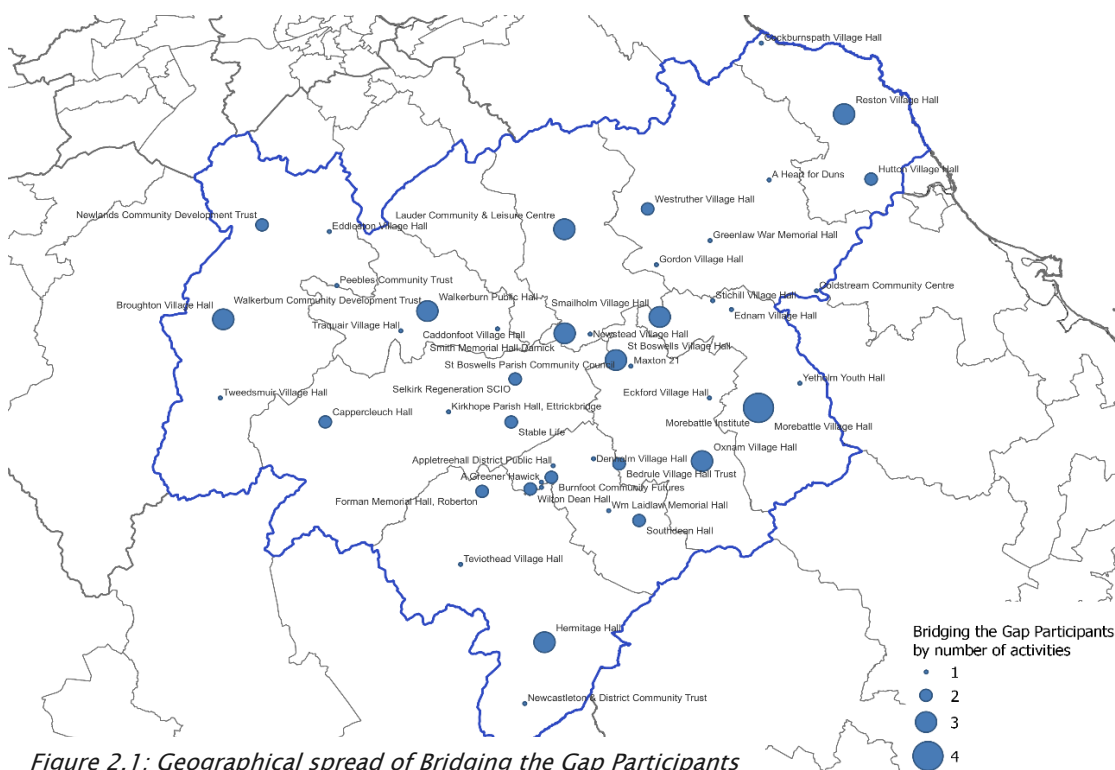


Figure 2.1: Geographical spread of Bridging the Gap Participants

¹ <https://thebridge.scot/village-halls/>

² 5 organisations did not manage a village hall/community centre but other buildings

Knowledge Transfer Workshops

The programme delivered two rounds of online workshops covering the establishment of a Digital Learning Centre, Greening Your Community Building (small community spaces) and Greening Your Community Building (large community spaces).

In total 35 community organisations took part in the workshops. This includes five organisations that were unable to attend the sessions and have been provided with the recordings of the workshops. Table 2.2 provides an overview of the workshops and their attendance.

TABLE 2.2: WORKSHOP PROGRAMME

Workshop	Date	Attendance
Digital Learning Centre	3 sessions plus site visit, Apr-May 2022	7 organisations
Greening Your Community Building (small community spaces)	2 * 5 sessions, Apr-May 2022	15 organisations
Greening Your Community Building (larger community spaces)	5 sessions, Apr-May 2022	5 organisations
Greening Your Community Building (larger community spaces)	3 sessions ³ , Sep-Oct 2022	8 organisations

The Greening Your Community Building workshops were delivered by representatives of A Heart for Duns (large community buildings) and Eckford Village Hall (small community buildings), who both have successfully completed a greening programme for their building.

The Digital Learning Centre workshops were facilitated by Newcastleton & District Community Trust, who have developed and run a successful digital learning centre.

The workshops consisted of five sessions each:

- **Workshop 1 - Setting the scene.** Focusing on a presentation of the achievements of the delivery organisation and the aspirations of the participating organisations.
- **Workshop 2 - Planning the programme.** This workshop covered research, community consultation and programme preparations.
- **Workshop 3 - Funding the programme.** This workshop looked at the various funding options available and how to access them.
- **Workshop 4 - Making it happen.** This workshop covered all aspects of implementing the plans.
- **Workshop 5 - Telling your story.** The final workshop taught organisations how to monitor and evaluate progress and achievements and how to publicise the results.

Workshop 4 and 5 of the Digital Learning Centre workshops were delivered in person through a visit to the Newcastleton digital learning suite.

Energy Audit and Decarbonisation Plans

In total 20 organisations received a grant to develop an Energy Audit and Decarbonisation Plan for their building⁴.

The aim of these plans was to identify how organisations can make their community buildings and facilities more energy efficient and less reliant on fossil fuels. The plans focused primarily on energy use, but also gave advice on other topics, such as food, wastewater and transport.

The programme has been working in close contact with Local Energy Scotland, and it is envisaged that organisations that have a plan in place will be able to apply for a capital grant of up to 80% of eligible cost, to a maximum of £80,000 through the Community and

³ The 3 September sessions covered the same material as the 5 sessions held in April-May, in a more condensed format. This was in response to feedback from the first set of workshops

⁴ 19 of these organisations were running a village hall, and one an indoor activity space.

Renewable Energy Scheme (CARES), which is administered by Local Energy Scotland.

The Bridge and BAVS, supported by Local Energy Scotland, have appointed two energy consultants through a tender process: Johnson Allen and Scene Connect. The grants were paid directly to the consultant on delivery of the plan.

Ideas Into Action Conference

On 24 November 2022 The Bridge and BAVS organised and facilitated a learning conference attended by 29 participating organisations. At the conference there were presentations by:

-
- A Heart for Duns – presenting the process and result of the Greening Your Community Building workshops for a large building.
-
- Eckford Village Hall – the greening story of a smaller hall.
-
- Newcastleton & District Community Trust - introduction to a digitally-connected learning centre.
-
- Scottish Borders Council – introduction to the Climate Change Route Map
-
- Local Energy Scotland, The National Lottery and Scottish Borders Council – presentation about funding options to implement the Decarbonisation Plans.
-

Knowledge Bank and Knowledge Team

During the programme The Bridge and BAVS staff have worked together with a range of

other organisations with an interest in transitioning to Net Zero and brought them into contact with the participating community organisations. These partner organisations include:

-
- Scottish Borders Council
-
- South of Scotland Enterprise (SOSE)
-
- Southern Uplands Partnership (SUP)⁵
-
- Local Energy Scotland
-

The programme staff have created a range of information sources and ‘How to’ guides, that are made available to the wider third sector on the Knowledge Bank section of [The Bridge website](#), including:

-
- How to Guide – Becoming digitally connected.
-
- How to Guide - Greening a community building.
-
- Governance guidance and templates.
-
- Information sheets re potential funders for projects to improve community buildings and digital connectivity.
-
- Guidance and policies to set up and run a village hall.
-

The Knowledge Team provide ongoing support to organisations after Bridging the Gap finishes. The Development staff at The Bridge and BAVS (Borders TSI) will be available to work with organisations who are developing their own greening or digital learning projects; CARES development staff will support applicants to their “Let’s Do Net Zero for Community Buildings” funding programme.

⁵ A newsletter article sent out to local construction organisations is included as an appendix (partnership working).

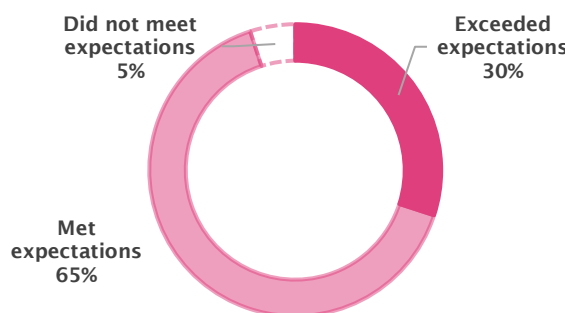
3: Views on Bridging the Gap

This Section presents the views of programme participants and facilitators on their satisfaction with the elements of the Bridging the Gap programme.

Knowledge Transfer Workshops

The vast majority of workshop participants (95%) were satisfied with the workshops they attended. For almost a third of participants (30%) the workshops exceeded their expectations.

Figure 3.1: Did the workshops meet your expectations?



"The set of workshops really struck the right chord - very practical and case-study led. Also very well delivered."

Views from participants and facilitators

In general most participants interviewed were happy with the delivery of the workshops.

"We learnt an awful lot from it."

"It's quite interesting to see how someone else had done it, and to be able to discuss how we've done it - and they understood where we were coming from."

"I found it really interesting to be able to follow the various steps that the case study showed us, and I found the way it was done really compelling. It really translated for me what my theoretical knowledge of planning for different scales of things meant for a very concrete project like this one."

Suggestions for improvement

The most frequently mentioned suggestion for improvement in both the survey and interviews was that the workshops could be condensed into fewer sessions.

"There was a heck of a lot of repetition."

"I felt the whole thing could have been condensed."

"Zoom can be tiring for concentration, could have been fewer workshops, we have busy lives."

Facilitators agreed with that view.

"By the time I got to the fifth one, I managed to make it different, but I felt that I could have covered it all in four [workshops]. But that's easy to say with hindsight."

However, there were also participants who liked the length of the workshops.

"They broke it down into nice chunks so you weren't getting overrun with too much information at once. If you fly through everything at once you forget everything."

"We need a lot of hand-holding throughout."

Some participants suggested a change in timings of the workshops. Workshops were delivered during office hours, but that did not suit everyone. Most of the small community facilities are run entirely by volunteers, some of whom have work commitments during the day.

"Timings weren't great in the middle of the working day."

Some participants found that the focus of the workshop was a bit too much on the planning

and process and would have liked more technical input in the workshops.

“They never tell you about your electricity bills going up tremendously when you put in these air source or ground source heating systems.”

Participants thought that online delivery had advantages, such as less travel time and cost, but some found it difficult to concentrate online. Facilitators were generally very positive about online delivery.

“Zoom was really useful, makes it much more accessible for all; people don’t have to make the journey five times.”

Participants and facilitators both mentioned that it would be useful to have a come-back session some months after the completion of the programme to see what organisations have done with the learning and to help participants to answer questions from their Boards/Trustees. Additional sessions with the Boards of interested organisations would also be useful.

“With village hall committees and community building committees, you often get one or two people who are really, really interested and then they’ve got to go back and sell the idea to their committee. [...] And they don’t necessarily have the follow up answers to questions that might be delivered.”

“If there was one or two of the halls that really wanted to take it further at that stage, have a final one which you can give to the whole committee, as a single session to try and bring it all together for them.”

“If you’re speaking to the actual committee members, you get more people interested and more people driving it.”

Energy Audit and Decarbonisation Plans

All participants interviewed had also been successful in getting an Energy Audit and Decarbonisation Plan funded through Bridging the Gap.

At the time of this evaluation, the plans had just been delivered to the organisation, and most reported they had not had a chance to fully digest it and discuss it within their organisations.

The two organisations that had a closer look at the plans found them somewhat disappointing. They agreed that their plan does meet the requirements of the Brief, but was not very useful for their organisation.

“The report gives us lots of recommendations, but leaves it up to us to do the legwork, find the experts, find the traders, the companies, the supplies. I was expecting a little more help in that respect.”

Participants found the content of the report too generic and not specific enough for their building. Some mentioned that the plans made recommendations that didn’t take into account things like their hall being in a conservation area, or the fact that it was a listed building, meaning that the suggestions in the audit were irrelevant or could not be acted on.

“I was looking for something more specific and more helpful to us, rather than just a general guide on what you might be able to do.”

“Quite a lot was not relevant, it’s a bit of a ‘one size fits all’.”

One organisation had previously undertaken an energy audit and found that the plan did not add anything.

A few organisations also mentioned that they found the audits difficult to interpret and understand. Some of the technical language was unfamiliar, and there was felt to be a lack of information on how implementing different greening strategies might impact on each other.

The organisations that had not scrutinised their plan were slightly more positive. At first glance the plan made some useful recommendations, but some noticed that there was no guidance on how to achieve the suggested improvements.

“Some things we’ve never thought of before.”

“This document gives us a point of reference.”

However, some also noticed that the recommendations were quite generic.

“We couldn’t really make a decision on what’s in the plan, you’d have to commission other people to come and give their view.”

Ideas Into Action Conference

Overall the participants were very positive about the conference.

Participants found the learning from the presentations by the organisations who had completed the whole process very useful. In particular, the conference participants were all representing community organisations owning or managing a community facility which meant the talks were highly relevant. Many commented on the useful practical advice, such as first steps to start a programme and pitfalls to look out for.

“Learning about programmes and community work across the region.”

“Case studies from local communities.”

“Hearing from the organisations with experience of undertaking a funded ‘greening’ programme. The importance of lessons learned. Gives me a good idea of where to start.”

“Shared experiences and different methods of achieving energy savings and cost reductions.”

“Information from village Halls that have completed ‘greening’ their halls. Where to start, expect delays and record work as it progresses.”

Participants also valued the networking opportunity the conference offered, especially because all participants represented similar organisations to their own.

“Networking with folks who face similar challenges.”

“Networking with other hall officers.”

Participants also positively commented on the presentations by funders and other organisations that could support their programme.

“Greening a community building is our ambition and Local Energy Scotland and this can make it happen!”

“Realisation that there is a support network.”

“I thought it was a good split of ‘village hall experiences’ and them supporting this with funding and guidance.”

Some participants reported gaining new perspectives and ideas from the conference. The usefulness of digital access in relation to achieving Net Zero was mentioned.

“How to use technology and digital learning to our advantage.”

“Going digital - aspects to consider.”

“We have not considered digital access until now.”

Participants further commented on individual speakers they found useful or not, and specific content that was relevant for them, or not. In particular the presentation by The National Lottery Community Fund was mentioned frequently as not relevant.

When asked for suggestions about the future of Bridging the Gap and future support, the most frequently mentioned suggestions was more conferences and networking events (13) followed by more technical support (5).

“Regular similar networking events for communities would be extremely useful.”

“More Borders events to ensure learning continues.”

Project management

Participants across the programme thought that the programme was well managed. Although online communication was not always found easy, people were satisfied with the support provided. Programme staff were approachable, quick to respond and giving helpful advice.

"They were so helpful; we could literally pinch their idea and use it for our own hall."

4: Impact of Bridging the Gap

This section explores the impact of Bridging the Gap evidenced by surveys and interviews with participants and facilitators.

The Bridging the Gap programme was focussed on knowledge transfer to support community organisations with transitioning their building to Net Zero.

Gaining knowledge and skills

All workshop participants (100%) reported that they have learned new things from the workshops, as shown in Figure 4.1.

Figure 4.1: What types of things have you learnt through the workshops?



Almost all respondents (95%) said that they have learned from the good practice examples of the facilitators and their peers. Half of them (50%) gained theoretical knowledge and just over a third practical skills (35%). Others mentioned learning leadership skills (20%), business skills (15%) and practical tools (10%).

"Planning, community consultations and engagement."

"We do not need to re-invent the wheel - if others can do it, we can do it."

"It has provided us with a realistic expectation of taking on a similar programme."

"It was good to see the whole pathway from beginning through to completion."

"I couldn't have held a conversation about all this beforehand."

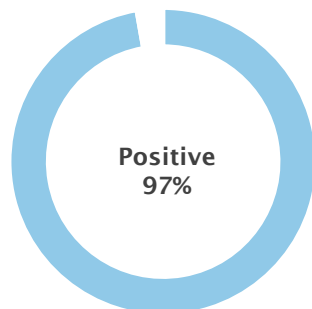
THE RIGHT LEVEL

One organisation commented on the relevance of the programme for a small community organisation like them. They revealed it was difficult to find the right level of information, not too basic, but also not too technical. The Bridging the Gap programme was pitched just at the right level for them and gave them focus and ideas of where to start.

"It was fairly basic, not about nuclear fusion and fission, or onshore vs offshore windfarms."

This was confirmed at the Ideas Into Action conference, where almost all participants (97%) reported that they have more knowledge about developing their community facility (see Figure 4.2).

Figure 4.2: Learned more about developing assets to meet needs of community



Facilitators agreed that participants learned new things from the programme. They believed that the most useful learning came from sharing the mistakes they made and pitfalls they came across.

"We shared our experience warts and all, the good bits and the bad bits."

"At each event, it was opened up for questions, so they had the opportunity to hear what other people were doing and some experiences from others too."

"People did ask questions which was really good; because you had a number of different halls in a number of different areas, of different sizes and so on, if people wanted to input when someone asked me a question, other people could give their opinions too, and they did."

Facilitators also thought that their knowledge and experience with community consultation was valued by the participants.

"Actually engaging with your users and your community before you embark on something – we felt that was a really important message."

Boosting confidence

Many organisations also commented on how attending the workshops has increased their confidence.

Most organisations that took part in the programme are completely volunteer-managed and -run. In many cases it was mentioned that trustees have frequently discussed taking

action, but the prospect of undertaking a major refurbishment project was daunting and they did not know where to start.

Gaining knowledge and skills and getting to know a successful project in detail through Bridging the Gap has given them the confidence to take on a project for their building.

SPRINGING INTO ACTION

One organisation revealed that their hall was cold and draughty and they had talked numerous times about the need to insulate. They had tried to speak to professionals, but got nowhere.

"We struggle to organise a coffee morning in our hall, but, despite many discussions, we haven't done anything yet."

Bridging the Gap has demonstrated them that it can be done, gave them the skills and confidence to tackle the issue and showed them where to go for funding.

"If anything comes to fruition from this, it will be the first time."

Sharing knowledge and experiences between village halls was frequently mentioned as an effective way of boosting confidence.

"Useful to understand how other communities are identifying and tackling challenges."

"Visiting another community who have worked through the experience of buying a building needing renovation. It was very instructive how the different areas are used and the thinking behind decision making."

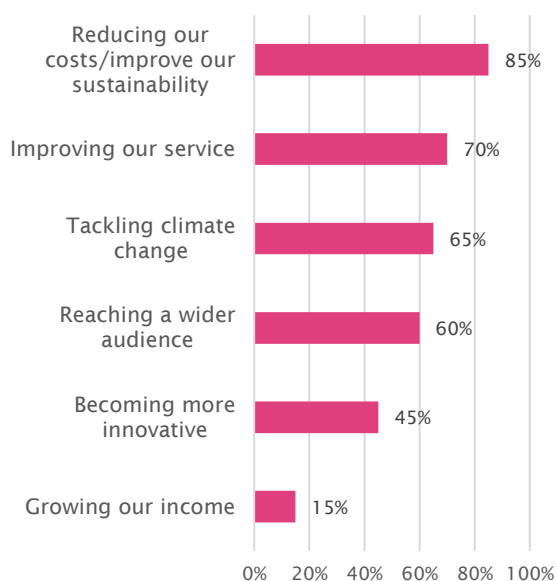
"We need to have a little bit more confidence that what we have done has been correct up to now. We've gone in there thinking we're not very good at what we're doing, we've got L-plates on our backs, but it's given us the confidence that what we've been doing,

our approach, is very similar to what halls are doing."

Putting knowledge into practice

Workshop participants cited a variety of things they wanted to do with their newfound knowledge, as displayed in Figure 4.3.

Figure 4.3: What are the most important issues you are hoping the workshop sessions will help you to address?



With the current energy crisis ongoing, it is no surprise that driving down cost was a reason for most organisations (85%) to become involved with the programme and wanting to reduce their energy cost. Other main expectations included service improvement (70%), the desire to contribute to tackling climate change (65%), reaching more people (60%).

"We hope to improve our Hall."

"Show the way forward regarding climate change and that anything is possible if the will is there."

IT'S (NOT) ABOUT THE MONEY

One organisation disclosed that they had real worries about the future of their village hall. The extremely high electricity bills are becoming an increasingly difficult issue. There were also various other maintenance issues they need to address.

However, there was also a deep felt need to make their contribution to the Net Zero agenda and address climate change.

"There is an aspect of this that is really affecting us but we haven't paid a lot of attention to it unfortunately, and that is decarbonisation. And I think decarbonisation seems to be driving this more than the reduction of energy costs."

They knew that there were a number of things that had to be done to the hall. Joining the Bridging the Gap programme was an attempt to try and learn how others have tackled this. They also realised that they needed help looking at the technical aspects of what they are trying to achieve.

Funding was always seen as the biggest problem. They knew there must be money available for decarbonisation, but did not know where to go.

"It helps to know what funds you can actually apply for."

Skills and knowledge in itself do not create impact: how organisations use them creates impact. Figure 4.4 presents ways that workshop participants plan to use their newfound skills and knowledge.

Figure 4.4: How do you intend to use your new skills/knowledge?



The vast majority of organisations plan on becoming more sustainable and contributing to achieving Net Zero (90%) and improve their financial situation (80%). Three fifths of organisations have plans to start a greening project (60%).

“Focus our efforts on upgrading and subsequent cost reduction.”

“We will develop an energy saving plan for our village hall and start wider village consultation for place making.”

“It will help us to fine-tune existing practices and also give an alternative perspective as to how community issues may be tackled and resolved.”

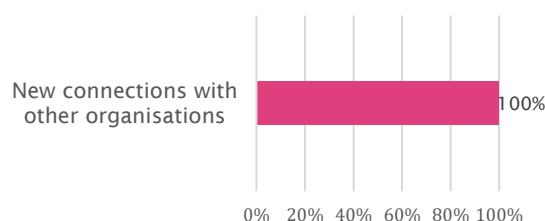
“Improve the energy efficiency and climate compatibility of our village hall and start a conversation about community-led climate action in the village.”

Some organisations mentioned a number of concrete actions they took from the programme, including regular monitoring of energy consumptions, installing different type of insulation, switching to energy saving lightbulbs, regular air circulation to avoid damp, lowering the ceiling to save on heating cost, draught proofing doors, self-closing doors and motion-sensor lights.

Making connections

All workshop participants (100%) reported that the workshops and other activities have helped them to increase their network and that they have made new connections.

Figure 4.5: New connections



“Trading experiences with similar rural trusts was invaluable and reinforced the need for good networking, especially when similar communities are so remote.”

“Networking and new contacts, very beneficial.”

“There are other halls in a worse position than ourselves, there are other halls that have been very much more successful than ourselves.”

“It’s early doors – what this project has started is the network of village halls. I think as we do more of these exercises, more and more village halls are coming together, people are getting to know each other, I’ve personally been approached by a number of people now for advice on how we’re doing things in the hall – all of which is great, and I can see this only getting better.”

Some participants suggested that regular follow up meetings or sessions on greening their building beyond the scope of the Bridging the Gap programme would be useful.

Developing organisations

Workshop participants did not keep their newfound knowledge to themselves, they shared it with others within and outwith their organisations. Figure 4.6 provides an overview.

Figure 4.6: Who do you intend to share your new skills/knowledge with?



All workshop participants plan to inform people within their organisation, varying from their Trustees (80%) to a select number of people (35%) and all staff members (35%). Many also plan to share their knowledge and skills more widely outside their organisation, including with their community (50%) and with partner organisations (25%).

“Common baseline for group discussions, several members have taken part.”

The Bridging the Gap programme reinforced the importance of community consultation for many participating organisations.

“Community involvement was new for us, valuable to hear about.”

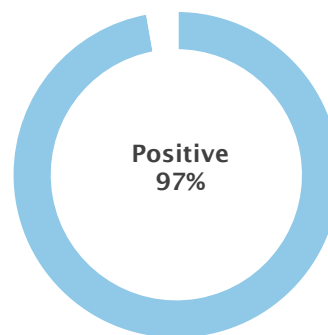
“Good ideas about how to get the kids involved in the consultation.”

Feedback from the Ideas Into Action conference confirmed the positive impact of the programme on the development of organisations.

Almost all organisations reported that taking part in the Bridging the Gap activities has made them more aware of opportunities to

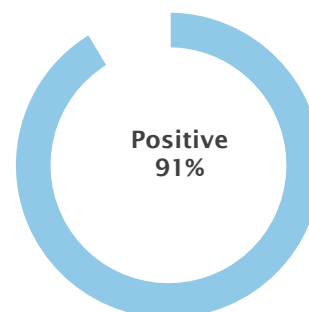
green their building and contribute to Net Zero, as depicted in Figure 4.7.

Figure 4.7: Be more aware of opportunities to go green



Most organisations (91%) said that the programme has helped them to increase their capacity to undertake projects that will help them to achieve Net Zero, as shown in Figure 4.8.

Figure 4.8: Develop capacity to carry out successful programmes



“Knowing where to apply for funding.”

Barriers to success

Most programme participants think it will be very difficult to find the experts (e.g. architects, engineers, contractors) to do the required work. Finding professionals to undertake work in rural areas like the Scottish Borders is challenging and is exacerbated by

the current energy crisis and levels of inflation.⁶

"It [the audit] says in quite a generic way that we should be consulting with insulation experts, but I'd like to know where they are because they're like hens' teeth in the Borders! It's finding who you can approach with a degree of trust and confidence to be pointed in the right direction."

"We need like-minded people and people who understand the technology to come and help us."

Most participants mention the cost of decarbonisation as a serious barrier. Grant funding is hard to get and it takes significant resource to write applications.

Some Energy Audits recommend that organisations take out a loan to fund the work, but small organisations are reluctant to do this.

Some also mentioned that after the Bridging the Gap programme they are convinced that certain investments are worthwhile, but they expect it to be very difficult to convince their Boards/Trustees.

"We don't have the income to take on loans, and the Bridging the Gap audit is partially pointing us towards loans and we just don't have the facility to pay back loans."

"Once funding is sorted, everything is sorted."

Some organisations say they find it difficult to engage with their community, and are afraid that their beneficiaries will have no interest in these issues.

Finally, most mention that greening their building will be a lot of work and cost a lot of time. This is generally an issue for smaller organisations run by volunteers.

"It's a big chunk of work, for which we don't have the people to drive it."

"It's a lot of work, so we need to convince the committee that it's worth it."

Facilitators echoed the views on barriers that the participants had: accessing funding, getting tradesmen to do the required work, community engagement, workload and convincing Boards/Trustees.

"They're not always very good at understanding the impact, and so they think that just by asking for the money, they'll get it, and they can go on and do it. Whereas, they haven't really understood the whole process of why funding might be awarded."

"It is almost impossible to get tradesmen."

"If you know what the community wants, you are more likely to be able to deliver that."

"Because you're explaining actually how much work is involved, that might have actually put some people off – because you've got to do half a dozen different things."

"If you've got a really lively committee, and they all take their share of it, then fabulous – because that breaks it down. But in general committees 'just want it done' – ideally by someone else!"

Legacy of Bridging the Gap

It is clear that the Bridging the gap programme has installed skills, knowledge, confidence and enthusiasm for transition to Net Zero with community organisations operating buildings across the Borders.

Community organisations wanting to decarbonise their building have gained useful contacts through the programme.

⁶ The Bridge and BAVS reached out to local tradesmen via the Borders Construction Forum to address this difficulty. See appendix.

The Energy Audits and Decarbonisation Plans have given 20 participating organisations a clearer idea of what they need to do.

However, the main legacy of the programme is the Knowledge Bank developed and the skills and knowledge gained by the programme delivery team.

The content of the workshops (Slides and videos) is freely accessible for all village halls and other community organisations across the Borders and the Bridge and BAVS staff are now better able to help them to make sense of the workshop content.

Bridging the Gap has generated a range of 'How to'-guides containing step-by-step guidance and practical tips, also free online accessible for everyone.

All this guidance, combined with already existing guidance documents, is available at the separate Knowledge Bank area on The Bridge's website.

"This is going to become a bigger issue for village halls and for community assets, and this this is step in the right direction, so that's really positive."

5: Conclusions

This section draws conclusions from the evaluation findings and provides recommendations for the future design and delivery of programmes.

Conclusions

From the research the following conclusions can be drawn:

The programme and its delivery

1. The Bridging the Gap programme managed to reach a significant number of village halls and community groups managing community buildings across the whole geography of the Scottish Borders. With 49 participants engaging in 84 activities, the programme significantly exceeded its target of 20.
2. The workshop programme was in general well received by the participants.
3. There were mixed messages about the number of workshop sessions. Many participants and most facilitators thought the programme could be condensed. However, other organisations appreciated the depth of a greater number of sessions.
4. The content of the workshops was pitched at the right level, and found to be useful, interesting and relevant.
5. Online delivery of the workshop programme worked well in general. Online delivery is likely to be a key factor in the reach and geographical reach of the programme.
6. Although it is too soon to conclude definitively, the Energy Audits and Decarbonisation Plans were less well received. Organisations that had scrutinised them found them too generic to be very useful.
7. The Ideas Into Action conference was perceived to be very positive, the content and speakers were deemed to be good and relevant, with a good mixture of case studies and funding information.

8. The project was well managed by the project staff. Communication was efficient and support effective.

Impact of the programme

9. Participants gained new skills and knowledge from participation in the programme, which was the primary objective of the programme.
10. Taking part in Bridging the Gap has boosted the confidence of many organisations to embark on a greening project for their building.
11. There is emerging evidence of participants turning their new skills and knowledge into practice. Organisations have implemented easy-to-do measures and many are seriously considering developing larger scale greening projects.
12. Community organisations in the Scottish Borders are serious about decarbonisation and contributing to achieving Net Zero.
13. Networking and making new connections with peers and support providers has been an important benefit for participants.
14. There are indicators that suggest that the skills and knowledge gained through Bridging the Gap are spread more widely into organisations and communities.
15. The importance of community consultation has been reinforced by the programme. Participants have learned how to improve their consultation skills.
16. Barriers to completing the greening of their building include accessing funding, difficulty getting professionals to do the work, community engagement, the workload and convincing Boards/Trustees of the need to invest.

The legacy of Bridging the Gap

17. The skills, knowledge, confidence, networks, plans and enthusiasm created by Bridging the Gap is likely to last and will inspire and support community organisations in the Scottish Borders with greening projects.
18. Bridging the Gap has created a Knowledge Bank, a free and easily accessible resource for all community organisations across the Scottish Borders interested in Net Zero.
19. The Knowledge Team consisting of the upskilled and more experienced staff of The Bridge and BAVS is another legacy resource of the programme.

Recommendations

In line with the main conclusions from this evaluation, the following recommendations can be made:

1. There is a great appetite for follow-up meetings or conferences about the greening agenda. The Bridge and BAVS

should try to access funding to organise these.

2. The Bridge and BAVS should publicise and market the Knowledge Bank widely across all organisations managing buildings in the Scottish Borders.
3. When commissioning outside consultancy on behalf of community organisations, such as the Energy Audits and Decarbonisation Plans, programme staff should carefully manage expectations of participants about what the plans contain and what they can be used for.
4. The Bridge and BAVS should consider online delivery as an effective way of delivering training in a rural remote area such as the Scottish Borders and enabling participants from all parts of the area to take part.

6: Appendix: Newsletter

The Bridge/Eckford Village Hall provided this article for the Borders Construction Forum Newsletter in April 2022, going to local tradesmen. This newsletter was part of another UKCRF-funded project by Southern Upland Partnership working with the Borders Construction Forum to increase interest among the local tradesmen of taking up opportunities to move into this area of work.

Opportunity for those working in Energy Efficiency and Renewables GREENING COMMUNITY BUILDINGS



Calling all businesses who can offer solutions to enable community buildings to become more sustainable particularly in relation to draughtproofing, insulation, heat pumps (air/source, ground source), solar PV, solar thermal, LED lighting etc.

Local Charities, The Bridge and Berwickshire Association of Voluntary Services (BAVS) are bridging the gap through knowledge transfer by organising a series of workshops encouraging those people responsible for community buildings to consider “greening” solutions to make their premises more affordable to run in the short term and sustainable in the longer term which will assist the Scottish and UK Governments in reaching their Net Zero emissions target by 2045

It is anticipated that grant funding will become available in the near future to enable or assist such “greening” projects to progress. One of the outcomes of the workshops is to provide a list of businesses, preferably Borders based, who can assist community buildings to meet their goals.

Can your business provide “greening solution”, in any shape or form? If you can meet this need then please email bordersconstructionforum@gmail.com giving your business contact details along with a brief outline of the specialisms/solutions that you can offer. This list will be shared with The Bridge Project Manager (heather.batsch@thebridge.scot) who is responsible for compiling “How To Guides” in relation to Greening Community Buildings. Your business details will therefore be passed to participants of the workshops, village and community halls and other parties who have an interest in this topic.

If you have been involved in delivering any innovative greening projects then we want to know more about that too.



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