Changing Tides and Making Waves

Youth Participation Leading Positive Change Across The North Sea

2020 Conference Report
Foreword

Helen Budge  
Northern Alliance Lead Officer

Living in a coastal or rural area means reaching out to the world in order to build inwards. Our regions often have to be more proactive and creative when making these connections - acting locally but thinking globally. That’s what ‘Changing Tides & Making Waves’ was all about for me.

As both participant and closing speaker of this event, I came from it completely inspired by our young people and the ideas and passion they have for changing their communities for the better. I hope the participants were similarly influenced by the stories and perspectives shared.

This is just the first step of collaboration between our areas in Scotland and beyond. We look forward to further co-operation in the future and working with young people on how to help them turn these ripples of change into waves. Thanks to all participants, organisers and speakers for making this happen.

Magnus Englebrektsson  
CPMR North Sea Commission Executive Secretary

Regional councils from all North Sea countries join forces in the North Sea Commission to achieve a productive and sustainable, climate-neutral, connected and smart North Sea Region. Transnational co-operation is key. The councils want to address joint challenges together, but also to learn and be inspired by one another.

Involvement of young people in our work will be another source of inspiration. We are still in an early phase of organising our youth participation. “Changing Tides – Making Waves” was an important and valuable step in this process. It was a pleasure to see the commitment and enthusiasm of the participants, and I am happy that the work that started with this event will continue.

Many thanks to participants and speakers and to the organisers of the meeting. Also thanks to the Northern Alliance for co-organising and giving a truly Scottish flavour to this international youth meeting.
Introduction

Changing Tides and Making Waves was the first CPMR North Sea Commission and Northern Alliance Joint Youth Conference held on Saturday 14th November 2020.

In the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic, both organisations were forced to think creatively about engaging with young people in their areas. With a large overlap in geography, the two organisations collaborated on a joint virtual event. A planning group was formed, comprising of four Community Learning & Development Workers from across the Northern Alliance area and the CPMR North Sea Commission Youth Advisor.

The planning group agreed to host a virtual conference using the Events Management App “Whova” and “Zoom” video-conferencing. The programme was kept short and quick-moving with a focus on the themes of both the CPMR North Sea Commission and Northern Alliance with an element of content choice.

By working together, it was possible to combine knowledge and skills to create an impressive programme of speakers and guests. To address the priorities of both organisations, the planning group reached an agreed focus for the conference in

“Youth Participation Leading Positive Change Across The North Sea”
The Northern Alliance is a Scottish Regional Improvement Collaborative which brings together a range of professionals with a focus on supporting teachers and other school staff working with children and young people to improve their wellbeing, attainment and outcomes.

It gives a shared vision to improve the education and life chances of our children and young people through delivering excellence and equity with a collective commitment to close the gap in attainment between our least and most disadvantaged children to raise attainment for all.

The Northern Alliance has a number of areas of focus including
Equalities, and Community Learning and Development.

Two of the priorities under these areas are to:
• Ensure the voices of children and young people are heard
• Capture and analyse youth participation and youth voice.

The CPMR North Sea Commission (NSC) is a cooperation platform for regions around the North Sea that aims to strengthen partnerships between regional authorities which face the challenges and opportunities presented by the North Sea.

Through policy and project development, political lobbying and knowledge exchange/best practice sharing, they work on four main themes: a productive and sustainable North Sea, a climate-neutral North Sea Region, a connected North Sea Region and a Smart North Sea Region. These themes relate to four thematic working groups which are open to elected politicians and officers from all member regions.

This image shows the member regions of the North Sea Commission in 2020:

Plenary Speakers

Kerstin Brunnström is President of the North Sea Commission. “We all take part in the commission because we all have something in common, we want to protect and develop the North Sea Region... We think that it is necessary to co-operate to bring about change... We share experiences and learn from each other... and we try to influence decision-makers... We need input from you, who are young. It is your future... youth has always been a driving force for renewal and change... You understand better the digital world we have ahead of us, and that will be important for the future North Sea Region.”

Janis Fifka is currently serving a two-year term on the European Youth Parliament’s international board. He first attended an event of the European Youth Parliament in 2011 as part of his high school delegation, later he got involved as a volunteer himself organising several events and partaking in more than 50 sessions across Europe. Janis reminded us of the importance of local, regional and international networks and also the importance of the Voice of Young People.
CLiIMATE ACTiViSM

with Laura Young

- DEGREES OF WARMING
  - The world is heating up
  - Current policy is NOT enough

- WHAT ARE WE AIMING FOR?
  - Catastrophic impact
  - The impacts are already here
  - Bring the numbers down
  - Change policy

- YOUR SPHERE OF INFLUENCE
  - Your network is BIGGER than you think
  - Your key tool for change
  - Extendable through social media
  - Be the change
  - Do your homework
  - Join with others

- GET ACTIVE
  - Live out your values
  - Less waste
  - Live your values
  - Invest in your integrity

- GET YOUR KNOWLEDGE
  - Expert
  - Blogging questions

- live your values
  - Kopi: Laura
North Sea Commission Session

Background:
In March 2019, a North Sea Youth Conference in Sandnes, Norway was organised by the NSC Smart Regions Groups and Rogaland Country Council. During the event, the youth participants had raised a want for a permanent youth representative present in NSC bodies and events. Following this, three young representatives, from Aberdeenshire, Aust-Agder and Groningen, attended and contributed at the Annual Business Meeting (ABM) and North Sea Conference in June 2019, and the ABM decided to involve young representatives in the regular work of the NSC and to engage a temporary youth advisor. Esme Leitch, from Highland and who attended the conference in Norway, was offered this role and started in December 2019. The main focus of the job is to develop a strategy for sustainable youth involvement and organise an annual youth conference. The 2020 youth conference, originally planned to be in Rotterdam, was moved virtually which is when a potential link and opportunity for collaboration was identified between the Northern Alliance and the North Sea Commission- who share members (Aberdeen, Aberdeenshire and Highland) and a focus on stronger youth voice.

The NSC Session:
The idea behind the North Sea Commission Session at this conference was to use the time together as an opportunity to hear young people’s ideas about a youth participation structure which could then be used to guide the work of the youth involvement project moving forward. The session started with a presentation by NSC Executive Secretary Magnus Engelbrektsson on the newly adopted 2030 strategy to set the scene and contextualise some of the information the attendees were given in advance of the conference. The youth attendees were then given a suggestion of a youth participation structure, some discussion points, such as what works well and not so well in their region, environmental impact of travel, the benefits of in person meetings, the age range and also some other things to consider in their conversation such as Covid-19, Brexit and finances. They were then put into small breakout rooms to have a discussion and were encouraged to elect a spokesperson to feedback at the end. The feedback from all the groups was largely in agreement with each other, and covered a number of key points.

Session Poll
What is the most important feature of a Youth Participation Structure?
Youth Led 52%
Channels to Decision Makers 22%
Fun - 13%

Next Steps:
Following the event, the feedback from the groups was collated and sent back to those who attended the session for any comments. There was a meeting planned in January for those who are interested in being involved in the work moving forward which will guide the next steps of the project.

Key Points
• The formation of an “advisory committee” was a good idea
• The age range for committee members should be 14-24
• The committee should meet regularly virtually, and only have in person meetings around twice a year
• Acknowledging the environmental impact of travel
• Engaging with other young people and promoting the work of the Commission is a priority.
Northern Alliance Session

The purpose of the Northern Alliance planning session was to consider the recommendations made by Young People who attended the 2019 Northern Alliance Youth Conference.

1. All councils should adopt a Youth Charter
2. All Secondary Schools should have Pupil Councils which are youth led.
3. All Councils should have Youth Work Staff in place to support youth engagement and participation.
4. All Councils should have structures in place, so young people’s voices, ideas and recommendations are listened to and action taken.

In response, session aims for the “Changing Tides & Making Waves” Conference were:

- How can we begin to put in place the recommendations from last year’s conference?
- How do we increase meaningful Youth Participation?
- How do we include more Young People from our area?

A Northern Alliance Planning session was included in the conference programme to consider ways to take these recommendations forward as well as respond to the Northern Alliance priority areas. Participants were sent information prior to the conference outlining the aims and tasks they would be involved with.

Young People from Aberdeenshire were invited to speak about their “Children & Young People’s Charter” and the process undertaken to put it in place. Using online interactive tools, participants came up with ideas outlining what they would like to see happen and how they could be involved to improve youth participation in The Northern Alliance. They were asked to imagine what it would look like if participation was working well. Below are some of their thoughts.

- “What if young people worked more closely with other young people from different areas?”
- “What if every area had a Youth Charter?”
- “What if all young people’s voices were heard - not just the usual suspects?”
- “What if young people felt confident and comfortable advocating for their own needs?”
- “What if we had groups of local people who helped Young People in their campaigns?”
- “What if young people’s mental health and wellbeing was valued above academic achievement?”

Bernadette Cairns is Principal Educational Psychologist for Highland Council and Chair of the Northern Alliance Equalities Group which is responsible for ensuring the voices of children and young people are heard. Bernadette finished the session by leading a discussion thinking about practical ways to make changes, some of which are included in the Graphic Recording on the following page.

Key Points:

- Meaningful Youth Participation is “by young people, for young people” and all work with young people must be considered in this light.
- We need spaces to meet, and workers to support and facilitate bringing together young people as ‘one youth voice’ for the Northern Alliance area but with the widest representation of young people possible so that everyone’s voice is heard.
- We would like to follow up in early 2021 by establishing working groups of young people to focus on priority areas, including adopting a Northern Alliance Youth Charter.
Welcome!

Northern Alliance

Influence in rural and remote areas

Ask as many children & young people as you can
Make sure our voices heard

Charter
Include us opportunities

Hammer it home too

One Voice

PRACTICAL WAYS TO MAKE CHANGES

Adults + Young people - equal voice
Decision making
Local Authority & regular communication
Meaningful engagement
Taken seriously
Wider variety of young people
Charter agreed by each Local Authority
PSSE & RME include relevant issues to children & young people
Connections campaigns

By young people

Anonymous surveys
More detail

Bernadette Cairns
Equality, Diversity & Children’s Rights Policy

Asked children & young people to write it (Northern Alliance)

Equalities groups led by young people in EVERY school & nursery

Young people feeling confident advocating for their needs & interests

Young people run involved & running youth spaces

Welcome!

A zoo in Sutherland
Real investment for youth participation NOT just about it, help, solutions & stigma

Places in council allocated for young people
Mental health over academic achievement

Youth Involvement Guidelines

International
Smaller regions

Work with schools, colleges, universities
Reach out to youth councils etc
Lobbying Your Government

Kirsty Morrow

SCOTTISH YOUTH PARLIAMENT

HOW DO YOU DO IT?

THINK

1. Think
2. Plan
3. Do
4. Review

CAMPAIGN CYCLE

THINK

Effects
Problem
Cause

Timeline
Objectives
Allies
Budget
Brand

Specific
Measurable
Achievable
Relevant
Time Based parliamentary terms debates

SMART

Petitions
Marches
Debates

Petitions
Marches
Debates

Kirsty Morrow

Make sure people affected are involved in each stage

DO

Review

Easier when planned well

Survey

Focus group

Quotes

Statistics

Videos + photos

In each stage

Workshops

Lobbying Your Government
Kirstie Morrow
Kirstie is the Scottish Youth Parliament Participations and Training Officer. She introduced us to the Scottish Youth Parliament - the democratically elected voice of Scotland’s Young People - and some of the effective political campaigns they have worked on over the years. She shared some of the practical processes that SYP use to make real political change happen.

Knowing Your Rights
Bruce Adamson
Abigail McGill
Jonathan Dorrat
Bruce Adamson is the Children and Young People’s Commissioner for Scotland. He spoke about his role as Commissioner and gave a brief introduction to Children’s Rights and how Scotland is moving forward to make them a reality for all Children and Young People. He was joined by Abigail and Jonathan, two of his young advisors.

Climate Activism
Laura Young
Laura Young is an environmental activist and ethical influencer, known across Social Media as “Less Waste Laura”. She took participants on a journey through what an activist actually looks like, and how we can all play a part and have our voice heard. This session looked at the many ways we can live differently for the climate, and engage in climate activism in our own spheres.

Social Media as a Tool for Influencing Positive Change
Jordan Daly
Jordan Daly is a co-founder of Time for Inclusive Education (TIE), Scotland’s LGBT-inclusive education charity. Referencing first-hand experience, the session covered how to use your voice and stories to influence positive change, and the potential for social media to be an effective campaigning and awareness raising tool.

How Safe Is Your Password?
Craig Steele
Craig is a computer scientist, educator, published author and creative technologist who helps people develop digital skills in a fun and creative environment. His company, Digital Skills Education, develops and delivers exciting projects across Scotland and internationally.

At the conference, Craig delivered a fun, interactive and engaging energiser with prizes and a serious message about Cyber Security.

68% of participants rated the workshops as “Very Good” or “Good”
Panel Discussion

Facilitator: Esme Leitch (CPMR North Sea Commission Youth Advisor)
A positive and lively discussion included Children’s Rights, minimising the effects of Covid-19, and hopes and aspirations for the future. It was underpinned with the desire for young people to be involved in decision-making at every level.

Members of the Panel

Maree Todd MSP
Minister for Children and Young People
MSP for the Highlands and Islands

Hope Laing
Children and Young People’s Commissioner for Scotland Young Advisor

Bernadette Cairns
Principal Educational Psychologist, Highland Council
Chair of The Northern Alliance Equality Group

Jonathan Dorrat
Children and Young People’s Commissioner for Scotland Young Advisor

Moira Pezzetta
Digital Communications & Media Co-ordinator
Young Feminist Europe

Abigail McGill
Children and Young People’s Commissioner for Scotland Young Advisor
Minimise effect of Covid
- School meals
- Exams
- Children under 12

Measures Government takes shouldn’t impact on children & young people’s lives

Children

Recognise & reduce harms on young people

University

Get through Coronavirus

First Minister’s Cabinet

Culture of inclusion

Learn from what we’ve achieved

Decision making in LAs

Take forward kindness in your careers

 Biggest Challenge

Social Media

Bullying & harassment

Surprise

Rural
digital poverty

careers

Education to use well & together

Diversity of challenge & experience across young people

THANK YOU!
For a Revolution in Children’s Rights

ACTION & Impact young people

RECOGNISING ACTION & IMPACT young people

Scottish Youth Parliament

BRINGING POWER & VOICE

Working with a broad spectrum of young people
Participant Feedback

“More speakers from different countries and more time for the Northern Alliance and North Sea Commission planning sessions.”

“Allow more time for more questions and be more specific in what the questions should relate to.”

“Maybe an ‘in-person’ event when Covid restrictions are lifted.”

“Longer time slots and more discussion times like in the break-out rooms.”

“Make it more spread out throughout the day.”

“Maybe give the attendees more time to get to know each other.”

What did we learn?

Not only is virtual engagement on this scale possible, but it works well and is effective. Although social interaction is very limited, there are many other advantages, such as reduced costs and reaching more people across a larger geographical area.

Need to make sure technology is tested well beforehand and that all participants are clear on how to join.

If the North Sea Commission and Northern Alliance are jointly organising again, a more international approach to workshops and speakers would be advisable. For good reason this event was very Scotland-heavy.

In hindsight, the main improvement would be having more time to work with. Sessions would be longer and less rushed and more social interaction would be built in. Introducing more buffer time between sessions would give more flexibility.

The events management app, Whova, was relatively easy to use along with Zoom meeting rooms.

We could improve by incorporating more social and cultural exchanges, and interactive sessions, as well as the formal itinerary and workshops.

Having separate accounts for Zoom, and staff to manage them was required when having different activities at the same time. Whova was great for the pre-event organisation and admin but the actual conference could be done just with Zoom.

52% of participants thought the sessions were too short and 48% said they were about right.
Knowing Your Rights

Abigail McGill
Jonathan Dorrat
Cathy Begley
Bruce Adamson

42 Rights
- Everyone under 18
- Most European countries not incorporated into law
- USA not a member

UNCRC

Rights of Child

International Law & Domestic Law

Uncertainty until brought into domestic law

Disability - Same rights as everyone else

Opinion taken seriously - Even in school

Right to be heard - Not to be discriminated against

Covid exacerbated young people's rights

Human Rights Defenders

Exam results - Climate change

Not feeling heard

Children's Commissioner

Amplify voice of children & young people

Discrimination
Social Media as a Tool for Influencing Positive Change

- Be That Voice
- Start With The Issue
- Know Your Idea
- Express Clearly

One voice can change a room, and if one voice can change a room then it can change a city... a state... a nation. It can change the world.

38 Degrees Campaigns by YOU

Start with Petitions by You

UK Parliament
The Scottish Parliament

Use Images

Communicate Stats

Reduce Risks by 55% in Squares

Highlight Key Supporters

Let's Do This

Toolbox

Take Time Offline
Focus on Your End Goal

Block Report Tricks

Stay Resilient

with Jordan Daly
**Evaluation Feedback**

“Thanks for the event. I really enjoyed it and it has really helped me to build up my confidence as someone who suffers from a chronic neurological sleep disorder and really struggles with anxiety. Thanks for letting me take part. Keep up the good work :)”

(participant)

“I know it’s the Northern Alliance conference, but I would invite speakers from all around Europe if possible, so that they see how inclusive you are having a conversation with young people. I am really amazed by this conference and the way you invited young people to speak and ask questions to your Ministers. Very well done and thank you!”

(participant)

“All in all the event was really inclusive and really really well structured. Whova is a great choice for hosting such an event. Also I felt warmly welcomed by the host and the preparation mails were also really informative.”

(participant)

“I was really pleased with this event. I couldn’t attend all sessions - but those I did attend were really well run, keynotes were great, focus was maintained, MC role was really well handled by Esme Leitch.”

(Guest)

“First time using Whova and it was really good with good info beforehand so I could feel confident using it.”

(participant)

“Well done on your first online event”

(speaker)

“Honestly couldn’t be any better if it tried. 100,000 well done to the organisers.”

(participant)

“The collaboration between the two large organisations was very impressive and will undoubtedly be productive going forward.”

(Guest)

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(Guest)

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(participant)
Overall Conference Rating
4 out of 5

Participant Feedback

“I will try to contact other attendees to try and form better connections with them.”

91% of participants were more aware of ways young people can be involved in influencing things that are important to them.

“I will see if my council would look at allowing youth members for the local council ward areas”

100% of speakers said they enjoyed the event, it was well organised and they would be willing to take part in a similar event in the future.

“I will take some training ideas back to our local groups”

96% of participants enjoyed the conference.

“I will try to become involved in Youth Projects in the North Sea Commission”

Alasdair MacQuarrie (Inverness Royal Academy) entertained us in the break.
As a result of this conference, the CPMR North Sea Commission, and the Northern Alliance will bring young people back together, and develop their Youth Participation Structures.

74% of participants would like to be involved in organising similar events in the future and a further 26% said ‘perhaps’.

“I will take the information back to my local forum and discuss ways to make a positive change”

“I will contribute to one of the working groups and get involved there”

“I will work on projects within the Youth Council”

“I thought the event was an excellent example of positive digital engagement. Attendees were included and sessions were interactive. I really liked involving young reps before and during the conference with an emphasis on involvement after the conference too.”

(Guest)

“I will take the information back to my local forum and discuss ways to make a positive change”

“I will contribute to one of the working groups and get involved there”

“I will work on projects within the Youth Council”

“I’m going to bring the information back to my youth forum and create discussions on how we can become more involved in issues facing us locally and increase youth voice around our area”

“Great conference, you should all be proud of pulling it off!”

(speaker)

“Thought the event was an excellent example of positive digital engagement. Attendees were included and sessions were interactive. I really liked involving young reps before and during the conference with an emphasis on involvement after the conference too.”

(Guest)

“It would be great to have more events like this and be able to build good relationships with people from around the North Sea and Northern Alliance areas.”

(participant)
The starting point for this event was a recognition by the key partner organisations, The Northern Alliance and the CPMR North Sea Commission, that the energy and voice of young people is a force for change. Providing a platform for focus, interaction and learning was a step in moving our collective goals on and building momentum from a regional youth event in 2019.

Thanks go to everyone who took part in shaping a challenging but purposeful programme agenda. We have to thank our wide range of speakers and contributors for creating such a productive arena where we could fully explore key messages. There was a strong endorsement from all speakers of the value and importance of the voice and role of young people.

The online model of conference has suited us well and we must thank those who provided technical support in the background for making everything run smoothly. The content of the programme was a credit to those involved in the event organisation overall. Not to forget the elements of fun and the taste of Scottish music provided by excellent young performers! The Conference artists have provided a simple colourful record of discussion and activity which can be used in future planning.

This Conference has already sparked action – planning is underway for further work to strengthen youth participation structures in the region and to secure a strong voice for young people in key aspects affecting their lives. Young people will be key to taking forward identified actions both in their local areas and more widely. I would like to share a final word of thanks to everyone involved for making such a success of this event.

Looking outwards – learning from others – leading change, is our direction of travel.
CLOSING WORDS
MAREE TODD MSP

THANK YOU! For the difference you make

for a revolution in CHILDREN'S RIGHTS... from RIGHTS to REALITY

BRINGING POWER & VOICE

RECOGNISING THE ACTION & IMPACT of young people

YOUTH LINK SCOTLAND

YOUNG SCOT

SCOTTISH YOUTH PARLIAMENT

WORKING with a broad spectrum of YOUNG PEOPLE
with funding from
The Gordon Cook
Foundation

to support Youth Participation

November 2020