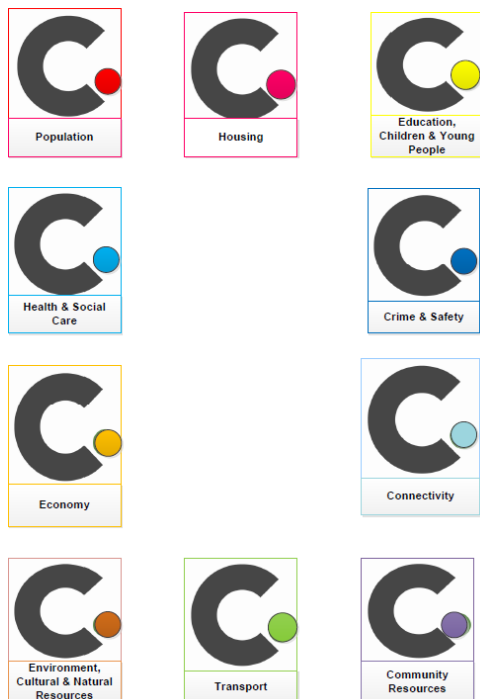


JULY/AUGUST 2013

Crichton Institute Regional Observatory – partnership and co-operation at its core

Regional Observatory



In the last newsletter we reported on the progress of the development of CIRO. Discussions are currently underway to extend the initiative to include Scottish Borders area. The CIRO Technical Group is well underway in developing the stand-alone portal/website to facilitate thematic, geographic, statistical interrogation and analysis.

The new website is to become the information hub for CIRO. In turn it will take a key role for the South of Scotland:

- Promote better decision making through the process of gathering, interrogating, analysing, signposting and sharing data of interest and significance to local partners
- Improve individual and regional competitiveness by promoting a culture of informed dialogue and evidence based decisions
- Inform and underpin the business engagement, applied research and policy activities of the Crichton Institute
- Inform and underpin the Institute's work in relation to the priority themes of rural economy and skills development, community development and place-making, impacts of demographic change and influencing policy and practice
- To provide accessible, up-to-date and accurate

information about the area that partners and the general public can utilise

- To support and align with the priorities in the Single Outcome Agreement in order to provide consistency across partners
- To help Dumfries and Galloway be better placed on the national and international stages and enable community development through sharing information and best practice

Dialogue with Crichton Institute

www.crichtoninstitute.co.uk

Crichton Institute wants to encourage dialogue and discussion on issues important to you and Dumfries & Galloway.

Why not engage with us by following Crichton Institute on Twitter (@CrichtonInst) and on LinkedIn (Crichton Institute).

As part of this dialogue, CIRO is also inviting organisations, agencies, businesses, and individuals etc. to come forward with data and reports that may be relevant in the context of the CI's remit, with the view of making this data and reports publicly available through the CIRO website, which is currently being developed. Please contact us.

Policy

Dr Sarah Skerratt, Dr Jane Atterton and Dr Artur Steiner have been working to support the development of project ideas by colleagues in the CI's Research Function. They are also writing a CI Policy Briefing which will set out recent and current policies across the South of Scotland, how national policies impact on the South, and the history and evolution of region-wide institutions like the South of Scotland Alliance. The briefing will be published in late September.

Research

Researchers within the CI are currently undertaking

- An evaluation of the impact of Macmillan Cancer Information and Support Services within community facilities. This work will also provide valuable insights into issues associated with the creation of a sustainable 3rd sector: statutory organisational model, partnership working, and the integration of third sector delivery models with statutory sector services.
- A broad scoping exercise as a precursor to a full evaluation of the Queensberry Initiative
- A large-scale study across Dumfries and Galloway to understand the nature and extent of farmers'

diversification into other businesses and any implications for the regional economy and job creation.

And have a number of other research projects of relevance to the region under consideration.

Business Engagement

After consultation with key stakeholders in the south of Scotland, we have identified three major projects which, together, should bring significant benefit to our economy. These projects will be carried out by the Institute working with our partners. Our first project will look closely at the operation of business clusters; why they fail and why they succeed and what is needed to strengthen them. The second project will focus on the barriers that businesses face and contrast those with what policy-makers understand them to be. The third project will look at how businesses engage with information in their decision-making and planning so that we can better understand what information should be made available to business-owners.

Activities

Crichton Institute continues to be involved in a range of events and activities locally and nationally. These include:

Queensberry Initiative Conference

QI held a mini-conference which members of the CI team attended. It was an opportunity to find out more about the Initiative's innovative approach to delivering educational objectives including transition support, life skills and employability skills using community partners and outdoor environments. Following this event CI and QI have commenced working together.

UWS Rural Enterprise Conference

The international Conference attracted delegates from around the world. It highlighted current research and policy practice in rural enterprise and brought together policymakers, researchers and rural community leaders concerned with the latest developments and issues in rural entrepreneurship.

The Friday afternoon session was hosted by the CI and, for the first time, offered an opportunity for local entrepreneurs, third sector representatives, council members and others with an interest in the rural economy to discuss how the research presented over the previous day can be applied, its consequences and the opportunities it may present. The session was facilitated by Professor Mike Danson, Heriot Watt University and Dr Sarah Skerratt, Co-Director for Policy at CI who ran an interactive session on Rural Policy.

Horizon 2020

Some 30 delegates attended the Horizon 2020 information event in Dumfries. We were delighted also to be able to welcome a number of businesses from the Scottish Borders. After presentations by Scotland Europa, Enterprise Europe Scotland, Scottish Funding Council and (National Contact Point for FP7 some interesting discussion took place on how SMEs will be given greater support in being part of the new funding programme (including the introduction of SME



Engagement Vouchers).

With the help of a couple of local businesses, Dundream and Funding Ideas, this information session was able to put the opportunities Horizon 2020 could offer SMEs into context. CI will work with local agencies to facilitate the applications by local SMEs for this funding opportunity.

Connected Communities Showcase

The CI attended the Arts & Humanities Research Council's Connected Communities (CC) showcase at Heriot Watt. The CC initiative deliberately funds diverse and creative projects linking university researchers with community groups. Interesting work around open data and hyperlocal initiatives were amongst a range of funded projects, including large community-university partnerships investigating historical and archaeological sites. Performance art was also demonstrated as a tool for community engagement.

CI is currently undergoing discussions with Dumfries & Galloway Council to pick up on some of the opportunities presented by collaborative open data projects.

The AHRC are also currently funding work to develop a Community Partner Network with the aim of generating stronger community-university partnerships. There is a Summit on 23-24 September in Bristol which all community leaders and practitioners are invited to attend: <http://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/about/community-partner-network>

Fresh Start for the Arts

CI attended the Dumfries session of The Fresh Start team exploring its proposals for the future of the arts in Dumfries and Galloway. CI does feature in the proposal as an opportunity for research and as a route for closer collaboration with the Crichton Campus.

Forthcoming Events

CORDERA

"College On Regional Development European Rural Areas"

CI is delighted to be involved in the forthcoming meeting of the partnership, which will take place in August 2013 in Dumfries & Galloway.

<http://www.dayoftheregion.co.uk/cordera>

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