



Briefing from SCVO's Rural Team on the rural dimension of the Big Lottery Fund's Big Thinking consultation

The Big Lottery Fund's Big Thinking consultation is now online, and provides an opportunity for rural communities to have their say on the Investing in Communities funding, which we believe has failed to provide adequate support for village halls and other rural community facilities. At the Village Halls Summit in February 2008, Alison Magee from the Big Lottery listened to these concerns and urged village hall committees and other rural groups to respond to the consultation. The consultation closes on the 27th February 2009.



How can you respond?

The Big Thinking consultation is an online-only survey which can be found at

www.big-thinking.org.uk

Unfortunately, it is not straightforward to answer just one part of the survey but with a little patience you will be able to have your say.

Click on the Consultation Survey link. Unfortunately you can't see the Scotland questions until you have answered the UK ones. You'll probably want to see them all before you formulate your thoughts. Therefore it's probably best to look at the guidelines and outlines of the questions, which you can link to directly here:

<http://www.big-thinking.org.uk/content/Big%20thinking%20-%20final%20guide.pdf>

The questionnaire starts with 10 'Big Questions' at UK level. Then you can go on supplementary questions for Scotland. The questions are quite focussed and don't allow much opportunity for addressing specific issues with Investing in Communities funding.

Comments on the failure of Investing in Communities – Growing Community Assets to deliver for village halls are probably best addressed in Question 3 of the Scotland questions.

What is SCVO's suggested response?

SCVO is calling on everyone with an interest in this issue to submit a response, however brief, to the survey, along the lines of SCVO's response, which is shown below:

The Village Halls Summit 2008 and the recent Scottish Government research on Rural Community Facilities provide evidence that rural community facilities which act as general purpose meeting places have been operating for a long time, most over 50 years, and still manage to meet their running costs in a sustainable way. They do, however, require an injection of capital to bring the older buildings up to standard and make them warm and comfortable places. But the model of multi-service outlet and social enterprise is largely rejected by the communities consulted.

SCVO believes that Investing in Communities needs to better reflect the needs of rural communities and enable them to provide community facilities that fit their needs and aspirations. Investing in Communities need to be revised to:

- Fund general purpose meeting places, without the need to provide multi service outlets.
- Address the need to for capital improvement and repair of rural community facilities, particularly focussing on energy conservation and efficiency.
- Recognise that a significant proportion of community facilities are managed for their communities through leasing arrangements and that they should not be disadvantaged in access to Investing in Communities funding.
- Recognise the requirements and criteria of other funders of community facilities including the Scotland Rural Development Programme and work towards simplified and unified grant applications. There could be a common form from several funders for community facilities and more co-ordination of the timings of deadlines and spend.

For a more detailed briefing on the issues and evidence behind SCVO's proposed response, please contact Sandra Hogg by emailing sandra.hogg@scvo.org.uk or phoning 01463 251729.