



Highlands and Islands Enterprise
Iomairt na Gàidhealtachd 's nan Eilean

Ambitious for Communities

Community Survey Report

Helmsdale and District

28 July 2010

Report prepared by:



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Section One

Survey Methodology

Introduction

These survey results form part of a series of pilot community surveys commissioned by Highlands & Islands Enterprise, HIE. The surveys were undertaken during summer 2010. The participating communities are all in remote and disadvantaged parts of the Highlands and Islands, termed 'fragile areas'. These communities are receiving a programme of intensive support through HIE's Community Account Management programme. This involves helping communities to take responsibility for planning their future economic and social development.

HIE is developing a measurement framework and outcome indicators for each area, and the 2010 survey results will form an important part of the baseline data. The research explores local attitudes and aspirations and it attempts to measure the level of 'community confidence' in each area. The exercise will be repeated some years in the future. These survey findings will be used in conjunction with other desk-based research as well as locally collected data in each community.

Survey Sample

195 households in Helmsdale and District were sampled in June and July 2010 using a self-completion postal questionnaire. 92 responses were received plus a further 3 online, totalling 95 responses (a response rate of 23%). A copy of the questionnaire is provided in the Appendix.

A profile of the survey respondents can be found at the end of this report after the main survey findings.

Throughout the report, totals may not sum to 100 either because of rounding or because multiple responses to certain questions were allowed.

Section Two

Main Findings

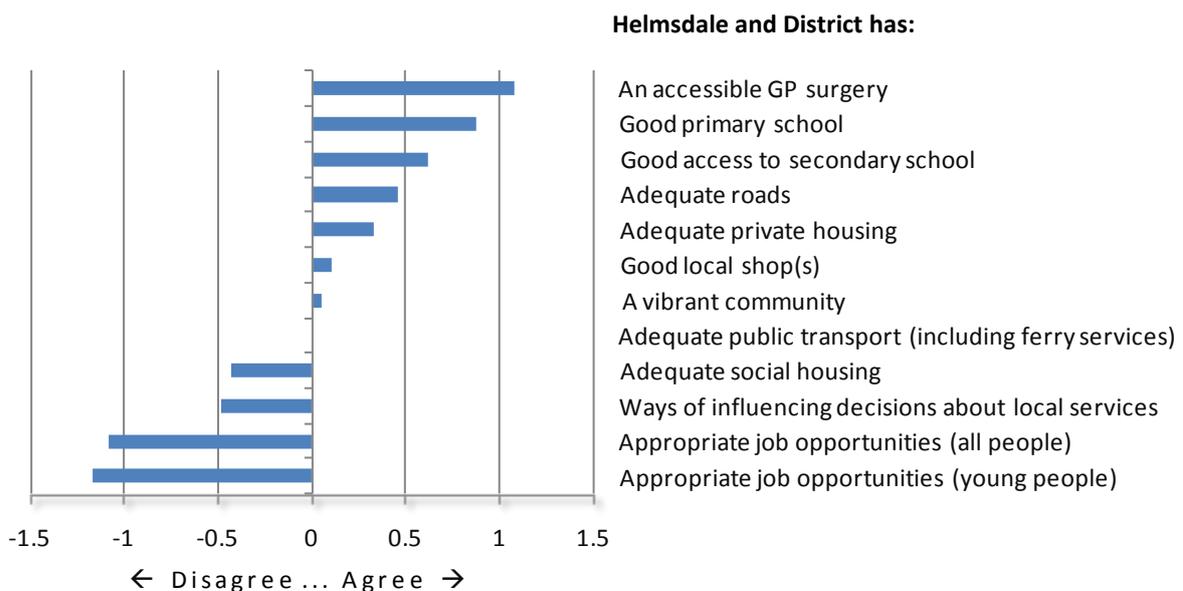
About Your Community

Respondents were asked to agree or disagree with a number of statements about their community. For this question and several others throughout the report, responses were converted to a score and displayed in a chart.

Figure 1: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

An average score was derived based on the following five-point scale:

<u>Response</u>	<u>Score</u>
"Agree strongly"	+2
"Agree"	+1
"Neither agree nor disagree"	0
"Disagree"	-1
"Disagree strongly"	-2

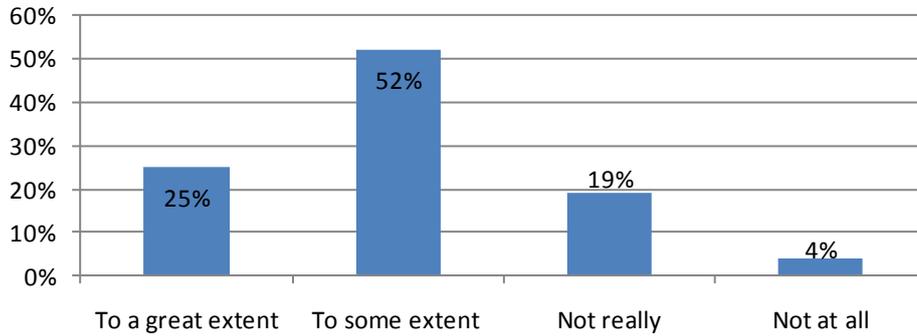


An accessible GP surgery, a good primary school and good access to a secondary school were the statements with which respondents were most likely to agree.

Respondents were least likely to agree with the statements about *job opportunities*.

Note that these are statements about *access* to housing, school, surgery etc – they do not attempt to reflect satisfaction with quality.

Figure 2: Overall, to what extent do you feel part of the community?

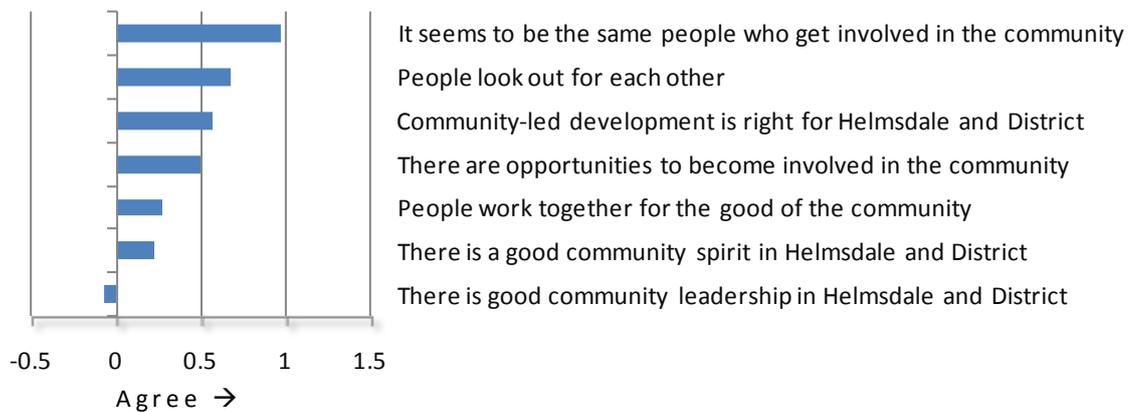


77% of respondents felt part of their community to a 'great extent' or 'some extent'.

The over 60s and people involved with community groups were more likely than average to feel this way.

Figure 3: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Figure 3, below, adopts the same five point scoring system (+2 to -2) as outlined earlier at Figure 1. All but one of the statements were met with varying degrees of agreement and therefore received positive scores.



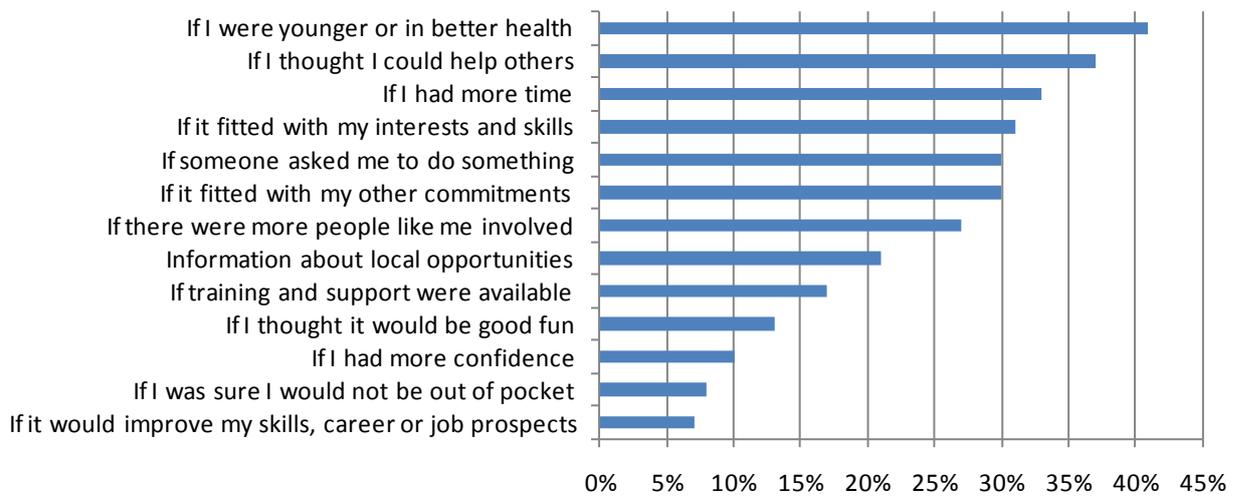
The only slight disagreement was over the statement *there is good community leadership in Helmsdale and District*.

Table 1: Involvement in Local Community Groups in the last 12 months

Level of involvement	%
Committee member / office holder of a community group and actively involved	29
Committee member / office holder, but with limited involvement	6
Actively involved but not a committee member / office holder	10
Aware of community groups but not involved	46
Not aware of any community groups	9
Total	100

45% of the sample were actively involved with the community in some way, with working people aged 25-44 being particularly active in the community. The remaining people were aware of community groups but did not take part.

Figure 5: What do you think would encourage you to become involved / more involved in your local community?



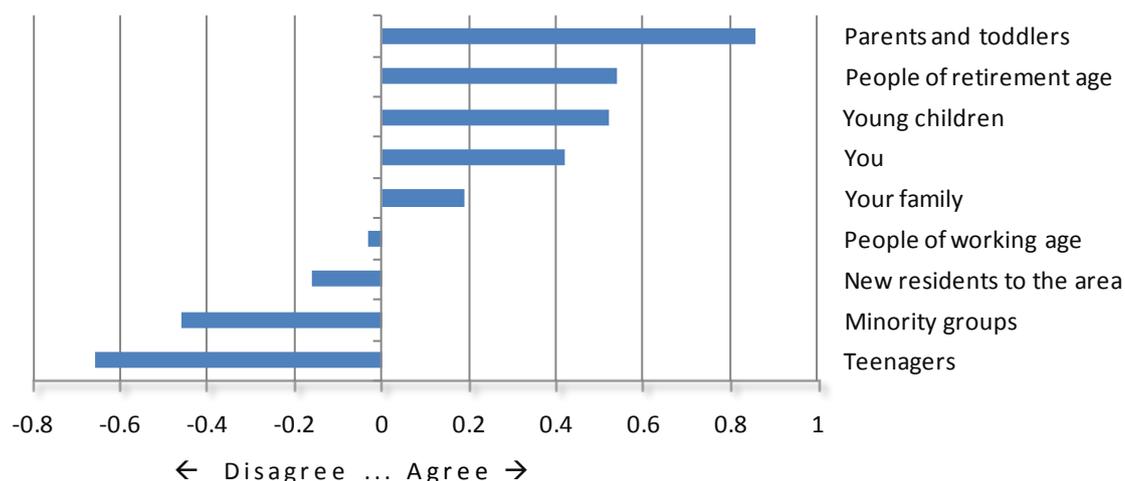
Note: multiple responses were accepted.

A number of factors would encourage people to be more involved locally. The main reason for not being more involved in the community was *age/ill health*. *Lack of time* was a particular issue for working people. Otherwise, there were no clear patterns of response among the various social groups.

Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which their community caters for certain groups, as reported below in Figure 6. A mean score was derived based on the following scale:

<u>Response</u>	<u>Score</u>
"To a great extent"	+2
"To some extent"	+1
"Not really"	-1
"Not at all"	-2

Figure 6: To what extent do you feel your community caters for the following groups?



Respondents felt that Helmsdale and District catered particularly well for *parents and toddlers* and *young children*. Interestingly, respondents from households without children were more likely than households with children to feel this way. Similarly, the over 60s were less likely than younger age groups to feel that the community catered well for people of retirement age.

Moving Away

14 respondents (15% of the sample) indicated that they were thinking about moving away from Helmsdale and District in the foreseeable future, i.e. within the coming three years.

Those who were thinking about moving away were then asked what would be the main reasons for leaving Helmsdale and District.

Table 2: What would be the main reasons for leaving?

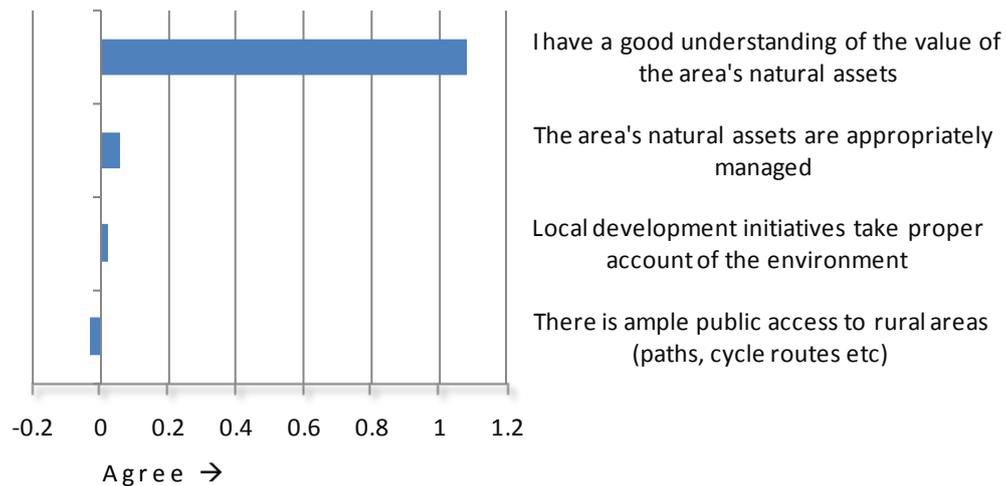
Reason	Number of Mentions
Employment elsewhere	8
Better quality of life	6
More affordable / available property	3
To be closer to family	2
Better climate	2
Education / training	2

Note: multiple responses were accepted.

Environment

A series of four questions sought respondents' views about the environment and land management, including common grazing (where relevant), woodlands, paths, the shoreline and other public spaces. The responses are summarised in Figure 7, below using the same five point +2 to -2 scoring system as before.

Figure 7: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?



Only one of the four statements received a strong positive score – *I have a good understanding of the value of the area's natural assets*.

In terms of the other three environmental statements, there may be scope for improvement in *public access to rural areas, local development initiatives and management of the area's natural assets*.

The Future of Your Community

Respondents were asked two general questions about their community as a place to live. Overall, 84% were satisfied with Helmsdale and District as a place to live. Satisfaction rose with age and was higher among respondents living in households without children.

Table 3: How satisfied are you with Helmsdale and District as a place to live?

Response	%
Very satisfied	34
Fairly satisfied	50
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	8
Fairly dissatisfied	7
Very dissatisfied	1
Total	100

When asked about the future, 51% of the sample felt “very optimistic” or “somewhat optimistic”. There were no clear differences in response among the various social groupings.

Table 4: How optimistic or pessimistic are you about the future?

Response	%
Very optimistic	6
Somewhat optimistic	45
No strong feeling	22
Somewhat pessimistic	22
Very pessimistic	6
Total	100

Respondents were also asked to outline the most important developments or changes they would like to see over the coming years in Helmsdale and District. A selection of these comments is provided separately from this report. These comments covered a wide range of themes, the main ones being:

- Re-open the filling station
- Improved public transport
- The need for more social housing
- More visitor facilities eg trails, accommodation, toilets
- The need for wider employment opportunities
- Clear up dilapidated buildings, yards, overgrown areas etc
- Local renewable energy projects
- More activities for youth / young people
- Save the library

Attitudes to Minorities

45% of respondents thought that their community readily accepts people of differing faiths (25% did not, and a further 30% did not know).

17% of respondents considered themselves to be part of a minority group.

Disabilities

20 individuals (22% of the sample) considered themselves to have a disability.

A summary profile of all respondents to the survey is provided overleaf in Table 5.

Table 5: Profile of Survey Respondents

Gender:	Male	32%
	Female	68%
Under 18s in Household:	Households with under 18s	20%
	Households without under 18s	80%
Family units in household:	One family unit	94%
	More than one family unit	6%
Age of respondent*	16-24	1%
	25-34	5%
	35-44	7%
	45-60	26%
	Over 60	61%
Time in community:	Fewer than 5 years	13%
	6 to 20 years	33%
	Over 20 years	54%
Ties with community:	Always lived here	20%
	Family from here but time lived away	23%
	Moved into the area	57%
Working status:	Working (full or part-time)	38%
	Retired	53%
	Other non-working	9%
If working:	One paid job	71%
	More than one paid job	29%
If working:	Periods away from home	9%
	Mostly at home	91%

* The younger age groups are notoriously difficult to survey due to work, family and other commitments. Wherever possible, the survey asked respondents to take account of the likely views of other household members as well as their own.