

Assynt Resilience Group

Assynt Development Trust, Assynt Community Council Community Care Assynt, Connect Assynt working together

November 2020 Newsletter

The Assynt Community Food Larder

The ARG met in September and decided to use the remaining Supporting Communities Fund (SCF) resources to buy a (glass fronted) commercial fridge and freezer and a shed to use as the Food Larder; the existing shelving that was acquired in the summer will be moved from the Village Hall to the Larder. It has been agreed with Assynt Leisure to locate the Food Larder at the back of the Leisure Centre car park. Throughout the Covid emergency there has emerged a significant delay of around two months for manufacturing, delivering and installing sheds but even with this delay we are hoping that the shed will be delivered and the Food Larder can be operational before Christmas.

With SCF resources for food aid ending in September it was inevitable that a self supporting local Food Larder Group would be needed to progress this project. In the consultation survey 25 individuals gave their names as being willing to help establish and run the larder and the ARG are very grateful to those willing to step up to become involved. As the two main sponsors of the ARG, both Assynt Development Trust and Assynt Community Council will provide support to those who come forward to run the Food Larder.

If anyone is interested in becoming involved in being part of the group running the Food Larder please email Liam Taylor on liamtaylor@hotmail.co.uk or Willie Jack on willie.assyntdevelopmenttrust@gmail.com The intention is to hold an initial online meeting for all those who wish to be involved sometime in late November or early December.

Community Food Larders

A community food larder is a community run facility that supports individuals and businesses to share surplus food and for anyone to help themselves to quality food that would otherwise be wasted. In Muir of Ord the MOO Community Fridge was established 2-3 years ago and has now expanded to several locations in villages around Muir. The Assynt Resilience Group contacted Emma Whitham the founder of the MOO Food Larder and discussed the possible establishment of such a facility in Assynt.

Please see their website at <https://moofood-org.stackstaging.com/projects/incredible-edible/>

A community food larder consists of a fridge, freezer and shelving and can accept any type of vegetables, fruit, bread, tinned & dried foods, cooked meat and fish all in sealed packaging with their own use by date. To avoid any issues with food hygiene it should not house raw meat, fish or eggs.

This type of facility is for the benefit of the whole community, anyone can give (givers) and equally anyone can take (takers). This initiative can help address food waste but it also provides social benefits by reducing food poverty and malnutrition as well as encouraging community spirit and increased resilience.

The role of the Assynt Resilience Group would be to provide a clean, safe environment for sharing surplus food to benefit the community. The ARG would not be responsible for the contents of the food larder and it is thought that a Food Larder Group would be best suited to run the facility(ies).

In late August Assynt Resilience Group obtained the consent of HIE to invest any underspend from the original Supporting Communities Fund resources in a Food Larder. In early September the group discussed this further and it was decided to test support locally for a Food Larder by carrying out a community consultation via an online Survey Monkey.

Consultation on the Assynt Community Food Larder

The survey was designed to tell Assynt Resilience Group whether those surveyed in Assynt were supportive, or not, of an Assynt Community Food Larder.

1. Number of completed surveys: 71
2. Do you think that the Assynt Resilience Group should support & promote an Assynt Community Food Larder? Yes 82% No 9% Maybe 9%

3. Which would be the best site(s) for the Assynt Community Food Larder? Multiple sites were suggested but individual sites were suggested as follows Lochinver harbour 48%, The Glac 12%, Baddidaroch 7%, Stoer 4%
4. Are you an Assynt resident? Yes 94%
5. Would you be willing to get involved in running an Assynt community food larder and being part of a group who do so? Yes 19% No 45% Maybe 36%
6. If you're happy to be contacted, please leave your contact details Yes 37% / 25 individuals gave their details

Background to the Assynt Food Bank

In March this year during early Covid restrictions pre-Lockdown, Assynt Development Trust was approached by Highlands and Islands Enterprise and Assynt Community Council was approached by Highland Council to see how both organisations were reacting to the emerging Covid emergency. The Scottish Government asked HIE to deliver the Supporting Communities Fund (SCF) through 'Anchor' organisations such as ADT across the Highlands. ADT approached ACC as well as Community Care Assynt and Connect Assynt to join together; the first meeting of the new Assynt Resilience Group and the receipt of the £29,000 funding from the SCF was in early May.

The food bank started in early May and over the past six months it has provided a weekly food distribution to those in need of food aid. It was originally sited in the Leisure Centre but when this re-opened for business in July the food bank moved to the Village Hall. Led by volunteer co-ordinator Andy Summers and co-ordinator Bill Wardley Smith the food bank has involved over 25 volunteers delivering food boxes across Assynt, the peak demand included over 60 individuals receiving help which provided nutritious food.

It was known all along that the limiting factors in delivering food aid through a Food Bank was the availability of volunteers, finding a suitable location for the Food Bank and that the SCF funds would cease by the end of September.

The SCF programme finished on 30th September and consequently the Assynt Resilience Group started to wind down the operation of the Food Bank. Through this time, many volunteers also became unavailable to deliver supplies and the need for food aid reduced. The last delivery of food boxes across Assynt was on Tuesday 27th October. However the Food Bank still has substantial supplies of tinned and dried foods which will be transferred in due course to the Food Larder.

If anyone is in need of food aid in the period before the Food Larder is set up they can contact Bill Wardley Smith at The Assynt Centre on 01571 844144 or email william.smith@communitycareassynt.org.uk

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