Overview of results of Stromness THI End of Project Survey

As part of the evaluation of the scheme which ran from 2009 to July 2014, Stromness THI launched an online survey in May 2014 to obtain feedback from the public, visitors and those who had been involved in the STHI project. The survey was open to all, but also had specific sections for those who had received a grant, business owners and people who had attended training events. The survey was publicised through the Orkney Islands Council website, on Radio Orkney and within local press through ‘The Orcadian’.

In total 45 people completed the survey, the majority of which were residents in Stromness (50%). The ‘other’ category comprised respondents from within and out-with the UK.

![Pie chart showing the distribution of respondents by area]

Completed entries were invited to leave contact details to be entered into a prize draw for Stromness Shop vouchers from some of the businesses who had been involved with the THI project. Winners were:

L Rae
R Temple
L Blacklock
F McGinn
S Esslemont
M Bowdler
S Turner
B Tait
A Robertson
Impact on Stromness

When asked what aspects of the Stromness THI project have had the greatest impact on Stromness, building repairs was the most often selected with 60% of respondents choosing this option, followed by bringing vacant space back into use i.e., buildings that were derelict being renovated and restored for a specific end use. The visual impact of the completed building works being cited as the reason for this:

- As a visitor, the visual impact in the centre of town (compared to say 10 years ago) is hugely improved. And since tourism is a major source of income for Orkney, this visual impact/attractiveness of the town is important to encourage people to spend time and money there. Plus bringing disused buildings back into use is a benefit to residents, businesses and visitors.
- A wide range of buildings throughout the town have been considerably improved in terms of appearance.
- The repairs make a difference to the streetscape, in general they have been carried out well and in keeping with their surroundings. The town had a 'down at heel' look before the Initiative.
- A lot of the buildings look better cared for now, but at the expense of scaffolding etc.
- It is fantastic to see the improvements to buildings and shops along the street. The town looks as if it has had a 'make over' It looks brighter and cleaner and cared for, each building taking on its own colour scheme with pride. I love the new shop signs.

However, there was also a general consensus that every element of the project had collectively contributed to its impact. Examples of such responses are given below:

- All of it! It has all had such a great effect on Stromness.
- All the aspects are important, the works to the properties and street make it look cared for and the training and education has helped ensure it will be maintained.
Everything together has contributed to a much better looking town with good things for visitors to do

- The Educational one because this has been about building capacity for future generations. The others because they visibly change the town landscape and make the town more welcoming.

A respondent, who had received a grant, commented that without funding works may not have been carried out – ‘Many of these houses were very old and some of the residents, like myself, would not have had the funds or the motivation to undertake repairs without the STHIP’.

A minority of respondents commented that the impact on Stromness had been negative, with responses such as:

- Biggest impact in a negative way I’m afraid. A fantastic idea but coupled with the timings of other projects in the town the street has been out of action for far too long. I think we need to do a survey on footfall, I don’t believe we’ve got these numbers back.
- Disruption for months and various trips/falls requiring rework
- For the past 5 yrs. Stromness main street has been a building site with nothing but scaffold and white vans parked all day. How do you expect folk to shop if there is no place to park.

Businesses owners who responded to the survey were also asked what impact the Stromness THI had on their business, 100% of these businesses said that the impact had been positive, with comments such as ‘the face lift to the town as a whole is positive’.
Benefits of Investment

With regards to the main benefits of the investment into Stromness, the majority of comments praised the visual impact of the improvements, for example:

- The general overhaul of the main streets and their buildings. The town looks great
- Restoration of vacant eyesore properties in the town centre; improving attractiveness of the town/availability of properties.
- Restoring old run-down buildings, making Stromness look more attractive
- The improvements to the buildings that have been 'done up' and repaired is fantastic. But I would say that the main benefit would be the opportunity given to people to improve their homes or buildings without having to pay for it all themselves. By doing this it has improved look of an area that would have otherwise looked more and more run down.
- Seeing buildings being used again. Everything looks so much better.
- Freshened up the old part of town - preserved attractive buildings for future

However, it was also recognised by respondents that there would be a lasting legacy for the community, with an increase in skills and knowledge regarding traditional building repairs, for example:

- Stromness looks so much better especially with shops having much improved signage which will hopefully encourage more people to shop locally. Also the various training programmes have introduced outputs which will last for years to come.
- Legacy of a new generation who are more heritage aware.
- Improved the fabric of the Town which is nicer to look at and ensures the future of the Town for future generations.
- Improved visual impact, enhanced character of the area, more vibrant community.
- The training and education will help ensure works are maintained.
- Increase number of locals and visitors who want to use the facilities of Stromness rather than centre that on Kirkwall.
- Makes the community feel valued and more attractive to inward investment.
- Visual impact of improvements. Legacy of a new generation who are heritage aware
- Improved the fabric of the Town which is nicer to look at and ensures the future of the Town for future generations.
- Improved visual impact, enhanced character of the area, more vibrant community.

A minority of respondents commented that there was no benefit of the investment:

- Nothing, a waste of money
- Few, if any, other than to the contractors who carried out the work.
Drawbacks of Investment

When asked about the drawbacks of the investment the main theme was disruption due to scaffolding and paving works, for example:

- Restrictions in access to businesses. Temporary spoiling of the town environment while work was going on.
- Scaffolding and white vans everywhere over several years.
- Road closures.
- Disruption caused by contractors was not managed particularly well and could have been reduced with better planning and more co-operation.
- Continual works especially road closures.

However, many respondents also acknowledged that this disruption was only a short term drawback:

- Some disruption on the street, however, works cannot be achieved without some disruption and the result is worth the few bits of scaffolding or odd street closure.
- The only drawback for me was hearing some of the public’s negative attitude towards the actual work being done! Mostly moaning about scaffolding on the street. Could they not see the bigger picture. Improvements to the buildings and people in work doing the improvements. Win Win situation.
- The length of time streets have been closed has been difficult for local business. Hopefully though the pain will have been worth it in the long run.
- Upheaval I guess ... but it's only short term.

Other comments on drawbacks included the lack of understanding regarding the project, with comments such as:

- Residents not on-board till late on, in some cases they were too late to realise the benefits.
- That at the beginning people did not really seem to understand those benefits.
- Some people have been very negative - what's not to like about loads of money being spent in your town? Surely for the end result, a bit of inconvenience is endurable?
Works to Buildings

There were a limited number of respondents who had received a grant from the Stromness THI, however, of those who responded, all responded that they would have not carried out the work without grant aid, or would have only perhaps done so in the future. 100% of businesses who responded said that they would not have carried out the works.

When asked what impact the works had on the property, all responses were positive, including the following:

- Conserved and preserved the building as well as improving its appearance.
- Improved the look of the shop.
Feedback on visitor offerings

Respondents were asked to indicate if they had used any of the community and visitor offerings which had been produced with funding from the Stromness THI, the offering which had been most commonly used was the Stromnessorkney.com website, followed by the Stromness Hometown DVD. Those who responded other had either watched ‘Stromness from the Sea’ animation or used the ‘Stromness from the Sea’ leaflet.

![Chart showing use of community and visitor offerings funded by Stromness THI]

Respondents were then asked to provide feedback on the offerings which they had used, particularly focusing on enjoyment and learning from using the offering and the format of the offering. Results are shown below:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Offering</th>
<th>Percentage of respondents who enjoyed using the offering</th>
<th>Percentage of respondents who learnt something new</th>
<th>Percentage of respondents who felt the offering was in the correct format</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stromness Hometown MP3 and DVD</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>local voices with a wealth of stories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cubby Roo</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Visiting grand-daughter loves the play park, it is fun and beautifully designed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stromnessorkney.com</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>lots of information about Stromness available on a very high quality website</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I Spy</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>Great fun looking for carvings, whilst learning new things. This is essentially for children but I found it great fun! Simple and engaging lots of info about Stromness I didn't know!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walking Tour</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>no comments left</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quest of the Hudson Bay Employee</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>Good info for visitors and young locals to learn history.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stromness from the Sea</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>Excellent piece of work by school pupils, film was good to watch but also informative.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Feedback on training and education events attended

Respondents who had taken part in a training or education event were asked to leave their feedback on the event, in particular if the event had been of benefit to them.

![Bar chart]

- **I attended taster sessions in building skills for Stromness Academy pupils at Orkney College**
- **I attended a community seminar run by Stromness THI (e.g., a tour of Commercial Hotel, Energy Efficiency in Old Buildings, learning about shop signage)**
- **I attended Tour Guiding training on the heritage and history of Stromness**
- **I attended a Stromness Hometown project drop in session to help produce the audio tour**

Of those who had attended a community seminar 100% of respondents said the training was of benefit to them, including comments such as ‘I learnt more about traditional buildings’.

With regards to the taster sessions in building skills, comments on the benefits of the training included:
- Learnt more about the materials and techniques used on old buildings.
- Learning about traditional building skills was very interesting.

With a representative from Stromness Academy commenting, ‘we have been very pleased to be involved with STHI. It has been an excellent opportunity to have a structured approach to partnership working’.

Of those respondents who had attended the tour guide training 50% of respondents said that the training was not of benefit to them, however, no comments were left with regards to why.

There was no feedback left regarding the Stromness Hometown Project.
**Other Feedback provided**

At the end of the survey, respondents were asked if they would like to provide any other feedback or comments.

One respondent commented on the event held in the Stromness Town Hall to celebrate the Stromness THI, saying ‘It was lovely to see the before and after pictures of the buildings that have been improved. Really brings home the work that has taken place within this project. Well done to all involved.’

Others left comments regarding the regeneration of Stromness, with feedback including:
- It has made a valuable contribution to the regeneration of the town, and will hopefully leave a strong legacy by improving confidence in the town and showing what can be achieved with comparatively little money.
- Another complete waste of tax payers' money.
- I think this is an exciting initiative and I hope that the lessons learned will help Orkney as a whole!

Respondents also left feedback regarding the street paving and projects part-funded through the THI:
- I hope that any other THI projects planned in Orkney will look beyond visual improvements. Also new paving is poorly done and empty Commercial Hotel unacceptable.
- The street re-paving has been a disaster.

There were a number of comments regarding projects which were not funded even in part through the Stromness THI, for example works at the Pier Head and also other town issues were raised eg parking. These comments have been passed to relevant departments within Orkney Islands Council for consideration.

If you would like a full copy of the survey results or have any other queries relating to the Stromness THI please contact Kirkwall THI, 15 Victoria Street, Kirkwall, KW15 1DN, telephone 01856 88 64 68 or email kthi@orkney.gov.uk.