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# Spotlight Session – Economic Development Tarbert 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2024

A strong local economy with a mix of businesses can help to make places feel active and attractive – most people enjoy spending time in lively places. Access to good quality jobs, volunteering and training can help us to stay active and healthy, provide social connections , a sense of identity and satisfaction, and an income where paid.

**Is there an active local economy? (able to spend locally (shop/eat/drink) mix of businesses, including local and community-owned, opening day/times)**

Some certain types of businesses are missing – Tarbert Stores was given as an example.

A lot of our businesses are owned by local community people. We don't have high street brands and that is something that sets us apart.

On the eating and drinking side there a lack of supply.

Even if we do shop locally that money is still making its way off island through distribution and end of line stockists.

That might reflect the loss of skill and affordability is an issue. Another massive issue is staffing. A lot of employers are having to fund their own workers accommodation.

A key is that as much as possible can be produced locally will make a difference to the viability of the process.

There is a market in Cumbria for fleece insulation and yet here crofters are burning fleeces.

We need to change habits and what we consume.

Convenience over community,

Price is the most important factor for consumers.



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## **Is there work available in the local area for those that want it?**

There are a lot of jobs but not necessarily jobs that would attract young graduates.

Some local organisations offer jobs internally and allow upskilling their workforce.

We have to make sure we are constantly offering a wide range of employment opportunities.

We are not teaching our kids the proper skills in schools. Not everyone is going to go to university and college.

Do we have any basic data on working industries? Yes

It all comes back to housing. The need for housing is so great to establish a year round economy.

## **What support is available (different needs, employment, childcare and travel)**

There is no support available specifically for childcare.

The nursery provision needs to be addressed in order to allow for greater growth in economic development.

The third sector has become a cheap labour source for the Government and we shouldn't look at the volunteer sector as the answer.

We need to see action rather than just talk.

## **How does the local economy affect how I feel about my place? (thriving or declining)**

Over the past 50 years the economy and services have declined.

Harris is at stagnation point. Different point that they are not high value jobs. Very few businesses would say they don't need any more staff.

Harris may be a leader even within the Western Isles.

Needs to be a closed circle in Harris on offering and even public service.